

INSPECTION REPORT

RICHMOND SCHOOL

Richmond

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121680

Headteacher: Mr P Beever

Reporting inspector: Mr Roger Holmes
2632

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th February 2003

Inspection number: 249651

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Darlington Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr William Gedye

Date of previous inspection: 10th March 1997

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19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English literature	
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Biology Physics Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? Educational inclusion
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10316	N Bertram	Team inspector	Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
13155	J Dixon	Team inspector	French	
10807	P Quest	Team inspector	Health and social care Religious education	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
8248	C Riches	Team inspector	Business studies	

20825	B Ogden	Team inspector	Leisure and recreation Travel and tourism	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Richmond School is a mixed comprehensive, taking pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. With 1635 pupils on roll it is much bigger than most schools and has grown significantly since the last inspection in 1997. The sixth form of 366 students has also grown and is larger than most.

Almost all of the pupils come from white, United Kingdom backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. Very few, about three per cent, are entitled to free school meals. The school serves a very large geographical area, stretching from the outskirts of Darlington to the head of Swaledale. The area is diverse, with some patches of rural deprivation, but overall socio-economic indicators in the area are above average.

Pupils joining the school in Year 7 represent the full comprehensive range. Their performance in national tests at the end of primary school is above average. Similarly there are fewer pupils with special educational needs than in most schools. The majority of these relate to specific learning difficulties, with others including emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism and visual and hearing impairment.

The school has two sites. Year 7 is based in two buildings on the site of the former boys' grammar school near the town centre. The rest of the school uses a collection of buildings on a large site about a mile away.

Richmond School has received an Investor in People award and has recently achieved Performing Arts College status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Richmond School is a good school with many strong features and very good sixth form provision. Pupils make good progress as a result of effective teaching in the main school. They develop very good attitudes to work and their personal development is particularly good, reflecting the emphasis the school puts on this aspect of its work. Strong leadership ensures that the school has a very clear sense of purpose. Management is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils and students make good progress and achieve good results.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form.
- The pupils have very good attitudes to work and grow well in maturity as a result of the very good support the school provides.
- The school's leadership is effective and has established a strong sense of purpose.

What could be improved

- The use of data to analyse and improve attendance and examination performance.
- The curriculum, teaching and organisational arrangements that arise from the separate site for Year 7.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected in March 1997. Each of the six key issues has been addressed although developments are still needed to provide information and communication technology (ICT) experience for all in Years 10 and 11, to reduce time lost between lessons in Year 7 and to monitor teaching more consistently.

During this period pupils' personal development has remained very good and the quality of teaching has been maintained. Results at A-level and GCSE have remained above average, but GCSE results dipped in 2002. Attendance has also worsened and is now only average.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9, 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
Year 9	A	A	A	C
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* National comparison data for AS/A-level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Pupils come into the school with above average results in the tests they took at the end of primary school. They make good progress throughout Years 7 to 9 and achieve very good results in the national tests at the end of Year 9. In 2002 progress was most rapid in mathematics, where it was amongst the best five per cent of schools in the country. It was better than most schools in English and average in science. These results match the standards of work seen in the school, which are well above average and have been rising in line with the national improvement over the last five years.

Results at GCSE have also been well above the national average in recent years, but dipped slightly in 2002. Although the proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at grade C or above was higher than in most schools, the number achieving lower passes was only average, and a higher proportion than in most schools left with no GCSE or equivalent accreditation. Over the last three years boys and girls have performed equally well compared to their national averages, but in 2002 girls performed relatively better than boys. Taken over the last five years, GCSE results have not risen as quickly as the national trend and dipped in 2002. Standards of work seen in the school are generally above average as a result of the good teaching.

Results at A and AS-level are well above average, with female students doing relatively better than male students. They have remained at this level over the last few years despite the increase in size of the sixth form. Achievement in the sixth form is very good and standards of work seen in the school reflect this.

The targets that the school has set itself for performance in tests and examinations have been realistic and appropriately challenging. They have been met as a result of the quality of the school's provision and the pupils' very positive attitudes to work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils take a pride in being part of the school and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in almost all lessons. They cope very well with the cramped corridors and narrow doorways, moving around the school with tolerance and good humour.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very positive amongst the pupils and with staff. These contribute very effectively to the pupils' development of self-confidence and their success in learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. This has fallen since the last inspection and is lower than it should be.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

About two thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 11 and almost nine out of every ten in the sixth form are good or better. Teaching in mathematics is very good, resulting in pupils making very good progress, particularly in Years 7 and 9. English and science teaching is good. Sixth form lessons are particularly successful because of the teachers' command of their subjects and the students' very positive attitudes to learning. There is often real scholarship displayed. Many lessons are equally successful with younger pupils, especially in subjects such as modern languages and mathematics where teachers have thought hard how to make best use of the unusually long lessons. In some other classes, lessons lose pace and focus because of this extra time available and are more ordinary. This makes it more difficult for some pupils to keep up their concentration and is one reason why less academic pupils do not make the same good progress as those who get good grades at GCSE.

Numeracy and literacy are taught effectively across the school and this is strengthening further as the Key Stage 3 Strategy is introduced.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It is broadened in Years 7 to 9 by classical studies and in the sixth form by vocational studies. In Years 10 and 11 it relies too heavily on academic GCSE courses, which do not suit all pupils. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. It covers a very wide range of interests, teachers are enthusiastic and many pupils take part. It plays an important role in establishing good relationships in the school and contributes well to the very positive attitudes that pupils have to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Provision is well organised and pupils make appropriate progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No pupils currently need this support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Provision for moral and social development is very good. This area contributes very strongly to the pupils' positive attitudes and their growth in maturity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is very caring and provides very good general support and guidance for pupils. Their academic progress is monitored and the information is used to help

	them to move forward, but this could be developed further.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school has had clear, strong leadership which has ensured that there is a shared sense of purpose and vision. This is continuing with the new headteacher who is already picking up aspects of the school's performance which need to be addressed. Management is effective and the school runs smoothly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed and committed to the school. All statutory requirements are met apart from the requirements for collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Development plans have been based on a sound overview of the school's performance, but some trends such as increasing absence have not been spotted. Increasing use is now being made of performance data.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are deployed effectively and the school examines spending decisions carefully to make sure it gets good value for money. The school has accumulated a larger than usual budget surplus, much of which is earmarked for improvements to the accommodation.

The split site causes the school considerable problems and affects the curriculum of the whole school. Some of the recent buildings on the main site are very good, but others are much in need of renovation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations. • Pupils make good progress. • There is a wide range of extra activities. • The school is very approachable. • Pupils are helped to grow in maturity. • Teaching is good. • Leadership and management are effective. • Behaviour is good. 	<p>A small proportion of parents would like -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school to involve them more closely • homework to be used more effectively.

The inspectors agree with the parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school. They did not find evidence to support the few concerns that were expressed: parents are involved well in the work of the school and homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is much larger than that found in most other schools. There are currently 166 male and 200 female students in the sixth form. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school. Approximately two thirds of the students in Year 11 continue into the sixth form each year and they are joined by around 40 students from other schools. Overall standards on entry to the sixth form are average. The school's requirements for students to enter the sixth form are very flexible and each student is considered individually for the courses they wish to study. The school provides a wide range of two-year courses leading to A-level and several vocational courses leading to qualifications at both intermediate and advanced levels.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a very good education that meets the wide range of needs of its students very effectively. Teaching and learning are very good so that students leave the school with A-level results that are much better than those predicted when they started their courses. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection; standards and results have been maintained at a time when the school has been successful in encouraging more students with lower GCSE results to enter the sixth form. This progress has been the result of very good leadership and management. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Strengths

- A-level results were well above the national average in 2001 and similar for 2002.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very good relationships with students. They expect students to work hard and achieve high standards but they also provide plenty of support for those who find things more difficult.
- Students have very mature and responsible attitudes to their learning and take an active part in the many events and activities that take place in school.
- Students can choose subjects from a very wide range of AS, A-level and vocational courses. Their experience is further extended by a very good range of enhancement and extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- The school does not make enough use of the results of regular tests and assessments to gain a detailed overview of how well students are doing across their various subjects.
- The arrangements for the registration of Year 13 are not good enough to ensure that the school always has accurate information about which students are in 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	Very good. Results were well above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.

Biology	Satisfactory. Results were below average in 2001 but improved in 2002. Students' achievement is now satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Physics	Very good. Results were well above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Design and technology	Good. Results were well below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Students now achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Business studies	Good. Results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Leisure and recreation	Very good. Results were above average in 2001 and average in the new AVCE in 2002. Teaching is very good but students' overall achievement is good, rather than very good, because attendance is a weakness for some students.
Travel and tourism	Very good. Results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and a variety of courses and qualifications that match their needs.
Health and social care	Good. Results were well below average in 2001 and similar in 2002. However, at that time there were frequent changes in staffing. Students are now achieving well as a result of good teaching.
Art and design	Good. Results were above average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Classical civilisation	Very good. Results have been above, or occasionally well above, average since 1999. Results in 2001 were above average and those for 2002 were similar. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Geography	Good. Results were below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
History	Very good. Results were above average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Religious studies	Satisfactory. Results were well below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Students' achievement is now satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.
English literature	Good. Results were average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
French	Good. Results were above average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.

Human biology, chemistry, science for public understanding, economics, ICT, physical education, music, Latin, government and politics, English language and German were also sampled. The 2001 examination results were very high in German, average in physical education and below average in chemistry. In the other subjects sampled, there were either very small numbers of candidates or no candidates in that year. Results in German were not quite as good in 2002 but there were significant improvements in results in 2002 in physical education and chemistry. Teaching was good in most of the sample lessons seen and there was an excellent lesson in Latin. Very good lessons were seen in physical education, ICT and German and a satisfactory lesson in government and politics.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students feel very well supported at a personal level; they say that there are a number of people they could turn to if necessary. They appreciate having the chance to attend 'taster' lessons in their proposed subjects. Teachers listen to students' views and act on them. For example, they are prepared to put on additional courses, and improve the courses already available, to meet students' needs and requests.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The school is proud of its sixth form and continually trying to improve it. The school is committed to meeting the needs of all students, whatever their attainment or ambitions for the future. Day-to-day management is good. The school does not yet make enough use of lesson observations in order to identify particular strengths in teaching and then share the ideas and strategies with others.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of courses allows students to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations. • Students' work is thoroughly assessed, so that they can see how to improve it. • The school helps students to settle well into the sixth form and sixth form work. • Students are taught well and challenged to do their best. • Teachers are accessible to help if students have difficulties with their work. • Students enjoy being in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful and constructive advice on what they should do in the sixth form. • Advice from the school and/or careers advisers on what they should do after they leave school. • How the school listens to their views. • Information about their progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get.

The above bullet points represent the views expressed in the latest questionnaire administered by the school to ascertain the views of students. Interviews with a wide range of students fully supported the positive questionnaire findings but not the negative views. Similarly, the inspection team agrees with the positive views but not with most of the negatives. However, the team does feel that more frequent monitoring could be used to inform students more clearly of their progress across their various subjects.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of work in the school and the progress that pupils make

- 1 Pupils come into the school with above average results from their tests at the end of primary school. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and their overall performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. Boys and girls perform equally well compared to their averages and the school's results at this stage have been staying about the same distance above the national average as it has risen each year.
- 2 Pupils' performance in mathematics has been particularly strong. In 2002, pupils' progress was amongst the five per cent of best schools in the country and their results were well above average. English results were also well above average, reflecting good progress because they had a relatively higher starting point than in mathematics. Results in science were above average but this represents less progress than in the other two core subjects and a little less than most schools achieved.
- 3 The work seen during the inspection, which was limited because of the short time available, confirmed the strength of performance in mathematics for pupils of all abilities, reflecting the very well organised work and the consistency of good teaching. In English and science there is less consistency and overall work in these subjects is above rather than well above average. In almost all other subjects at this stage, standards are above average, including modern languages, history, geography, design and technology and music. In ICT the great majority of pupils reach the levels expected for their age but few go higher, as they do in all the other subjects, because of the restricted experience they have of the subject.
- 4 Performance at GCSE is not quite so impressive. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or above is higher than in most schools, and reflects appropriate progress for these pupils. Pupils who achieve lower grades than this do less well than in other schools. The proportions achieving five or more passes at grade G or above and the proportion achieving at least one grade G are both close to the national average, but not as high as would be expected from their performance at the end of Year 9. Many of these pupils might have more success if they were able to follow less academic courses.
- 5 Students in the sixth form make very good progress. The entry requirements are very open and overall students have the range of GCSE grades typical for young people starting this stage of education. In most subjects they achieve AS and A-level grades which are considerably higher than these grades would predict. This progress is a result of the very good teaching at sixth form level and the students' very good attitudes to work.

The pupils' personal development and their attitudes to work

- 6 Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to school. They settle quickly into Year 7, largely as a result of the special treatment that they receive in their separate lower school buildings. Parents particularly value this feature of the school and say it helps their children make a good start to their secondary school. The atmosphere in the school encourages pupils and teachers to treat each other with respect and this

helps good relationships to develop. Form tutors move up the school with their classes and get to know them well and would provide help if needed. This contributes to the pupils' feeling of security in the school and prevents them feeling lost in a large organisation.

- 7 In lessons, teachers often ask pupils to express their views and to explain how something has been done. Their replies are treated seriously so that pupils feel that they are valued. This approach boosts their confidence and makes them realise the part they play as learners. The school has many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, including an active school council. Pupils take these roles seriously and respond very well to responsibilities. By the time they are in the sixth form they have taken over the organisation of many of their own social events and activities such as debates. They contribute significantly to the positive ethos of the school through the example they provide and by direct support for its work such as through the 'Listeners' initiative.

The quality of teaching, particularly in the sixth form

- 8 In the sixth form nearly nine out of ten lessons seen were good or better and over a third were very good or excellent. In the main school, where a smaller proportion of lessons were seen, two thirds were at least good and a fifth were even better. Teachers know their subjects well and this comes through particularly in the sixth form as a major strength. Being confident in their knowledge, they are able to encourage pupils and students to raise questions and challenge statements. The discussions, which this approach produces, help pupils to develop their skills in expressing themselves clearly and build up their positive approach to learning.
- 9 Lessons at Richmond School are longer than usual, 70 minutes where they are 60 or even 50 minutes in most schools. This is a long period for many pupils to maintain concentration. In most lessons, the teacher plans very carefully to ensure that there is a variety of activities to keep pupils involved, particularly in younger and lower ability groups. In many cases, teachers deploy lesson structures from the Key Stage 3 Strategy and many are making significant use of research into pupils' preferred learning styles. For example, in a very successful mathematics lesson for the lowest set in Year 7 the teacher made sure that pupils understood place values through skilful questioning, encouraging them to discuss their ideas and physically moving around digits to make large or small numbers. When their attention was in danger of flagging they moved into a brisk 'mental-gymnastics' session and returned with revived energy. As a result, they made significant progress in their understanding of the concepts, and built up their confidence in the subject and their trust in the teacher. Similar approaches are used throughout the school so that by the time they are in the sixth form, students are aware of how they learn best and plan their work accordingly.
- 10 Virtually all lessons are at least satisfactory, but a number of these could easily be improved. In these cases the teacher does not make full use of the time available and lets the work that could have been covered in an hour or less expand to fit the longer period. This is also often accompanied by a lack of focus on the main purpose of the lesson so that pupils are not clear about what they should be learning.
- 11 Pupils' positive attitudes are a significant feature of the progress they make. Because relationships are so good, teachers rarely have to spend time and energy establishing order. Consequently lessons retain a pleasant atmosphere, everyone stays in good humour and the good relationships are strengthened further.

The effectiveness of the school's leadership

- 12 The current headteacher has been in post only since September 2002, having moved from the headship of another school. The previous headteacher had been in post for several years. During this period the school has grown in popularity and developed a strong reputation locally. Leadership has been particularly effective in establishing an ethos in which everyone is valued. This underpins the work and life of the school. Its success is seen in the quality of relationships in the school and the way pupils and students grow in maturity. The school has also been managed effectively. Despite being a large organisation, with the added complication of a split site, it runs smoothly. Management has been reflective about the school's performance and monitored its work to see what is most effective and what needs improving. These findings have led into appropriate development plans and to initiatives such as the 'Bridge Project' for older pupils who do not normally find schooling relevant.
- 13 The new headteacher is successfully monitoring the school's positive ethos and at the same time asserting his own values through dialogue with staff and public statements in school assemblies. Staff, students and pupils are responding well to his vision and sincerity. Support is also strong and effective from the two deputy headteachers who both have clear and significant roles in the school. The extended leadership group increases the extent of staff participation in the school's management. This helps to ensure that the school's values are understood thoroughly and expressed in the policies and through actions.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of data to analyse and improve attendance and examination performance

- 14 As described above, the school has a very clear sense of purpose and, in general terms, knows how successful it is. However, in two important areas its performance has begun to slip recently and these areas need careful review and action:
- attendance, which was above average at the last inspection is now only average;
 - overall performance at GCSE, although above average, dipped in 2002.
- 15 The data that the school holds is not easy to use to analyse either of these issues. Attendance data is kept accurately for the main school, but is not archived so that comparisons can be made between years. At the moment little analysis is carried out to look for reasons for the worsening picture of attendance.
- 16 Analysis of pupils' performance is also under-developed. The school has developed a very useful system (VADAR) to track pupils' progress. At the moment this is used unevenly by different departments, perhaps because some teachers do not see the value of linking predicted grades to specific targets in order to improve pupils' performance. Similarly, the school does not systematically analyse performance data from public assessment. For example, results from Year 9 assessment have only recently triggered any enquiry into why mathematics is doing more strongly than science. At GCSE level the trend of pupils achieving five or more passes at grade C or above seems to have masked a dip in overall performance compared to the national picture. Whereas the average score of pupils at Richmond School was some 10 points above the national average in 1998, it is now only five points above.

- 17 The group of pupils who do not manage to achieve five or more A*-C grades are not performing as well as the others. This has not been picked up by the school's data analysis. The new headteacher is introducing considerably more use of this sort of information and involving the leadership group in its interpretation and consequent action.

The curriculum, teaching and organisational arrangements that arise from the separate site for Year 7

- 18 Year 7 pupils are housed at Lower School at a separate site about a mile away from the rest of the school. None of the teaching staff are based at Lower School and so often have to return to main school for the next lesson.
- 19 To reduce the number of times this happens, and to cut down on the time lost between lessons, the school has adopted a four period day, each period being 70 minutes long. This arrangement works and ensures that:
- Year 7 have specialist teachers;
 - almost all subjects have an adequate time allocation;
 - the movement of teaching staff is reduced.

However, the arrangement has other effects:

- the four period day reduces curriculum flexibility;
 - it is one reason why ICT is not taught separately in Years 8 and 9. It may make vocational courses more difficult to introduce into Years 10 and 11;
 - whilst most subjects may have enough time in total, its distribution can be a problem, for example, modern languages teachers only see pupils once in one week of the two-week timetable up to GCSE courses;
 - the extra short period for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is not as successful as other lessons, partly because there is insufficient time for pupils to explore the complex issues being covered in the lesson and partly because the arrangement requires all form tutors to teach the subject when some deal with PSHE much more successfully than others;
 - the unusual length of lessons contributes to some ordinary teaching, when the teacher lets the pace relax. This affects lower ability groups most and is likely to contribute to the relatively slower progress that these pupils make up to GCSE;
 - teachers do not 'own' the rooms that they use in Lower School so they are not as effective for learning as rooms in the main school;
 - there is no senior management permanently on site and so supervision and monitoring are not as effective as in the main school.
- 20 The separate provision for Year 7 in Lower School is very popular with many parents because of the special treatment pupils receive. There are, however, many inefficiencies in having separate provision so far away. For example:
- rooms can only be used about two thirds of the time;
 - there is a shortage of specialist rooms for science and design and technology;
 - expensive resources such as the ICT suite are greatly under-used;
 - Year 7 pupils do not have access to main school facilities, such as the library.
- 21 The long-term aim must be to bring Year 7 in to the main site, perhaps preserving its special provision with a special block as its home base. In the meantime the school

needs to review the effect that the four period day is having on the curriculum for the rest of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 22 In order to improve the quality of education even further, staff and governors should:
- 1 Make more effective use of reliable data to analyse the school's performance and to plan effective action, particularly in relation to:
 - attendance
 - pupils' performance in examinations and tests.(See paragraphs 14 – 17)
 - 2 Review the arrangements for teaching Year 7 at the separate Lower School site to ensure that there is the best balance between competing factors such as the needs of the pupils in Year 7, the stress placed on teachers and the curriculum of the rest of the school.
(See paragraphs 18 – 21)

Sixth form

- 3 Improve the use of assessment information by:
 - collecting in the results of assessments in all subjects more frequently;
 - assembling these results, and comparing them with students' targets, to give a clear over-view of the progress of individual students and different groups of students;
 - using the findings from this data to give students, and their teachers, better information about how well they are doing in all their subjects;
 - using the data to identify where extra support may be needed.(See paragraphs 58, 106)
- 4 Improve registration procedures so that the school always has accurate information about which students are in school.
(See paragraphs 65, 81)

In addition to these main points, the school should also seek to comply with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	68
	Sixth form	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	12	31	22	2	0	0
Percentage	1	18	46	32	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	30	44	11	1	0	0
Percentage	1	34	51	13	1	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 Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1269	366
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	40	4

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	186	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	63
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.0
National comparative data	9.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	113	135	248

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	91	86
	Girls	116	119	109
	Total	181	210	195
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (79)	85 (82)	79 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (44)	62 (58)	35 (39)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	92	86
	Girls	118	122	116
	Total	182	214	202
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (76)	87 (85)	82 (78)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (42)	66 (61)	41 (40)
	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	140	104	244

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	75	127	132
	Girls	71	99	99
	Total	146	226	231
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (57)	93 (96)	95 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.1 (46.2)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	82	91	173
	Average point score per candidate	16.5 (14.3)	18.8 (17.5)	17.9 (16.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	62	78	140	20	27	47
	Average point score per candidate	17.1 (16.5)	20.6 (20.9)	19.1(19.2)	93	88	91

National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*
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**National comparison data for AS/A-level results in 2002 are not yet available. 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
1583	33	0
0	0	0
18	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
14	0	0
15	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	101.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	734

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	22.9

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4965185
Total expenditure	5146853
Expenditure per pupil	3181
Balance brought forward from previous year	450414
Balance carried forward to next year	268746

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.5
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	1635
Number of questionnaires returned	303

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	46	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	42	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	62	3	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	60	11	2	2
The teaching is good.	38	59	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	45	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	41	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	35	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	57	10	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	35	56	1	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	37	4	0	4

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- 23 Students do very well in the sixth form.
- 24 The students who left at the end of Year 13 in 2001 did so with above average examination results, despite joining the sixth form with average standards. However, within this overall situation, there were some differences in the results gained by different groups of students. Students studying vocational courses gained results that were above the average for all providers of post-16 education, while the larger number following A-level courses did better and gained results that were well above average. Female students did better than male students and the difference was bigger than that found nationally.
- 25 In 2002, the A-level results were very similar to those for 2001 but the vocational results improved, so that the combined results show a significant improvement on those for 2001. Female students again did better than male students but the gap was narrower than the year before. The school's 'value added' information shows that, in 2002, students did better than expected, in relation to their GCSE results when they started Year 12, in most of their A-level subjects and some, though not all, of the vocational subjects.
- 26 Students in the current Year 13 were broadly average, in terms of standards of attainment, when they joined the sixth form. They are doing very well, so that their standards overall are now well above average. Although standards in individual subjects are generally above, rather than well above, average, it is the consistency of these good standards across the subject areas which ensures that, overall, students' standards are well above average and their achievement is very good. This very good progress reflects the very good teaching that students receive in the sixth form. There is no significant difference in the standards seen in school between male and female students, despite the better performance of female students in recent examinations.
- 27 The school has a relatively low proportion of students in the sixth form with special educational needs. These students study a range of subjects and do very well, because they follow appropriate courses and receive any additional support that they require.
- 28 Standards are now above average in most subjects and well above average in mathematics, physics, travel and tourism and history. Standards are average in biology and religious studies; they are well below average in health and social care. Students achieve very well, in relation to their standards when they started the courses in Year 12, in mathematics, physics, travel and tourism, classical studies and history. In all other subjects that were inspected, they achieve well, with the exception of biology, religious studies and health and social care, where achievement is satisfactory.
- 29 The different rates of progress made on different courses are usually directly linked to the quality of teaching. So, for example, the teaching on the mathematics course is very good so progress is much better than expected. There are, however, some deviations from the pattern. In leisure and recreation, students respond well to the

very good teaching they receive and learn very effectively in class. However, their overall achievement is limited by the spasmodic attendance of some students.

- 30 Students generally have a good range and level of learning skills but, in some subjects, aspects of these skills are not fully exploited. For example, students demonstrate good speaking skills and use these to good effect in discussion, for example in classical civilisation and physics. However, these skills are not used as effectively as they might be in mathematics and French. Similarly, students demonstrate confidence in using ICT in, for example, travel and tourism and business studies. Students in other subjects, including French and religious studies, do not get as many opportunities as they should to use, and develop further, their ICT skills.
- 31 Recent examination results are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time, the sixth form has increased in size; it has retained its numbers of students taking A-level subjects but also been successful in encouraging more students to join the sixth form to take vocational courses. In this way, the proportion of students with relatively low GCSE results has increased and the average attainment on entry to the sixth form has been reduced. Hence, this maintenance of results and standards represents good progress for the school.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 32 Students' attitudes to the school and to their work are extremely positive. Their commitment to their studies results from the very high expectations that tutors have of all their students regardless of their starting point. If the student has the commitment to succeed, then the school is prepared to support them. In music, for example, students are supported in following an A-level course even though they did not do the subject for GCSE, provided that they show the determination needed to be successful. In mathematics, even if students have not 'made the grade' at GCSE, provided they can show a strong willingness to apply themselves to the subject, they are accepted on to their chosen course. Although there are exceptions, the eventual success of most students is proof of the effectiveness both of this strategy and of the dedication that teachers are able to inspire in their students. Students very much enjoy being in the sixth form and would strongly recommend it to others.
- 33 The behaviour of students is very good. They conduct themselves maturely and responsibly in general, though students in Year 13 do not always sign in and out of school as they are required to do when they are allowed study leave for working at home.
- 34 Students' personal development is also very good and they relate very well to each other and to adults. They communicate their ideas sensibly and are articulate and astute in their views of their school and their studies. Many students give freely of their time to offer support to younger pupils both as 'Listeners' for any personal problems the younger ones may be experiencing, and as helpers in lessons and homework clubs. When they felt that their common room needed improvement, they showed their great maturity in agreeing a budget with the school and proceeding to consult their peers, purchase materials and complete the work themselves, 'going the extra mile' by making new furniture, themselves, out of the existing furniture.
- 35 Students' attendance is satisfactory overall but currently unsatisfactory in two tutor groups, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13, in which the students are mainly studying vocational subjects. Some lessons seen in leisure and recreation during the

inspection showed unsatisfactory levels of attendance and this clearly has an impact on students' eventual achievement in the subject.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 36 Teaching is very good overall and, as a result, students learn very well and show very good achievement. In lessons seen during the inspection, almost nine out of ten lessons were good or better. In most individual subjects, teaching is judged to be good. It is this high level of consistency, in terms of the good teaching that students experience, that is the major strength of the teaching in this sixth form.
- 37 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are excellent and underpin all the work they do in planning, in the lessons themselves and in marking students' work. Their own thorough understanding enables them to ask particularly probing questions to investigate any misconceptions that students may have and help them to gain a correct perspective on the topic. Another strength of the teaching is the very good relationships that exist between teachers and students. In many lessons, nice touches of humour make lessons more enjoyable and learning more memorable.
- 38 There is a genuinely high level of rigour and challenge in many subjects and teachers expect much from students in terms of the effort they should make and the standards they can achieve. However, this sixth form is far from being an academic 'hothouse' where only higher attainers, or only those with talents in the more traditional subjects, can thrive. Teachers are readily available to give advice and support to students who find the subject more difficult and students very much appreciate this willingness of teachers to provide extra help. There is no overall difference in the quality of teaching between the vocational subjects and the AS and A-level courses.
- 39 There are many examples of very good teaching. In a Year 12 lesson in leisure and recreation, students took part in a very useful debate on risk assessment on the school site. They developed debating skills, gained knowledge of how to conduct a meeting and developed their understanding of safe working practices. Students enjoyed the activity and a very good pace of learning was maintained by careful interventions from the teacher. In a Year 13 biology lesson, the teacher ensured that students were fully involved in the topic by encouraging them to use several learning styles simultaneously. Students saw an immaculate chart being built up on the board; they heard a very clear account of aerobic and anaerobic respiration and they drew out their own large chart. Hence students were seeing, hearing and taking action, with all activities combining to produce very secure learning.
- 40 When teaching is less successful, though almost always at least satisfactory, teachers give students information but do not involve them enough by questioning or requiring them to think things out for themselves. In these circumstances, learning is not as secure as in lessons where students are more actively involved.
- 41 Teachers use homework very well to extend students' learning. They generally mark students' work regularly and carefully. Most teachers give students clear information about how their work could be improved. However, this quality of marking is not entirely consistent across subjects. In art and design there is not enough interim marking and in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism, teachers do not scrutinise all portfolio work to ensure that it is on target.
- 42 Students contribute very well to their own learning and are not merely passive receivers of information. They take an active part in lessons and are happy to

contribute to discussions, as well as listening to and respecting the opinions of others. Students work hard in the library when they use it for private study, creating a very good atmosphere for learning. There are many other instances of students putting real effort into their learning. In English, for example, students are encouraged to read widely, and they do so, taking their reading seriously and gaining much benefit both from what they read and from establishing habits in learning that will be very useful in the future.

- 43 In the individual subjects that were inspected in detail, teaching and learning are very good in mathematics, physics, leisure and recreation, travel and tourism, classical studies and history. Teaching and learning are good in all other subjects inspected, except biology and religious studies where they are satisfactory. In the subjects where teaching is satisfactory, there are aspects of the teaching that are strong but also some areas that could be improved. In both these subjects there is some variation in the style of teaching across the department, with some methods being preferred by students and hence more effective in promoting good learning. There is not yet enough use of lesson observation to identify particularly effective teaching methods so that can be used by other teachers to improve their own lessons.

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

- 44 The school provides a very good curriculum in the sixth form, as it did at the time of the previous inspection. All of the subjects normally found at AS and A-level in the sixth form are provided for students. In addition, there are several more unusual AS and A-level subjects, including classical studies, Latin, government and politics, and science for public understanding.
- 45 Five vocational subjects are offered at advanced level and two at intermediate level, giving students a wider choice of vocational courses than is available in most school sixth forms. This choice is extended still further by additional courses within the vocational subject areas, for example in travel and tourism. Lessons in 'key skills' are provided to supplement and enhance students' learning in their main subjects. PSHE, enrichment activities and general studies extend students' learning beyond courses specifically aimed at examinations. Both tutors in the sixth form and the careers service offer good guidance on careers and entrance to higher education.
- 46 Sixth form students, in common with pupils in the main school, have lessons in PSHE on Thursday afternoons. Students clearly value some aspects of these lessons. They appreciate the individual support provided by their tutors, particularly in terms of discussing their annual reviews and, in Year 13, in making applications for the various courses in the next stage of their education. They also value the external speakers and the school nurse who contribute to these lessons. However, they regard other aspects of the lessons as much less useful and the poor attendance seen in one Year 13 lesson indicates that attitudes to these lessons are not as good as they should be.
- 47 There is a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities in the sixth form. Many of these are sporting and recreational, including the normal school team games and instrumental playing. There are also visits to Berlin, Rome, Prague and Iceland, musical tours of eastern USA and many local community activities. Some team games are played in local leagues which include people from the town and surrounding area. Events such as concerts and carol singing take place in the town, sometimes alongside local choral groups.

- 48 All these extra-curricular activities have an obvious benefit in terms of enhancing students' personal development but many also extend students' learning in their chosen subjects by providing additional experiences in which to develop skills. For example, during the week of inspection, the Young Enterprise group ran a 'Fame for Five Minutes' talent show. A very well organised and confident group had planned the whole event. The enthusiasm of the organisers was matched only by that of the eager participants to be found rehearsing around the school. Apart from their obvious satisfaction when the show was such a success, students had also gained insight into finance, planning and the importance of teamwork – a valuable experience for all, but particularly relevant to students' work in business studies and leisure and recreation.
- 49 The school provides very good opportunities for students' personal development. Students experience a wide range of activities, all of which contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. However, the most important influences within the school on students' personal development are the very positive atmosphere for learning and the support and individual attention that students receive from their teachers. Students are expected to be responsible and to work hard. They receive much encouragement and specific advice in order to help them develop self-knowledge and personal organisation.
- 50 The opportunities for spiritual development are now good and this represents a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection. There are many opportunities for the students to engage in discussions that develop their awareness of their own beliefs and those of others. In geography and history, for example, students examine the way that people in other places, and in other times, live differently and they come to understand why. However, the absence of religious education as a core subject for all students in the sixth form means that students do not benefit from the additional opportunities for reflection that this subject could provide.
- 51 The school provides very good opportunities for social and moral development and for the aspects of cultural development that relate to music, drama and the arts. The very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities plays an important part in the life of the sixth form and provides ample opportunity for students to work in teams and to gain new experience and understanding. Students take full advantage of the opportunities such as the school council and joining in the 'listening' programme for the younger pupils in the school. Students are enabled to develop a moral framework which allows for others to differ, whilst still knowing what they themselves stand for and why.
- 52 While many students visit European cities and have many other opportunities to experience European culture, there are fewer opportunities for students to develop an understanding and appreciation of the rich variety of cultures represented in Britain today. Nonetheless, the school does include multicultural aspects in some of its lessons and students do understand the importance of diversity in our own society.
- 53 During the week of inspection, students experienced a very valuable assembly, drawing on images in paintings and then considering the image we ourselves present to others when we are on/off guard. The assembly contributed to cultural development and was very relevant for students preparing for interviews. Students indicate that assemblies are usually less impressive but imply that they do contribute to social and moral development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

- 54 Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. However, there is still some scope for improvement in assessment in this sixth form where many aspects are very good.
- 55 A substantial amount of data on pupils' attainment is available when pupils enter the sixth form. Individual subject target grades are set for AS-levels in Year 12 and A-levels in Year 13. The school bases these targets on projections from ALIS (A-level Information Service) and the judgements of subject teachers. Most subjects then carry out regular tests or other forms of assessment to find out how well students are progressing.
- 56 The available test results and other assessment information are used well within most subjects to monitor and support students' progress. There are major strengths in subjects such as mathematics, history, and health and social care, with some weaknesses in art, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism, where there are missed opportunities to utilise interim marking of students' work.
- 57 Assessment results are generally discussed with students in order to set targets and to provide advice and guidance about how those targets can be met. The use made of assessment in planning the curriculum is also good. In some departments, for example mathematics, assessment information is used very effectively to guide lesson planning and to match the work more closely to the needs of individual students. This is one important factor in enabling students to achieve very well in mathematics.
- 58 Once a year students are involved in the production of their annual reviews. These reviews are valuable in giving overall views of students' progress in relation to their target grades. However, between these reviews, there are no formal arrangements for recording and comparing students' standards across the whole range of subjects and courses. The school has not yet developed a system in the sixth form that uses assessment data in a methodical way to analyse the progress of students at frequent, regular intervals. Such a system should enable the school to identify any under-achievement at an early stage so that students could be supported even more effectively as they proceed through the sixth form.

Advice, support and guidance

- 59 Students are appreciative of the good support and guidance they are given to help them choose appropriate courses of study in the sixth form. Highly committed careers staff are effective in ensuring that all Year 11 students attend interviews and there is a great deal of discussion regarding syllabuses for the different subjects. What students most appreciate, however, are the trial lessons that they can attend in order to experience what it would be like to study a particular course at AS or A-level. Former and current students are also on hand in the trial lessons to give the student's view of the course to their peers. The success of this programme is indicated by the relatively small number of students who have felt the need to change from their initial choice of course.

- 60 Heads of department report to careers staff on their assessment of the prospects of any students who appear to be over-ambitious in their choice of courses. Provided that the student shows a clear commitment to their subject, the student will be supported in their chosen course of study. The success of this approach is borne out by the very good achievement of many students who entered the sixth form with the support of a head of subject, despite their GCSE results being disappointing. Particular additional support is also given to those students in Year 13 who have not done as well as expected in Year 12.
- 61 Most students feel well prepared for their career choices after school. School careers teachers ensure that a broad range of information is available to students, including information and advice on work opportunities as well as on options in higher education. Careers teachers and advisers keep track of every Year 13 student and ensure that each student has an interview where their plans can be discussed.
- 62 Students are extremely well supported on personal issues. They feel that a range of staff can be relied upon in times of academic or personal need. These people include the visiting nurse, whose lessons in PSHE they also appreciate, their personal tutors with whom they stay for the whole of their time in the sixth form, and their subject teachers.
- 63 In relation to their academic support, students requested some new A-levels, for example in economics, textiles and government and politics; the school responded accordingly and now provides these courses.
- 64 The school makes satisfactory arrangements for the health and safety of students. First aid is provided for well and appropriate arrangements are made for the safety of students around the site. However, the current shortage of caretakers makes it difficult to keep on top of the day-to-day difficulties that arise on a site of this size and complexity. The connecting corridors are unkempt and grubby due to the recent gritting, following the bad weather, so that some of the school's accommodation appears rather neglected.
- 65 The arrangements for ensuring that the school knows which students are on site are unsatisfactory. Registration of students does take place in individual lessons but registration of all students, whether having lessons or private study sessions, does not take place until the afternoon and some students do not attend that registration session. This is a particular issue for Year 13 and students of vocational subjects because of the amount of personal study time in their timetables. Significant numbers of students do not abide by the rules of the school regarding signing out when they are going off site.
- 66 Overall, parents are kept well informed about how their sons and daughters are progressing in their studies in the sixth form. The annual written reviews provide parents with useful information about the grade that the student is expected to gain at the end of the course, together with the grade that the student is currently achieving. This is very useful for parents in assessing whether students are doing as well as they should. Some teachers, however, do not provide sufficiently clear information on exactly what students need to do to improve on these grades. Comments are sometimes too general and do not relate directly to the subject. Parents' meetings, at which students may also be present, are quite well attended. These are held in the autumn term, and provide a good opportunity for picking up any problems at an early stage.

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

- 67 Both parents and students hold the school and its sixth form in high esteem.
- 68 Parents are extremely pleased with what the sixth form provides for students. They particularly like the very high expectations that teachers have of their sons and daughters and this view is supported by students, who praise the school for supporting every student regardless of their level of attainment. One sixth form student sums this up as, "This school is friendly, hard working and there is lots to do. There is an emphasis on individual success even if you are not a top achiever." Parents feel that the school is easily approachable when they have questions or problems. Students feel that their views are taken seriously. They feel valued when they make suggestions about how to improve the school and for the generous contributions they make in supporting younger pupils in the school, through assisting with supervision of homework clubs and providing personal support as 'Listeners'. Almost all parents feel that their sons and daughters make good progress and over 90 per cent appreciate the school's provision for clubs and additional activities.
- 69 The school frequently consults with its student body via the student council and by using questionnaires. The most recent responses to the school's sixth form questionnaire, issued shortly before the inspection, indicate that students are pleased with: the range of courses; the care shown to them when settling into their courses; the level of challenge provided by their courses; the way their work is assessed; and, the accessibility of the staff.
- 70 However, concerns were expressed by some students regarding the advice given about what courses they should follow in the sixth form, the information they receive about their progress, careers advice and whether the school listens to their views.
- 71 Further investigation of these issues, with a range of students, revealed that the views of those interviewed were almost unanimously positive. Students quoted many positive examples in relation to the same questions that had provoked concern in some students' response to the questionnaire. The students interviewed confirm that the school helps them with choices in the sixth form, to the extent of putting on sample lessons where they can also speak with existing students of that subject. Students describe a wide range of careers information and support provided for them. They also speak highly of the information they receive about their progress. Some subjects were highlighted as being particularly good at this, including government and politics, history, physical education, geography, health and social care and English language. In summary, while many students had strongly positive views about the sixth form, others clearly have concerns, indicating that in some aspects of provision, for example in providing information about progress, there are some inconsistencies in students' experience, depending to some extent on the courses they follow.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

- 72 The leadership of the sixth form is very good and provides very clear educational direction. The school is proud of the sixth form and regards it very much as part of the school as a whole, rather than a separate entity. Hence the leadership of the sixth form, provided by the headteacher, governing body and management team, is similar to that provided for the rest of the school. However, in some respects the leadership

of the sixth form has actually been stronger than that for the main school and there is more evidence of progress in its development.

- 73 The numbers of students in the sixth form were already increasing at the time of the previous inspection and they have continued to rise. There were 301 sixth form students in 1997 and there are now 366. The number of higher attaining students has remained fairly constant but more students with relatively low GCSE attainment now enter the sixth form. The school has welcomed this broadening of the sixth form intake and is constantly seeking to offer a range of courses that meet the various and changing needs of its students. For example, several new courses have been added to the range of A and AS levels including government and politics, science for public understanding and Latin. More subjects are to be added to the curriculum in September 2003. Meanwhile, more vocational courses, notably in travel and tourism, have been introduced and there are firm plans for further adjustments in the vocational courses as problems with some of the newer courses have been identified. Hence the sixth form has made good progress since the previous inspection; standards have been maintained in a changing sixth form situation.
- 74 The management of the sixth form is good. The role of head of sixth form has traditionally been regarded in the school as encompassing mainly organisational and pastoral responsibilities. The current head of sixth form carries out these responsibilities very effectively; the sixth form is well organised and runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Most importantly, the head of sixth form and form tutors know their students very well and are careful to ensure that each individual is well supported and able to get the best from their time in the sixth form. An example of this attention to detail concerns the 40 or so students who join the sixth form each year from other schools. Much care goes into making this transition easy for students and usually they settle in and 'mix' quickly with other students. Recently there were a few students who seemed rather separated from the others and very careful investigation was undertaken to discover why this had happened and to establish that there was no real cause for concern.
- 75 The school has an appropriate policy for promoting racial equality. The few students from ethnic minority backgrounds take a full part in the life of the school and experience the same very good relationships with teachers and other students as everyone else.
- 76 The new headteacher has brought to the school an increasing emphasis on monitoring in order to find out exactly where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie. The head of sixth form is aware that his role and that of the rest of the management group, in monitoring the work of the sixth form is, at present, under-developed. For example, there is only limited observation of sixth form lessons by the management group. Clearly, in a situation where teaching is very good overall, the main purpose of such monitoring is not to detect unsatisfactory teaching. Nevertheless, there are variations in teaching quality within and between subjects in the sixth form and a programme of observation would enable the school to identify where very good practice exists so that it could be used to influence the teaching elsewhere, across the subjects of the curriculum.
- 77 The leadership and management of subject areas in the sixth form are generally good, with several subjects benefiting from very good leadership. As expected, subjects where students achieve well usually have better leadership and management than those where students do less well. However, there are several

subjects, including, most notably, health and social care, where improvements in leadership and management have not yet been reflected in examination results.

- 78 The plans for the improvement of the sixth form are good and demonstrate the same quality of financial planning as the main school. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good because there is a close match between the proportion of the school's income that is intended for the sixth form and the proportion of funds actually spent on sixth form provision.

Resources

- 79 Overall, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum, with its wide range of academic and vocational courses, is very good. Staff are well deployed in sixth form teaching and have excellent in-depth knowledge of the subjects they teach. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff also make a positive contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the sixth form. There has been good staff development for sixth form teachers to enable them to keep abreast of latest developments in their subject and the demands of public examinations. The arrangements for performance management are satisfactory and there are good induction arrangements for new teachers.
- 80 The school has sufficient accommodation to enable it to provide a wide range of courses for its sixth form students. However, as numbers of students have grown, so have the number of constraints posed by the limited availability of space. All subjects have sufficient teaching rooms and, where necessary, suitable specialist facilities. However, in art, although there is sufficient teaching space for lessons, there is only enough studio accommodation for three or four students to work on their projects outside lesson time. This limits the individual work that students can do and restricts their progress. In several subjects, the accommodation, although adequate, is shabby and does not provide an encouraging environment for study.
- 81 The library provides very good facilities for students' independent work. However, it is not particularly large for the size of the school. Overall, the school has a shortage of suitable spaces where sixth form students can study independently. The school's solution to this problem is to allow Year 13 to study at home where appropriate. Students value the freedom that this arrangement provides but there are difficulties, particularly in relation to the registration procedures for Year 13 which are inadequate.
- 82 The learning resources in the sixth form are good overall. Departments provide students with a wide range of up-to-date resources. There is a wide variety of books and resources in the library, which supports students' studies very well. The library is a major strength of the school. It offers a welcoming and studious environment and is heavily used by students. It is very well organised, provides very good accommodation for private study and offers very good access to ICT facilities, thus providing students with very good opportunities to extend their knowledge and develop their research skills.

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

In the inspection, 15 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 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	16	100	*	56	*	3.6	*
Biology	22	73	*	28	*	1.9	*
Business studies	40	88	*	18	*	2.4	*
Chemistry	10	80	*	30	*	2.2	*
French	13	85	*	38	*	2.8	*
German	15	100	*	40	*	3.2	*
Government and politics	12	92	*	17	*	1.8	*
History	54	98	*	56	*	3.5	*
English language	33	100	*	48	*	3.3	*
English literature	29	100	*	52	*	3.4	*
Mathematics	47	89	*	47	*	2.8	*
Physical education	23	74	*	22	*	2.0	*
Physics	16	88	*	50	*	3.3	*
Religious studies	20	85	*	35	*	2.7	*
Science	5	60	*	20	*	1.4	*
Food technology	3	100	*	33	*	2.7	*
Textiles technology	30	93	*	50	*	3.1	*

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	42	100	*	76	*	8.1	*
Biology	25	92	*	24	*	4.7	*
Chemistry	10	100	*	70	*	7.2	*
Physics	18	100	*	56	*	6.8	*
Design and technology	11	91	*	45	*	6.2	*
Food technology	4	100	*	25	*	5.5	*

Business studies	44	98	*	32	*	6.1	*
Business - Post 16 VQ	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	105	*
Sports studies	12	100	*	58	*	7.2	*
Leisure and recreation - Post 16 VQ	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	78.6	*
Health and social care - Post 16 VQ	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	120	*
Travel and tourism – Post 16 VQ	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	117	*
Art and design	16	94	*	75	*	7.6	*
Music	3	100	*	66	*	8.0	*
Classical studies	23	100	*	65	*	7.9	*
Latin	2	100	*	100	*	10.0	*
Geography	34	97	*	44	*	6.6	*
History	42	100	*	50	*	6.6	*
General studies	21	86	*	24	*	4.8	*
Religious studies	14	100	*	43	*	6.6	*
English language	28	100	*	57	*	7.4	*
English literature	30	100	*	66	*	7.4	*
French	7	100	*	57	*	7.4	*
German	7	100	*	43	*	7.1	*

**National comparison data for AS/A-level results in 2002 are not yet available*

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	13	100	*	62	*	0	*
Health and social care	7	100	*	71	*	0	*

**National comparison data for results in 2002 are not yet available*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

- 83 The focus was on mathematics, biology and physics but two lessons in chemistry, and one each in human biology and science for public understanding, were also sampled. Teaching and learning were good in all the individual lessons observed.
- 84 In chemistry, the 2001 A-level results were below average but results improved in 2002 and were better than expected, given students' GCSE results when they started the course. In the lessons observed, students were achieving well both in practical tasks and in developing their understanding of equilibrium in chemical reactions.
- 85 In Year 12, the lessons observed in the new courses in human biology and science for public understanding showed students successfully identifying structures in a dissection of a pig's heart in the former and making good progress with interpreting data on climate change in the latter.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards and examination results are well above average.
- The very good teaching leads to students achieving very well in A-level mathematics.
- Teachers provide students with very good guidance on the quality of their work.
- The subject is very well led, ensuring that high standards and an enjoyment for mathematics are maintained.

Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from more opportunities to take a more active role in class discussions.
- Students have limited opportunities to develop study skills and to read about topics in preparation for lessons.

- 87 The students in the sixth form study mathematics courses at AS-level and A-level and generally complete the course. In total, 97 students study the subject in the sixth form, of whom 41 students are studying it at A-level. The majority of students who study AS-level go on to the A-level course. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Students have the opportunity to study further mathematics at A-level. Increasing proportions of female students are studying mathematics in the sixth form. The school also gives students the opportunity to retake their GCSE examinations.
- 88 In the 2001 examination, A-level results were well above the national average and students gained better results in mathematics than they did on average in their other subjects. Results were significantly better in 2002. In that year, all students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining grades A and B was high. In the 2001 A-level examinations, male students attained higher grades than female students, but in 2002 there was no significant difference.
- 89 In 2001, 15 students were entered to retake their GCSE in mathematics and almost half gained grades A*-C.

- 90 The standards of work seen in Year 13 are well above average, which represents a very good level of achievement in relation to their average standards when they started the course. Students' responses to questions show a high level of understanding. In a further mathematics lesson, students demonstrated a good understanding of iterative methods to solve equations and quickly progressed to solving equations using Newton-Raphson iteration. In mechanics, students apply the integration techniques they have learnt in their pure mathematics well when solving problems. They demonstrate a good understanding of the characteristics of lamina and centre of mass and apply this effectively when solving problems involving bodies on inclined planes. Students beginning their second statistics module demonstrate a good understanding and application of the binomial distribution and variance.
- 91 Standards in Year 12 are above average for this stage in the AS course. Students' achievement is good given their attainment on joining the sixth form. Students are successfully extending their GCSE work into new areas, for example in statistics they extend their understanding of probability by using statistical notation to calculate the outcomes of events. In pure mathematics, students are developing a good understanding of differentiation and use the skills they acquire to find the equations of tangents and normals to curves.
- 92 Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. One of the best features of the teaching is the very good knowledge and understanding of the teachers. This is used to good effect when questioning students. The teachers' understanding of the subject is such that they can explain principles clearly and use symbols effectively. Subject content is accurate, and is planned and prepared effectively. The explanations are clear, and the students are quick to learn, so that only one explanation is ever needed. This was evident when the teacher was extending students' understanding of arithmetic and geometric progressions to calculating progressions to infinity. Students very quickly understood how to find the formula for the sum to infinity. This level of knowledge and understanding promotes students' confidence in, and respect for, their teachers.
- 93 Learning is very good because students concentrate hard and complete a substantial amount of work. They respond well to the challenging level of work and this enhances their learning. They have a mature approach to mathematics and are well motivated. Consequently they put in a good level of intellectual effort and acquire new knowledge expeditiously. Students are very attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. Their work is very well organised and presented. In the better lessons, teachers conduct lessons at a stimulating pace, resulting in rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, when students were introducing a new topic on sampling and population, the teacher energetically presented it in such a way that it quickly built on previous learning and extended this to the principles of randomness. Teachers enjoy their subject and present it in ways that capture the interest of students. For example, in a statistics lesson, the teacher used an Ordnance Survey map of the local area effectively as a practical exercise on sampling. The level of questioning and challenge is generally very good. However, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons so that they can share different techniques and approaches to problems and learn from each other.
- 94 Very good use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in lessons, and in some lessons it is used very well to develop study skills by encouraging students to read about a topic in preparation for the following lesson. However, this is not always happening. The day-to-day marking and assessment of

students' work are very good. The quality of marking is such that students can see where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

- 95 There are very good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Using a regular programme of formal tests, teachers measure the progress of students as they proceed through the module of work. The information from these tests is used well for sharing targets and validating them with students.
- 96 The very good teaching and learning is the result of the subject having a high quality of leadership and management with a very good perception of what is needed for students to succeed at a high level. The professional development of staff contributes well to their effectiveness and the systems for monitoring and evaluation are effective in ensuring very good teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic and work very well together. There is a strong commitment by the whole team to improving standards in mathematics and presenting it in ways that capture students' interest. For example, students have the opportunity to take part in an intensive revision course for A-level at a study centre in Swaledale.
- 97 The department has made good progress since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have improved from above average in 1997 to well above average in the current Year 13.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving and are better in the current Year 13 than those indicated by recent A-level results.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic; there are very good teaching skills within the department.
- The department provides very good opportunities for fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

- Students' A-level results in biology are not as good as their average results across all their subjects.
- Teaching styles vary and some meet students' needs more effectively than others.
- Students are not tested as often as they might be in order to give them a clear idea of how well they are achieving in a particular topic.

- 98 The department offers courses in AS and A-level biology, along with a new course in human biology which has been introduced this year into Year 12. There are 20 students taking biology and 22 taking human biology in Year 12; 16 students are taking biology in Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination.
- 99 A-level results were below the national average in 2001 and students did not do as well in biology as they did on average in their other subjects. Results were better overall in 2002; 23 of the 25 students gained pass grades and six gained the higher grades A and B. Nevertheless, students did not do as well as expected, based on predictions from their GCSE results.

- 100 Standards of work seen during the inspection are better than those indicated by recent A-level results and broadly match the national average in the current Year 13. Students are achieving satisfactory standards in relation to their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example, students demonstrate appropriate understanding when they present the essential facts about tuberculosis to the rest of the class. There are occasional weaknesses in students' presentation of their work, for example in presenting graphs, which are not always picked up in teachers' marking.
- 101 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are average for this stage in the AS course. This represents satisfactory achievement for the group. Students use microscopes carefully to identify the differences in structure between veins and arteries. Their drawings are better than expected at this stage, their labels are accurate and they make the links between structure and function.
- 102 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Students appreciate teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and generally plan appropriate learning activities for students. They give information and explanations clearly. Students concentrate well in class and apply themselves willingly to whatever activities are provided. The pace of lessons is generally satisfactory and students learn at an appropriate rate. In some parts of lessons, especially when students are working alone, they could work more quickly than they do.
- 103 Some lessons have very good features. For example, a lesson on meiosis in Year 12 gave students the opportunity to work through the process with coloured cards, ensuring that they were thoroughly involved in working through the stages and giving them the opportunity to identify any weaknesses in their understanding and ask the teacher for help. In a lesson on aerobic and anaerobic respiration, students watched the very clear presentation of the processes on the board, heard a very direct and concise explanation and drew out their own charts. Thus all their senses were fully involved and learning was quick and effective. Teachers usually mark students' work well, giving them clear indications of how the work could be improved.
- 104 There are, within the department, variations in the style of teaching. Students' files indicate that some teachers provide interesting research tasks for students, which give them a broad understanding of the topics. Others provide a more tightly structured programme which gives less breadth but greater emphasis on the major points that students need to learn and remember. Students recognise the value of both approaches but feel the need for a very clear framework from which to work. This view is confirmed by their files which, although containing information of appropriate content and detail, do not always present a sufficiently clear overall view of each topic. Students also appreciate the value of teachers providing questions for them to answer to test their understanding rather than simply giving them information.
- 105 This department provides particularly valuable opportunities for fieldwork. Students enjoy a variety of fieldwork locations and activities over five days, with all the experiences and tasks carefully planned to relate directly to course requirements.
- 106 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department is disappointed by recent examination results and the team are clearly keen to improve. AS results for the current Year 13 indicate significant progress in raising standards. Teachers have collaborated to produce new and detailed schemes of work to guide the activities of the department. However there are still areas where

improvements could be made. For example, the department is not yet making the best use of frequent tests to indicate to students how well they are doing in a particular topic. Teachers within the department would benefit from more frequent opportunities to observe each other's lessons and share each other's strengths and particular skills.

- 107 The previous inspection report did not contain any specific judgements on A-level biology and so it is not possible to make a judgement on the progress the department has made since it was last inspected.

Physics

- 108 Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **very good**.

Strengths

- A-level results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good and students learn very quickly as a result.
- Teachers and students share an enthusiasm for the subject.
- Students have easy access to any extra help they need, not only from their own teachers but also from other physicists within the department.

Area for improvement

- Occasionally, explanations are not as clear as they might be and need to be repeated, slightly slowing the pace of students' learning.

- 109 The department offers courses in AS and A-level physics. There are 31 students taking the subject in Year 12 and 14 in Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.

- 110 A-level results were well above the national average in 2001 and the seven students gained slightly better results in physics than they did on average in their other subjects. Results were similar in 2002; all 18 students gained pass grades and over half gained the higher grades A or B. The majority of students gained grades that were better than predicted from their GCSE results.

- 111 Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving much better standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. Students are accustomed to being challenged to provide explanations. For example, students in Year 13 gave a good account of why a meter is despatched with a connecting wire between its terminals. Students' files are well organised and provide a valuable source of information for reference and revision.

- 112 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are already above average for this stage in the AS course. This represents good achievement for the group. For example, students' practical skills are better than expected at this stage. In an experiment into the change in volume of a gas as it is heated, they make appropriate predictions and suggest the likely sources of error in their experiment. Some students in Year 12 do not show enough working when presenting calculations and some omit units from answers. These weaknesses are energetically tackled in teachers' marking and improvements can be seen in later work.

- 113 Teaching is very good and students learn very quickly. In individual lessons, teaching is often good rather than very good but the strength of this department lies in the high

quality of students' whole experience of the subject. Teachers are highly skilled, knowledgeable and very enthusiastic. Each group is taught by two teachers and students value the different teaching styles, viewpoints and explanations that their teachers provide. Students play an active part in lessons and clearly enjoy the subject; they pose questions of their own when they need further explanation. They indicate that teachers are very approachable and always willing to give extra help if there are difficulties. This extends beyond the teachers who actually teach them; students know that any member of the physics team can and will provide the support they need.

- 114 Lessons are carefully planned and teachers provide an interesting variety of learning activities. For example, teachers make particularly good use of students explaining topics to each other, thus benefiting both the presenter and receivers of the explanations and ensuring that ideas are thoroughly understood. Teachers expect students to work hard both in class and in their own time. Where teaching was very good, students were given some basic information, for example about photons and the emission of electrons when light falls on a metal surface, and asked to deduce, in discussion, the theory that underpins the observations. Students enjoyed meeting this challenge and, because they had deduced the theory for themselves, their learning was very secure. The department makes good use of ICT, particularly sensors and data loggers, as part of students' practical work in physics. Occasionally, in a lesson where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the teacher's explanations were not entirely clear at first and had to be repeated, making the pace of learning slightly slower than is usual in the department.
- 115 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers and the technician work very well together as a team and share a strong commitment to ensuring that students enjoy the subject and do as well as possible in physics. A particular feature of the management is the exemplary analysis of examination results, leading this year, for example, to increased emphasis on electricity and elasticity topics in Year 12 and more preparation for the practical examination.
- 116 The previous inspection report did not contain any specific judgements on A-level physics and so it is not possible to make a judgement on the progress the department has made since it was last inspected.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

- 117 The focus was on design and technology and all the department's three options – product design, textiles and food technology – were included.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience.
- Teachers show commitment in their teaching and provide a good level of challenge for their students.
- The department makes good use of assessment information to set targets for students and monitor their progress in relation to those targets.

Areas for improvement

- The numbers taking the examination in food technology are low.
- The achievement of male students is not as good as that of female students.

- 119 The department offers courses at AS and A-level in product design, textiles and food technology. The numbers taking courses in product design and textiles are appropriate and these options are popular in Year 12 and Year 13. There are low numbers in the food technology option. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination. The majority choose to continue in Year 13. A-level results were below the national average in 2001 and students gained worse results in design and technology than they did on average in other subjects. Results were much better in 2002. Five of the eleven students gained grades A or B and all except one gained pass grades. Female students gain better results than male students.
- 120 The standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13. These standards broadly match those indicated by the much better results in 2002. Students are achieving good standards in relation to predictions based on GCSE results when they came into Year 12. In food technology students make good use of their research and investigation skills and their project folders show attention to detail in the presentation. The number of students in the food technology option is low. In product design lessons students demonstrate good levels of practical skills and can use tools, equipment and processes with confidence. Female students produce better design folders; male students produce practical work to a higher specification.
- 121 Standards in Year 12 are above average for this stage in the AS course. This represents satisfactory achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were above average for students taking AS courses. Standards of work are higher in textiles lessons. Students produce practical work of good quality using different techniques to join fabrics. They have a good level of knowledge and understanding of manufacturing processes.
- 122 Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and setting appropriate tasks. Lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and their skills and techniques improve as the lesson progresses. Students have opportunities to carry out detailed research, working as individuals, to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. Teachers draw together students' ideas and provide explanations. Students respond confidently to the activities provided. In the lessons seen, students were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it. Their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.
- 123 Students are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In one of the practical lessons seen, students acquired skills and techniques in cutting, shaping, machining and joining different materials. Their skills improved through practice. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. In the lessons, time is used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident

when offering ideas in more open discussion; this was seen in a lesson where they investigated the use and application of different manufacturing processes.

- 124 The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflects the course requirements and determines the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of students' performance through review, evaluation and assessment are becoming established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.
- 125 The department has made satisfactory progress since the time of the previous inspection. Standards remained average from 1997 to 2001 but are now above average in the current Year 13. However, the standards achieved by female students are much better than those of male students. The department has not addressed the issue of differences in the achievement of male and female students, which was identified in the previous report.

BUSINESS

- 126 The focus was on A-level and AS level business studies and AVCE business. However, economics was also sampled. The AS and A-level economics course was introduced in 2002 so there are no examination results for the subject. One economics lesson was observed. Teaching in the lesson was good; students developed a secure understanding of housing tenure and were able to apply their understanding in manipulating housing statistics.

Business studies

- 127 Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers' expert subject knowledge provides a framework within which a variety of activities allow good learning to take place.
- Questioning is a particular strength of teaching because it is clearly directed, demanding of the students and allows them to use knowledge gained earlier in the course to enhance current learning.
- Students have very good attitudes towards learning and are very responsive to questioning and group activities. Many students choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
- Leadership and management of the department are good. This ensures consistent implementation of teaching strategies that are designed to enhance students' progress.

Area for improvement

- Marking and the awarding of assessment levels are inconsistent, making it difficult for students to judge their standard of achievement.

- 128 The department offers courses in AVCE Business and AS and A-level business studies. The latter is a very popular course. All of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination. The number of students continuing with A-level business studies in Year 13 is very high. AVCE Business has been less popular and in some years it has failed to attract sufficient students.

- 129 A-level results were above the national average in business studies in 2001 and students gained similar results in business studies to their average results across all their subjects. Results were similar in 2002 but not as many students gained grade A. Results in AVCE Business were similar to the national average in 2001.
- 130 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving higher standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example, students are able to make very good use of previous work to help them gain understanding of new concepts and ideas. Understanding of how to analyse and evaluate ideas is well above the expected level, as is the ability to recognise errors and to learn from them.
- 131 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are above average for this stage in the AS course. This represents good achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were average for students taking AS business studies. They make good use of prior, and newly acquired, knowledge to discuss issues. They also show a firm grasp of financial accounts and how to interpret them. The AVCE students have made good progress, given that their GCSE results were below average. They make good use of data which they have gathered to answer the demands of their assignments.
- 132 Teaching and learning are both good. The teachers' expert subject knowledge provides a framework within which activities allow good learning to take place. Lessons are well structured and have a good variety of activities so that the students learn well. A very good example of this was a Year 12 AVCE Business lesson on unemployment. Students worked in small groups to identify factors causing various types of unemployment, and the policies to deal with them, and then exchanged ideas during a feedback session. Questioning is a particular strength of the teaching. It is clearly directed and demanding of the students and allows them to use knowledge gained earlier in the course to enhance current learning. The result of the good teaching is that the students have a very good attitude towards learning and are very responsive to questioning and group activities. The department has a satisfactory level of resources with good access to, and use made of, ICT both in lessons and as a research tool. It is working to advance the use of ICT as a learning tool through hyperlinks in on-line worksheets and schemes of work. All of this ensures that standards in lessons are at least good and often very good.
- 133 The leadership and management of the subject are good. This ensures that there is a consistent approach to the way in which teachers implement teaching strategies designed to enhance students' progress. This is helped by the good teamwork which the leadership has fostered. One result is that the number of students continuing with the subject in Year 13 is high. This is a particular achievement for the department because business studies is seen initially by many students as their fourth option. Whilst work is assessed using grades and marks, with helpful comments provided, especially in the case of AVCE assignments, the inconsistencies in approaches to the awarding of marks or assessment levels to other work make it difficult for students to judge their standard of achievement. The students would benefit from a more thorough approach in this area, throughout modules and units.
- 134 The department has made sound progress since the time of the previous inspection. Standards are similar to those described in the previous report. Teaching is better than it was at that time. The department has made good progress in allowing students more time for reflection on learning gained during group activities, which was identified as a weakness in the previous report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 135 There were no focus subjects in this curriculum area but ICT was sampled. There were no entries for examinations in ICT in either 2001 or 2002. One lesson was observed; teaching was very good and students were working to a clear completion plan so that they could track their own progress. As a result, students with a wide range of prior experience and skills in ICT were all making very good progress in producing questionnaires, reports and brochures.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 136 The focus was on leisure and recreation, and travel and tourism but physical education was also sampled. In 2001, the A-level results in physical education were average. Results improved in 2002 and students did slightly better than might be expected in relation to their GCSE results when they started the course. One Year 12 physical education lesson was observed; teaching was dynamic and imaginative and, as a result, students made very good progress in developing their understanding of the various types of feedback and their effects.

Leisure and recreation

- 137 Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and recreation is **very good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good which means learning is also very good.
- The overall achievement of students is good, whatever their prior attainment.
- The strength of relationships between students, and with their teachers, promotes confidence, ability to take part in discussion and motivation to succeed.
- The rising numbers of students studying the courses are an indication of the very positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- A lack of emphasis on the spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects within the courses constrains the breadth of students' achievement.
- Teachers do not check all written work in portfolios, beyond that submitted for assessment, to ensure that it is on target.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory in some lessons in Year 12.

- 138 The department offers courses leading to the AVCE in leisure and recreation, both single and double award, and the Community Sports Leader Award. There are ten students taking the subject in Year 12, and 12 in Year 13. The subject has become increasingly popular now that it is available to all students in the sixth form and can be studied alongside traditional A-levels. Most students who begin a course in leisure and recreation complete the course and gain a qualification.

- 139 In previous years, leisure subjects were examined at Advanced GNVQ level. Examination results varied significantly from year to year during the period 1998 to 2001, with male students gaining considerably better results than female students. Results were above average in 2001. In the 2002 examinations, at the new AVCE level, students' results were just below the national average. Special circumstances

account for the majority of those who failed to pass and predictions are much higher for 2003.

- 140 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving higher standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example, there is growing independence in learning, above average use of the Internet and encyclopaedia for obtaining data and good analysis and interpretation of both primary and secondary sources. In developing their portfolios, it is clear that students are focused, know what they are doing and use the careful feedback from teachers' assessments of their assignments to develop their learning further.
- 141 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are above average for this stage in the course. This represents good achievement for the group because there is considerable variation in the prior attainment of the students, reflecting their differing standards at GCSE when they came into Year 12. Very good feedback from their teachers following assessment of work indicates the current grade attained, gives comments on what to do to improve and sets targets for future performance so that students know where they stand and how to make further progress. There is above average use of the Internet and encyclopaedia, showing students selecting relevant information rather than merely cutting and pasting work indiscriminately.
- 142 Teaching and learning are very good. All lessons seen had good or very good teaching and some lessons had outstanding features. This flows from the careful planning within the department, the in-depth knowledge of the subject staff, skilful delivery of lessons and the rigorous assessment strategies that are in place. The outstanding relationships between teachers and students are particularly effective in securing very good learning, bolstering students' confidence, increasing their willingness to contribute in discussion and encouraging independent learning. Assessment is good overall, especially the quality of the feedback given to students. However, not all portfolio work is scrutinised to ensure that it is on target. Not enough emphasis is given to drawing out the moral, social and cultural aspects of topics within the course in order to make a greater contribution to the breadth of students' overall achievement.
- 143 The very good teaching ensures that students who attend regularly make very good progress. However, there are some students who do not attend regularly; attendance in a few lessons is poor. Hence, the overall achievement of students is good, rather than very good.
- 144 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is efficient and organised with a clear vision of where the subject is going. Standards of administration are very high and there is careful analysis of past performance, which is then used to modify current practice. There is a strong team spirit within the department that contributes much to its strength. The level of resourcing to the department is adequate but not generous and several of its computers are now in need of replacement.
- 145 The previous inspection did not report on leisure and recreation so it is not possible to make a judgement on the progress the department has made since that time. Undoubtedly, the department has the capacity to move forward with confidence and build on the very good contribution it is now making to students' achievement. The department has realised the weaknesses in the current AVCE arrangements and will

introduce the BTEC National course in sports studies from September 2003, so widening the scope for students even further.

Travel and tourism

146 Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **very good**.

Strengths

- The range of courses available within the subject area means that students have a wide choice.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and so the overall achievement of students is very good, whatever their prior attainment.
- The strength of relationships between students, and with their teachers, promotes confidence, the ability to take part in discussion and motivation to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- The low numbers of students taking some of the courses within the subject area makes the long-term viability of those courses doubtful.
- Not all portfolio work is scrutinised to advise students whether or not it is on target.

147 The department offers courses leading to: the AVCE in travel and tourism, both single and double award; the intermediate level of the GNVQ in leisure and tourism; the Certificate of Travel Agency Operations and the Certificate of Tour Operators. There are 14 students taking the subjects in Year 12, and 11 in Year 13. The subjects have become more popular now that they are available to all students in the sixth form and can be studied alongside traditional A-levels. Some of the courses can be combined so that students gain more than one qualification. However, the school is aware that splitting options into two teaching groups between single and double award AVCE is producing groups that are not viable. Steps are being taken to rationalise this without detriment to students' choice of courses.

148 In previous years, leisure subjects were grouped together and examined at Advanced GNVQ level. Standards varied year by year during the period 1998 to 2001, with male students gaining considerably better results than female students. The 2001 results were above the national average. In the 2002 examinations at the new AVCE level, six of the seven students passed, including some with higher grades, giving an overall point score that indicates similar standards to those for 2001. Special circumstances account for the one student who failed to pass. Predictions for 2003 are higher. In the Intermediate GNVQ course, there was a 100 per cent success rate in both the 2001 and 2002 examination, with at least half the students being awarded a merit grade.

149 Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving much higher standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example, there is a high level of independence in learning, above average use of the Internet and encyclopaedia for obtaining data, and good analysis and interpretation of both primary and secondary sources. In developing their portfolios, it is clear that students are focused, know what they are doing and use the careful feedback on their assignments, from the assessment by staff, to develop their learning further.

150 Standards are higher in the current Year 13 than those indicated by last year's AVCE results. One reason why students are now doing better than they have in the past is the department's improved monitoring of students' progress and the better quality of feedback it now provides. Hence, students now have a better idea of how well they

are doing and what they need to do to improve and they are making good use of this information.

- 151 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are above average for this stage in the course. This represents good achievement for the group because there is considerable variation in the prior attainment of the students reflecting their differing standards at GCSE when they came into Year 12. This applies particularly to the Intermediate GNVQ group which has been set up partly in response to the school's move towards widening participation and for social inclusion. Very good feedback from their teachers following assessment of work indicates the current grade attained, gives comments on what to do to improve and sets targets for future performance so that students know where they stand and how to make further progress. There is above average use of the Internet and students select relevant information rather than merely cutting and pasting work indiscriminately.
- 152 Teaching and learning are very good. The teaching in all the lessons seen was good or very good, some lessons having outstanding features. This is a result of the careful planning within the department, the in-depth knowledge of the subject staff, very skilful delivery of lessons and the rigorous assessment strategies that are in place. The outstanding relationships with students are particularly successful in bolstering confidence, encouraging contributions to discussion, and developing students' independent learning skills. Assessment is good overall, especially the quality of the feedback given to students. However, not all portfolio work is scrutinised to advise that it is on target. There is only limited emphasis on drawing out the moral, social and cultural aspects of topics within the course to make a greater contribution to the breadth of students' overall achievement.
- 153 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is efficient and organised with a clear vision of where the subject is going. Standards of administration are very high and there is careful analysis of past performance which is then used to modify current practice. There is a strong team spirit within the department that contributes much to its strength. Resources for the department are adequate but not generous and several of its computers are now in need of replacement, thus limiting the use that students can make of ICT to support their learning.
- 154 The previous inspection did not report on travel and tourism so it is not possible to make a judgement on the progress the department has made since that time. The department has the capacity to move forward with confidence and build on the very good contribution it is now making to students' achievement. It also has the determination to do so, as indicated by the move to introduce the Applied GCSE course in leisure and tourism into Year 10 in September 2003.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 155 The focus was on health and social care.

Health and social care

- 156 Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers are committed to providing a challenging and caring environment within which students of all abilities make good progress.

- Very good assessment procedures enable students to monitor their own progress and improve their performance.
- Students are enthusiastic; they enjoy the subject and work hard.

AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Continue the improvement in performance by ensuring continuity of staffing.

- 157 The school offers courses in health and social care at intermediate level GNVQ and both single and double award AVCE. The number of students taking the course has increased considerably in the last three years. Most students who begin a course complete it and gain a qualification.
- 158 In 2001, standards were well below the national average. Results for 2002 were similar to those for 2001. However, analysis of the results indicates that most of the students achieved grades that were broadly in line with predicted grades. A minority of students significantly under-achieved but there were particular factors affecting these results including personal problems, which the school has carefully explained.
- 159 In the intermediate GNVQ course, Year 12 students are attaining standards that are average and in line with the predictions based upon their GCSE results so that their achievement is therefore satisfactory. They have a sound knowledge of child development and use this knowledge well in their practical work placements. They are currently working towards a pass grade.
- 160 The Year 12 single award group is also achieving standards of attainment that suggest grades that are at least in line with the national average. They have recently completed a work experience placement and have produced good assignments based on this visit. These show not only a sound understanding of the work of the service that they visited, but also good skills of evaluation. Achievement is satisfactory based upon their GCSE results.
- 161 In Year 13, the double award group is achieving well and reaching good standards. Students have a very good understanding of the systems of the human body and are able to use complex language well. In one lesson, a class was competently examining various models of health promotion and showed a very good understanding of complex terms such as epidemiology. Students' work shows that they have a satisfactory understanding of research methods but they have only limited skills in analysing results. Their expected grades cover a wide range but are generally better than predictions based upon GCSE results. Students have good communication skills and are confident in their use of ICT.
- 162 The quality of teaching and learning is good. A team of competent teachers, who know their subject well, create an environment which both challenges and nurtures students of all abilities. Lessons are well planned with a good balance of activities which encourage students to develop their own learning skills. Assignments are accurately marked. Students are given full information and encouraged to use their assessment records in order to monitor their own progress. The commitment and enthusiasm of the students are such that they recently decided to renovate the teaching rooms themselves.
- 163 The leadership of the subject is very good. In the past there have been frequent changes in the staffing but at the moment a strong team of well-trained teachers is led by an experienced and well-organised subject leader. The department has

carefully analysed the examination results and made suitable amendments to the courses it offers.

- 164 The previous inspection did not report on health and social care so it is not possible to make a judgement on the progress the department has made since that time. However, as a result of changes, for example in the courses being offered, there has been a gradual improvement in standards in the past year. The improving standards and growing popularity of the subject indicate that recent progress has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

- 165 The focus was on art and design but music was also sampled. There were only four candidates for A-level music in 2001 and three in 2002, so statistical analysis of their results is not appropriate. However, in 2002 all the students gained grade C or above and they did as well as might be expected from their GCSE results. One lesson was observed; teaching was very good and the single student benefited from instant high quality feedback on work completed earlier.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above the national average.
- High quality teaching ensures that students make good progress.
- Positive teacher/student relationships support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures lack interim marking to give students information about their progress.
- The subject does not appeal sufficiently to male students so that too few choose to study the subject in the sixth form.
- Accommodation is inadequate for optimum progress.

- 167 The department offers courses in AS and A-level art and design. There are 25 students taking the subject in Year 12 and 14 in Year 13. It is a popular subject with female students, but few male students take the subject in Year 12 and Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination. The majority choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
- 168 A-level results were above the national average in 2001 and students gained better results in art than they did on average in their other subjects. Results improved in 2002 and 12 students out of a total of 15 were awarded the higher grades A or B. The small number of male students who took art achieved less well than female students.
- 169 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving better standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example the standard of work from students working towards completing drafts of their personal studies is good. They achieve this by placing emphasis on a high standard of presentation of their personal ideas about artists' intentions and using a wide technical vocabulary.

- 170 Students in Year 12, where the number of students is larger, are achieving standards that are above average for this stage in the AS course. This represents good achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were average for students taking AS art. This good achievement was seen in a lesson where students were printmaking from woodcuts. Students chose appropriate texts and then made preparatory drawings to illustrate their ideas about them. The compositions were figurative and included the text in a chosen typeface. The standard of outcomes was good because of the demands of producing a thoughtful design combined with the need for technical expertise.
- 171 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well and display wide subject knowledge. The influence of this expertise was seen in students' work that had been produced during a two-day sculpture workshop. Students showed that they understood the skeleton and musculature of the head and neck and were able to include expressions on the faces to communicate their ideas.
- 172 In lessons, students show a high level of concentration and great willingness to take an active part in response to the good teaching that they experience. Students work with evident enjoyment and industry. They appreciate the help and resources available but also demonstrate responsibility for their own development. This contributes to their good achievement. They discuss their work with each other and are quick to provide advice and support. They make good use of ICT when word-processing their personal studies. The homework seen shows that students are able to persevere without any direct input from teachers. Excellent opportunities exist for students to visit exhibitions and galleries in London. This provides a stimulus for subsequent work and contributes to good learning and achievement.
- 173 The leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed subject leader promotes high standards through effective teaching and by giving expert support. This takes the form of regular visits to all classrooms. Monitoring of lessons could be improved by making formal records that would enable the department to share good practice more effectively. Records of students' progress are accurate and kept up to date. However, assessment procedures lack interim marking to give students information about their progress. All teachers' contributions are valued and they work in areas that enable them to utilise their strengths. Accommodation for the subject is generally suitable but studio provision for the sixth form is inadequate.
- 174 The department has made good progress since the time of the last inspection. Standards have fluctuated from below average in 1997 to average in the present Year 13. Teaching is better than it was at that time and this has enabled the department to raise standards.

HUMANITIES

- 175 The focus was on classical civilisation, geography, history and religious studies. Latin and government and politics were also sampled. There were no A-level results in Latin in 2001 but, in 2002, the two candidates both gained grade A. One lesson was sampled and teaching was excellent, offering a high degree of challenge and enabling students to reach a very high level of competence in their linguistic work. Students will be entered for A-level government and politics for the first time in 2003. Again, one lesson was sampled. In that lesson, teaching and learning were satisfactory; students discussed the pros and cons of the jury system and reached balanced conclusions.

Classical civilisation

176 Overall the quality of provision in classical civilisation is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average.
- The students achieve very well, and tend to do better in classical civilisation than in their other subjects.
- The teachers have excellent subject knowledge and share their scholarship and love of the subject with enthusiasm.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and are a significant factor in the students' very good achievement.

Area for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for the students to express a more personal response to the literature.

177 The department offers AS and A-level courses in classical civilisation and Latin. Classical civilisation is a popular subject and currently there are 24 students in Year 12 and 27 in Year 13. All students who begin the AS course complete the year and sit the examination; nearly all students continue with the subject and take the A-level examination in Year 13.

178 Results in the A-level examination in 2001 were above the national average. Male students achieved better than male students nationally, and both male and female students did better in classical civilisation than in the other subjects they took. Results in 2002 were similar: all students passed the examination, and well over half of them gained one of the highest grades, A or B. Female students did marginally better than male students in terms of their points scores. Over the five years since the previous inspection the proportion of students passing the examination, as well as those gaining the highest grades, has risen steadily, with students consistently doing better than in their other subjects.

179 Standards of work seen during the inspection are similarly above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. The students are achieving much higher standards than might be expected given both their prior attainment and the fact that the subject was new to nearly all of them when they entered the sixth form. They acquire a very secure knowledge of the texts they are studying and a very good understanding of the cultural background to the classical period. They use this knowledge and understanding to sustain arguments in lessons, and they communicate their ideas effectively, both in discussion and in writing. For example, they deploy their wider knowledge of Roman moral values very effectively to identify the ideal moral values of the countryside in their reading of the Satires of Horace and Juvenal. Students' written work is very competent, and by Year 13 they show very good skills of evaluation and can set the texts and themes studied into a broad cultural, literary or historical context. The highest attaining students write stylish answers with a fine level of understanding of the classical literature they have studied, and supported with a good range of detailed and general argument.

180 Teaching is very good and the students learn very well as a result. The teachers are enthusiastic and frequently inspiring, as in a lesson on Homer's Odyssey where the teacher captured the essential drama of the story. Such an approach is a significant factor in the students' motivation. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, so that

they can with confidence set the literature and topics studied into a broad classical context. This degree of scholarship provides the students with a rich cultural and educational experience. The teachers work successfully as a team, and have planned the course very well. Their lessons are carefully structured to build incrementally upon what the students already know, so that they acquire a growing knowledge and appreciation of Greek and Roman epic, satire and drama, and of the social and political context in which these are set. For example, in lessons seen during the inspection, the teachers successfully encouraged the students, through skilful questioning, to make connections with their earlier reading. The teaching offers real challenge, and requires a high level of intellectual involvement from the students. The key skills of written and spoken communication are successfully fostered as an integral part of the course. Teachers make relatively little use of computers or the Internet in their teaching, although students are encouraged to, and do, make good use of the Internet in their research and word-process some of their written work efficiently. Plenty of opportunities are provided for students to work and discuss collaboratively in pairs and small groups, although more opportunities could be provided for the students to develop a more personal response to the literature. Work is marked promptly and meticulously. The students are well involved and consulted about their performance, and because the teachers assess written assignments according to A-level criteria and comment on the work in helpful detail, the students have a clear understanding of how well they are progressing. Good use is made of assessment information to give students a clear and honest appraisal of their progress, and to negotiate with them future targets for their work.

- 181 Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Students are very well motivated and work efficiently. Their attitudes to learning about the classical world are very positive, and these are reflected in their enjoyment of their work, as well as in the relatively high proportion of students proceeding annually to degree courses in classical subjects.
- 182 Standards have risen under the very good leadership and management of the subject. Teaching expertise in the department is shared very effectively, and the specifications of the A-level course have been translated into a cohesive programme which challenges and inspires. The curriculum is enhanced by occasional opportunities to see performances of classical drama, and every two years students can benefit from a study visit to classical sites in Greece or Italy. The subject is taught in suitably appointed rooms which the teachers have enhanced with attractive displays to provide a stimulating environment for teaching classics. The excellent classical section in the school library provides very well for private study, coursework and furthering the students' interest in the classical world.
- 183 The department has made very good progress since the time of the last inspection. Examination standards have steadily improved, and monitoring of teaching and learning, which was an area for development in the last report, is now in place.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are above the national average.
- Students achieve well and their fieldwork is good.

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers' good subject knowledge and the good relationships between teachers and students underpin students' good attitudes to learning.
- The department is well led and there is good monitoring of students' work and progress.

Area for improvement

- There is not enough monitoring of teaching in order to identify good practice so that it can be shared across the department.

- 185 The department offers courses in A and AS-level geography. Geography is one of the more popular subjects in the school, with a total of 68 students currently studying the subject in Years 12 and 13. Several students take up geography for the first time in Year 12, without any prior experience of the subject at GCSE. Many students who take AS geography choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
- 186 The 2001 A-level results were below the national average and students did not do as well in geography as they did on average in their other subjects. However, the 2002 results were significantly better than those in 2001 and similar to the results in 2000 which were above the national average. Of the 34 students entered for the 2002 A-level examinations, 15 attained the higher grades A or B and almost all gained pass grades. Male and female students gain similar results in geography. The 2002 AS-level results indicate similar standards to those shown by the A-level results in the same year.
- 187 The observation of students in lessons, and an analysis of samples of their work provided by the school, confirmed that students are achieving well and that standards are above average overall, matching those indicated by the 2002 results. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection, when standards were found to be average.
- 188 Almost all students show good knowledge of the elements of physical and human geography in the work that they have covered. They confidently work with source material. From the information they collect they make reliable judgements and those of higher attainment draw inferences, as well as making sound conclusions. Students make good use of photographic information that they themselves have gathered, for example in the urban segregation fieldwork in Darlington and Leeds. They regard the Internet as a familiar and reliable source of information and the computer suite in the library is well and frequently used. Higher attaining students question the validity of information and use it with discretion.
- 189 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Students clearly understand the lesson objectives. Resources such as off-prints from popular and learned journals are used effectively to stimulate discussion and to guide research. All teachers know their subject well, which shows not only in the content of the lessons but also in the way that questions are posed. Students are questioned at the beginning of lessons and at intervals during the lessons, to ensure that their knowledge and understanding are secure. For example, in a lesson on the spread, prevention and elimination of the worldwide hazard of AIDS, the teacher first checked that the nature and cause of the condition were well known before asking students to interrogate sources. The lesson then continued with discussion on the variation in the occurrence of the condition across the world and in the various age-groups.
- 190 Students learn well. They listen closely to the teacher and respond readily to questions and challenges that characterise the good teaching. Most are confident that

they can 'chance their arm' when they are unsure. There is mutual respect within all of the groups. The quality of the fieldwork indicates the enjoyment of using primary sources. This year the department is extending its scope beyond the Lake District and local towns by taking a group to Iceland to study geomorphology. Students' personal development is enhanced because of the opportunities provided to explore attitudes, feelings and various cultures within the study of the subject and students show considerable maturity by the end of Year 13. Teachers are always available to help students to clarify and extend their work.

- 191 The department is well led and managed. The plans for learning seen in the scheme of work are meticulous and detailed. Plans are constantly kept up to date to ensure their validity. Students' are aware of what is expected of them and their performance is monitored well. Teachers' marking indicates clearly what is needed to attain higher levels of attainment. The relative performance of girls and boys is monitored. There is a great deal of test and examination data, which is used to guide changes in coursework to meet students' needs and improvements in teaching approaches. Regular and frequent meetings ensure that good practice is discussed, but monitoring in class is less rigorous.
- 192 Overall, the department has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve still further.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall; subject knowledge and wider expertise are used to very good effect to enable students to learn skills and acquire knowledge.
- Students learn very well; they develop understanding and the ability to make good historical and personal decisions.
- The department has very good management and exemplary leadership.
- The department makes very good use of assessment as a tool to select appropriate courses, track individual progress and monitor group performance, in order to improve standards still further.

Area for improvement

- There is not enough classroom monitoring, on a regular basis, to ensure consistently very good teaching approaches.

- 194 The department offers courses in A and AS-level history. Large numbers of students choose to study history in Years 12 and 13, making history one of the most popular A-level subjects in the school.
- 195 A-level results in history were above the national average in 2001 and improved still further in 2002. Of the 42 students entered for A-level in 2002, half gained the highest grades A or B. The 55 students who took AS examinations in the same year gained results that reflected the pattern of the A-level results, with over half the students gaining grades A or B and almost all achieving pass grades. Overall, students achieve very well in A and AS-level history.

- 196 Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above the national average in the current Year 12 and Year 13. Students analyse historical sources and use a wide variety of evidence, examining it critically. Students reach well-balanced and cogent conclusions, with the highest attainers writing fluently and convincingly. Essays on the personal rule of the king and the influence of his bishops in the 17th century indicated a command of the facts and reflected impressive background knowledge. In group discussions, many students contribute their views with confidence, though some have to be brought into the discourse by leading questions. Only a small number of students are still in the position of being able to describe rather than explain.
- 197 Teachers' very good knowledge and expertise are at the heart of the very good teaching. They are shown in the depth of detail they provide for students and in the way that questions are posed to bring out the best responses from students. The length of the lessons is hardly noticed because of the skilful way that activities are introduced. Lesson introductions consisting of brisk question-and-answer enable the teacher to lay the foundation of prior knowledge on which the rest of the lesson depends. Virtually every lesson has, at its centre, relevant source material from which all pupils obtain knowledge and understanding. The highest attainers also draw inferences. For example, when reading a passage relating to Archbishop Laud, some students saw that the description of a procession showed a jealousy that was later to play a part in his downfall. This enriched the later part of this lesson by giving the rest of the class a view that they might otherwise have missed. Students are involved in both teaching and learning by preparing and giving presentations to their classmates. During these classroom exercises their research skills grow until they are in command of an essential part of the historian's craft.
- 198 Students of all abilities learn very well in relation to their own targets. There is clear progress in terms of growth of skills, knowledge and understanding because of the clearly focused and well-presented lessons. Students' use of the Internet in the library supplements and extends the range of book and magazine sources available there. Some students use word processing and drafting of work to improve the quality and presentation of their written work. The relationship between teaching staff and students is good. Students benefit from the experience of the staff in marking and setting national examinations that underpins the very effective technical approaches to historical enquiry. During the course of their studies, students enhance their personal development. Because they develop the skills of evaluating historical evidence of the 'how?' and the 'why?' of events, they make up their own minds and defend their views, whilst respecting those of other people.
- 199 The department is very well led and managed by a head of department experienced not only in teaching, but also in the formulation of examination courses and questions and the subsequent marking of students' scripts. Marking across the department is largely good and in essays there is normally constructive comment on how to improve to a higher standard. Assessment is regular and frequent. The findings from assessments are used to track the progress of individuals and the overall progress of the various groups. These findings are evaluated and used to improve courses and/or teaching methods. Monitoring of class teaching is less well developed and this inhibits the spreading of very good practice which would raise the quality of teaching still higher.
- 200 The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. High standards have been maintained and the arrangements for assessment have improved.

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Examination results are improving.
- Students have positive attitudes, enjoy the subject and work hard.
- Good leadership of the subject has raised the profile of religious studies in school and ensured that a growing number of students opt for the course.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching methods is limited in some lessons.
- The department does not provide enough detailed feedback to students to help them identify how they can improve their attainment.
- The department does not yet make enough use of the good teaching skills and strategies that exist within the department, to influence the work of other teachers.

202 The department offers courses in both AS and A-level religious studies. Numbers of students taking the course have increased considerably during the past three years and there are now 44 students taking the AS course. A high proportion of students following the AS course choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.

203 There has been a significant upward trend in results in the last three years. In 2001, results were well below the national average, with students obtaining grades that were significantly lower than their grades in other subjects. The results for 2002 improved very significantly and students' grades in religious education were generally in line with their results in other subjects and with their predicted grades based on their GCSE results.

204 This upward trend in standards is reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection which are average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Year 13 students have a good understanding of complex philosophical theories. A group was revising the categorical imperative argument and students were able to use appropriate language well. Their folders contained essays which demonstrated a sound understanding of the major philosophical points of view, with the more able students developing very good skills of synthesis and evaluation. Their understanding of ethical issues is equally good. A group skilfully discussed concepts such as situation ethics and moral relativism. Students of all levels of attainment enjoy the subject and work hard. They are making satisfactory progress and are generally on target to achieve their predicted grades.

205 Year 12 students are making similarly satisfactory progress. They have a sound grasp of philosophical language and are able logically to set out their arguments in essays. Their level of achievement is in line with their target grades and is, therefore, satisfactory. Students are extremely committed to the subject.

206 The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and in a significant number of lessons it is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons carefully. In the satisfactory lessons, there is a tendency to rely on a strongly teacher-led approach with a heavy dependence upon worksheets. These lessons lack vigour and pace and, whilst students listen attentively and diligently write out their notes, they find it difficult to follow the complex arguments being presented. In the better lessons, teachers use a wider variety of teaching methods which engage

students more actively in the learning process. In one Year 13 lesson, students were fully involved in reviewing the main teaching of five different approaches to ethical issues.

- 207 Teachers set good assignments which the students complete well. Some teachers mark these assignments well, with good feedback and suggestions for improvement. Other teachers do mark assignments but students are not fully informed of the necessary steps they need to take to improve the standard of their work.
- 208 The leadership of the subject is good and is moving the subject forward. There is a strong team spirit with all the teachers fully committed to the subject. The subject leader has carefully analysed previous results and taken steps to improve attainment. Monitoring of teaching has taken place but the outcomes are not always followed through sufficiently. Limited use has been made of ICT to support learning in the subject.
- 209 The department has made good progress overall since the previous inspection. Examination results in 2001 were similar to those described in the previous inspection report. However, the improvements in results and standards since 2001, and the growing popularity of the subject, indicate a department that is now making good progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- 210 The focus was on English literature and French but English language and German were also sampled. The 2002 A-level English language results were similar to those in English literature but with a higher proportion of A grades. Two English language lessons were sampled and teaching was good in both. In one lesson students explored, in some depth, the links between power and language. In the other they identified aspects of language that are distinctive to various work areas and distinguished between those that are and are not exclusive to those areas.
- 211 In German, the A-level results in 2001 were very high and students did better in German than they did on average in their other subjects. Results were not as high in 2002 but students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE results when they began the course. One lesson was observed; teaching was very good and students were following the rapid, complex German with confidence.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards currently being attained are above the national expectation for the course.
- The quality of the best written work seen is very high.
- The quality of teaching is good, which leads to good achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Area for improvement

- Some students have not developed independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

- 213 The subject is a reasonably popular choice at A-level and a high proportion of students who start the course finish it, whether to AS or A2 level.
- 214 In 2001, A-level examination results were in line with the national average. Results have fluctuated in recent years according to students' prior attainment. Thus in 1999 they were well above the national average and in 2000 they were above it. The results obtained in 2002 were better than those obtained in 2001. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that attainment is currently above the national average. When students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations is taken into account, their achievement is good.
- 215 By the time they reach Year 13, most students are articulate, accustomed to working in groups and ready to advance their understanding by sharing their ideas with teachers and fellow students. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on *Othello*, in which students acted out a scene from the play and considered how particular nuances of meaning could be communicated according to the way the actor delivered the lines. Higher attainers could see a number of possible interpretations, whilst lower attainers were less aware of the complexities. All students made their contribution to the discussion and listened respectfully to what others had to say. The highest attaining students can use their wider reading and knowledge of history to help them understand particular works more deeply. Thus, for example, such students were able to draw parallels between the techniques of advertisers and the recruitment methods used in the First World War and how the latter influenced the writing of such poets as Wilfred Owen. Lower attainers are more dependent upon their teachers to make such comparisons for them. The quality of written work is variable. Higher attainers produce very high quality, carefully reasoned, well-illustrated work on a number of demanding topics, such as the narrative techniques used in Guterson's *Snow falling on Cedars*. Lower attaining pupils find difficulty in expressing themselves lucidly and lack an adequate technical vocabulary. Whilst higher attainers are effective as independent learners, some middle and lower attainers have not developed such skills to the extent that might be expected and so are not as able to make their own independent assessments of what they read.
- 216 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some of the teaching seen was very good. In most of the lessons seen, teachers possessed very good subject knowledge. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on poetry of the First World War. The teacher was able to explain how recruits were influenced by the propaganda of the period and to refer students to books that would give them other relevant background information. She was obviously well acquainted with the books she recommended and her quotations from them clearly aroused the interest of the students. Teachers create good opportunities for students to be active in lessons, including the acting out of scenes from plays, working in pairs or groups, brief pauses in lessons to allow students the chance to assimilate and discuss a new idea in slightly more depth or ranging across an anthology to explore how the patterns of language changed over a period of time. This means that students concentrate well, enjoy their studies, communicate effectively and make good progress. Teachers actively encourage students to take a broad view of their studies. One effect of this was that some students had visited the Imperial War Museum to gain a better understanding of the nature of war and how people wrote about it. Additionally, all students spoken to had an interest in reading outside the prescribed curriculum. The cumulative effect of this breadth of interest is that students are better able to judge the quality of literature and have a wider awareness of culture. When teaching is less effective, lessons lack pace and students play a relatively passive part in the lessons. Some opportunities are missed to require students to use and develop their

independent learning skills. Marking is generally of high quality and gives students guidance on what they need to do to improve.

- 217 Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers work closely together to maintain high standards. The head of department listens to, and responds to, the interests and preferences of students, as is seen in the introduction of the extra course.
- 218 Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The good standards in English literature have been maintained. Additionally, the school has introduced English language at A-level. This has proved a popular option and has helped attract increased numbers of male students.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is well planned to support students of all levels of attainment.
- A-level results are above average.
- Students are committed and try hard in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not expect students to make enough oral contributions in lessons.
- The department does not make enough consistent use of ICT and other media to support learning.

- 219 The school offers courses in French to AS and A-level. Most students who complete the AS-level course continue their studies to A-level. At present there are 12 students in Year 12 and eight in Year 13.
- 220 In 2001, half of the students entered for the A-level examination in French achieved the highest grades A or B. The average points score achieved by students was above the national average. Over the last four years, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B has risen each year, as has the average points score. In 2002, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades rose again. Students achieved better results than expected in relation to their GCSE results when they began the course in Year 12. Comparisons of the results of male and female students over the period are not possible because there were no male candidates in 2000 and 2001.
- 221 The work seen during the inspection shows that students in both year groups are generally making good progress and achieving well, relative to their GCSE results when they began the course. The standards of work seen are above average for students following these courses. Year 12 students have successfully made the transition from GCSE work and can speak and write at an appropriate level about a range of social and economic issues. In each teaching group there is a range of attainment, but most students concentrate in lessons and make a genuine effort to improve their performance. Attitudes towards language learning are good, and are a consequence of very good and very supportive relationships between the teachers and the students. This in turn makes a very positive contribution to the progress which students make and to their overall attainment.
- 222 Teaching and learning in French are good overall and, in some lessons, they are very good. The course is shared between two very experienced teachers who work well

together and who plan the course so that each can teach to her strengths. This ensures that each lesson is extremely well researched and that students benefit from the considerable linguistic and course-related expertise available to them. Lessons often make a substantial contribution not only to students' language development, but also to their awareness and understanding of major world issues and of the cultural and social background to language. A Year 12 lesson on asylum seekers and immigration was particularly effective in encouraging all students, irrespective of their level of attainment, to express their views and to make a positive contribution to the lesson. Occasionally, however, the lower attaining or less confident students are not sufficiently challenged to make an oral contribution to lessons and the higher attainers are allowed to dominate.

- 223 Students' work is consistently and helpfully marked, and students are required to demonstrate that they have understood where they need to improve. Thorough reviews of students' work are carried out and targets set for improvement. Both students and teachers share responsibility for the identification of targets and for the progress made. Assessment information from examinations and other work is used consistently by teachers to adjust the work to suit the needs of students. Good use is made of diagnostic testing before students embark on the post-16 course in French in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to aid planning appropriate course materials.
- 224 The curriculum in French is soundly based on the examination requirements in each year, and is well planned to ensure that all students, irrespective of their prior attainment, can make the transition with ease. There are very supportive elements to aid students come to terms with the increased demand for grammatical accuracy and more sophisticated speaking and written work. Students are encouraged to become increasingly independent and responsible for their own learning, and to make use of the Internet for research, although there is insufficient use made overall of computers and other media to promote and support learning at this stage. The language laboratory facility which the department possesses, and for which materials are being developed, needs also to be more consistently exploited. Students' speaking skills benefit greatly from a weekly session with the French assistant. There have been recent links with schools in France, which provided opportunities for students to develop their skills in the country itself, but these are not sufficiently consistent to make a full contribution to all students' learning experience.
- 225 The leadership of the subject is good and the management is satisfactory. The course is led by an experienced head of department who is very concerned to sustain standards and to ensure that all students achieve their highest potential. There is a scheme of work which underlines the basic themes required by the examination, but which lacks detail as to departmental policy and recommendations about how the material could best be taught. All teachers who teach the post-16 courses have received appropriate professional training to familiarise themselves with course demands. Resources and accommodation are adequate but the accommodation is not well presented to provide a stimulating learning environment for modern languages.
- 226 Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The good standards in French and the good quality of teaching have been maintained.