

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Redditch, Worcestershire

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116997

Principal: Carol Buchanan

Reporting inspector: David Driscoll  
11933

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249654

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of students: 13 – 19

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Stonepits Lane  
Hunt End  
Redditch

Postcode: B97 5LX

Telephone number: 01527 550400

Fax number: 01527 550230

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev P Tibke

Date of previous inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11933	D Driscoll	Registered inspector	Educational Inclusion	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements.</p> <p>How well are the students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?</p>
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Science Physics	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Citizenship	
10297	D Cox	Co-ordinator	Information and communication technology (ICT)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	Business studies	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31705	J Mason	Team inspector	Music	
12985	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	

11720	P Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17278	B Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry	
2740	B Barratt	Team inspector	Sociology	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

3 Harrowby Road  
West Park  
Leeds  
LS16 5HN

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Augustine's Catholic High School is an average sized comprehensive school educating students between the ages of 13 and 19. There are 861 students at the school, 412 boys and 449 girls, many more than at the time of the last inspection. The school draws its students from a very wide area around Redditch and Bromsgrove and accepts students from all religions, while emphasising its strong Christian ethos. Approximately half the students are Catholic. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of the students are average. The great majority of students are white, with only a very few from each of several different ethnic backgrounds as well as a small number of travellers' children. The proportion of students who come from homes where English is an additional language is low and almost all are fluent in English.

The attainment of students on entry to the school is above average overall, but this varies from subject to subject. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average. Most students on the higher stages of the special needs register have moderate learning difficulties. The school is very popular with parents and there are not enough places available to accommodate all those who wish to send their children to the school.

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

This is a good school, whose rapid improvement is still continuing as a result of very good leadership and management. Students achieve well, regardless of their gender or background, because the teaching is good in all years. Standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Excellent financial management ensures that the school provides very good value for the relatively low level of funding it receives.

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

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching in all years.
- Very good leadership and management by the Principal and senior managers is leading to rapid and sustained improvement.
- The impact of the school's emphasis on providing the best education for all brings about good attitudes to work among its students.
- The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 is outstanding; results are very high.
- The school makes very good use of its links with the Catholic church and other sections of the community to improve standards.

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

- Students underachieve in French because the teaching of speaking is unsatisfactory in the main school and teachers are not sufficiently aware of their students' capabilities in the sixth form.
- The provision for students who are really gifted or talented is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers who are new to the school are not always informed quickly enough of the highly successful ways that the school has developed for teaching boys, so their teaching is not yet reaching the very good standard seen elsewhere.
- The careers advice for sixth form students is unsatisfactory.

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

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

Very good progress has been made since the school was last inspected. At the time of the last inspection there were significant concerns about the underachievement of boys, in particular, but also lower and middle attainers. The school focused completely on improving achievement, through providing a better quality of teaching, and its efforts have been very successful. Standards are now much higher, attendance has improved, teaching is much improved and all students achieve well regardless of their gender or background. All of the weaknesses in the last report have been addressed successfully and many are now strengths in the school's provision.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	B	*	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

\* National comparisons for 2002 are not yet available.

Students achieve well in all years and leave with better GCSE results than would be expected given their standards on joining in Year 9. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11.

By the end of Year 9, standards are highest in English, where they are well above average. Standards in mathematics and science are above average. These standards reflect the results of the most recent national tests, which were well above average overall and above the average for similar schools. Test results have been maintained at a well above average level over the past four years. Students do well in almost all their subjects. In art and design, ICT and physical education, achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in French is unsatisfactory.

Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average and continued the rapid improvement in results since the school was last inspected. Overall, students gained results that were much better than would have been predicted from their national test results when they were in Year 9. Results were very high in ICT and religious education. Students' achievement is excellent in ICT, but they underachieve in French.

Results at AS and A-level were above average in 2001; when the vocational courses are included, results were well above average. Male students gained results in 2001 that were broadly average, while the results for females were well above average; a similar pattern occurred in 2002. Students are now doing very well in business studies, English literature, media studies and physics but are underachieving in French.

The school's managers set demanding targets and either meet or exceed them every year.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good in the main school and very good in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of	Good, often very good in Years 10 and 11 where the school's procedures



classrooms	for improving behaviour have had time to take effect.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students demonstrate a great deal of respect for the feelings of others. Relationships are very good throughout the school.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average and improving.

Students in the sixth form develop very good learning skills and students throughout the school demonstrate a very good capacity to empathise with others.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good in all years and meets the needs of students well. Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science in the main school, as it is in most other subjects. The teaching in ICT in Years 10 and 11 is excellent, but in French is unsatisfactory in all years.

Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of students and the methods used are usually interesting so students enjoy their lessons and make good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. The management of students is good in most years, but some teachers, especially those new to the school, have difficulties controlling some classes containing lower attaining boys in Year 9. More established teachers have been through the school's training programme aimed at raising boys' achievement; the methods that these teachers use are more successful than those who have not had the training. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve, so they set demanding classwork and homework, that students work hard to succeed with. Literacy skills are taught well, but the teaching of numeracy skills is not co-ordinated and as a result is only satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form, where the range of subjects is particularly wide.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good and improving rapidly. Students receive well-targeted support from knowledgeable support assistants.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. There are very few students who need such support, but those who do need it are supported in such a way as to allow them to make the same good progress as other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for spiritual development is very good; moral and social development is good and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. There are good procedures to ensure students are properly cared for, and very good systems for assessing their progress.

The school has very good procedures for improving attendance and good ways of improving behaviour. The school has very good links with parents. Links with middle schools and the wider community are strong and play a significant part in the good progress that students make in Year 9.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Principal and other key staff	Very good. The school has improved significantly and is still improving as a result of the very good leadership and management in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors carry out their duties well and pay excellent attention to their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are comprehensive systems in place for judging the school's effectiveness and taking action to improve the quality of education offered.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school has been able to make significant improvements, despite relatively low funding, as a result of excellent financial management.

The school has enough staff and rooms, and is well resourced. New technology is used very well, particularly in the sixth form. The school's Intranet, managed by librarian, is excellent. The school's managers are highly committed to providing an equally good quality of education for all students. The way that the school ensures it is providing the best value is excellent.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The expectations teachers have of students.</li> <li>The progress students make during their time at the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of information on progress.</li> <li>Teaching on the psychology course in the sixth form.</li> </ul>

The inspection team generally agrees with parents' views. While there are some minor discrepancies on reports, parents' main issue appears to be with the timing of the first parents' evening in Year 9, which they do not feel is early enough.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has grown considerably since the school was last inspected and is now bigger than most other sixth forms; there are currently 132 female and 112 male students. The students come from a range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school. The school has significantly increased the number the subjects it offers over recent years and now attracts a much broader range of attainment than previously because students can study a wider range of subjects. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average, but this varies considerably from year to year. The students currently in Year 13, for example, joined the sixth form with below average standards, while standards of those currently in Year 12 were above average.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good education and meets the needs of its students well. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. Standards are improving as a result of very good leadership and management. Excellent financial planning ensures the sixth form is very cost effective.

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well because the teaching is good.
- Students do very well in English literature, media studies, physics and business studies.
- Very good leadership is ensuring that the sixth form continues to improve.
- The school is good at equipping students with the skills needed for study, so students' attitudes and work rate are very good.

#### What could be improved

- The teaching of French is unsatisfactory.
- The guidance on careers is not good enough.
- The temporary arrangements for the teaching of psychology are unsatisfactory.
- The systems for providing personal support, while satisfactory, are not up to the same high standard as the rest of the 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 CURRICULAR AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were well below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Students now do as well as expected because teaching is satisfactory.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 but declined slightly in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Results were well below average in 2001 but improved hugely

	in 2002. Students now achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Results were average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 and improved further in 2002. Students now achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Information technology	<b>Good.</b> Results were well above average in 2001 but declined in 2002. Students are now achieving well because the teaching is good.
Physical education	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were well below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Students now do as well as expected because teaching is satisfactory.
Art and design	<b>Good.</b> There are too few students to allow comparison of examination results with national averages. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Media studies	<b>Very good.</b> Results in 2001 were well above average but declined slightly in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Results were well above average in 2001 and improved still further in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Sociology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results in 2001 were below average but improved in 2002. Students now do as well as expected because teaching is satisfactory.
English literature	<b>Very good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
French	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Results were above average in 2001 but declined in 2002. Students are underachieving because the school has had great difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers of a suitable quality; teaching is unsatisfactory as a result.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory overall. There are very good procedures for assessment and much of the academic support students receive is good. However, careers guidance is not good enough and personal support is only satisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The sixth form benefits from the same very good leadership from the Principal and other senior staff as the rest of the school. Management of assessment and the way that data is used to raise standards are both very good, while the curriculum has expanded rapidly to meet the needs of students.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The high expectations of their teachers.</li><li>• The way teachers are always available to support them.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quality of careers guidance.</li><li>• The cramped nature of the accommodation.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with the students' views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Students join the school in Year 9 with above average standards. However, the picture is relatively complex as a result of the school's very good links with its feeder middle schools. Instead of just continuing where the middle schools left off, the schools have planned their courses so that the middle schools concentrate on some topics while St Augustine's concentrates on others. So it is, in some subjects, that students will be well above average in the topics they studied at middle school but will be below average on entry in topics to be taught at the high school.
2. The general picture is one of students making good progress in all years and leaving with better GCSE results than would be expected given their standards on joining in Year 9. Parents too, comment on the good progress their children make at the school. The standards in religious education were not judged, as this will be the focus of a separate inspection.
3. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Standards are highest in English, where they are well above average. Standards in mathematics and science are above average. These standards reflect the results of the most recent national tests, which were well above average overall and above the average for similar schools. Standards in other subjects are generally above average, although they are average in art and design, ICT, French, physical education and citizenship. Standards are below average in music and German. Nevertheless, students do well in almost all their subjects. In German, for example, they have only been studying the subject for one year, so a below average standard is actually a good level of achievement. In ICT and physical education, achievement is satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching. In art and design, on the other hand, teaching has improved recently and is now good, but the improvements have been too recent to raise levels of achievement above satisfactory. In French, students do not do as well as they should because the teaching is not good enough, especially of speaking skills.
4. Standards in most subjects are now considerably higher than they were at the time of the last inspection and test results have been maintained at a well above average level.
5. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average and continued the rapid improvement in results since the school was last inspected. Overall, students gained results that were much better than would have been predicted from their national test results when they were in Year 9. Results were very high in ICT and religious education, and well above average in English literature, mathematics, science and design and technology. Results were above average in geography and average in art and design, French, German and history. The results in ICT and religious education really are stunningly high; over 96 per cent gained at least a grade C in ICT for example and over 76 per cent gained either an A or A\*. Such outstanding results mean that, in comparison, other subjects' results do not look particularly good. However, the real situation is that students' achievement is excellent in ICT, very good in design and technology and good in almost all other subjects. Students do as well as expected in German, history and physical education, but underachieve in French. The GCSE results reflect the current standards in all subjects except art and design,

where standards are now higher as a result of improved teaching. Overall, standards are now well above average by the end of Year 11.

6. Boys' results were lower than girls' results in 2002. However, this is not part of a long-term pattern as usually boys perform as well as girls do. The difference in 2002 reflects the same difference that was apparent when the students joined the school. At the time of the last inspection, however, boys were way behind the girls and were underachieving. The school's efforts to improve boys' attainment have really paid off; boys' GCSE results have shot up, but girls' results have improved rapidly as well so now all students, regardless of gender or background, achieve well.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good because teaching takes account of students' learning difficulties and teaching assistants give very good support. Because of the high quality of personal support, students improve their social as well as their academic skills. They gain in self-esteem and this motivates them to learn. At the end of Year 11, they take the full range of GCSE examinations and achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
8. Students' standards of literacy are well above average. The vast majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Those who are unable to do this by themselves receive a good quality of support. Students' grasp of the basics of literacy, including spelling, punctuation and grammar, are usually good. Most students produce extended writing and show an ability to present information clearly. Students have developed very good skills in reading. In English literature, students of all levels of attainment are set demanding tasks and so are able to appreciate the different layers of meaning in what they study. Standards of numeracy are above average; students carry out mental calculations relatively quickly and have an above average understanding of measurement and spatial awareness.
9. There are no students who are at the early stages of learning English. Students who had recently joined the school, but who had a satisfactory level of ability in English, were still provided with support that allowed them to play a full part in lessons.
10. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection when boys, lower attainers and middle attainers were all underachieving. Results at GCSE are now much better, boys are doing well, students of all levels of attainment are achieving well and the poor performances of geography and history have been turned around.

### **Sixth form**

11. Students achieve well in the sixth form and leave with better examination results than would usually be expected, given their GCSE results.
12. Results at AS and A-level were above average in 2001; when the vocational courses are included, results were well above average. There are no national figures available for 2002 as yet, but, if anything, results appear to have improved in 2002. Male students gained results in 2001 that were broadly average, while the results for females were well above average; a similar pattern occurred in 2002. The inspection team could find no definite reasons for such a discrepancy; in almost all subjects the number of candidates is too small to carry out any statistical analysis by gender. However, one factor that influences achievement and leads to female students doing better than males is that females are much more likely to study English than males are; some of the best teaching occurs in English so females do very well there. The same is true of other subjects, such as media studies.



13. Results in 2001, in the subjects inspected, were well above average in media studies, geography and ICT; above average in business studies, chemistry, English literature and French, average in design and technology, below average in sociology and well below average in mathematics, physics and physical education. All of the subjects whose results failed to reach the national average improved in 2002, some of them very significantly, such as physics which were among the best in the school. However, the results themselves are not a measure of how well the students have achieved on the course as some courses started with higher attaining students than others.
14. Students are now doing very well in business studies, English literature, media studies and physics and are doing well in all the other subjects inspected except mathematics, physical education and sociology, where achievement is satisfactory, and French where they underachieve. In all of the subjects inspected, the students' achievement is a direct result of the quality of teaching; when students are taught well, their achievement is good.
15. There are some students with special educational needs in the sixth form, but they are very high attainers. Their own special needs are met very well and they are making very good progress.
16. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection, when standards were average. The results for male students have improved from below average to average, while those for females have improved from above to well above average.

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

17. Students' personal development and their relationships with each other and with staff are very good; their attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good. All these aspects of students' development are stronger than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Parents are happy with students' behaviour and with the attitudes and sense of values that they develop.
18. Very good relationships are the norm both with the teacher and between students. This underpins the good atmosphere for learning found in many lessons. Most students, especially those in Years 10 and 11, are keen to succeed and respond readily to their teachers' enthusiasm for helping them learn. When the pace of a lesson is brisk, students respond with good efforts to the challenge, remaining alert throughout and concentrating. In ICT, for instance, students are often completely engrossed in learning, as when Year 11 students produced leaflets for a hotel sponsorship package. Supported by high quality teaching skills, the whole class was highly motivated, worked rapidly to meet the teacher's expectations, and were prepared to give up their own time to continue the task. Students usually take a pride in their work and this is often evident in the way they present written work in their books. Even when lessons offer less chance for active involvement students usually work very willingly, making good efforts to learn. Just occasionally, girls' concentration is better than boys'.
19. Occasionally good rapport between students and the teacher disappears. A few students, mostly boys in lower attaining Year 9 groups, sometimes lack respect for the teacher. They fail to take interest in their work and lapse into silly, immature behaviour. An added factor here is that some teachers taking Year 9 classes are less skilled than others are in managing behaviour and so, in isolated lessons, behaviour

becomes unsatisfactory. Students' motivation to learn improves during their time at the school so in lessons for Years 10 and 11 good concentration is the norm. However, a few, mostly boys, still tend to be less responsible in their attitude, as in one Year 10 physical education lesson where a group of boys were lacking in interest and slowed their own learning. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds show the same good attitudes as others and are well integrated into the whole spectrum of school activities. Similarly, students with special educational needs show the same good behaviour as others. Their very good relationships with the staff help them adopt very good attitudes and contribute to their progress.

20. Students involved in extra-curricular sports are enthusiastic about this and there is growing interest in the musical activities now offered. The chaplaincy team also has a high profile, with students responding well to projects such as the revision of the anti-bullying policy and letter-writing campaigns to gain the release of prisoners of conscience.
21. Students show consideration for others as they move around the building and behaviour is also good outside, though a few boys become over-lively at times. Incidents of really poor behaviour arise occasionally, resulting in the rate of short-term exclusions being around the same as the average in other schools. The school perseveres with good success with strategies to improve individual behaviour, so there are few permanent exclusions. Other aspects of students' personal development are mostly very good. Very good moral and social understanding is seen in the way they recognise others' rights and needs, and work to help them. Those on the school council develop good organisational skills, for instance to co-ordinate charity fund-raising, and other students show much active participation in efforts to raise funds for a variety of good causes. Students respect each other's views even when they do not agree with them. A well-developed capacity to empathise with different feelings is evident as well when occasion arises in lessons, for instance in history when they think about the experiences of soldiers in the trenches. There were several occasions during the inspection when teachers asked lower attaining students to read a passage aloud. They persevered despite obvious difficulties and the whole class responded with a spontaneous round of applause at the end. Strong spiritual development is also seen in the respect developed by all students, Catholic and non-Catholic, for the religious beliefs upheld by the school. It is apparent as well in students' understanding of the respect due to others of different races or religions, even though their knowledge of these is somewhat limited.
22. Attendance in the 2001/02 academic year was 92.6 per cent. This is higher than usually seen in other schools and is better than at the previous inspection, when it was reported as 90.8 per cent. The true rise since the previous inspection is even greater than these figures indicate, because previously study leave was counted as if students were present in school, whereas recent statistics correctly include it as authorised absence. With the help of the efforts of pastoral staff and the education welfare officer, attendance is continuing to edge upwards in the current year. Awards for good attendance help to motivate students; comparing the attendance levels of different tutor groups raises their awareness, and the very prompt follow-up for any unexplained absence also has an important impact. Unauthorised absence is a little higher than at the previous inspection and is around the average seen in other schools. The increase arises because absence for family holidays taken in term time is no longer authorised at key times in students' studies.

### **Sixth form**

23. Students have very good attitudes to work and this aids their progress. They relate very well to each other and to their teachers and this creates a strong, shared focus on learning in many lessons. Students mostly show a very good sense of responsibility for their own work and towards the school and wider community.
24. When teaching is really good students work with great enthusiasm. They concentrate completely on their work, take the initiative in volunteering suggestions and readily enter into relevant discussions. Mutual support and encouragement contribute to the progress made by all. In a Year 13 business studies lesson, for example, students considering the consequences of different rates of inflation showed high levels of co-operation as they worked in groups to consider varying consequences and costs. In response to challenges set by the teacher they became completely involved and made terrific progress in confidently discussing different points of view. Students admit they find some lessons less interesting, especially if the teacher talks most of the time and their activity mostly consists of note taking. Even in lessons like this however they concentrate well and work conscientiously. Drifting attention is almost unknown.
25. Students' very good relationships with staff are underpinned by the way teachers care about their progress. Students appreciate the way teachers readily give extra help and support. As often happens in sixth forms a number of students criticise aspects of the provision as well as finding points to praise. Nevertheless they mostly show a mature determination to make the most of the opportunities with which they are presented. This is reflected in the very good sense of responsibility they show towards their work. Some comment that the continual workload is burdensome at times but for the most part they all cope efficiently with it. They mostly present their work well and keep their folders in good order. There are occasional exceptions. In some instances, usually involving male students, there is room for folders to be ordered more methodically. In art, planning and time management are relatively weak; again this is most evident amongst male students. Occasionally students find it hard to organise themselves to meet deadlines for coursework.
26. Wider aspects of students' personal development are very good. Care for others and great empathy with each other's feelings were evident in the shared delight for those who found they had gained improved grades in examination 'resits'. This care, coupled with capacity for initiative, is also apparent in their contribution to the school and wider communities. For instance despite the pressures on their time many volunteer to act as learning mentors to support younger students in lessons. Very good social and moral awareness is reflected in the way members of the sixth form lead the school council in charity fund-raising projects. Very good respect for the religious beliefs upheld by the school is apparent, regardless of students' individual religious beliefs. They show similar respect towards the range of religious and cultural traditions to be found in neighbouring communities, and would like to understand them better.
27. Students' attendance in lessons has improved since the previous inspection and is good. It is promoted by their very good motivation to learn. The knowledge that parents will be contacted about any unexplained absence also occasionally helps, even though the students involved object to the feeling of being treated like children. For those on education maintenance allowance, the associated attendance requirements prove an additional incentive. Those in Year 13 generally use their freedom to spend study periods at home responsibly and like those in Year 12 make sure that they arrive for lessons on time. There are occasional absences from

lessons when students give other aspects of their studies, such as an approaching coursework deadline, higher priority.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. Teaching is now good in all years and students learn well as a result. In Year 9, teaching is good in all subjects except ICT, German and physical education, where it is satisfactory, and French where it is unsatisfactory. A similar situation exists in Years 10 and 11, except that the teaching is excellent in ICT, very good in design and technology and music and satisfactory in history.
29. If anything, the teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Year 9. The teachers' deep understanding of their examination syllabuses really shines through in Years 10 and 11. In ICT, for example, the teachers are able to pinpoint exactly what students need to do in order for them to gain as many marks as possible for their coursework. This means that students have a head start in examinations, because they have already gained lots of marks for their coursework. The greater the coursework component, the greater the effect on results, so students do really well in subjects like ICT and design and technology.
30. In contrast to Years 10 and 11, the teaching in ICT is only satisfactory in Year 9 and this is an illustration of one of the main differences between the teaching in these years. Subject specialists are used almost exclusively for the teaching of examination subjects in Years 10 and 11, while non-specialists teach some subjects in Year 9. These non-specialists often do not have the depth of subject knowledge that specialists have and so cannot answer questions so readily. In one Year 9 ICT lesson, for example, the students actually knew more about how to operate an interactive whiteboard than the teacher did.
31. The other main difference between the year groups lies with the way that students are managed. The school has done a great deal of work aimed at raising boys' achievement since the last inspection and has been extremely successful in this. Boys, in particular, are more difficult to manage in Year 9 because the school's good procedures for improving behaviour take time to take effect; by the time they are in Year 10 almost all boys are behaving consistently well.
32. The school's approach to improving the achievement of boys has been based on improving the quality of teaching they receive. In a science lesson, for example, all of the strategies were put into practice to produce a good lesson for a low attaining group containing some boys who were difficult to handle. The teacher had planned a lesson with several changes of activity and each of the activities was broken down into short tasks that would maintain the boys' attention. The video that was used, for example, was stopped every minute or so, in order that the teacher could reiterate the main points and ensure that all had understood them and written them down. The boys did not really get much of a chance to let their minds wander, but when they did, the teacher immediately intervened to get them back on task. Teachers who are new to the school, or who are temporary, have not been through the school's intensive training on improving teaching so are more likely to have difficulty managing boys and bringing about the same good progress that is apparent in other lessons.
33. The knock-on effect of the school's emphasis on improving teaching for boys is that lessons have become more interesting for all students. The good variety of activities and the way that work is made interesting mean that students concentrate well in lessons because they enjoy themselves. Students generally work hard and, as a

result, make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. They are clear about how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve their work, because marking is helpful, although it is better in Years 10 and 11 where the teachers can focus more tightly on what is required for the examination.

34. Throughout the school, students make good progress because the way that the school uses assessment information leads to teachers having high expectations of what their students can achieve. Parents, too, comment that one of the great strengths of the school is the way teachers expect their children to do their very best. The school takes information on each student's attainment and predicts what sort of GCSE results they should obtain. The school then adds on a bit more, to end up with a target for each student that is higher than would usually be expected. All teachers are made aware of these targets and know that this is what their performance will be judged against. In this way, teachers consistently aim high for their students and many students not only meet, but also exceed their targets. In French, however, the expectations of students' speaking skills are not high enough. In general, students do not like speaking in French, because they lack confidence. Instead of challenging these inhibitions, teachers reduce the amount of speaking to make students feel more comfortable, but, as a result, students underachieve.
35. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good. Teachers suit the work to students' capabilities and offer support through writing frames, lists of key words and individual attention. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth*, an excellent variety of activities, including role-play, engaged students throughout the lesson. Lively oral work led to an interesting written task in which students composed a letter from Lady Macbeth confessing her guilty secrets. Students structured the letter carefully, with the help of a clear writing frame, and achieved very well. A teaching assistant gave very good support. Teaching assistants play a significant role in the good learning of students in classes that they support. The assistants have a very good knowledge of how students learn best. They frequently ask questions to check how much students have understood. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, two assistants worked closely with students with learning difficulties to help them understand how electricity is produced. As a result, students felt confident to answer the teacher's questions and take a full part in the lesson. Teaching assistants are skilled at ensuring that students concentrate hard. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the assistant gave very good support to a student who worked industriously at written and computer calculations of the areas of complex shapes. The student did so well that he moved on to extension work and made better progress than the others in the group.
36. Overall, the quality of teaching in Years 9 to 11 is much better than at the time of the last inspection. At the last inspection, teaching was described as 'mainly satisfactory', but had several important weaknesses that were leading to underachievement. Teaching is now good and students achieve well.

### **Sixth form**

37. Teaching is good in the sixth form and students learn well. In the subjects inspected, teaching is very good in business studies, English literature, media studies and physics. Teaching is good in all other subjects, except for mathematics, physical education and sociology, where it is satisfactory, and French where it is unsatisfactory. Parents generally feel that teaching is good in the sixth form, but have concerns about the teaching of psychology. The inspectors looked at the teaching of psychology and found that parents' concerns were justified. The school has had

difficulty recruiting a suitably experienced and qualified teacher, so while all teachers have a very good understanding of the subject they do not all have the necessary skills to enable them to communicate this knowledge to the students. The school has already put extra support in place, both for teachers and students.

38. As in Years 10 and 11, teachers know their subjects and the examination syllabuses very well. This means that they can plan lessons that target specific areas of the syllabus very well. At the same time, their knowledge of their subjects is extensive. In English literature, the teacher is able to use a deep understanding of religion and industrial practices in order to explain the more obscure references in the works of Blake. In media studies, the teachers combine both of these elements to teach both the subject content and examination technique at the same time. Such approaches lead to students learning at a very good rate; they make good gains in their knowledge and understanding as they move through the sixth form.
39. The marking in the sixth form is not as good as that in Years 10 and 11, and is satisfactory overall. In some subjects, such as business studies, the marking is exemplary; it explains to students what they have done well while pointing out where they need to add information to improve their work. In other subjects the marking is much more variable. In French, for example, some teachers mark the work well, while others do hardly any marking. This is an example of the underlying problem with the teaching of French; the school has had difficulty in recruiting permanent teachers. As a result, some teachers do not know their students well enough to have sufficient understanding of what they already know understand and can do to allow them to plan suitably challenging lessons. Most teachers also ensure that students keep their notes well organised, but some do not and in these cases male students, in particular, are most likely to suffer from having poorly organised notes that do not provide sufficient basis for revision.
40. Many of the lessons in the sixth form are of a high quality; they are interesting and encourage students to work hard. Levels of concentration among students are very good, even when teachers adopt a more lecturing approach that students find less interesting. In general, students like to be active in lessons rather than sitting passively listening to the teacher. Students do, however, work hard in their own time as well. The cramped accommodation, together with the school's emphasis on preparing students for university, mean students in Year 13 often go home to study when they do not have lessons. The school ensures, however, that they are not left to their own devices; the school's Intranet is packed with notes and useful information that students can use to further their studies outside of lesson times.
41. There were no clear judgements on teaching in the sixth form in the last inspection report against which to judge improvement.

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

42. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements; there is good equality of access and opportunity for all students. In Year 9, all students are taught the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and two languages – French and German.
43. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum provides a satisfactory range of GCSE subjects as well as vocational GCSEs. A small group of students are provided with an alternative curriculum which is appropriate for their specific needs. This involves students

attending the local college of further education and studying courses that lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

44. The length of the taught week is below that recommended by the government, although there is no discernible impact on the attainment of students. The time allowed for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is relatively short, but the programme provides sufficient guidance on sex, drugs and health related issues because it is supplemented by extensive work in the religious education course. Despite the pressure on the curriculum there are no major inequalities in the time allocations given to the various subject areas. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. It gets off to a good start in Year 9, when students are introduced to the careers' library and supported over their choice of courses to follow for the next two years. Satisfactory use is made of the limited time available for careers' education in Years 10 and 11. Provision includes a week's work experience for all students, for which they are well prepared. However, debriefing to help students gain the maximum benefit from the experience tends to be neglected. Liaison with the Connexions service contributes to the provision for careers' guidance. At the time of the inspection, advisers were on course to complete the interview schedule for Year 11, which had earlier lagged because of a shortage of personnel.
45. The provision for students with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants have considerable expertise and are efficiently deployed to give maximum support to those who would benefit. Individual education plans provide well for students' needs. Targets are precise and take account of recommendations in the new Code of Practice. There are several recently introduced initiatives that are just beginning to have an impact on learning. For example, a commercial scheme enables students to work on computers at their own pace to improve literacy and numeracy skills. This scheme provides continuity with the work of the main feeder middle school and, as such, is a very good provision. To help students improve social skills, a scheme of work aims to improve speaking and listening, and to raise students' self-esteem. A team of mentors from the sixth form offers in-class support, at the request of subject staff.
46. The provision for gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory; the need to develop this provision is recognised in the school development plan. Whilst students still attain the very highest grades at GCSE, little is done to provide them with anything really special to make the very most of their talents.
47. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is good. The English department's coverage of reading and writing is thorough and mostly effective. A particular feature of the work is the emphasis upon reading skills. Students are taught different reading skills, including skimming and developing the use of inference. Students of all levels of attainment are taught to be reflective readers and to be aware of the deeper layers of meaning that might be contained in a text. The extent to which other departments focus upon teaching literacy as a basic skill is generally good, but there are some inconsistencies.
48. The strategy for improving numeracy skills is satisfactory. Although students' standards of numeracy are above average, there is no whole-school policy that would provide opportunities for students to consolidate and enhance their mathematical skills in the other subjects. Some departments provide good opportunities for students to practise their numeracy skills, for example design and technology, but others do very little.

49. There are very good links with the middle schools that allow the subjects to flow seamlessly from Year 8 to Year 9. Teachers from all subject areas meet with their counterparts from the middle schools to plan and develop schemes of work. Students get off to a flying start when they join St Augustine's in Year 9 and time is not wasted repeating work. There are good links with the local college of further education and students benefit from having access to the vocational courses offered there.
50. There is a good range of clubs and other activities that take place outside of lesson times; these range from sporting activities through to clubs based on specific subjects of the curriculum. Many students attend these activities, although participation is restricted because a significant number of students do not live in the immediate vicinity of the school.
51. There are very good links with the community. The Diocese has a significant influence on the school; there are strong links with the local parishes. The school Intranet provides students, parents and the wider world with very good information about St Augustine's. For example, there is a schedule for when students should hand in coursework; excellent case studies are posted onto the Intranet to support sixth form students studying English. The many links with local industries provide students in business studies with the opportunity to see theory being put into practice.
52. The curriculum is of a similar standard to that noted in the previous report.
53. Overall, there is good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All these aspects are central to the aims and ethos of the school. The school's provision is guided by the ideals of its Catholic foundation.
54. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Prayer and reflection are integral parts of class and year assemblies. There is good emphasis on the Christian precept of love: to treat others as one would wish to be treated. There is very good provision for spiritual development in religious education; it is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 where all students take the full course in GCSE. Students reflect on topics such as life and death issues, values, prejudices and reactions to dilemmas. The main liturgies of the Christian calendar are observed and there are weekly Masses for class and year groups. Students take an active part in planning and participating in these ceremonies; a recent voluntary Mass dedicated to anti-bullying attracted over 200 students. There is a daily act of collective worship that makes good provision for reflection. There is a chaplaincy team of student volunteers to help with the planning of religious ceremonies. The chapel is open all day and provides a place for quiet reflection; the chaplain attends once a week to say Mass and give support to classes and individuals. The 'Rainbows' programme of volunteers from both staff and students gives good support to students who are bereaved or who have personal difficulties. In many subject areas there is provision for students to reflect on serious humanitarian issues as they arise.
55. Provision for moral and social development is good. These aspects are fully integrated. Issues such as racism and bullying are addressed formally and the school is active in ensuring that elements of hidden racism are rectified. Students are given opportunities to study moral issues on a wider scale. These include issues of world poverty, moral aspects of war, the effects of the nuclear bomb and the work of liberal reformers who have contributed to our present welfare state. Teachers provide good role models, treating students with respect. Students have opportunities to work together in small groups. They are encouraged to discuss and debate and to listen to others with respect.



56. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Although aspects of the multi-cultural nature of modern society are covered in religious education these are not extensive. All students in Year 9 visit two places of worship of the other major world religions. These include those of Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist and Sikh faiths. There are educational links and visits with a school in Tanzania. In food studies, students study cultural aspects of Italian, Chinese, and Indian foods. In music, students study the music of different cultures. The study of non-Western art is largely limited to African art. There are displays and posters illustrating the multi-cultural world of sport. However, there is no significant emphasis on the multi-cultural nature of modern society throughout the school. There are trips to theatres and museums and opportunities to visit France and Germany.
57. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, especially with regard to provision for spiritual development. There is also an improvement in students' awareness of the contrast between rich and poor nations and of moral and social issues generally.

### **Sixth form**

58. The sixth form curriculum is good. The school provides a wide choice of courses for its students and these are chosen so that they build satisfactorily upon the subjects available in Year 11. The good links that the school maintains with other providers in the area means that students have access to an even wider range of courses. A strength of the curriculum is the good way that the courses are planned to meet the requirements of examination syllabuses; teachers paying close attention to examination criteria when they plan lessons brings this about. All students study religious education and the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
59. The courses meet the needs of the students satisfactorily and offer good equality of access. However, there are concerns that a small number of students are placed on courses where they have little chance of gaining a grade. For example, a small number of students studying for A-level physics were not predicted to gain a pass grade, given their GCSE grades on entry to the course, but were still allowed to follow the course. Different courses are offered in the same subject, such as the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course and A-level course in information technology, so that students can choose the type of course that suits them best.
60. The school makes good provision for enrichment activities. Students involve themselves in many school and community-based projects, which are successful in helping them to develop responsibility and self-confidence. The curriculum is also successful in offering a variety of other opportunities ranging from sport through to music and drama. Some students, however, feel that they would like to know more about other cultures so they could improve their understanding of current affairs.
61. Provision for careers' education is unsatisfactory. Students receive good support in some respects, for instance from the head of sixth form over university applications. Occasional assemblies and a sixth form visit to a higher education fair provide some useful input. Those on vocational courses benefit from the guidance built into their studies. On balance though, present arrangements are not adequately structured to ensure that the needs of the increasing numbers of students, following a greater diversity of courses, are all catered for effectively. The Connexions adviser sees students on a self-referral basis but students find that time for this is somewhat limited.

62. The curriculum has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS and A-levels has been managed well and there is a much broader range of subjects now on offer so a much broader range of students is staying on at school. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

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

63. Good attention is paid to students' welfare and guidance. They benefit from a strong focus on academic effort within a friendly and caring community. Management of behaviour has improved and is good. Attendance procedures are also better and are now very good. Arrangements for assessing and recording students' academic achievements and for using this information to promote their further progress are also very good. The overall quality of care has improved from the previous inspection and the use made of assessment data is much better than before.
64. Teachers have high expectations about behaviour and attention to work and generally uphold these to good effect. Students grow in understanding that they must act sensibly, work hard and show care and respect towards others. When the lesson content is interesting this in itself normally prompts good behaviour. Teachers usually correct any loss of attention quickly but there are instances when some teachers lack effective strategies. Well-structured sanctions are in place and are used appropriately when behaviour falls below the expected standards. Sanctions include reasonable use of exclusion when really poor behaviour occasionally occurs. A rewards system is in place as well to mark particular effort or achievement, though some students would like their successes to be recognised more often. A very good framework of support is in place for the few students who have ongoing difficulties in controlling their behaviour. Pastoral staff liaise successfully with the special educational needs co-ordinator to support such students.
65. Good procedures are in place to resolve any problems with bullying or other harassment. Parents and students are mostly happy that any bullying that occurs is dealt with well. The school is not complacent about such issues; teachers and students in the chaplaincy team have recently helped pastoral staff review the anti-bullying policy. The school gives good attention to meeting the needs of particular groups of students; for instance, students with special educational needs receive very good personal support from staff. Selected students, including some with special educational needs, benefit from support extended to them in class by volunteer sixth form mentors. Careful attention is given to supporting the needs of any travellers' children who attend the school, and considerable effort has been made to improve disabled access to the buildings for students, staff and visitors. A support scheme is available for any who have suffered any form of loss.
66. Monitoring of attendance is very good. Previous weaknesses have been tackled effectively. If any student fails to arrive there is a prompt phone call home unless an explanation has already been received. Administrative staff who make these calls build up an understanding with the parents of those involved and this helps to bring about improvements in attendance. Persistent lateness is followed up as well as absence. Registers are now taken in each lesson. There are occasional cross-checks between these registers and the official ones taken at the start of the morning and afternoon, and these have reasonable success in discouraging students from missing lessons during the day. They cannot be done more often as they are very time-consuming. The school plans to overcome this difficulty by enhancing the computerised registration system. A strict line is taken about granting permission for

students to miss school for family holidays; such absences are not authorised at key times such as during statutory tests. This tough stance is proving effective in reducing the time lost by holiday absences. Good arrangements are in place to supply students with work if an absence is prolonged for other reasons. A start has recently been made on comparing the attendance of boys and girls. Records are being compiled to identify any trends so that any problem can be tackled. Similarly the attendance of the few students of minority ethnic groups is analysed. Pastoral staff receive good support in their efforts from the education welfare officer. The school plans to buy in extra hours of her time to supplement the limited allocation currently available.

67. Students' other personal needs also receive very good attention, for instance trained first aiders are readily available to look after any who become unwell. Good procedures are followed to respond to the child protection concerns that arise from time to time, with good efforts made to liaise effectively with social services when such involvement is relevant. Arrangements regarding health and safety are good; very thorough procedures are in place. For the most part these are applied successfully.
68. The learning support department places great emphasis on the personal development of students with special educational needs and there are good links with heads of year. The co-ordinator and teaching assistants are accessible to students during the school day if problems arise. Recently, a scheme of mentoring, led by teaching assistants, has been organised to offer further support to students with learning difficulties. Links with outside agencies are good. The local education authority's support services give valued help in assessing students' needs and advising on programmes of work.
69. The procedures that the school has put into place for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. A substantial amount of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the school. There are established routines for sharing information with departments and these lead to the setting of progress targets for students. In Year 9, for example, students are tested at regular intervals to measure their standards against National Curriculum criteria with systems in place to check on the progress that they make. In English, mathematics and science, for example, the results of regular tests are recorded and comparison made with the targets that have been set for them. This leads to teachers and students reviewing progress and setting future learning targets. The procedures continue into Years 10 and 11 with the school adding additional data that provides further information about how well subjects and individual students are progressing and this helps ensure students achieve their full potential.
70. Overall, the use of assessment information is satisfactory. The school makes good use of assessment information to influence the curriculum. Teachers are kept informed about how well students achieve in subjects and the information is used to improve the quality of learning. The school uses information on students' entry in Year 9 to identify teaching groups. In mathematics, for example, the data is used to place students into sets so that they have work that is appropriate for them, whilst the school tracks individual performance to ensure that students are in appropriate groups as they move through the school. Many subjects use assessment information very well to track progress and improve standards. In science, very good analysis of test results is used to identify weaknesses and help drive up standards, whilst in ICT the close monitoring of students' progress leads to the setting and achievement of very high standards. There are, however, inconsistencies in using assessment

information to the same high level in other subjects. In physical education assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because of the lack of clarity in using the criteria. In modern foreign languages assessment is not used to identify strategies to improve students' writing, whilst assessment planning for the monitoring of student progress in citizenship has not yet started.

71. The assessment of students with special educational needs is good. The learning support department has a range of standardised tests to complement information passed on by middle schools. The data is well used in the writing of targets for individual education plans. Achievement criteria are precise and are easy to measure.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

72. The same very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress exist in the sixth form as for the main school. The school uses students' GCSE performance alongside national data on attainment to guide students in subject choices, to set targets and to predict future attainment. There is a good match of actual grades with predicted targets. There is regular testing and assessment of performance in subjects with students well informed about assessment criteria for external examination. The achievement of individual students is closely monitored through the use of progress sheets that measure progress against target grades. Strengths and weaknesses are identified. In science, for example, frequent reference is made to past examination questions, examiners' reports and mark schemes and used to inform students about expected standards. Whereas most subjects have very good procedures and make good use of assessment information, a small minority are not up to the same high standard as the rest. They do not analyse examination results rigorously and students' progress is not closely tracked against their prior attainment. The school has made good improvement in addressing weaknesses in the systems and the effectiveness of the use it makes of information.

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

73. Academic guidance is good. Subject teachers are there to help when students need it but at the same time they are prompted to take increasing responsibility for their own work. Other aspects of personal support and guidance for sixth formers are satisfactory.
74. Advice starts before students first join the sixth form. They hear at an open evening about the courses on offer and are able to attend a taster day with sample lessons in their preferred options. Good and generally successful efforts are made to provide the combination of courses that students want. A few are not quite content. For some individuals this arises because a particular course combination proved impossible and so one of their courses does not match their preference. A few others feel that despite the advance information they were given, the content of one of their courses is different from what they expected.
75. Subject teachers generally support students very well. Students speak appreciatively of how willing teachers are to find extra time to help if they need support with any aspect of their work. Systems are in place to follow up unexplained absence from lessons or concerns about work and parents are told of any serious problem. At the same time students are appropriately given growing responsibility for organising their own work and their use of study time.

76. Support from the pastoral team is satisfactory. Tutors generally know students well; quite often they make the transition with most of their tutor group from the main school into the sixth form. Suitable steps are taken to integrate students who transfer into the sixth form from other schools. One aspect of guidance, however, is underdeveloped. Some of the time previously used for daily assemblies has been freed up to be available for tutors to give one-to-one support to students. This functions well if a tutor or a student himself or herself takes the initiative to resolve a concern. However, there is no routine to ensure all students meet formally with their tutor from time to time, so as to cater for any who, for instance, might benefit from discussion of their overall effort or progress. This is an emerging concern because of the increasing numbers in the sixth form. One or two fear that, despite the strong drive for academic success, their individual personal needs are in danger of being forgotten in the crowd. A mentoring scheme is now supporting the highest achieving students and it is notable that a hint of resentment is occasionally evident from those not included in the scheme. The head of sixth form is active in supporting students who are applying to university but the lack of structure for delivering careers' advice also detracts from the quality of guidance.
77. Satisfactory attention is given to monitoring students' attendance. Procedures are better than they were at the previous inspection. The necessary checks are in place with regard to students claiming education maintenance allowance. There is a prompt phone call home if any student misses a required registration session without explanation. This good routine contributes to the way attendance has improved. Attendance in lessons is monitored consistently. However, routines for recording when students are actually in school during the day are not tight enough. This is because Year 13 students who spend study periods at home often forget to sign in or out when they arrive or leave the school in the course of the day. A system is being tried out whereby Year 13 have to be present at only one official registration session a day. While this has attractions in terms of promoting students' sense of personal responsibility it adds to uncertainties about which students are in the building at any time. The lack of accurate records causes a degree of concern. For instance in the event of an emergency evacuation, staff check that all in the building leave. However, the incomplete signing in and out records are inadequate for additional checks and are a potential cause of confusion. The school already has plans in place to introduce an electronic registration system.

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

78. Parents are happy with the provision made by the school. They especially like the way that teachers encourage all students to work hard and help them to make good progress. Staff are keen to work in partnership with parents and, as at the previous inspection, they do much to keep them supplied with relevant information. Nevertheless, a minority of parents would still like to be more closely involved in their children's education.
79. Reporting to parents about students' progress is good both in the main school and in the sixth form. Each year parents receive both an annual report and an interim review. Annual reports, like the reviews, show by summary grades how a student is doing and how well he or she is expected to get on in statutory tests or public examinations. In addition they generally give a very helpful picture of what has been learnt in each subject and point out the next steps in learning needed to bring about further progress. Occasionally, however, comments lack clarity, for instance in non-examination physical education. Parents come in good numbers to the consultation

meetings offered every year and the school makes good efforts to offer meetings at an alternative time for parents who cannot come on the usual evening. On an ongoing basis they aim to keep parents informed of any concerns. This is mostly effective in gaining parents' support, though one or two parents feel information is too slow to reach them. There is room to expand the system of writing home when a student makes a particular improvement or achieves particular success. Links with parents of students with special educational needs are very good. They are kept fully informed and involved, so that they understand and appreciate the way that individual education plans support students.

80. Other information for parents is very good. A really notable feature is the use of the school website, which tells parents and students about the course content in different subjects as well as making newsletters and other general information available. Traditional channels for informing parents are also very well organised; for instance, as well as an introductory meeting for parents before their children join Year 9, a very helpful booklet tells them about routines and the work that is to be tackled. The governors' annual report and the prospectus both give a good range of relevant information. An informative, interesting newsletter is sent home every week. A separate prospectus tells students and parents about the sixth form courses.
81. Parents make a good contribution to the work of the school. Many give regular contributions to the school fund to help the school meet its share of the cost of buildings' projects. Parents support their children's attendance at extra-curricular events and those in the parents' association contribute particularly through organising events that promote drugs and alcohol awareness. The links between the school and parents of students with special educational needs are good. Parents invariably support the Annual Reviews of statements and write with appreciation of the provision the school makes for their offspring. There are ample opportunities through telephone conversations for parents to discuss matters of interest with the co-ordinator, and to meet her at parents' evenings. Parents take a personal interest in the targets of the individual education plans and ask what they can do at home to complement the work of the school.
82. Most students who join the sixth form are satisfied with their choice. They are happy to continue their studies in a friendly environment that at the same time has high expectations of their achievements. They appreciate improvements such as the recent refurbishment of science laboratories. For the most part they feel very well supported by their teachers and in some areas such as business education they are particularly enthusiastic about the provision. They have reservations about some aspects, such as the way they feel the accommodation is too cramped for their increasing numbers, to the extent that at times it is hard to find somewhere suitable to study in a free period. They are unhappy when the computers in their study area are out of order. A considerable number, more than half according to the school's own survey last year, would like to see careers' guidance enhanced. Some feel the school could do more to take their views into account. Their reservations are justified at least in part. On balance though, students find all the benefits offered by the sixth form much more than outweigh the drawbacks.

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

83. The Principal and senior staff lead the school very well. Working as a team, they have taken a school with considerable underachievement and turned it into a good school where students all achieve well, regardless of gender or background. Such success strongly reflects the school's values and ethos that stress the importance of providing

a good quality of education for all students; the excellent work on providing access for the physically impaired on a very difficult site is clear evidence of the school's commitment to inclusion. The same commitment is also seen in the work of the governing body, in the way they have deliberately spent a significant amount of time getting their policy on race relations correct, rather than say just adopting a template approach; they mean to have policies which will have an impact.

84. Governors carry out their responsibilities well and their attention to ensuring that they meet all statutory requirements is excellent. Nevertheless, the real driving force for improvement comes from the Principal who is passionate about providing the best for students. She is very active in her approach. Students know that they can come and see her at any time; she is frequently to be found dashing out of her office to grab a passing student to find out how they are getting on or what is happening about a particular event, such as fund raising, for example. This interest in students has led to students themselves playing a part in the school's leadership, through the various year and school councils. Their opinions count and they can make a real difference to what goes on in school.
85. The school could not, however, improve on the quality of leadership alone and this is where the senior managers really come into their own. The quality of management is every bit as good as the leadership. The school has only one deputy Principal who carries much of the burden for the day-to-day running of the school, which operates most effectively. Much of the impetus for progress has been provided by the improvement in assessment and the way that data is used; both are the responsibilities of senior managers. Much of the leadership and management provided by middle managers is also of a good quality, although it is very good in design and technology and unsatisfactory in French.
86. After the last inspection, the school's managers threw themselves into addressing the issues raised. The actions taken have been exceptionally effective, to the extent that all of the issues have been dealt with most successfully, and the really important ones, such as dealing with underachievement and improving the quality of teaching, are now significant strengths of the school. These successes are a result of very good planning and targeting exactly the areas which most need improving. That the school could bring about such improvement on relatively low funding, while at the same time building up sufficient capital to allow the payment of the school's proportion of a major building project is evidence of the outstanding financial planning at the school.
87. However, the school's managers do not concentrate solely on dealing with the big issues. The very good way that they check up on what is happening in the school and take actions to improve, even when things appear to be going well, mean that smaller, but still important improvements are made. In science, for example, students were not performing as well as in English, so the Principal put into place specific actions to improve the department's performance and the results are seen in the improving examination results. Such improvements are observed in almost all subjects and are helped by the detailed information that heads of department and the senior managers have from the results of reviews of every department by the senior managers, together with outside consultants, that take place every other year. The one failing in this approach has led to the school's main weakness in provision. The school was aware of underachievement in French, but nobody could find the reason for the underachievement. As a result, this is one of the reasons why the school plans to drop foreign languages as a compulsory subject. This approach is mistaken as the

weakness lies in the teaching, which, if corrected, could ensure that students receive just as good a quality of education as they do in other subjects.

88. The leadership and management of the learning support department are very good. The co-ordinator has been in post for only six months, but has already diagnosed areas for improvement and implemented new schemes. She is very enthusiastic and is ably supported by teaching assistants highly committed to helping students learn.
89. The school generally has enough staff to meet its requirements, although there are clear differences in the quality of teaching between classes taught by specialists and non-specialists, especially in ICT and physical education. The school's strategy for performance management is good. The objectives that teachers and their line managers agree each year must include a commitment to improving students' progress as well as other improvements to the teacher's professional practice. The effectiveness of the strategy has contributed significantly to the recent, and continuing, improvements in the school's standards.
90. The professional development of staff contributes well to their effectiveness. The school has good procedures for deciding the training that is undertaken by its teachers, and the focus is clearly on the needs of the school. There is a satisfactory induction programme for teachers new to the school. Newly qualified teachers are given good support both from senior management and from personal mentors who are often the heads of subject departments. However, in a minority of cases, the arrangements for more experienced teachers who join the school have not ensured that they benefit quickly enough from the good work previously done on, for example, improving students' behaviour in lessons or raising the achievement of boys.
91. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that it provides the best possible value. It compares its performance with that of similar schools and aims high by consistently expecting subjects to produce significantly better results than those suggested by the students' performance on entry to the school. There are comprehensive systems for gathering the views of students and parents, so that the school is consistently looking to improve. Given the school's relatively low level of funding, it provides very good value for money.

## **Sixth form**

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

92. The sixth form benefits from the same quality of leadership as the rest of the school and the improvement has been equally as impressive. Much of the drive for improvement emanates from the Principal, while other senior staff have ensured that the assessment systems and the use of data are equally as effective in raising standards as those in the main school. The deputy Principal has ensured that the expansion of the curriculum is meeting the needs of the increasing numbers of students who are staying on into the sixth form. The governors are equally aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form as they are in the rest of the school.
93. There are, however, some areas of weakness in the guidance offered to students. The management of the pastoral system is not as effective as it could be because too much emphasis is placed on the student taking the initiative for seeking help, rather than having a formal system whereby students meet with their tutors. A few students are allowed onto courses with limited chance of success and intervention is not quick



enough to ensure that they do not fail. The careers advice that students receive is unsatisfactory because it is not structured well enough.

94. Nevertheless, there are areas of great strength in the management of subjects, such as in English, physics, media studies and business studies, with no significant weaknesses. As a result, progress since the last inspection has been at least good in almost all of the subjects inspected and standards have improved considerably.

### ***Resources***

95. The school has sufficient staff for its needs and ensures that they operate well by using the same good systems for training and performance management as those in the rest of the school. Accommodation is cramped, but there are just enough rooms. However, one of the students' biggest complaints is about the lack of space in their common room and the difficulty of finding space to study away from lessons. The school is addressing this at present by allowing Year 13 students to study at home when they do not have lessons and are supporting them in this through a very good use of new technology. The school's Intranet is available to all students and their parents and is packed with useful information, including lesson notes and links from each of the subjects. Generally, the school is well resourced, despite its relatively low funding, because the monies available are used so efficiently and targeted to exactly the places where they will have the biggest impact.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

96. In order to improve the quality of education still further, the school's managers should:

- (1) Improve achievement in French by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students are capable of in terms of speaking in Years 9 to 11
  - ensuring that all teachers in the sixth form are aware of their students' attainment and capabilities and teach to the same high standards as others. (Paragraphs 34 and 39)
- (2) Ensure that gifted and talented students are stretched to the full by providing specific activities for them.\* (Paragraph 46)
- (3) Ensure that all new teachers are brought up to date as quickly as possible on the ways that the school uses to bring about good achievement among boys. (Paragraph 32)
- (4) Provide a more structured approach to careers advice for students in the sixth form.\* (Paragraph 61)

### Sixth form

- (1) Ensure that the temporary arrangements for teaching psychology do not reduce the achievement of students by guaranteeing that all teachers have the skills necessary to transmit their knowledge to students.\* (Paragraph 37)
- (2) Ensure better personal support for students by providing a more structured approach to contact with tutors.\* (Paragraph 76)

The school's management may also wish to address the minor weakness of improving the co-ordination of the teaching of numeracy skills in Years 9 to 11.

The school already has plans in place to address the issues marked \*.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	112
	Sixth form	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		69

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 9 – 11</b>							
Number	5	22	40	39	5	1	0
Percentage	4	20	36	35	4	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	4	19	26	12	3	0	0
Percentage	6	30	41	19	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	617	244
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	33	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y9 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	6	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	58	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	13

<b>Student mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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13
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## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	101	109	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	80	82
	Girls	102	85	82
	Total	188	165	164
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	90 (80)	79 (81)	78 (82)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (53)	55 (58)	40 (47)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	84	87
	Girls	104	89	89
	Total	196	173	176
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	95 (88)	82 (80)	84 (78)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	62 (51)	54 (44)	50 (36)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	112	91	203

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	66	106	108
	Girls	80	91	91
	Total	146	197	199
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	72 (68)	97 (98)	98 (99)
	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 student	School	50.2 (47.5)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	39	35	74
	Average point score per candidate	15.8	20.9	18.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	31	33	64	13	8	21
	Average point score per candidate	15.1	19.1	17.1	11.5	12.8	12.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

### ***Ethnic background of students***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
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***

<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
769	18	1
20	1	0
19	0	0
9	2	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
8	1	0
4	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	2	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
11	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.24
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.7

#### **Education support staff: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	288

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	23.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2327681
Total expenditure	2257620
Expenditure per student	2723
Balance brought forward from previous year	103974
Balance carried forward to next year	174035





### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	861
Number of questionnaires returned	191

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	52	8	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	51	5	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	57	5	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	56	12	5	3
The teaching is good.	28	59	5	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	43	19	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	37	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	45	13	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	42	42	6	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	52	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	40	18	8	19

### Other issues raised by parents

Some parents were concerned about the quality of teaching in psychology in the sixth form.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Standards and examination results in English literature are particularly high.
- Good leadership and management have led to significant improvements in standards.
- The quality of teaching is good so students achieve well.

#### Area for improvement

- Some lessons lack pace and challenge with the result that students learn relatively slowly.

97. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were well above the national average for all schools and well above the national average for similar schools. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results have been consistently well above average over the past four years. In 2002, results in English were better than those obtained in mathematics and science.
98. In 2002, the GCSE results in English were above average and in English literature were well above. The results in literature were all the more creditable because the school entered many more students than is usually the case nationally. Overall, girls were further above the average for girls than the boys were above the average for boys. However, boys did better in English literature than they did in English and their achievement was close to that of the girls. In English, results in 2002 were similar to those obtained in 2001 and better than those in 2000. In English literature, results obtained in 2002 were significantly better than those obtained in 2001 and 2000.
99. Standards being currently attained by the ends of Years 9 and 11 are consistent with test and examination results obtained in 2002 and are well above average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, including those with special educational needs, achievement by the ends of Years 9 and 11 is good.
100. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is of a high quality throughout Years 9 to 11. They take part in a good range of whole-class, paired and group discussions. When they have to deliver a prepared speech, students understand how to refine what they have to say and are willing to incorporate the recommendations of others. Higher attainers possess good vocabularies and can speak at length with confidence. Most students can explain themselves more fully when questioned. Lower attainers lack the confidence and cogency of higher attaining students but nevertheless can explain themselves with clarity. A number of examples of good speaking and listening were seen. In a Year 10 class, for example, students became absorbed in discussing how different images of war were created in a variety of photographs they were studying. Many were quick to spot and explain what they felt might be politically inspired bias.
101. Reading is a strength throughout Years 9 to 11. In each of the years, students study demanding literature, including pre-twentieth century plays, poems and novels. Most higher and middle attaining students understand plots and have considerable insight into how characters are created. The standard of reading aloud is usually good. Most

students read fluently and are able to project their voices. Most students can read independently, though the lowest attainers are dependent upon their teachers to help them establish meaning. A particular feature of the work is that students across a very full range of attainment are required to undertake demanding tasks. In Year 11, for example, students can make detailed comparisons between stories by Conan Doyle and Steinbeck. The nature of the task and the level of support needed vary from group to group, but even so very many students are able to consider the different layers of meaning in what they study. Lower attaining students tend to be aware of the gist of what they read rather than engaging with the text itself.

102. By the end of Year 9 students are familiar with different types of writing, including description, narrative, diaries and poetry. By the end of Year 11 they go on to consolidate their skills. Very good writing was seen on a variety of topics and higher and middle attaining students know how to adapt their style to be appropriate for their chosen subject. Thus, for example, good, well-structured work was seen on media topics and ingenious variations in sentence structure were seen in more atmospheric writing. Many students redraft their work in order to improve its quality. Inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar mar the work of some lower attaining students. Students' use of ICT is satisfactory.
103. The extent to which other departments focus upon teaching literacy as a basic skill is generally good, but there are some inconsistencies. Across the full curriculum, students learn and use a full range of subject-specific terms. A good range of opportunities are provided for students to write at length, especially in English, religious education and art. In science students submit investigational reports as part of their coursework and have some opportunities to present their views on matters of current interest, such as the use of the MMR vaccination. In design and technology students write evaluations of products and processes, appropriately writing in the third person. In modern foreign languages, the tasks set requiring students to read and write are more limited than might be expected. In history, whilst some tasks do require students to produce extended writing, such opportunities are less in Year 9 than are normally seen. Strategies generally ensure that students' presentation is of a good standard.
104. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 9 to 11 is good. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. When teachers have very good subject knowledge they can introduce students to a whole new vocabulary and range of ideas. Because the teachers are themselves enthusiastic and are keen to impart their understanding, the lesson moves along at a brisk pace, students become absorbed in what they are doing and learning is rapid. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson on how 'the haunted house' is presented in literature and film. Students studied some well-selected extracts from films and, with the help of their teacher, learnt how to analyse and describe the effects created. When teachers use good resources in their teaching, students' interest is aroused and their understanding is increased. During the inspection, for example, a theatre group visited the school to perform *Macbeth* in front of Year 9. In a lesson that followed the performance, it was clear that students had developed a much better understanding of what happened in the play and of how the events were linked. Students also engaged well in some lively and, at times, entertaining discussion about features of the production, such as the use of sound effects and the costumes worn by the cast.
105. Most teachers set tasks that take into account students' prior attainment. This means that the work is relevant to students' needs, yet also contains a good level of challenge. Teachers usually introduce variety into lessons. This helps students to

concentrate well and creates a busy, yet orderly, environment for learning. When teaching is less effective, the work does not adequately take into account students' prior attainment and so does not sufficiently challenge them. In other lessons the pace is slow, the work lacks variety and this leads to a lack of attention and some inappropriate behaviour. Much of the marking is of good quality. It provides guidance on what students need to do to improve and generally encourages them to take a pride in what they produce. However, a small proportion of the marking is not thorough and so does not provide students with the same level of support.

106. Leadership and management of the department are good and have led to significant progress since the last inspection. Strong teamwork and a clear focus on improvement are features of the department. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- The quality of leadership and management is good and is leading to improved standards and teaching.
- GCSE results are improving at a rate greater than the national trend.
- There are very good methods of monitoring and tracking students' progress so students can see how they are progressing and where they need to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- The whole school numeracy handbook needs to be developed further in order to give students more opportunities to practise their mathematics.
- Students are asked to explain themselves in the very best lessons, but this does not happen in all lessons.

107. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were above average in comparison with the national average for all schools. When compared to other schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were average. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science but below those in English. Results had been well above average for several years, but dipped a little in 2002. Over the last five years the trend in results has been broadly in line with the national trend. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average and these students achieved better than expected from their results at the end of Year 9. Results are improving faster than the national trend.

108. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents a good level of achievement for all students. The school has developed strategies to improve attainment. It has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into the planning of lessons and the work that students do has been planned well to support a variety of abilities. This has had a positive impact on learning. Higher attaining students demonstrate good algebraic skills. For example, they can solve simultaneous linear equations algebraically and then quickly progress to solving them using graphical methods. The measuring skills of the middle attainers are good and they are confident in applying these skills. They understand how to calculate the areas of circles and apply those skills well when solving compound problems involving parts of the circle. Lower attaining students understand how to work out areas of shapes with triangles

and rectangles and they consolidate these well using computers to support their work.

109. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average, which represents a good level of achievement for all students given their attainment in Year 9. A good feature of students' work is the quality of their coursework; students are developing good skills in investigations. The higher attaining students effectively apply the mathematics they have learnt previously. For example, when carrying out the data-handling investigation, the higher attaining students use spreadsheets well to calculate the standard deviation of the samples so that they can compare results and analyse them. The lower attaining students work systematically through the tasks. When investigating the T-Totals, they explain their results clearly in table form and can describe the mathematical structure of the table. Although lower attaining students demonstrate a good understanding of fractions and can add and subtract them accurately, they do not always simplify their answers. Higher attaining students are extending their understanding of trigonometry by using the sine and cosine rules to find angles, lengths and areas of any triangles. The understanding of averages is good and middle attaining students can calculate the estimated mean of grouped frequencies by taking the midpoint values.
110. Standards of numeracy are generally above average throughout the school. Mental arithmetic skills are frequently practised at the beginning of lessons and this develops the students' mental agility. Students generally contribute well in class discussions. They confidently explain the methods they use to work out answers while the rest of the class listens attentively. When given the opportunity, students work well together, discussing their work with each other usefully. Students use ICT well, particularly in their coursework in Years 10 and 11.
111. Although students' standards of numeracy are above average, there is no whole-school policy that would provide opportunities for students to consolidate and enhance their mathematical skills in the other subjects. Teachers in these subjects have had training to acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. Some departments provide good opportunities for students to practise their numeracy skills, for example design and technology, but others do very little. Students' data handling skills are sound and they use them well in citizenship when examining statistics about marriage and life issues. In art there are missed opportunities for students to develop an awareness of spatial ideas and properties of shapes.
112. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress, in line with the rest of the students. They are placed in small classes and teaching assistants work very well with teachers to ensure that students are integrated in their lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts.
113. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and, in the better lessons, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates students to want to learn. Students respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. In the majority of lessons, students are encouraged to explain how they arrived at their answers and this contributes well to the intellectual effort they make. There are good quality interventions and explanations and the lessons generally proceed at a brisk pace, motivating students to want to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well with activities that maintain interest and motivation. This was demonstrated in a lesson where the teacher planned the lesson so students

applied their previous understanding of areas when calculating volumes of prisms. The teacher gave students a variety of cylinders to measure and then to calculate the volumes. The students worked well with each other and quickly learnt how to calculate the volumes of cylinders and then applied the same principles to calculating the volume of triangular prisms.

114. The management of students is good in all years and the students respond accordingly; behaviour is good and students work well with each other. Students generally listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions. Standards of presentation are generally good, particularly by the higher and middle attaining students. Students set their work out clearly and structure answers well so that they are developing good practice; it is less evident in the work of lower attaining students. Homework is generally set regularly and supports the work that students do in class. There is some good quality marking when teachers indicate where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.
115. The department is led and managed well, and there is a clear emphasis from all teachers on improving standards. The school provides students with a wide range of opportunities to extend their mathematics. In Year 9, the National Numeracy Strategy is used to raise standards. This same principle of the three-part lesson is used to plan lessons in Years 10 and 11 and lunchtime sessions are arranged so that students can gain extra support in preparation for national tests. There are booster classes for Year 9 that prepare students well for their national tests. The information from assessments is analysed very well and is used effectively to place students in groups so that the work set is at an appropriately challenging level for all students. It ensures that all students are given the best opportunity by planning work that is appropriate for them. Procedures for tracking students' performance as they progress through the school are very good. There is good guidance given to students so that they know what they need to do to improve. The assessments are used well to place students in sets appropriate to their ability so that the work they do challenges them at their level and they have the best opportunities to succeed.
116. Progress since the last inspection has been good. There have been significant improvements in the results of national tests at GCSE and teaching has improved.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good so students achieve well and do better in GCSE examinations than might be expected in relation to their standards when they entered the school.
- The department makes very good use of examination and test results to identify weaknesses in students' achievement and then devise strategies for improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, students do not always listen when the teacher is speaking. Hence they do not learn as effectively as they might.
- Teachers do not always demand as much as they could from higher attaining students, in terms of the speed at which these students work and learn.

117. In the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds, results were above the national average and average in comparison with schools taking students from similar backgrounds.



Students' results in science were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. The relative results of boys and girls vary from year to year and there is no particular pattern. Results are usually well above average, but dipped a little in 2002.

118. The 2002 GCSE examination results were well above the national average. More girls than boys gained grades A\* to C but more boys than girls gained grades A and A\*. GCSE results improved significantly between 2001 and 2002. Students generally did better in physics topics than they did in other aspects of the science examinations.
119. Students' overall achievement in science is good by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students entered the school with standards that were above the national average and they gain GCSE results that are well above average. Hence they gain better results than might be expected, given their attainment on entry to the school.
120. Standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average Year 11, reflecting the standards indicated by the 2002 test and examination results. The majority of students have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are currently studying and secure recall of earlier work. In some groups there are particularly good standards. For example, a higher attaining group in Year 10 successfully investigated the factors affecting the rate of electrolysis and used their knowledge of the underlying theory to explain the trends in their results. Students generally have good practical skills. For example, a Year 11 middle attaining group worked very carefully and precisely when investigating the path of a ray of light as it travelled through a semi-circular glass block.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. It is more consistently good in Year 9, where the department is working hard to implement the ideas and suggestions from the national Key Stage 3 strategy, than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan lessons carefully, choose appropriate learning activities to meet students' needs and provide a good variety of activities to maintain their interest. Students with special educational needs receive good support and are enabled to make progress that matches that of the others in their group. Teachers use some very good 'starter' activities to get students thinking early in the lesson. For example an imaginative 'bingo' game enabled students to enjoy testing their understanding of respiration and photosynthesis.
122. There are some individual lessons in which teaching is very good. In these lessons, resources and activities are imaginative and stimulating and there is a strong emphasis on the main ideas that students need to understand and remember. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on the structure of the atom, there were unusual models of atoms, partly imaginary, that involved cups of tea, biscuits and books. Students had clearly remembered these images from earlier lessons and were keen to use them again. Students concentrated very well as interesting demonstrations reinforced basic ideas and they made very good progress in understanding the existence of isotopes.
123. In some lessons, although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there are, nevertheless, weaknesses. In particular, students do not always listen when the teacher is speaking and so, in parts of the lesson, they are not learning as quickly and efficiently as they should. In some lessons for higher attainers, teachers could expect more from students in terms of the speed at which they work and learn. In these groups, some boys are rather relaxed and slow to get on with written work while

some girls tend to concentrate too much on the immaculate presentation of their notes rather than being required to think hard about the scientific ideas.

124. All teachers mark students' work regularly, often giving encouragement as well as clear indications to students of where they have gone wrong. However, sometimes teachers do not correct poor setting down of calculations or spelling mistakes in important scientific words. The department makes very good use of regular tests for students. After each test, students are informed about the levels or grades at which they are working and then helped to identify what they need to do to get to the next level and eventually to meet their targets.
125. The leadership and management of the subject are good overall. The head of department provides very effective leadership, teachers and technicians work well together as a team and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. In a very valuable departmental meeting, the head of department presented a detailed analysis of Year 10's module test results so that weaknesses could be identified and suitable strategies devised to improve any aspects where students were not doing as well as they were in others. However, the various monitoring procedures that the head of department has introduced since he arrived have not yet been in place for long enough to be fully effective in raising the quality of all the teaching in the department to that of the best.
126. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection in 1997. GCSE results and test results at the age of 14 are both similar to those at that time. However, teaching has improved and the department has made good progress in overcoming the weaknesses identified in the previous report.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and students are achieving well in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' achievements in drawing and painting are good because of the emphasis that has been placed upon these aspects.
- Computers are used well for research purposes.

### Areas for improvement:

- Gifted and talented students are not identified so are not really stretched.
- The lack of television and video equipment limits students' knowledge and understanding of the world of art beyond the classroom.

127. GCSE results rose from 2000 to 2001 but fell dramatically in 2002 and were average. Girls achieved better than boys did.
128. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard of work in drawing, painting and knowledge of artists' styles of working is average. Students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their average standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 9. Students work in a wider range of materials than was recorded at the time of the previous inspection, including clay. Computers are used well for research and, often, for homework. Sketchbooks are used for observational and imaginative drawings but not for recording first ideas or experimental studies. They are not used to record

glossaries of new technical words and because entries are not dated sketchbooks fail to provide reliable evidence of progress over time. Too few opportunities are available for students to discuss ideas before working and, in the case of the Cubist flat drawings, to share concerns or possible strategies for moving forward. Whilst higher attainers are prepared to take risks in challenging situations other students hide their concerns by laughing at their own efforts.

129. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is above average and shows good achievement. Little difference is seen between the boys' and girls' attainment. Students display good craft skills as they produce relief clay tiles based on studies of moving figures. Their knowledge of how to overcome technical problems in ceramics is better than their understanding of how to judge quality in their work, because no time has been devoted to drawing students' attention to the differences between the technical, construction skills and the aesthetic element. Students are not given time to identify success criteria ahead of undertaking the task and this limits their learning. In Year 11, higher attaining girls and boys in one group are held back by the sequential nature of the planning sheet provided. In another class, without this constraint, students make better progress as they move straight from a brainstorm of such themes as 'cells' and 'arabesque' into using ICT and books for research purposes. All students find the lists of descriptive words helpful in this year's examination paper. Whilst sequential preparation for the forthcoming examination is strong, students at this level do not present a review sheet showing the drawing together of their ideas and the reasons for the decisions made.
130. Students with special needs receive the same care and attention as everyone else. The teacher knows the students with learning difficulties in literacy, numeracy or with behavioural problems and provides suitable support. The gifted and talented students are just being identified, however, and are not given any extra challenges to help them attain their potential. Currently provision for literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory, but not as good as that for the development of ICT skills. Although the department has had training in these areas, the development of literacy is limited to the posting of a few key words on the walls and numeracy is only considered in terms of the scaling up of drawings. There are missed opportunities, for example, for using timelines to locate artists or for considering geometrical forms when studying Cubism or Pop art. Level and grade descriptors are not published in wall displays and as a result students are prevented from checking how well they are doing.
131. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9 and also in Years 10 and 11. The school now has an extra, part-time, teacher who is working well with the head of department to raise standards. However, the impact of the new teacher is not yet fully bearing fruit in Year 9 as an emphasis has been placed on the examination classes. The strengths of teaching are in the teachers' subject knowledge and the care lavished on all students. A narrower range of teaching strategies is used with Year 9 students, however, than in Years 10 and 11. During the inspection there were no opportunities for pair or small group work or for team-building starter activities to engage minds and develop understanding. The lack of a television and video prevents the teacher from extending learning about artists beyond the classroom, thus limiting students' cultural and multi-cultural understanding.
132. The leadership and management of the department are good. Recent improvements in staffing have led to a greater awareness of the need for changes from the traditional art apprenticeship style to a more collaborative form of teaching and learning. Information from internally generated assessments are used well to inform

learning and planning but there is a recognised need for training in the use of assessment data for establishing value added information.

133. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching and learning are better and the range of materials used more extensive, but the standards do not yet reflect the improved teaching.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- There is good provision for citizenship within the religious education programme of work.
- Students are engaged in active citizenship by helping others in a range of ways.

### Areas for improvement

- Not all the aspects are fully addressed, so there are gaps in students' knowledge.
- Teachers are not all aware of how they can contribute to citizenship.
- The assessment of students' standards is unsatisfactory.

134. Standards in citizenship are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and students are achieving well. The subject is taught largely within religious education and the PSHE programme of work.
135. In Year 9 students gain a good knowledge and understanding of rights and responsibilities. They study the effects of crime and punishment in good detail. Their written work on 'No man is an island' shows a good understanding of our interdependence on each other. They learn the key features of Islam and write impressively on the advantages of studying the major world religions. They explain how this contributes to an understanding of the diversity of identity within the United Kingdom. However, some aspects of citizenship are not studied in enough depth or detail. These include some aspects of legal and human rights, central and local government and parliamentary and other forms of government.
136. In Years 10 and 11 all students take the full GCSE course in religious education. In the aspects of citizenship studied here standards are above average. Students show a good knowledge of all forms of prejudice and the effects of prejudice and discrimination on society. They know the attitudes that contribute to racism and sexism. They are aware of the laws that relate to these issues. They learn why and how Martin Luther King fought against racism and the global effects of his struggle. In studies of liberation theology they gain a good knowledge of the global economic situation. This includes the injustices that contribute to world poverty. However, they do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the work of parliament or how the economy functions in the United Kingdom, including the operation of business and finance services.
137. In all years students gain some experience of the democratic process by voting for their year and school councils. They are kept informed of the activities of these councils and are asked to make suggestions on how to improve their experiences in school. They are encouraged to be active citizens and to show initiative in this respect. Students engage in fund raising to help the needy through global charities such as CAFOD and for local services such as hospitals. The most successful of these was initiated and led by a student. There is a recently formed 'Rainbows' group

of trained counsellors that includes staff and students. This group offers good support to students who encounter personal difficulties.

138. In all years students make very good use of ICT for research. This ensures that the gifted and talented can extend their learning. They get good opportunities to discuss issues in most lessons and can justify and defend their opinions particularly well in writing.
139. The quality of teaching and learning within lessons is good. There is good overall emphasis on helping students to become well-informed and good citizens. They are taught to be analytical and to structure their thoughts clearly to show cause and effect. The work is made interesting and relevant. Students are taught in classes that are set according to ability so work is carefully planned to challenge students at all levels. This ensures that all students, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make good progress. Students' written work in PSHE lessons is below average with regard to length, and therefore, depth of study. There is a need for teachers across all subject areas to be more aware of how they can contribute to students' education in citizenship. This applies particularly to current affairs and to political and economic awareness.
140. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been an audit to establish where and how the various elements that contribute to citizenship are being taught. The elements that are not fully covered are identified and plans are in place to cover these aspects. Assessment is unsatisfactory in that there is no discrete assessment of students' attainment in citizenship. There is therefore no detailed information to guide future planning. There is a good awareness of what has to be done in this new area of the curriculum. The subject makes a good contribution to students' moral and social development by studying aspects that are essential for creating a just and harmonious society.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures students achieve very well.
- The very good leadership is driving the department forward.
- The close monitoring of students' coursework in Years 10 and 11 maximises their achievement.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the liaison with feeder schools to ensure that the curriculum builds upon and extends students' skills in designing.

141. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average. Girls performed much better than boys did overall. GCSE results in 2002 were better than the previous year and reflect a rising trend.
142. The standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 are above average and students achieve well. The curriculum is broad and balanced and opportunities for the use of ICT, in particular, and designing and making using computer-aided design and manufacture, are particularly good. A good example of this is the Year 9 textiles project where students are given the opportunity to use a computer-aided embroidery machine to apply a design to hats they have designed. In general design skills,

evaluation and analysis are not as good as making skills, which are well above average. This is evident in all material areas and is partly as a result of not having good enough liaison with feeder schools to provide detailed information on standards at the start of Year 9.

143. The standard of the students' work is well above average in Year 11 and students achieve very well. As in the work in Year 9, practical skills are very well developed. Most students show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and use product analysis as an effective research technique. A good example of this is the way in which commercial graphic products such as point of sale displays are analysed by the students to establish why their design and physical properties meet the needs of consumers. Many students produce outstanding coursework that is thoroughly analysed, thoughtfully presented and manufactured accurately with precision and care. One of the strengths of the department is the extent to which students work independently. A good example of this is within textiles where students confidently use both standard and over-locking sewing machines, computer-controlled embroidery machines and ICT equipment. ICT is well used across the whole department and is helping to raise standards.
144. The quality of teaching in Year 9, and the learning it promotes, is good. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are planned well, and the pace of lessons is always brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs progress at a rate that matches those of other students. However, work is not sufficiently matched to the standards already reached by some students and this restricts the progress they make. Homework is set regularly across the department and is used to reinforce learning. The department has an effective system for the assessment of students' work; this is consistently followed by teachers and gives students a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Assessment folders are assiduously maintained; this enables the head of department to effectively monitor students' performance. However, teachers are not consistently using the results of assessments to inform their planning or set individual targets.
145. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 10 to 11 is very good. Lessons are always planned well and students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting, challenging activities. The teachers are well informed about the detailed examination board requirements for all of the courses that they teach. The pace of learning in lessons is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. The standard of marking and ongoing assessment is very good; teachers assiduously mark students' work and set targets for future improvement. Students are generally aware of their own performance targets and know what they need to do to improve. The monitoring of students' work during Year 11 is very effective. Students' progress is regularly reviewed at departmental meetings and the head of department contacts parents for support when necessary.
146. Usually, the department provides a very good education. However, the department has recently experienced a problem with staffing which has required them to appoint a temporary unqualified teacher. The head of department has worked very hard to ensure continuity for those students affected; however, standards of teaching and learning in these classes are not as good as they should be and the overall effectiveness of teaching within the department is therefore only good at present.

147. The department makes a good contribution to the development of the students' literacy skills. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms. In addition, students are given opportunities for speaking and discussing their ideas with both peers and the teacher. Students' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed through activities such as accurate measurement, marking out and weighing.
148. The leadership and management of design and technology are very good. The new head of department is very effective and provides a clear vision and direction for design and technology education. Using self-evaluation as a tool, the head of department understands the strengths and weaknesses in provision; there is a detailed development plan for future improvement. The department has benefited greatly from investment since the previous inspection. Overall the quality of resources is good; they are well managed and are having a positive impact upon standards.
149. Overall, the department has made good progress since the last inspection. At the time of the previous inspection, design and technology was a strong department. Since then standards have continued to improve and the number of students who achieve the highest grades at GCSE is very impressive. The department has been active in developing strategies to improve all aspects of teaching and learning; the improved standards reflect this. The very good leadership of the department ensures that students receive a very good education in design and technology.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving quickly as a result of good leadership.
- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.

### Areas for improvement

- Inconsistencies in the quality of day-to-day marking results in some students not being informed well enough about the quality of work and how they can improve.
- Insufficient attention is given to ensuring boys' written and diagrammatic work is accurate.

150. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were above average with many students achieving the highest grades. The results are a progressive improvement over recent years.
151. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement given their standards when they join the school. Students have a secure knowledge of world places and make very good use of the atlas to find places and research information. They use a range of geographical skills well, such as map reading and analysing data. Low attaining students in a Year 9 lesson, for example, read and colour-coded data to identify reasons for the economic wealth of Japan. Girls did better than boys because they sequenced the information better and wrote more detailed answers. Standards are lower than expected for the minority of lower and average attaining boys because of weakness in grammatical accuracy and they do not take enough care with diagrammatic work. Most students, however, write clear and varied accounts with good grammatical accuracy. Students have very good understanding of topics, such as earthquakes. They know the pattern of distribution and understand about the causes and consequences, but frequently they do not develop answers enough. Higher attaining students, for example, wrote detailed, well-

explained accounts for an assessment enquiry and illustrated them with labelled diagrams, whereas other students did not explain how the processes lead to an eruption. Students were very well informed about how well they had done and knew how to improve. Consequently the standards reached were above average.

152. Standards reached in Years 10 and 11 are above average. This represents good achievement given students' standards at the end of Year 9. Students build on their skills from Year 9. They read maps and draw labelled drawings to show the main features in physical geography such as sea stacks and how they are formed. Standards of lower attaining boys, however, are below average because they do not show the purpose of drawings and they leave work incomplete. Knowledge of world places is good because it is emphasised in lessons. Students know about the characteristics of countries at different stages of development and understand how a project such as the hydroelectric power plant on the Parana River in Brazil contributes to development of the region. Students write well. They research projects and produce detailed accounts of topics in a variety of forms. In Year 10, for example, students wrote well-structured reports about the Dutch response to flooding in 1953 through the 'Delta scheme' and then compared this with the difficulties faced by people experiencing major flooding in Bangladesh. In the minority of instances, however, insufficient detail and weaknesses in grammatical accuracy reduce the quality of writing. Students are competent in using ICT to research work. Students make good use of websites to gain information and to present reports.
153. Teaching is good in Year 9. Teachers plan lessons carefully and share the lesson objectives with students so all know what they are doing and what they are aiming for. Students regularly consolidate work covered in earlier lessons and this leads to them improving their understanding of topics. In a lesson on Japan, for example, the teacher made good use of the atlas to reinforce knowledge of places and to re-visit information about trade. This helped students to extend their learning about imports and exports and to improve understanding of terms such as 'balance of trade' and 'gross national product' in a discussion about Japan's economy. Students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when additional adult support is available. They know students' needs well and give effective support in helping them understand information and how to record their written answers, but on some occasions teachers do not make enough provision for them and the progress they make is slower than is to be expected. In the most effective lessons teachers manage students well; they set challenging tasks for them and this results in students making substantial progress. In some lessons teachers do not manage the class well or set appropriate tasks for them. This leads to students becoming restless, losing concentration and making slower progress than expected. Teachers make good use of resources to help students learn. Good quality books and atlases provide sources of information and, increasingly, teachers and students are using computers to research information and present work. Students researching and obtaining information from websites, for example, enhanced learning about Japanese world trade and enabled them to classify data about imports and exports. The marking of work is good overall, but inconsistencies in quality result in some students not being well informed about how they can improve their work.
154. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they have a clear understanding of the GCSE course requirements. This makes a good contribution to students' learning and is leading to the improving standards evident in recent years. Lessons are planned well and teachers explain points clearly. Learning is very effective when the teachers expect much of students and set demanding tasks for them. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, challenges were set for



students to link map and written information about physical features of different areas and explain the effect on the local economy. They concentrated well, made good use of learning resources and engaged well in discussion. As a result they made very good progress in improving their understanding of the topic. At other times, however, not enough is expected of students because teachers impart information without challenging students enough to develop ideas. Similarly teachers do not expect enough of students in class summaries to explain what they have achieved in the lesson. Teachers' planning makes provision to meet the different needs of students. Lower attaining students achieve well because of the help given to them, particularly when additional adult support is present, but not enough time is given to meeting the needs of higher attaining students and tasks are sometimes too easy.

155. Leadership and management are good. There is clear direction about the work of the subject through policies and detailed schemes of work. Teachers are very well supported but the monitoring of marking is not satisfactory because of inconsistent practice. There are very good procedures to assess students' attainment and progress, and the information is well used to inform about standards achieved. The arrangements to assess students' National Curriculum levels in Year 9 are commendable, but not enough information is given to students about what the levels mean.
156. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The GCSE results are a significant improvement on those last reported. Teaching has improved and students are attaining higher standards.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are rising as a result of good leadership.
- Links with the middle schools provide good information to ensure the syllabus is covered.

### Areas for improvement

- Boys quickly switch off when the teaching does not require them to be active.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to think independently and work out their own judgements that they support with evidence.
- Assessment does not provide enough detailed information to enable teachers to identify areas for development.

157. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were average. Boys' results were below average for the higher grades and the majority of boys failed to achieve their targets. Girls' results were well above average. Overall results have improved since the school was last inspected.
158. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and students are achieving well. This is reflected in the teachers' own assessments of students in Year 9 in 2002. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Students have a secure overview of the topics studied and select and record relevant information in response to questions. They present their work clearly and identify the factors that led to changes. They are beginning to link these factors. For example, in work on the development of industry, they identify industry's need to transport goods leading to the development of transport. They use sources with confidence to obtain information, although only higher attaining students evaluate their use to the historian. Lower attaining students

do not consider the reliability of the sources. Most students recognise that people view events differently; higher attaining students explain why this should be. They have a clear understanding of the conditions found in the First World War trenches and they demonstrate sensitivity towards the feelings of the soldiers involved. Their work on the extension of the franchise is enabling them to develop an understanding of the desire to achieve democracy, although there is no apparent link with their work on the living conditions of the poor or activities overseas.

159. Standards in Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Higher attaining students give clear explanations for the move away from the domestic to the textile factory system. They identify the factors that led to this development and the consequences to the living and working conditions of the people of the time. Higher attaining students link the factors that supported the development of the factory system and explain the increased demand that led to it. Students use sources to research into the conditions of the poor. They recognise the conditions and the pressure on the government to act. However, there is little evidence of understanding the motives of the researchers or the measures in place for the support for the poor that existed previously. Understanding of the reasons for government inactivity is superficial. Tasks are clearly structured and very organised, with the result that there is little opportunity for students to demonstrate independent thinking and analysis. There is little indication of students being expected to weigh evidence and make judgements that they support with reasoning. As a consequence they become dependent on the teacher and the texts they are given. Lower attaining students benefit from this close support and achieve well, but higher attaining students have insufficient personal challenge to think and so sometimes underachieve.
160. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in the GCSE groups. Learning is best when teachers have clear learning objectives that are explained to the students so they can identify their progress. Where tasks are designed to develop students' understanding in stages and in increasing depth, students do well. Teachers make good use of opening 'recap' questions to support students' recall, enable them to build on earlier work and identify links with prior learning. Where students are actively involved, as in a lesson where students censored a letter from the First World War front, they become focused and involved. When lessons become too teacher directed, more often in the GCSE groups, and students become receivers and re-arrangers of given information, they become passive and uninterested. Progress is slower for boys in particular as they switch off more quickly, while girls continue to concentrate. In some lessons tasks provide insufficient challenge, relying closely on books and information sheets. As a consequence students are not required to think about the information but simply extract relevant material from the text. In these lessons higher attaining students underachieve. In some lessons there was insufficient depth of response to students' questions, and the teacher failed to extend students' understanding because of insecure knowledge of the subject.
161. Students take a pride in the presentation of their work and when they have the opportunity, they present independent research clearly and attractively. Teachers support students' work with commendation and respect; this encourages their participation and their own confidence in their abilities. Day-to-day marking, whilst encouraging and identifying what the students have achieved, does not give sufficient advice to enable students to identify how to improve. The use of self-evaluation sheets enables students to reflect on their work. However, they focus on effort rather than areas for development of their historical understanding and skills. There is no

clear base for history, and, as a result, students' understanding and recognition of the period are limited by the lack of visual display.

162. The quality of leadership and management is good. Regular links with the middle schools enable the department to build on earlier work and ensure that the syllabus is delivered. Schemes of work have been developed and opportunities to use ICT to extend students' understanding and research have been identified. The school's Intranet enables students to access relevant information easily at home and at school, and supplements the textbooks available. Students are aware of their target levels and the criteria for achieving them, and these enable them to take some responsibility for their progress. Assessment tasks have been designed to measure students' progress; however, these are not sufficiently targeted at the key skills of history and so cannot be used to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of learning. The department is reviewing its work and has identified areas for development, although proposed action is unrealistic in the short term. There is insufficient opportunity for students to undertake first hand investigations of primary sources or to visit historic sites. As a consequence they fail to experience the excitement of discovery.
163. The department has addressed most of the points identified in the last report and good progress has been made in raising standards.

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

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

### **Strengths**

- Students achieve exceedingly well in Years 10 and 11 as a result of the excellent teaching.
- Standards are very high by the end of Year 11 because teachers have an excellent understanding of the examination criteria.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject and relationships are excellent.
- Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection because of the excellent leadership.

### **Area for improvement**

- Students in Year 9 do not make as much progress as students in Years 10 and 11 because non-specialists teach them.

164. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were very high when compared to the national average. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. Students' results in ICT were far better than those attained in most other subjects they studied. Results have improved dramatically since the previous inspection.
165. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are average and this represents satisfactory achievement. However, the progress that students make is dependent on which teacher they have. For example, in one Year 9 class on database techniques, students made satisfactory progress because the teacher had a satisfactory knowledge of the topic materials; in another lesson, taught by a different teacher, students made poor progress because the teacher did not have a good enough knowledge of the subject. Students have a sound grasp of modelling techniques; higher attainers use the more advanced mathematical functions whilst lower attainers use only basic functions such as SUM. Students make good use of presentation software to enhance their projects; for example, they use clipart images well.

Students have an average level of technical vocabulary; they know what a cell is and can explain why they might use a spreadsheet as opposed to a calculator. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make the same progress as other students. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls.

166. By the end of Year 11, students' standards of attainment are very high and this represents excellent achievement. Students have a high level of knowledge and understanding of software applications. The highest attainers have good programming skills and use these effectively within their coursework. Students manipulate images very well, using insert and cropping features with ease. For example, in a Year 11 class, students were producing a presentation of how their modelling project operated. All were able to use the screenshot function and import images into the word-processor. From here, they cropped the spreadsheet image and used text within text boxes to explain about their projects. Students have a very good grasp of technical vocabulary because teachers reinforce terminology and insist on students using key phrases within their work. Even lower attainers use macros and 'nested buttons'. For example, in a Year 11 class, all students used 'buttons' within their spreadsheet models and when asked, gave a clear explanation of how 'buttons' can be used. Students have a very good grasp of databases. For example, in a Year 10 class, students went from very little understanding of databases to being able to construct, query and know the difference between a 'flat' database and a 'relational' database. Students with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same excellent progress as others. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls in Years 10 and 11.
167. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Year 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. The main reason for the difference in the teaching between year groups is that teachers of students in Years 10 and 11 have a far better knowledge and understanding of their subject. This was evident in a Year 11 class when the teacher demonstrated an excellent understanding of the examination syllabus. He explained to students how to achieve maximum marks but, more importantly, how students could improve their coursework. However, in a Year 9 class, the teacher was unable to answer questions and students made poor progress. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have exceedingly high expectations of students; they set challenging tasks. For example, in a Year 11 class, the teacher set students just 10 minutes to produce an evaluation of their modelling project; this they did and made significant gains in their understanding of the use of screenshots. The vast majority of students have very good attitudes; they really enjoy the subject and the way in which it is taught. However, students show disaffection when teaching is not good enough and do very little in the lesson, as was the case in a Year 9 class.
168. In Years 10 and 11, the rate at which students assimilate new knowledge and understanding is excellent. Teachers are always prepared to extend students through more difficult tasks. Excellent use is made of the interactive white boards. During lessons, teachers regularly halt the class, use the system lockout to gain students' attention and then make a teaching point using the whiteboard. There are excellent relationships between teachers and students and between students themselves. In Years 10 and 11, teachers run their classrooms like a commercial office; students are expected to help one another and then ask for their teacher's support when they are unable to move forward. Students are encouraged to do well; teachers use praise well to motivate. In one lesson, for example, students asked if it was possible to get help from the teacher outside of normal school hours; the teacher gave them a

number of options and students were really pleased and went away enthused; students always thank staff for the support that they are given.

169. The quality of leadership is excellent. The subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection. ICT was a key issue for improvement in the previous report. Facilities have improved greatly, the quality of teaching is now excellent in Years 10 and 11 and there is much better use of ICT across the school. The school Intranet is excellent. Each subject has its own space that includes case studies for sixth form students and assessment procedures. Students and parents can gain access to the school Intranet from their own systems.
170. The quality of management is satisfactory; there is insufficient monitoring of ICT across the school and, whilst there is some very good usage, it is rather patchy and unco-ordinated. There is impressive work in several subjects, but nobody has a clear idea of what exactly is going on.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Students with special educational needs make good progress as they are supported well.
- Teachers manage behaviour well and relationships are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Students have been affected by disruption to staffing in French.
- Students' spoken skills are not developed well enough because teachers do not pay sufficient attention to this skill.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of higher attaining students.

## French and German

171. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were average in both French and German. In 2001 students achieved results which were also around the national average in French but over the past three years results have fallen. In German results have varied over the past three years, being much worse in 2001 than in 2000, but overall results rose significantly in 2002. More students take French than the national average; the number taking German is around the national figure. Almost all students in the school take a GCSE in either French or German and all students who were entered for the examination passed with a grade G or above. Boys attained standards that were below average in both languages; their results are significantly below those of the girls. Few students achieved A\* grades in either language and in French few also achieved A and B grades.
172. At the end of Year 9 students are attaining standards which are in line with what would be expected nationally in French. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement as students enter the school with standards that are above average. In German standards are slightly below what would be expected nationally but this reflects the fact that students have only been studying the language for a year and have made good progress in this time.
173. In both languages, students are generally better at listening and reading than at speaking and writing. Students get plenty of practice of listening to tapes and videos

and are expected to understand details about, for example, the pollution of the environment. In reading, students cope well with the short extracts in the textbook but have few opportunities to work on authentic or more extended texts and so have less well developed skills of reading at length. They can write postcards and paragraphs about themselves and their family; lower attaining students are given plenty of support to enable them to do this well but few of the higher attainers are able to write accurately using a variety of tenses unless they are following a model. In class, students often are expected to give only short answers or single words instead of sentences when writing and speaking. When speaking, students are not often asked to work from memory or to ask as well as answer the question and so have developed less good speaking skills. They have mostly satisfactory pronunciation, but as errors sometimes go unchecked; they are not always able to improve on this minimum level. Boys in particular remain content with performing at a minimum level.

174. Students are attaining around the standard expected nationally for French and German in Year 11. Achievement in French is unsatisfactory; a significant minority of able students, especially boys, does not do as well as would be expected. They have been adversely affected by several changes of staff and by teachers who do not know them well enough to pitch the lesson at the correct level. In German, students achieve better standards as they have not been affected by the turnover in staff and the teaching style appeals to the boys who enjoy talking about topics such as football. In one lesson, for example, they were keen to learn how to say that a local football team had won a match and commented humorously in German on how this was not something that happened often. In German they are quite regularly expected to understand challenging material when listening either to the teacher or to tapes but this is less often the case in French. As in Year 9, students cope well when reading short extracts from textbooks but they have insufficient opportunity to develop their ability to read at length.
175. In both languages, students with special educational needs do well in all aspects of their language learning because they are given plenty of support. Students with special educational needs make good progress in writing because they are given the opportunity to draft their coursework and are given good guidance on the content of their work. Students' writing has improved since the previous inspection because they have very specific tasks for their coursework but, even so, a few boys complain that the topics such as writing about their school uniform in French do not interest them. They write with more feeling on topics such as descriptions of their favourite cars and show an ability to use a range of expressions. In both languages, students speak at a basic level on topics such as descriptions of themselves and members of their family. The higher attaining students do not always do so at any great length and they often keep to simple sentences, giving basic facts and opinions following a model that they have been shown. Some students continue to pronounce words with an English accent. More able students find it difficult to answer unprepared questions but perform better when they are given time to work out the answer in advance. Less able students are hesitant in their replies but are, nevertheless, able to make themselves understood and to communicate basic messages.
176. In French the quality of the teaching and learning is currently unsatisfactory. There is some inconsistency in the quality of the teaching and learning, which has been caused by the changes of staff. In German both the teaching and the learning are satisfactory. In both languages, teachers have high expectations of behaviour and plan lessons with a variety of activities. Teachers have good strategies to manage students who do not always have positive attitudes to learning a language because they have had many different teachers. Students are expected to understand

instructions given in French or German and develop better listening skills because of this.

177. Homework is often well planned and reinforces what has happened in the lesson. For example, in German, students had to complete a worksheet showing they could remember the captions for some pictures they had been shown during the lessons. Marking in books is mostly good, although there is some inconsistency in this across staff in French. Errors are indicated and suggestions about how students could improve their work are made. Students are given some helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons but teachers are sometimes reluctant to correct pronunciation. Teachers often move swiftly between activities but in several lessons there was insufficient time allowed for students to use the language for themselves. This meant that students did not make as much progress in speaking as they could have done and writing tasks were very simple and short. At times students use French spontaneously, to ask a teacher to repeat something for example, but there were several opportunities which were missed when students could have done more speaking, especially in pairs, in class.
178. Lessons are well organised but the resources and tasks are not always appropriate for the range of abilities in the class, especially in French for the higher attainers. There are times, for example, when more difficult work is not available for students who would benefit from working from authentic texts and being encouraged to write and speak from memory using more complex language. For example, in one lesson, able students in both Year 9 and Year 11 were filling in single words on a sheet which required little more than their name and age. When teaching students with special educational needs, teachers are much more likely to know what students will find difficult and plan more carefully to meet the needs of less able students in general. Students with special educational needs are given some effective help to improve their work. For example, in a lesson in French using the laptop computers, students were given plenty of support to enable them to prepare to answer questions about themselves and their family. This work was then saved and could be accessed at home for revision purposes though the Intranet. Teachers usually ensure that students make careful notes on the language they have learnt but do not insist that they refer to it later. Boys in particular suffer from a lack of willingness to use all of the reference materials that they have available, especially their grammar notes, although they use dictionaries when necessary. Most students do some redrafting of their writing coursework to improve their work but only a few are able to improve the accuracy of what they have done by referring to their notes.
179. Currently some ICT is used in lessons but as access to computer rooms has been difficult, not all staff get the opportunity to use computers with students as often as they would like. There has been a significant improvement in this recently since the department has had access to laptops to use in class.
180. The department is satisfactorily managed at a day-to-day level. The head of department has worked hard to address the difficulties in staffing but has been unable to appoint permanent staff who can fulfil the departmental requirements. Results are analysed and, for example, coursework has been introduced in a successful attempt since the previous inspection to improve the writing skills of the lower attaining students. Work, however, remains to be done on improving speaking, and the attainment of more able students and of boys in French. There are plans to improve the speaking skills of students and the range of reading materials available but these plans have yet to be implemented. Leadership is, therefore, unsatisfactory as several areas identified in the previous report have not been addressed and results in French

have fallen over the past three years. As a result, the department has made unsatisfactory progress.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students learn very well in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching.
- Improved extra-curricular provision enhances learning and contributes positively to the ethos of the school.

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work do not take account of whole-school initiatives.
- There is not enough emphasis on composition and musical appraisal in Year 9.
- The setting and monitoring of homework are unsatisfactory in Year 9.

181. Due to the small group sizes, no reliable comparison can be made about the GCSE results in relation to the national average.
182. In Year 9, standards are below the average; standards in Year 11 are above average. Students' attainment on entry in Year 9 is below average. A sizeable proportion make good progress and students' achievement during Year 9 is good, although indications are that they will still fall a little short of average attainment overall by the end of the year. In Years 10 and 11 students achieve well, making good progress in their work.
183. Students in Year 9 co-ordinate simple rhythms in ensemble and, in most cases, play simple melodic material with appropriate technique at keyboards and on tuned percussion instruments accurately, either by ear or by reading notation without annotations. Lower attaining students are sufficiently secure in their performance skills to recognise their errors with minimal prompting. Higher attaining students, often those who also play other instruments, are able to realise more complex music. Students' composition and musical appraisal skills are not as well developed as their performance skills. In Year 11 most students take individual instrumental or singing lessons and their standards in performance are high overall. Their compositions reflect their musical interests. Their musical knowledge is developed through well-researched projects. While they keep and develop glossaries, their command of essential technical vocabulary for appraising music is inconsistent, reflecting also the untidy organisation of many of their folders. Students with special educational needs achieve well and there is no significant difference between the standards and attitudes of boys and girls or of different ethnic groups.
184. Overall, the quality of teaching is good: it is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students learn well in Year 9 because the teaching has high expectations of what the students can achieve and uses materials which enable students of different ability to work together well as a class. This is linked to high expectations of behaviour, creating a good environment for learning. Most lessons are well planned with good starter activities to focus attention and a summary, often involving a student self-assessment exercise, to reflect on the progress made during the lesson. However, opportunities for analytical listening and musical appraisal within practical lessons are underdeveloped. There is insufficient rigour in the setting of homework and the monitoring of books to ensure continuity, especially for those classes who may have ten-day gaps between some music lessons, and to ensure that note-taking is consistent and accurate.



185. In Years 10 and 11 students learn very well because the very good relationships engendered through the support given to realise the students' musical ambitions ensure very good routine and very good use of time. However, detail in planning lacks rigour. For example, in the Year 11 composition lesson, some groups were held back because they could not quickly devise lyrics and no appropriate template was available. Students' folders reveal the systematic development of listening and appraisal skills and stimulus materials for composition that suit the students' different interests and abilities. The very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not yet reflected in students' achievement as the teacher was only appointed in September.
186. Overall the department is well led and managed. The head of department has recently been appointed and has ambitious plans to enliven the extra-curricular provision for music. Rehearsals for a production of *Grease* are well underway and there is also a modestly-sized orchestra and choir, which enhances religious celebration in the school. Relatively few students take instrumental tuition in school, although many take private lessons. The schemes of work are underdeveloped and currently take the form of a comprehensive list of learning objectives. While undergoing revision, they do not yet formally take account of whole-school learning issues, such as spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education, citizenship, the provision for the gifted and talented, and literacy and numeracy. The department uses assessments well to track progress, especially in Year 9 where testing on entry has revealed discrepancies with the National Curriculum levels of the Year 8 assessments of the middle schools. Plans to improve liaison in music with the middle schools are in hand. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and standards have been maintained.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results are improving.
- Extra-curricular sport offers good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in their chosen sports.

### Areas for improvement

- Too many lessons in Years 10 and 11 are taught by non-specialist teachers.
- Procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment and progress in the National Curriculum are not clear enough.

187. The 2002 GCSE results were average, and a significant improvement on the 2001 results.
188. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment in physical education. The standards in the current Year 9 are also average, and this represents satisfactory achievement.
189. By Year 9 most students attain average standards in team games. They show competence in a range of skills and understand the principles of play in invasion games, as seen in basketball. Boys of all abilities show a sound knowledge and understanding of attacking and defensive skills that are developed, effectively, in the context of tactical play. The most able students can cut away from their opponent to receive the ball at speed. Lower attainers can demonstrate man-to-man marking in

practice, but not all remember to stay close to their opponent in the game. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, making satisfactory progress in play. Standards in gymnastics are broadly average. Girls link movements together and build a sequence on large apparatus, satisfactorily. Their performance is limited by a lack of previous experience. Most students know how to warm up before exercise, but do not yet do this independently. Students' skills in observation and evaluation are also not as well developed as they should be, and they need prompting to identify strengths and areas for improvement in performance. Literacy development is enhanced in some lessons, when students have opportunities to plan and discuss their work.

190. Standards in the Year 11 National Curriculum course are average, and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Sound progress continues in games, as seen in badminton and football. Year 11 boys show that they have mastered the basic skills of indoor football through good ball control, skilful passing and intelligent use of space. Girls' performance in step aerobics is average, and they have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. Standards in the GCSE course are above average, well illustrated by girls in netball and boys in volleyball. In a theory lesson, most students recalled previous learning accurately, indicating a good knowledge and understanding of the respiratory and circulatory systems. Students make good use of their ICT skills in the presentation of their personal performance programmes.
191. Extra-curricular sport offers good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in their chosen sports. The school is justifiably proud of the successes of its football, netball and basketball teams. Individual students regularly gain representative honours at county, regional and, sometimes, national level in a variety of sports. There are currently two students competing at national level in netball and swimming.
192. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but non-specialists have limited knowledge. Good relationships between staff and students usually create a positive, co-operative learning environment. There was one exception to this, when some immature Year 10 boys showed lack of courtesy and respect for people and equipment, disrupting their own and others' learning. The behaviour and attitudes of most students are good, and they put energy and effort into their work. There are high levels of participation, and students support extra-curricular activities well. However, there is a minority of boys and girls who do not take their work seriously, on occasions, showing their lack of maturity by losing concentration and distracting others. Teachers prepare well, share the objectives of lessons with students, and maintain a good pace of activity. Well-designed tasks ensure that students build on previous learning and make progress through opportunities to practise new skills. This was illustrated well in a good basketball lesson, where students of all levels of ability experienced a demanding pace of learning and good progress enabled them to use their new knowledge, skills and understanding, effectively, in the game. Teaching is good when teachers have high expectations and use a range of strategies to give students a share of responsibility for their learning, as seen to good effect in netball, where girls successfully took responsibility for their own warm up. Marking is encouraging but students receive little advice on how to improve their work or how they are progressing against targets set.
193. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a very good will for the department to succeed, and the enthusiasm and commitment of the two

specialists, who form the nucleus of the team, are a strength. There is good use of assessment data to provide individual targets in the GCSE course, and the focus on improving standards in this examination has been successful. This rise in standards has been achieved by good specialist teaching in the subject. Standards in Years 10 and 11 National Curriculum course have yet to rise. Years 10 and 11 have a significant proportion of non-specialist teaching. Although this may be satisfactory as a stopgap, lack of specialist knowledge is likely to be a limiting factor in students' attainment and progress over time. Assessment and recording procedures, together with schemes of work, were identified as areas for improvement in the last inspection, and they are still unsatisfactory in Year 9. Monitoring and development of teaching are in place, but have not yet had much impact.

194. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in Years 9 to 11 remain the same, but there has been a significant rise in GCSE results. The quality of teaching is broadly similar to that in the last inspection.

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

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

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
French	1	0	78	0	13	0	1.7
Mathematics	10	50	62	0	15	0.6	1.5

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	16	88	87	13	43	3.5	5.8
Chemistry	5	100	90	20	43	6.4	5.9
Biology	11	82	88	9	34	3.3	5.3
Physics	9	56	88	0	40	1.8	5.7
Design and technology	7	100	91	14	30	5.7	5.4
Economics	9	100	89	11	36	4.0	5.5
Sports/PE studies	7	86	92	0	25	3.7	5.1
Art and design	3	100	96	100	46	9.3	6.6
Music	1	100	93	0	35	6.0	5.7
Geography	7	100	92	43	38	6.3	5.7
History	11	100	88	64	35	7.8	5.5
Psychology	6	83	87	50	34	6.0	5.3
Sociology	6	67	86	33	35	4.3	5.3
English language	11	100	92	45	30	6.9	5.3
English literature	17	100	95	47	37	6.6	5.9
Communication studies	12	100	93	58	31	7.3	5.5
French	7	100	89	29	38	6.6	5.6
German	2	100	91	0	40	5.0	5.8
General studies	59	78	85	15	30	3.8	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. Results in biology were well below average in 2001, but were much higher, and among the best in the school, in 2002. One biology lesson was observed; the teaching was good. Students made good progress in the lesson because of the way that the teacher gave them a short test to start and used the results to plug gaps in students' understanding as well as improve their examination technique.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Standards are improving as a result of the changes to assessment and the curriculum.
- There are very good methods of tracking students' progress and setting them objectives as they go through the school so that students can see how they are progressing and where they need to improve.

##### Areas for improvement

- The opportunities for students to develop their study skills are limited.
- Students are not involved enough in lessons and sometimes too little is demanded of their initiative.

195. Students in the sixth form study mathematics courses at AS-level and A-level and generally complete the course. The subject is a popular choice. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The school also gives students the opportunity to resit their GCSE.
196. In 2001, results at A-level were well below average. Students did not do as well as they did in their other subjects. However, there has been an improvement in results in 2002. In 2001, 18 students were entered to resit their GCSE in mathematics and 18 per cent attained grades A\* to C.
197. Standards are now broadly average in Years 12 and 13 and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement given their attainment on joining the sixth form. This improvement in attainment is due to the changes in teaching staff, regular assessments and a change in the curriculum. The attainment of students on entry to the course is improving. Students are successfully extending their GCSE work into new areas; for example they have the opportunity to study mechanics and extend the work on statistics that they were introduced to on their GCSE mathematics course. Students have a secure understanding of how to resolve forces by using components. However, they have greater difficulty in applying their knowledge the constant acceleration equations when solving problems of retardation. In Year 13, students demonstrate a good understanding of partial fractions and they progress to applying that understanding well when integrating. This allows them to select the most appropriate method of integration for each problem.
198. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and all students learn at a satisfactory pace as a result. The best feature of the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of teachers. Subject content is accurate and teachers explain principles well. This

promotes the students' confidence and respect for their teachers. Most students respond well to the teaching they receive, have positive attitudes to the subject and work hard. Although teaching methods are satisfactory, in the better lessons teachers ask probing questions, which develops good thinking skills. However, this is not always the case. There are instances when there is too little demand on students' initiative and there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons. On other occasions, resources are used well, such as when students investigated the effect of pulleys. Students could clearly see the effect of different masses and search for reasons why the string was slack for example. This deepened their understanding before carrying out the calculations.

199. Teachers generally build successfully on previous understanding, for example, when the teacher was consolidating understanding of different methods of differentiation before progressing to identifying when to use the most appropriate rule for integration. Students are attentive in lessons and show an interest in the subject. In the better lessons, the teachers conduct lessons at a stimulating pace, resulting in rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Students are alert throughout the lesson and a high level of concentration is maintained. In these lessons, students generally participate well in discussions, respond well to questions and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways. Effective use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. Work is generally well presented and well organised, but there are instances where presentation could be improved. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work are good. It indicates where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. There is a good programme of regular formal assessments that allows teachers to see how students are progressing over time so that they can give effective support to those experiencing difficulties.
200. Satisfactory leadership and efficient management are rooted in effective consultation and collaboration amongst teachers. There is a clear commitment by the whole team to improve standards by raising achievement for all students. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are very good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Students' progress is monitored well, with students in Year 12 having the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning as they analyse the assessments and set themselves achievable targets. Although the level of resources is generally satisfactory, the students have limited opportunities to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own study due to the inadequate range and quality of library resources.
201. There is insufficient information in the previous report to make a judgement on progress since the last inspection.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and communicate their background knowledge and experience within the subject to their students, who achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good so standards are rising.

#### Area for improvement

- Routine notes made by students contain errors and misunderstandings that could be corrected by better marking.

202. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. Around 10 students take up the subject in Year 12, and few fail to complete the course. The A-level results in 2001 were above average and better than for other subjects. Compared to their GCSE results, students achieved better than might be expected. Results fell a little in 2002.
203. Standards are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics covered earlier in the course are secure, helped by teachers' attention to detail. Standards of literacy are good; in both Years 12 and 13 students' answers to class questions are both articulate and largely accurate, and questions are answered in good English. Numeracy skills are good, with calculations performed correctly, and graphs drawn accurately. Students are proficient in the use of ICT, illustrated by use of laptops in both theory and practical lessons. Assignments and homework are well written and presented. Practical skills are developing well in Year 12, illustrated by the use of burettes to measure volume changes in a lesson on intermolecular forces, where students carefully avoided parallax error in their readings. Attention to health and safety considerations is a feature of practical work.
204. Teaching is good overall. The quality of teaching is illustrated by a Year 12 lesson on the oxidation of alcohols, where the teacher recognised that a lack of awareness of molecular geometry was hindering students' understanding, and changed the lesson sequence to include the use of three-dimensional molecular models. Teachers have good subject knowledge, lesson planning is thorough, and the positive atmosphere in lessons provides a secure climate for learning. Use of exposition and question and answer by teachers is skilful, guiding students to understanding. Marking of homework assignments is regular and thorough, but routine notes are checked less frequently and lack diagnostic feedback. Teachers' attention to examination requirements, evident in lessons, benefits all students.
205. Students respond well in this environment, co-operating with their teachers and each other so that an argument or explanation can be developed, and tasks shared during experimental work. Attitudes and behaviour are very good.
206. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Documentation is up to date and helpful to teachers, with good use of student data for planning and evaluation. Mutual support and communication within the subject are effective.
207. There has been good progress in chemistry since the time of the last inspection and teaching has improved.

#### Physics

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are rising rapidly as a result of very good leadership.
- Students achieve very well in physics because teaching is very good.
- Teachers and students share a real enthusiasm for the subject.

Area for improvement

- A few students do not receive sufficiently clear advice to prevent them beginning the AS-level course with little realistic chance of success.

208. The department offers courses in AS and A-level physics. There are 17 students taking the subject in Year 12 and nine in Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination.
209. A-level results were well below the national average in 2001 and students did not do as well in physics as they did on average in their other subjects. Results were much better in 2002; four of the eight candidates gained grades A or B and all gained pass grades. Students achieved well in 2002; their A-level results were better than predicted on the basis of their results when they entered Year 12.
210. 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' files are very well organised and contain detailed notes of high quality. Their investigative work, for example when discovering the resistivity of a wire, is very good, with immaculately presented calculations and graphs. Students are very capable users of ICT both in lessons, where they make good use of sensors and dataloggers, and in their own time to find information, draw graphs and present coursework.
211. Standards in Year 12 are average for this stage in the AS course. This represents very good achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were well below average for students taking AS physics. Students' module test results so far indicate standards below average. However, there are two significant strengths in these students' skills which have not yet been fully tested but which prove very important in the subject. Students have better investigative and mathematical skills than expected at this stage in Year 12. For example, students planned sensibly for an experiment to find Young's modulus for copper wire. They discussed the sources of error in the experiment, understood their relative importance and selected appropriate equipment and samples of wire in order to minimise those errors. In another lesson, students coped well with demanding calculations.
212. There are a small number of students in Year 12 who entered the physics course with relatively weak standards in GCSE double award science. A few of these students do not have the required skills and background knowledge to take full advantage of the very good teaching they receive and module test results show that they are not succeeding with the course. Students are not yet receiving sufficiently firm advice in order to prevent them embarking on a course in which they are very unlikely to be successful or the intervention is not good enough when it becomes clear that they will not succeed.
213. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject. Students relish the enthusiasm of their teachers and the lengths to which they will go in order to make a topic exciting. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students arrived to see a plasticine trapeze artist already poised for action on the front bench. Their interest in torsional oscillations was immediately aroused. They then considered the factors that might affect such motion and moved very quickly to decide for themselves what factors they should investigate and how it might be done.



214. A particular strength of the teaching in the sixth form is the treatment of the subject's mathematical aspects. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, students plotted a series of logarithmic graphs to discover for themselves the particular advantages of this presentation of results. In a Year 12 lesson, students learned to manipulate powers of ten and gained an appreciation of orders of magnitude. Such topics might be expected to have a rather limited appeal to students but these lessons were certainly not a dry, mechanical exercise. The teacher is a dedicated physicist with a huge passion for the subject. He used the mathematics to enable the Year 12 students to appreciate the wonder of the nucleus and the enormous density of nuclear material, leading them on to a consideration of neutron stars and black holes. He has a maxim: "Precise subject; enjoy the precision". These students really do enjoy what they do and are inspired to work very hard. Over half the current Year 13 intend to study physics at university.
215. Teachers make particularly good use of the assessment of students' work. Students are given plenty of practice in answering examination questions and teachers mark this work very thoroughly, indicating precisely what needs to be improved. In addition, teachers make very good use of examiners' reports so students know exactly what is required by examination questions.
216. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of science takes responsibility for physics in the sixth form, and teaches some of the physics in Year 12, but a part-time teacher who is very experienced in teaching the subject at this level does most of the sixth form teaching. In these circumstances, there is simply very good co-operation between the two teachers, meticulous analysis of all available test and examination results and a very clear commitment to ensure that students enjoy the subject and achieve the best possible results.
217. The department has made very good progress since the time of the previous inspection. A-level results were well below average in 1997. By contrast, standards in the current Year 13 are well above average.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on design and technology.

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers assess work well and students' achievement is good.
- Students' attitudes and independent learning skills are very good.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Insufficient use is made of computer-aided design and manufacture.

218. The school offers courses at AS and A-level in food technology and product design. About 25 students study these subjects each year and it is rare for a student not to complete a course. These courses were not offered at the time of the last inspection. Results in the 2001 examinations were average. Students gained similar results in design and technology to those in their other subjects. Results in 2002 were broadly similar.

219. The standards of students currently in Years 12 and 13 are above average and they are achieving well. Students have well-developed knowledge and understanding of materials and processes and use product analysis and effective research techniques to support their designing and making. Students have a clear appreciation of the implications of social, moral and cultural considerations on product design and understand the wider implications of design decisions. Students' work is characterised by a thorough and detailed approach to all aspects of study, clear analysis and sound evaluative comment. This is apparent in the product study assignment where thorough analysis of an existing product leads to an improved design. Students use a variety of presentation styles in their work and ideas are clearly annotated against specified criteria. Students respond well to individual design briefs and demonstrate a good level of knowledge and understanding of industrial and commercial techniques. Practical skills are well developed, particularly in food technology where students have developed a range of advanced skills. Students' coursework contains a variety of presentation styles and ideas are clearly annotated against specified criteria. The use of general ICT techniques is good and leads to high levels of presentation, for example Year 13 food technology students use presentation software to present the findings of their research into topics such as aseptic techniques for preventing contamination. Students occasionally use computer-aided design software to generate ideas but this is generally underdeveloped within product design; three-dimensional computer-aided manufacturing is not being used.
220. The quality of teaching, and the learning that it promotes, in Years 12 and 13 is good. Lessons are characterised by thorough planning, brisk pace and a variety of teaching methods that promote student involvement. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are able to respond to students' questions in great depth, drawing upon a wide range of examples to support learning. The quality of teacher-led discussions is good; they are characteristically focused and highly relevant. Teachers use assessment and monitoring procedures well. Work is assiduously marked against examination board criteria and targets are set for individuals; this is good practice and leads to high attainment. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive. They are interested in their lessons, concentrate well and work hard. Behaviour throughout the department is excellent and students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.
221. The leadership and management of design and technology are good. A great strength is the way the teachers who teach the courses work together and this has meant, for example, that there is seamless progression from the Year 12 course into Year 13. The new courses at AS and A-level in product design and food technology have been successfully introduced since the last inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on business studies, but economics was also sampled. Results in economics were below average in 2001. One economics lesson was observed; the teaching was excellent. The whole lesson was conducted at a very rapid pace that made students really race through the work. The end of the lesson was outstanding in summarising exactly the key points that students needed to understand.

### **Business studies**

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

Strengths
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- Very good teaching leads to students achieving very well.
- Highly motivated students enjoy the subject and strive hard to gain high grades.
- Very good, inspiring, leadership from the head of subject has led to great improvements in standards.

Area for improvement

- The timetable allows students in Year 12, on the GNVQ intermediate course, too much unstructured time.

222. The department offers Year 12 courses in AVCE single award and GNVQ intermediate levels, and Year 13 courses in AVCE single and double award levels. Almost all those who begin AVCE courses continue to the end of the year and take the examination. A small number of GNVQ intermediate students leave school before the end of the year to take up employment. The number of students choosing courses has increased significantly in recent years.

223. Results in the 2001 GNVQ advanced examinations were above the national average. Students performed better in business studies than they did in many of their other subjects. The AVCE examinations were held for the first time in 2002. National comparisons are not available currently for 2002 but the subject's advanced and intermediate level results continued the upward trend of recent years. Students consistently gain results that are at least one grade higher than their target grades.

224. Standards of work are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. As students start with broadly lower than average levels of attainment, this represents very good achievement. Students in Year 12 have good understanding of important concepts. In a lesson dealing with demand for goods they drew graphs and accurately described the effects on demand curves of increases and decreases in demand for a product. Students in Year 13 show, in assignments, good knowledge of the significance of effective staff training and development to the performance and commercial success of companies. Higher attaining students taking AVCE display very good levels of understanding in fluent, well-written coursework. Year 12 students produce detailed and very well supported conclusions about marketing strategies. In a Year 13 study of a local company of their own choice, they analyse the provision made for customer service and make well-justified recommendations for improvements to that aspect of business practice. In their written work, lower attaining students sometimes fail to demonstrate convincingly what they know because their answers lack sufficient detail and do not analyse critically the quality of the provision made by the company.

225. Teaching is very good on all courses and it promotes very good learning. The basis of this high quality is the deep subject knowledge that teachers have, their enthusiasm for the subject and the clarity with which the work to be done in lessons is organised. Expectations of students' work rate and performance are very high and have a powerful influence in developing in students the clear determination to exceed their target grades that is so evident when they speak about their progress. Basic skills are taught well and teachers have extensive knowledge and experience of examination requirements. For instance, Year 12 students in a GNVQ intermediate lesson were helped by the provision of an essay-writing frame, to improve their prospect of attaining the higher level of distinction grade. AVCE students receive high quality guidance and individual support from teachers when working on their coursework assignments. This, together with the access they have to good quality book and ICT resources, results in students developing their independent learning skills very well. The marking of work by teachers is regular and informative, with helpful comments to indicate ways in which students can improve the quality of their written work.

226. Students are highly motivated and have very good attitudes to the subject. Almost without exception, they strive very hard to gain grades that are two levels higher than the target grades that are based on their prior attainment. Students speak very highly about the quality of the teaching they receive and the constant availability of their teachers during lunchtimes and after school. They appreciate the opportunities for private study afforded by the school's library and computer facilities. Students benefit greatly from links with, and visits to, local businesses. The timetable for Year 12 GNVQ intermediate students, however, allows them too much unstructured time during some days, which they then do not use profitably.
227. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of business provides a high quality and very clear educational direction for staff and students. Her enthusiasm is infectious and it inspires confidence and positive attitudes in teachers and students alike. The subject benefits greatly from her work as an examiner, an examination board moderator, and her service on the examination board's panel that evaluates examination papers. The equally high quality of the subject's management is illustrated, for example, by returns from the examination boards that verify efficient meeting of deadlines and excellent accuracy of the subject staff's assessment of coursework.
228. There has been very good improvement in business education since the last inspection; standards are much higher and the quality of teaching has improved considerably.

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

The focus was on information and communication technology.

### **Information and communication technology**

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

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- The subject is well led and new courses have been introduced successfully.
- Students make very good use of the school Intranet to support their studies.

#### Area for improvement

- Teaching of the theory aspects of the syllabus is rather dull and uninspiring.

229. Results in the 2001 Advanced GNVQ examinations were well above the national average and students achieved well. There was no significant difference in the achievement of males and females. Results in 2002 declined but still represented satisfactory achievement. The school offers AS, A-level and AVCE in ICT. Courses are very popular and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course of study.
230. Students' standards by the end of Year 13 are above average and represent a good level of achievement. Students have an above average knowledge of programming and produce program code using *Visual Basic*. Students manipulate images very well and their evaluations of their projects are above average. Students have an above average knowledge of technical vocabulary. For example, students accurately described what nested procedures were and how they are used within a sequence of code. Higher attaining students create complex databases and use macros to move

between different tables and software applications. Female students are more reticent and do not experiment with their designs for systems as much as the males; they tend to decide on an idea and follow it through rather than trying out various options. Students make good use of the Internet; they research topics well and discuss their findings confidently and competently.

231. Standards in Year 12 are average and this represents satisfactory achievement. Students following the AS-level course have an average knowledge and understanding of computer operating systems and know that different systems are used. Students following the AVCE course have good practical skills and use these effectively to enhance their coursework. Students have a sound understanding of how ICT impacts on society. Students have an above average knowledge of spreadsheets. They collect data and use modelling techniques to analyse and produce charts of an above average standard.
232. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject content but only a satisfactory understanding of how best to teach some of the theoretical aspects. For example, in a Year 12 class, the teacher provided a presentation slide show on the history of computer operating systems. This was a very dull and uninspiring approach, which enabled students to produce a good set of notes, but little new learning occurred. There are very good relationships between teachers and students; for example, students in Year 13 were offered the opportunity to attend support surgeries and many took up the opportunity to sort out problems with their coursework. Homework is set appropriately, students are expected to carry out research using the Internet, work is marked well and informative comments are provided that help students to improve their work.
233. Resources are very good; the quality and quantity of computers are very good and the school Intranet provides students with useful case studies. The subject is well led and as a result good progress has been made since the previous inspection. New courses have been successfully introduced and the numbers of students opting for courses are high.

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

The focus was on physical education, but leisure and tourism and travel and tourism were also sampled. Too few students studied these subjects in 2001 to make comparisons with national averages and there are no national figures for 2002 available as yet. In the one combined lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory. The teacher made good use of assessment criteria to help students as they worked on individual assignments.

### **Physical education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards are improving as the department concentrates on raising standards.
- Assessment data is used, effectively, to set individual targets so students know what they should be achieving.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure the best practice.
- Marking does not let students know what progress they are making against targets set.

234. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. There are 17 students taking the subject in Year 12 and seven in Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course continue to the end of the year and take the examination.
235. The 2001 A-level examination results were well below the national average, and students did worse in physical education than in most other subjects they studied. Results were much better in 2002; students generally gained grades that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, and their achievement was satisfactory.
236. Standards are now broadly average in Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 have a sound knowledge and understanding of the factors affecting participation in sport. They explain, confidently, why opportunities are not the same for everyone. In a discussion on gender discrimination in sport, high attaining female students had positive and innovative ideas to contribute. Students in Year 13 have a good understanding of the advantages of goal setting, when recalling previous work in the psychological aspects of sport. One student competently reported the results of his research into the disadvantages of goal setting, which led to a brief, but informative debate on motivation. Students' independent learning skills developed well in this lesson, as they undertook a research task on ergogenic aids in sport. They demonstrated good ICT skills, researching the Internet for information, and good communication skills in the presentations they made to the rest of the group on what they had discovered. Students' written coursework in both year groups generally contains good quality notes with an appropriate level of detail. Some students are not yet secure in all the new knowledge they have received. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson on the historical aspects of physical education. Too many students had difficulty in recalling the key features of popular recreation, and the way that rational recreation had developed.
237. It was not possible to observe any practical coursework, but teachers' records show that this is a strong aspect. One student is currently a member of the Under 19 English Schools' Netball Squad. A very good feature of the overall sixth form provision is that all students are enabled to take part in physical activity as a curriculum option, as seen in football, where students' standards were above average.
238. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers are enthusiastic, and have very good subject knowledge. Relationships are good, and the students respond very well to the support and guidance they are given. They are well motivated and have very good attitudes to the subject. Although they are sometimes tentative in putting forward their ideas, they respond positively to the good use of questioning that is characteristic of all the teaching. Careful planning provides students with a clear structure for learning, but the pace of learning slows when teachers spend too long on the same type of activity. The strongest teaching actively involves students in short, well-focused tasks that promote a demanding pace. This was seen to good effect in a Year 13 class when the teacher gave students a time target for a task that involved Internet research and the presentation of their findings. Independent learning skills develop well in lessons like this, but less so when the teacher takes tighter control of learning, and does not allow students to find out things for themselves, solve problems and learn through taking a share of the responsibility. The marking of coursework is satisfactory, but does not give enough information about how students are progressing against targets set.

239. The leadership and management of physical education are satisfactory. Development planning puts appropriate emphasis on raising standards of attainment, and assessment data is used effectively to set individual targets. There has been satisfactory improvement and students are now achieving an appropriate proportion of the higher grades in the A-level examination. Monitoring and development of teaching are in place, but the impact of these is not yet evident, as there is a wide variation in the quality of teaching. The department faces the problem that students who gained success at GCSE through the high quality of their practical work are allowed to join the AS courses without the academic strength needed to be successful in meeting the course requirements.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was sampled. Too few students studied the subject in 2001 to make comparisons with national averages and there are no national figures for 2002 available as yet. In the one lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory. The teacher had good subject knowledge, but did not make enough use of the students' own understanding in discussions.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and media studies, but music and theatre studies were also sampled. There are too few students studying music to make reliable comparisons with national averages for examination results. One lesson was observed during the inspection and the teaching was good. Students were highly motivated by the teacher's enthusiastic approach. There are no A-level results for theatre studies as there are only students in Year 12. Two lessons were observed. In both lessons, teaching was good and students made good progress. In one, students rehearsed a piece of devised drama to be assessed as part of their AS course. The teacher had prepared them well and made good use of the examination criteria in assessing them. In the other, students continued their work on Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*. The teacher had planned a wide variety of activities and students had lots of opportunities to become deeply involved in the lesson.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good so students achieve well.
- The standards attained by Year 12 students in drawing and painting are above average.
- Computers are used well for research purposes.

#### Areas for improvement

- Study skills in Year 13, as for example planning and time management, are weaker than might be expected.
- Opportunities are missed for developing independent learning by students presenting and evaluating each other's work.

240. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. Numbers taking the courses are relatively low. There were too few students studying A-level in 2001 to make comparisons with national averages and no national figures are yet available for 2002.

241. Standards in Year 13 are average and students are achieving well in relation to their standard on entry to the sixth form. Some students have taken excellent photographic images as a starting point for the theme of 'water'. Others have made perceptive links in their analytical drawings between the patterns seen on wood and those on water surfaces. Art works from western and non-western sources are used effectively as a base for large acrylic paintings. Whilst students draw inspiration from a wide range of sources they do not all consider the examiner as the main audience for their work. They do not communicate clearly the sequence of stages they have been through or why the changes of direction occurred in the way that they did. Similarly, whilst higher attaining students have a deep interest in their personal study, lower attainers are going through the motions rather than being fully involved. This is evident in the way students discuss their studies or fail to bring written work in on time. Study skills such as time management and work planning are below average in this year group.
242. Year 12 students' attainment in drawing and painting is above average and better than their modelling in clay or wire. As a result of the opportunities offered, however, these students are making good progress in acquiring three-dimensional skills. This is evident in the wire models of natural forms such as shells and fish as well as in the cubist card constructions of a musical instrument. Computers are used effectively for research and for producing posters, such as the one for the current school production of *Grease*. Sketchbooks are filled with useful research and experimentation.
243. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from the one teacher's expertise in printmaking, fine art and art history and the other teacher's knowledge and skill development in ceramics and sculpture. However, teachers do not pay enough attention to encouraging students to become more actively involved in evaluating their own and other sixth formers' work against the examination criteria. Too much of the current practice is teacher controlled, with the student often listening passively. In discussion several students admitted that the freedom to think for themselves came as a shock after their Year 11 course.
244. Leadership and management are good. The department has benefited from additional teaching staff, which has increased the range of skills offered. As a result, teaching and learning are better than at the time of the previous inspection and good progress has been made.

### Media studies

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

#### Strengths

- Examination results are well above average; students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good: teachers have wide subject knowledge, which helps students learn rapidly.
- Leadership and management are very good; teachers work as a team to help students do their best.

#### Area for improvement

- Some students are not encouraged to take part in whole-class discussions.

245. The department offers courses in AS and A-level media studies. There are 35 students taking AS-level in Year 12, and 23 Year 13 students taking A2. These numbers are significantly higher than in previous years and they make media studies



one of the most popular subjects in the school. No students have failed to complete the course in recent years.

246. Results at A-level in 2001 were well above the national average. Students did better in media studies than in their other subjects, with male students gaining higher grades than female students. Results in 2001 were better than those of 2000 and represented very good achievement. In 2002, results were a little lower.
247. Standards are now above average in Year 12 and well above average in Year 13. By Year 13, students make their own video trailers for imaginary films, showing considerable creative ability with camera shots and in the choice of music to establish atmosphere. The preparatory work they do indicates students have good independent learning skills and research their subject thoroughly. They compare and contrast the opening of war films, such as *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Black Hawk Down*. They make perceptive comments about the start of *Saving Private Ryan*, showing they understood how the opening of this film differed from the other war films. They structure a discursive essay on why war films are popular, and whether *Spartacus* is a product of its time or a modern version of democracy. Students are able to express precise views because they have a very good command of media language. However, the written expression of lower attaining students is more vague, with ideas not sufficiently backed up by evidence.
248. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have wide subject knowledge that enables them to ask key questions to assess how much students have learnt; and to encourage them to think more deeply about the topic. Teachers use small group work very effectively to provide opportunities for students to share ideas and to show initiative. For example, in a Year 12 lesson the teacher asked students to plan, in groups, the filming of a trailer. All students participated with enthusiasm and learning was good. In whole-class discussion, a significant minority of students choose not to speak out and miss the opportunity to play an active role in their learning. Teachers manage lessons very well so that no time is wasted. Resources are integrated effectively into lesson plans and provide a strong stimulus for learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher showed brief clips from war films to illustrate directors' techniques in capturing an audience's attention. His emphasis on the use of precise language helped to widen students' vocabulary; when a student described *Apocalypse Now* as 'educational', the teacher suggested 'intellectual' would be a more apt word. Because teachers are enthusiastic and approachable, students' attitudes to their work are very good, though a few male students prefer oral to written work. In lessons, students listen very well to one another and to their teachers, with students showing considerable interest in the subject. They say the work is fun but challenging, and that media studies is one of the most enjoyable sixth form subjects.
249. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge of media studies has developed the subject very successfully in the two years he has been at the school. As a result, the numbers of students choosing the subject has risen sharply. He gives very good support to the newly qualified teacher, who shares the teaching of the two Year 12 groups. The teachers meet regularly and co-ordinate smoothly the work of the classes. The continuity of learning which results accounts for the above average standards attained by students in Year 12. Resources are good, in particular the Intranet site which enables students to access materials on computer to use in the home. This is helping to raise standards in written work. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection, so it is not possible to comment on improvement.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and sociology, but psychology and history were also sampled. The psychology lesson was unsatisfactory. The teacher had a good knowledge of the subject, but not the skills necessary to convey this knowledge to the students. The history lesson was very good. The teacher used searching questions to probe students' understanding and combined these with a very good emphasis on what the examination questions really required by way of an answer.

## Geography

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching results in students achieving above average standards.
- Standards are rising as a result of good leadership.
- Good use is made of fieldwork to allow students to observe the theory being put into practice.

### Area for improvement

- Some lessons allow the students to be too passive.

250. The school offers courses at AS and A-level, which attract viable numbers. It is very rare for a student not to complete a course of study. The A-level results in 2001 were well above average and improved in 2002. Students did better in geography than they did in their other subjects.

251. Standards are above average in both Years 12 and 13 and students are achieving well. Students build a solid foundation of knowledge of topics. In Year 12, for example, they know about terms such as 'leaching' and 'horizon' in soil studies and know how tundra soils are affected by climate through the leaching of the upper layers. They are skilled in using a range of research methods to evaluate evidence about soil profiles in fieldwork study on the Clent Hills, but do not consistently make enough use of examples in the theoretical aspects of study. In Year 13, students have wide-ranging knowledge of topics, such as issues of urban development in countries like Brazil. They are aware of social and health problems created by the growth of 'shanty towns' as a result of migration from rural areas, but average attaining students do not develop answers enough by researching and using data to show depth of understanding in writing about case studies. Students are competent in using ICT. Year 12 students, for example, used websites to research information about the origin and destination of different ethnic groups into Britain. They were able to identify sources and patterns of immigration across Europe, but lacked confidence in explaining the reasons and consequences of immigration. Consequently their answers were not well developed. Students' note-taking is good and most students organise themselves well, but do not incorporate enough data or use maps and diagrams to complement their writing often enough.

252. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are experienced and they plan their lessons well by consolidating work covered previously. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students' understanding about the features of the west coast climate of India was improved because the teacher recognised weaknesses in understanding and spent time reinforcing knowledge through explanation and questioning. The methods that teachers mostly use lead to active student participation. Year 13 students made very good gains in a lesson about developments in recreation and tourism in contrasting regions because the methods set challenges for them to work collaboratively and to

report findings, which were debated. This led to students improving their knowledge about changes in world tourism and their understanding of the effects on global economies. Occasionally learning is unsatisfactory because students are allowed to be too passive and topics are not studied to an appropriate depth, so that they do not make enough progress in the lesson. Teachers use resources well and they help to engage students actively in learning. They use books and atlases well to improve knowledge of places and for research. Regular use is made of the Internet for information about regional developments and reports and they use it well to develop assignments.

253. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The schemes of work are detailed and give clear guidance to teachers about what is expected. Students also have copy of the modules and this enables them to better understand how their learning is planned and what is expected of them. The residential and other fieldwork opportunities enhance students' learning so they can see the practical applications of study. Resources are good, particularly the access to computers, and these are used well for class and independent work. Teaching is monitored and opportunities provided for teachers to improve their skills.
254. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The above average attainment at A-level has been maintained and standards of work seen are now above average.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching of research is good, so students develop above average skills in this area.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and examination criteria.

### Areas for improvement

- Some lessons rely too much on using resources at the expense of using the teacher's knowledge.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking and writing skills.

255. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. The subject attracts viable numbers and it is rare for a student not to finish a course of study. Results at A-level were below average in 2001, but have been improving steadily each year and this improvement was continued in 2002.
256. The work of current Year 12 and 13 students is average, reflecting a continuing trend of improvement resulting largely from the strengths in coursework. All students achieve in line with their earlier standards at GCSE.
257. In both Years 12 and 13 students have sound sociological knowledge and understanding. They show a sound grasp of sociological perspectives and the theoretical foundations of the subject, and also of subsequent developments such as post-modernism theories. Much coursework, especially that of higher attaining Year 13 students, is of high quality. It is well structured and organised with, at its best, clearly stated aims and hypotheses. Students make good progress in Year 12 in developing research skills, and especially in learning to choose appropriate methods for the collection, interpretation and presentation of data, and in planning and

conducting research. This results in high quality assignments in Year 13 that reflect good understanding of methodological issues, and competent, well-reported research. ICT is used well in the presentation of assignments.

258. Students are less secure in linking and cross-referencing the topics discussed in lessons with sociological theories and case studies. For example, Year 13 students confidently discussed links between the media and violence in the context of their personal experiences, but made no attempt to support their discussion with findings from sociological research. Their thinking is also not always sufficiently critical. Year 12 students, for example, accepted rather than questioned assumptions made in the text being studied, of the advantages and disadvantages of selection in education.
259. Students' folders are well organised and provide useful support for learning. Lesson notes are clear and usually appropriately annotated, but there is little evidence of the development of a range of writing styles for different purposes. Extended writing in particular is insufficiently well developed thus restricting the development of skills of synthesis, analysis, comparison, explanation and conclusion, which are especially important for the synoptic assessment part of the course.
260. Teaching is satisfactory. It is, however, inconsistent in providing appropriate challenge, and ensuring that topics are consistently related to sociological research. There are particular strengths in the teaching of sociological research methodology. Students in a Year 13 lesson, for example, made good progress in developing their research skills because of the teacher's very clear practical guidance, and by being required to judge the quality of sample evidence papers against examination criteria. Their learning benefited significantly from the teacher's experience and good subject expertise.
261. Learning is well supported by up-to-date texts, worksheets and other resources including ICT and video material. However, there are instances when teaching is too dependent on such resources, and draws insufficiently on the teachers' own knowledge in providing appropriate breadth, and ensuring that topics are linked to sociological theories and research. This hinders the development of sociological knowledge, understanding and skills. There are also times when students' depth of understanding, and development of critical thinking skills are limited by over-dependency on the teacher, and by insufficient challenge for students to investigate issues for themselves and propose their own findings.
262. Homework assignments are set regularly but some tasks are not sufficiently challenging or helpful in supporting the development of study skills. The requirement for Year 13 students to complete a worksheet begun in a lesson is an example of this. Students' progress is monitored through systematic assessment that is well linked to course assessment requirements. Assessment results are used well to track students' progress against target grades, and to set further targets for improvement. Work is marked but often superficially, with too little guidance for improvement.
263. The leadership and management of sociology within the humanities department are satisfactory overall, resulting in satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The head of humanities provides support and guidance through regular monitoring including lesson observation. This contributes to development planning for the humanities department as a whole, but there is no specific planning for sociology in the current department development plan. The two sociology teachers work closely together on a daily basis in planning and maintaining an overview of provision, but

both have other responsibilities which make it difficult for them to focus as strongly on sociology as they would wish.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature and French.

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Students do much better than would be expected from their GCSE results because the teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good; the head of department is an excellent role model and makes exceptional use of new technology.

#### Area for improvement

- On occasions, lessons are so fully led by the teachers that students have limited opportunities to learn how to express their own ideas.

264. The subject is a popular choice at A-level and a very high proportion of students who start the course finish it, whether to AS or A-level. Many more female than male students choose to study the subject. Results at A-level in 2001 were above average and were similar in 2002. Standards are currently well above average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is very good.
265. By the time they reach the end of Year 13, students are articulate and are willing to contribute to whole-class and group discussion so as to advance their own understanding by sharing ideas with each other and their teachers. This was seen, for example, in a lesson on Sheridan's *The Rivals* in which students examined such matters as precisely why particular words were used in a given context, how a particular word or phrase might shed new light on a character and just what views about eighteenth century society were being communicated in the play. Students are also good at listening. They will listen respectfully to contrasting points of view, offer a challenge when they feel they have something to add, and make a clear and concise note of matters of significance. Virtually all the written work seen was of a very high standard. Students are able to write on a wide range of topics, from examining in fine detail why a soliloquy in a play by Shakespeare is effective, to making comparisons between *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *Birdsong*. Students also know what they need to do if they are to achieve high standards and they mostly do it. They reflect upon what they read, follow the guidance they are given, read the information and articles available on the department's Intranet and are ready to re-draft their work in the light of any constructive criticism they receive. Students' essays are well structured, well illustrated and evaluative. In some lessons, students tend to rely too heavily on the teacher to produce ideas and are less active in promoting their own learning than might be expected.
266. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and awareness of the requirements of the course. This was seen in a number of ways. In a Year 13 lesson on Blake, for example, the teacher brought to bear his considerable knowledge of religion and the early industrial revolution to explain the more obscure references in the writing. This led students to understand what they were reading and, indeed, to see the poetry's relevance to themselves. In

another Year 13 lesson students were required to analyse passages of prose and verse, commenting upon such features as structure and the effectiveness of the language used, as they would do as part of their final examinations. Students had a clear understanding of what was required of them and they were able to work very rapidly and express themselves clearly, using the correct terms. Students are taught how to write in a most effective manner. Tasks are carefully explained, students are often provided with lists of words they might find useful when trying to express themselves to advantage and relevant articles are recommended to them. Some of the work is handed in as a first draft; the teacher provides guidance and the students produce their final version. Students are required to complete a substantial quantity of written work. When students hand their work in, it is marked promptly so that they receive the full benefit from the teacher's assessment of the work. All this means that teachers have very high expectations. Students respond by working hard. They have much respect for their teachers. A number are very pleased at how well they have progressed since starting the course. All lessons seen were conducted at a vigorous pace and hardly a minute was wasted. However, on occasions the lesson tended to be rather too much led by the teacher, with the result that students' opportunities to develop their capacity to think independently were more limited than might be expected.

267. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department sets very high standards and is an excellent role model as a teacher. The information available to students and their parents on the Intranet is of great value in, for example, explaining the nature of the course and in providing relevant articles and revision packs. This is a most imaginative use of ICT to promote learning and make it more enjoyable and accessible. Progress since the previous inspection has been good; standards have been raised and the quality of teaching has improved.

## French

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

### Strength

- Students have good attitudes to learning a language and work hard at home.

### Areas for improvement

- Students have been badly affected by the changes in staffing and are not achieving as well as they should; teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Students' spoken skills are not developed well enough in lessons.
- Students do not have many opportunities to use authentic texts.

268. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. The numbers choosing French are viable and very few do not finish a course of study. Results at A-level in 2001 were above average, but fell in 2002 when students did not achieve the grades that would be expected from their GCSE results.

269. Standards are below the national average overall in the current Years 12 and 13. Students have been badly affected by a member of staff leaving and subsequent difficulties in finding a replacement. They sometimes miss work out or repeat work as the teachers do not know exactly what they have learnt previously. Students in the current Year 12, especially the lower attaining students and male students, spend a lot of lesson time working on improving their grammatical knowledge. All but the very highest attaining students produce written work in which they express their ideas in fairly simple language. They are beginning to write essays in which they can argue

their case but few make adequate reference to current events in France and the French-speaking world. Their spoken language sometimes also lacks accuracy and fluency because, although a few have spent time abroad, there is little opportunity to have contact with foreign nationals to develop their spoken skills. Students make better progress in understanding tapes and reading articles, about the types of holidays French people enjoy for example, and they increase their vocabulary quite significantly.

270. Students in Year 13 understand discussions in French on topics such as how different countries prepare for war, but they find it difficult to give their own opinions when they are not given time to prepare them in advance. When writing, although their basic grammar is usually correct, they often do not manage to express themselves in a more sophisticated manner, or have difficulty using persuasive arguments because they have not always been adequately prepared for this. They produce better writing when they have worked on a topic such as the films of François Truffaut or the Occupation of France and had time to assimilate new ideas as well as draft work to improve accuracy.
271. Students have good attitudes and are willing to work hard during lessons and at home but they do not always have access to the resources they need such as extra reading and listening materials to enable them to make good progress outside the classroom. Students are given some difficult texts to read in class and persevere until they understand but they do not have many opportunities to update their knowledge of current events affecting France.
272. The teaching is unsatisfactory. Students in Year 13 feel that the lessons are mostly interesting and varied and as a consequence they work hard. They have, however, found the lack of a permanent teacher over the past two years quite disruptive and have been made to repeat some work that the teacher does not know they have done. There is considerable inconsistency in the approaches of the different members of staff which students find difficult to reconcile. In Year 12, there is a heavy emphasis on reinforcing key grammatical points and new vocabulary at the beginning of the course. This means that most students can write more accurately as they progress through the course and understand more complex texts. In some lessons students are given good opportunities to discuss matters that interest them, such as the importance of learning to drive, but in others the teachers do most of the talking. In Year 13 they are expected to do a lot of writing at home and are given some very good feedback on what they need to do to improve but they do not do enough writing in class with the teacher on hand to help them with difficulties. Some students have not had work marked as quickly as it should have been.
273. Teachers use reading resources that are accessible to students but this is sometimes at the expense of more authentic texts that challenge students in the way required by the examination. Some teachers are not fully aware of the examination requirements; others have a very good understanding of this. Students are not often asked to work on more challenging materials at home in preparation for the lesson so that basic difficulties can be ironed out before they arrive. To improve listening skills, students are given practice in class but there is little access to foreign television channels or video material and many students claim that they find listening to the foreign language difficult. Students rarely get the opportunity to control the tape so that they can pause it when they feel the need to have something repeated and on occasions the instructions are so unclear from the teacher that they do not know what they have to do.

274. The leadership and management of the sixth form course are satisfactory. The frequent changes in staff have been the major cause of the sudden drop in standards from 2001 to 2002. Until 2001, students had been achieving standards above those expected nationally and students had been achieving at least in line with what would be expected given their performance at GCSE. More students are now studying French in Years 12 and 13 than has been the case in previous years. The need to try to minimise the staffing problems have meant that, for example, it has not been possible to co-ordinate the work of the staff who teach French at A-level to ensure consistency of approach. The provision is not as good as it was at the last inspection because of the difficulty in appointing suitably qualified staff.