

INSPECTION REPORT

WATH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Wath-on-Dearne

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106954

Head teacher: Mr E Sampson

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones
18462

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th February 2003

Inspection number: 249664

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:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs I Hartley
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11508	C. Griffin	Sixth Form Co-ordinator	English (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
4926	T. Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics (Key Stages 3 and 4 and sixth form) Educational inclusion	
15079	T. Boys	Team inspector	Science (sixth form)	
19066	J. Brooke	Team inspector	Religious education (sixth form)	
22531	D. Burbidge	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4) Equal opportunities	
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	History (Key Stages 3 and 4) Business education Sociology (sixth form)	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology (Key Stages 3 and 4 and sixth form).	
12356	R. Dickason	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
7084	J. Haslam	Team inspector	Computer studies (sixth form)	
15407	M. Harrison	Team inspector	Geography (Key Stages 3 and 4 and sixth form)	

20287	D. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 and 4) Provision for students with English as an additional language.	
31688	B. McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design (Key Stages 3 and 4) Citizenship	
15678	J. Radford	Team inspector	Religious education (Key Stages 3 and 4) Provision for students with special educational needs	
3793	J. Ratcliffe	Team inspector	French (sixth form)	
24033	J. Ruse	Team inspector	English (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
19295	P. Wall	Team inspector	Physical education (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
28197	H. Ward	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs (visual impairment)	
1340	D. Wigley	Team inspector	Music (Key Stages 3 and 4 and sixth form). Drama (sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wath Comprehensive School is a much larger than average sized mixed comprehensive school, with 1756 students on roll. There are 859 boys and 897 girls. The school has a large sixth form, which attracts up to a third of its 275 students from Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. Students are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and levels of attainment. Wath has suffered a significant amount of deprivation and social disadvantage over the past 20 years and this is reflected in the school's population. The attainment of students on entry overall is below average and there is a smaller proportion of higher attaining students than average. There are a few students who have English as an additional language, but none at an early stage of learning English. Around 11 per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is broadly average. Some 12 per cent of students have special educational needs, which is below average, and there is within the school a unit for students with visual impairment. Less than two per cent have statements of special need, which is below average. The school has been successful in achieving specialist Language College status. The school is currently embarking on a large rebuilding project to replace poor and widely dispersed accommodation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The leadership and management of the new head teacher, senior staff and the governors are good. The teaching is good and students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well from a level of attainment on entry that is below average. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is also good. The school is well organised. Students develop very positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave very well. The school provides good value for money and the sixth form provision is cost effective.

What the school does well

- The leadership of the new head teacher is good, and very good in producing a clear educational direction to the school's work and he is supported effectively by the senior management team
- Students gain well above average GCSE results in art and design, physical education, German and Spanish.
- Teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very good teaching throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Students behave very well in lessons. Their very positive attitudes and relationships with each other and their teachers ensure that good learning takes place.
- The Language College status ensures an excellent contribution to students' cultural development.
- The quality of pastoral care is good. It is particularly effective in helping students to settle into Year 7 and in supporting less confident students throughout the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics are too low and too many students underachieve in the subject.
- The accommodation is poor and impedes learning in many parts of the school. Aspects of the accommodation present health and safety hazards.
- Lateness to lessons and unsatisfactory attendance among a minority of students are having an adverse effect upon achievement.
- Arrangements to develop skills in numeracy and ICT are unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in November 1997. The trend in National Curriculum test results is in line with the national trend and improvement in results in GCSE examinations is above the trend. Students achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and has improved. The school has responded effectively to most of the issues in the previous report apart from accommodation and ensuing health and safety issues. A radical rebuilding programme is about to start. Curriculum issues have been resolved in design and technology and there are well-established plans to

improve information and communication technology (ICT) provision in the next academic year. There are still issues to be resolved relating to registration of sixth form students and lateness to lessons. The school has good capacity and commitment to improve further.

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	C	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	A	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

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

In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, results were average overall and average compared with similar schools. The average points score in English, mathematics and science was average. The results represent good achievement for these students. The trend in results over time is in line with the national trend. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were broadly average, but below the average for similar schools. The trend in results was above the national trend. This group of students achieved well in relation to their starting points in Year 7. Targets were set for students in Year 9 and Year 11 that were too high and were not achieved. This was partly due to some underachievement and partly due to data not being used effectively enough to set realistic targets. Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are above average in English, broadly average in science, but below average in mathematics. This marks good achievement in English and science, but students are underachieving in mathematics. The work of Year 9 students is broadly average in ICT, modern foreign languages, geography and religious education. In all other subjects standards are above average. These standards reflect students' good levels of achievement through Years 7 to 9.

In Year 11 standards are above average overall and students are achieving well. Standards are currently still below average in mathematics and ICT. They are broadly average in science, geography and religious education. In all other subjects standards are above average and are well above average in art and design. This represents good achievement in most subjects. Only in mathematics are students underachieving. Students with special educational needs and those students identified as gifted and talented achieve well. Students with English as an additional language achieve well and attain standards in common with their peers. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. GCE A-level results in 2001 were well above average overall. Students' achievement on these courses was very good.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment.
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students show enthusiasm in their lessons. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in out-of-school activities. The learning atmosphere in lessons is good as a result.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour in and out of lessons. Students know right from wrong and understand the boundaries of acceptable conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for students' personal development is very good. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good. Students have good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond very well
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of attendance are broadly in line with the national average.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 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 and the learning that results are good in English and all other subjects except mathematics where the overall teaching provision is unsatisfactory. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, predominantly by temporary staff in other subjects. There is a significant amount of very good teaching and some excellent teaching was seen. This is an improvement since the last inspection and has led to improved levels of achievement among students. The impact of this good teaching is seen most clearly in the good levels of achievement of students in Years 7 to 11. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. The lack of a whole-school approach to teaching numeracy is resulting in unsatisfactory development of numeracy skills, because of a lack of consistency in the contribution from some subjects. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but subjects do not make sufficient planned contributions in Years 10 and 11.

Teachers provide good role models and show commitment to the work they undertake. The quality of teachers' planning is good and leads to effective learning by students. Teachers have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects and a good level of expertise relating to the examination demands their subjects make. Class management techniques of teachers are good and teachers use the time in the lessons well to ensure good learning takes place. Teachers' expectations of students are kept appropriately high. This not only applies to students' behaviour and level of effort, but to the quality of their work. Teachers' use of assessment is an improving area in the school, and targets are set to inform students more closely about the progress they are making in their learning. There are still some inconsistencies in the setting of homework and the frequency and depth of teachers' marking. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Gifted and talented students are taught well, learn effectively and achieve well. Students with English as an additional language receive good teaching and achieve well in common with their peers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. It is broad and balanced. However, it does not yet fully meet the requirement for teaching ICT in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. These students achieve well in response to the good teaching they receive, particularly when there is additional support in the classroom.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory; it is good for moral development and very good for social and cultural development. The ethos of the school is one where respect for the individual is promoted effectively.
How well the school cares for its students	There are some unsatisfactory aspects concerning health and safety that stem from the poor accommodation. Pastoral care in the school is good.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The school has good links with parents. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. The quality of information to parents is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher provides good leadership and ensures a very clear educational direction for the school's work. Key staff are effective in their contribution to the running of the school. They have good levels of commitment and energy in pursuing continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good understanding of the school's work and they are mainly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is an improving feature of the school's work. It is currently good and systems and strategies are being established to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Specific grants are used effectively and best value is obtained in the school's spending. Staffing is good and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Accommodation is poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high expectations that the school has of their children. The good progress that is made by their children. Their children like school. Parents find the school approachable. The extra-curricular provision, including sports, the arts and educational visits. Quality of teaching. General standards of behaviour. The school's reputation within the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of parents expressed concern about the behaviour and discipline of a minority of students. They are concerned about the level of homework. A number of parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents. Concerns were expressed about the amount and quality of teaching by supply teachers. School buildings are generally inadequate.

The inspection team agreed with the positive views expressed. They also agreed that accommodation is poor. A disproportionate amount of the unsatisfactory teaching observed was undertaken by supply teachers. Inspectors found behaviour to be very good with only a very few incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour. Inspectors found the use of homework to be satisfactory. The school makes good efforts to keep parents informed and encourages them to be members of the Friends of Wath.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 152 students in Year 12 and 123 in Year 13 and is larger than most school sixth forms. There are slightly more female students than male. The proportion with special educational needs is very low as is the proportion from ethnic minority groups. The sixth form is popular and over-subscribed. Most students enter with average or above average results at GCSE. About four in ten of the school's Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form. About one third of the sixth form roll joins at the start of Year 12 from other schools. Almost all students complete their courses successfully. The curriculum comprises a range of traditional GCE A-level courses at AS and A2. Year 11 students seeking vocational provision receive appropriate advice and guidance and mainly attend a local college of further education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The previous report noted the students' good progress, and their achievement has remained good. Results in the 2001 examinations were well above the national average and they improved further in 2002. The wide range of AS and A2 subjects makes very good provision to meet students' aspirations and successfully enables them to fulfil their higher education ambitions. The overall quality of teaching has remained good with an increasing proportion of very good and occasionally excellent teaching. The tutorial system provides very good care and support for the students' personal and academic progress. The working atmosphere is positive although the facilities for independent and private study are inadequate. The students' attitudes are very good. These mature young adults very much enjoy their life in the sixth form and add much to the life of the school.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in French, drama, design and technology, religious studies and sociology.
- Leadership of the sixth form is very good, provides clear educational direction and creates high expectations.
- Students make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. Teaching is very good in modern foreign languages, design and technology, drama, music, religious studies and sociology.
- The range of courses is very well matched to the students' needs and helps them to progress successfully to the next stage of their education.
- The procedures for monitoring the students' progress towards their learning targets are extremely effective.
- The students have very good motivation and have excellent attitudes towards their work. They set a very good example to younger students.

What could be improved

- The facilities for independent learning and private study are inadequate.
- The procedures for registration and monitoring the students' presence on the school's premises are unsatisfactory.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
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Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are average and teaching and achievement are satisfactory. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their independent study skills.
Biology	Good provision and achievement. Above average standards result from good quality teaching and learning, supported by the students' good attitudes towards their work.
Chemistry	Good provision and above average standards. Teaching is good and the students' attitudes are very positive, enabling them to achieve well.
Design and technology	Very good. Well above average standards are attained and there is very good achievement as a result of very high quality teaching and learning.
Business studies	Good. Good teaching and learning help the students to achieve well, especially in their knowledge of theory and use of correct terminology.
Computing	Good. Standards are average and the students have good attitudes. They achieve well from their starting points. Teaching and learning are good.
Music	Good. Teaching is very good. Recent examination results have been below the national average, but students achieve well in relation to their starting points. Students have very good attitudes.
Drama	Very good. Exceptional leadership and management, very good – often excellent – teaching and excellent student attitudes lead to very good achievement. Well above average standards were observed and very high examination results are gained.
Geography	Good. There is good teaching and learning, resulting in above average standards. Students have very good attitudes and achieve well. There is good resource provision.
Religious studies	Very good. The very good teaching and learning lead to well above average standards, very good achievement and very good students' attitudes.
Sociology	Very good. The very good teaching results in very good achievement, well above average standards and positive students' attitudes.
English	Good. Students make good progress because of their very good attitudes and good specialist teaching. Some teaching is excellent.
Modern foreign languages (French)	Very good. Students achieve very well because of very good specialist teaching. They have very positive attitudes.

Nine other subjects were sampled. Teaching and learning were very good in physical education, psychology, Spanish and art; good in English literature, history and German; and satisfactory in physics and English language and literature.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Students receive very good guidance and support. The advice given for higher education applications is excellent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form and his team convey the highest expectations to the students with regard to their personal development and their studies. The sixth form is popular and continues to grow.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of courses, which suit their talents and aspirations. • They are well taught and challenged. • Teachers are accessible when students require help. • They enjoy the sixth form and recommend it to others. • The marking and feedback they receive on their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for independent and private study. • Advice about future options other than university. • The range of enrichment activities. • The response of school to their views.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments made and found students were very positive about their experiences in the sixth form. Inspectors also agree that the facilities for independent and private study are not good enough. Inspectors judge the advice about future options to be a strength. The students had been consulted at an early stage in the year before Year 12 students had received any guidance about future options. Students can – and do – voluntarily take part in a wide range of activities including sport, music and drama. The curriculum is further enriched through personal, social and health education, general studies, ICT courses and a range of residential and day visits in Britain and overseas. Students interviewed were strongly of the opinion that their views were listened to and that they knew whom they would go to for help.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. On entry to school, students' attainment is below average. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were broadly average and in line with the average for schools deemed to be similar on the basis of the proportion of students entitled to free school meals. In 2002, Year 11 students' results in the GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average. They were below average compared to similar schools. This group of students achieved well in relation to their starting points in Year 7.
2. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, results were average overall, both compared to all schools and to similar schools. The proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above was average in English, mathematics and science. The proportion reaching Level 6 and above followed the same pattern. Compared with schools deemed similar on the basis of entitlement to free school meals, results were average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Girls did slightly than boys, but the results are not significantly different overall. The results represent good achievement for this group of students particularly in English because they entered the school with lower scores in this area. The trend in results over time is broadly in line with the national trend.
3. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the average points score per student was average. The trend in results over the past five years has been above the national trend. When compared with examination results achieved in similar schools, the results were below average. This group of students made good progress, achieving well in relation to their starting points. Girls gained slightly better results than boys in line with the trend nationally. There were some variations in results at GCSE between subjects within the school. Students gained results that were well above the national average in art and design, physical education, German, Spanish and Latin. Above average results were scored in history and design and technology. In some areas the results were significantly lower, including mathematics and religious education.
4. In the work seen in the inspection, students in Year 9 make good progress and achieve well in nearly all subjects in response to the good teaching they receive. Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are above average in English, broadly average in science, but below average in mathematics. This marks good achievement in English and science, but students are underachieving in mathematics. In English and science, students have benefited because the teachers have taken good account of recent national guidelines in planning their teaching. This has not been the case in mathematics. The subject has been further disadvantaged by the amount of teaching that is undertaken by non-specialist teachers.
5. The levels of attainment of students when they enter the school vary in other subjects of the curriculum, but are generally below average. The work of students currently in Year 9 is broadly average in ICT, modern foreign languages, geography and religious education. In all other subjects standards are above average. These standards reflect students' good levels of achievement through Years 7 to 9.
6. In the work seen in the inspection, students' levels of attainment in Year 11 are above average overall and students are achieving well. This is in response to the good teaching they receive, reinforced by their positive attitudes and very good behaviour.

These latter factors explain the difference in students' current levels of attainment and the results of Year 11 students in 2002. The latter group were not as committed to their studies and a number of students' results were depressed by poor attendance patterns and disaffection. The school has put into place a mentoring system in response to this and has identified students who need additional support. This is proving to be effective in keeping the year group in line with the ambitious targets set for 2003.

7. Standards are currently still below average in mathematics and ICT. They are broadly average in religious education, which has halted the decline that took place in 2002. Standards are also average in science and geography. In all other subjects standards are above average and are well above average in art and design. This represents good achievement in most subjects and, when account is taken of their starting point, students are achieving very well in design and technology, music and art and design. The smaller numbers who take additional foreign languages to the two minimum that all take, achieve very well. Overall there are no significant differences in performances between boys and girls throughout the Years 7 to 9. In the GCSE courses and examinations, differences in performance have been broadly in line with differences nationally.
8. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall, in common with other groups of students. In all subjects they make good or satisfactory progress, except in mathematics where the progress of most students is unsatisfactory. In art and design they work well to acquire new skills and in modern foreign languages they are confident in using French to talk about themselves. They contribute well to discussions in English lessons. In public examinations students with special educational needs generally achieve well in comparison with their standards on entry to the school.
9. The school has identified students in each year who are the highest attainers and/or have specific talents, for example in music, the arts or sport. These students generally receive good provision that extends and enhances their curriculum. As a result, these students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. There is a small proportion of students of different ethnic background. Within this group there are no students whose English is at an early stage of acquisition. The attainment of students with English as an additional language in 2002 was not significantly different from other students.
10. Standards of literacy are below average when students enter the school. As a result of good teaching, standards improve. Teachers in most subjects stress the importance of key words so that students can understand them and use them correctly. However, in English, Year 7 students found it difficult to organise their writing into clear paragraphs and their reading skills are not strong enough to enable them to cope with the reading demands in all subjects. By Year 9 students make good progress in reading and can write more accurately and standards are average. Although some students continue to make spelling and punctuation errors, many have the confidence and skills to write at length and to organise their writing appropriately. During Years 10 and 11 students make further progress and standards are above average. In English they are able to explore texts with understanding and to justify their opinions, writing fluently and at length.
11. Standards in numeracy are below average. Below average mental arithmetic skills, for example, impede learning in mathematics. Students do not know their tables well enough and do not add up quickly enough. Standards of attainment are sufficient to

support learning in geography; for example the students use co-ordinates in map work, and in Year 11 students use their numeracy skills in coursework satisfactorily. In science there is little evidence of good algebraic manipulation skills and graph work is mainly unsatisfactory although measuring and written calculation skills are used appropriately. In music simple number skills are used effectively in constructing harmony intervals. The use of numeracy skills in design and technology lessons makes a good contribution to students' mathematical skills. For example, in food technology measure, percentage and proportion are used in adapting and using recipes.

12. In 2002, the school set targets for the Year 9 students taking National Curriculum tests and for students in Year 11 taking GCSE examinations. In both cases the targets were very challenging when account is taken of their prior attainment and in neither case were the targets met. A combination of some underachievement by Year 11 students and data about students' attainment not being used effectively enough to set accurate targets were the cause of this. Both factors have since been tackled and students in both Years 9 and 11 are currently on course to meet the school's targets, other than in mathematics where there is still some underachievement.

Sixth form

13. The results in the 2001 examinations at GCE A-level were well above the national average as measured by the average points score obtained. Male students did marginally better than females. Comparison information against national figures is not available for the new A2 examinations in 2002 but there was an improvement in the overall standards as indicated by the average points score. The sixth form is over subscribed and there is a high rate of successful course completion, not only for the one-year AS courses but for the two-year combined AS and A2 courses.
14. In the 2001 A-level examination, results were well above average in business studies, drama, sociology and physical education. They were above average in art and design, biology, English language, French and geography. Results were average in chemistry, computing, and general studies. They were below average in history, mathematics, music and religious studies and well below average in design and technology. In 2002, results improved in biology, chemistry, computing, French, design and technology, mathematics and religious studies. They were lower in business studies and drama and broadly the same in English language.
15. In 2001, students sat the newly introduced AS examinations for the first time. Results were significantly above average in chemistry, biology, design and technology, business studies and computing. They were broadly average in religious studies, geography and business studies. Results were below average in music. Comparative data are not available for drama and mathematics; in mathematics students did not sit the required number of modules in order to be awarded an overall grade. National comparative data is not available for 2002.
16. In work seen during the inspection overall standards are above average in Year 13 and Year 12. Students are achieving well in relation to their previous examination results. Standards are well above average in French, drama, design and technology, religious studies and sociology. Standards are above average in English language, biology, chemistry, geography, business education and music. They are average in mathematics and computer studies. Standards in Year 12 usually match those in Year 13 with the exception of sociology where Year 12 standards are above, as distinct from well above, average. Other courses were sampled and it was found that standards are well above average in German and Spanish. They are above average in

English literature, history, psychology and physical education. They are average in Year 12 English language and literature and in Year 12 and 13 physics.

Key skills

17. The school provides an accredited course in ICT key skills for those students whose computing skills require further development. This good provision is available to all students through its timetabling in each of the four option blocks. Provision for the development of key skills in subjects is good. The enhancement of application of number is a strength in design and technology and geography. It is satisfactory in religious education and music and good in other subjects. The use and development of communication skills are very good in sociology, design and technology, drama and English language and good elsewhere except for mathematics where they are satisfactory. The development of ICT skills is less even. It is satisfactory in religious studies, mathematics, biology, chemistry and business education. It is very good in a range of subjects: design and technology, music, geography and drama. Opportunities for working with others are mainly good and are very good in design and technology, geography, sociology and drama. The enhancement of study skills is very effective in religious education, sociology and drama but is not satisfactory in business education and mathematics where students do not have enough opportunity to work on their own initiative. The development of problem solving is good and outstandingly so in design and technology.
18. The students' communication skills are above average across a range of subjects. Year 13 business education students explained succinctly and with clarity the impact of government policy on the purchasing strategies of companies. As a result of very effective group work in Year 12, chemistry students provided very good extended answers when exploring fermentation. High quality debating and discussion skills were evident when Year 13 drama students discussed production issues in *Hamlet*. Year 12 sociology students provided very good and easy to follow reports on the advantages and disadvantages of statistical analysis.
19. The students' application of number skills is above average. Year 12 business students showed above average level of skills when interpreting stock control graphs. Year 13 business students were assured in their use of number when calculating risks to companies. Assured number skills were consistently observed in biology when Year 12 students investigated dependent and independent variables and analysed graphs and Year 13 students carried out calculations quickly and accurately. Year 12 geography students successfully interpreted census data when researching population structures and ICT students were assured when translating denary numbers to binary and then reversing the process.
20. The standards of ICT skills are average as observed in the core ICT provision across each option block. Students who previously studied ICT at GCSE show a higher level of skills and are able to apply these to other subjects. As well as word processing they combine texts and graphics effectively when processing information for an audience. Significantly good practice was observed in design and technology. Students' portfolios showed good use of word processing and captured images. Their use of ICT and digital cameras to record the processes of their work was a strength. In geography there were frequent examples of good applications of the use of text processing, desktop publishing packages and spreadsheets. Year 12 sociology students used ICT well when investigating research techniques such as structured interviews, longitudinal studies and sampled questionnaires.

21. Students work well with others. Good group and collaborative work were observed in biology, English language, computing and sociology. Group work in a Year 13 business lesson was a most effective means of enhancing and securing the students' understanding of the impact of globalisation on trade with the United Kingdom. The teacher's thoughtful use of a competitive group situation enabled Year 12 English language students to increase significantly their accurate application of the correct term to analyse dialect levelling. Excellent group work enabled Year 13 sociology students to explore in depth theories about the relationship between crime and deviance.
22. Standards of study skills tend to be above average but they are uneven. There is a degree to which this reflects the students' lack of access to good, well-resourced and quiet accommodation to facilitate private study. One group of students only gained access to computers after obtaining a key from a teacher who then supervised them. The lack of facilities to encourage independent private study is a weakness. Nevertheless some good and often very good practice occurs in some subjects. In design and technology students made good use of primary and secondary sources to carry out independent research. Higher order and critical reading skills were notable strengths in a Year 12 geography lesson when students evaluated an article from the 'National Geographic' on storms. Good independent learning was a constant feature in geography. However, in business education, despite the occasional positive example, there was too much reliance on the teacher for note taking. Independent study skills are not sufficiently developed in mathematics. The consistent development of independent study skills across all subjects is a development need, not only in preparation for post-16 examinations but also for study in higher education.
23. Students have good opportunities to solve problems. Design and technology students frequently face the challenge of responding effectively to design issues. Year 13 English language students drew on their knowledge of the subject and of purpose and audience to devise a product that would enhance the linguistic knowledge of younger students. During a lesson on lava flow, Year 13 geography students effectively unravelled the significant considerations for hazard management.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Students have very good attitudes to learning. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. Students' maturity and friendliness are a credit to the school. Personal development is very good and attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Most parents agreed that their children like school. Students are proud of their school and pleased to be there.
25. In lessons, students have very good attitudes and this has a positive impact on learning. Students are very well motivated, attentive and keen to learn. They concentrate well and persevere with their work. Attitudes are only unsatisfactory in a very few lessons, often associated with Year 7 groups, lower attaining groups or temporary teachers. The immature attitudes of Year 7 students improve as they settle into the school and follow the good example of older students.
26. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. In the last reporting year, there were 133 fixed-term exclusions involving 83 students, mostly boys. This is relatively high and reflects the rigorous approach to maintaining high standards of behaviour. The school's efforts to be more inclusive and keep students in school are shown by a decline in exclusions last term compared with the previous autumn. There was only one permanent exclusion last year, which is well below average.

Students identified with behavioural difficulties are given good support to help them learn effectively. Students behave very well at break times and are trustworthy around the school and in caring for resources and equipment. They know how to behave well and are extremely polite and helpful to visitors. The poor state of the accommodation results in some disrespect for the school environment and much litter is strewn around the school at break times. The provision of extra litter bins since the last inspection has improved the situation.

27. Relationships across the school are very good and contribute very positively to students' learning. Students form very good and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. They have very good relationships with their form tutors, most of who stay with them through the school. Tutors get to know students well and give a very good degree of support and guidance for both academic progress and personal development. Students co-operate very well in pairs and groups and share resources well. They listen sympathetically to each other and respect each other's feelings, views and beliefs. They applaud each other's successes. Students mix well socially across age and ability groups. Students in Year 7 appreciate the support given to them by sixth form counsellors and paired readers. There are occasional incidents of bullying, especially in Year 7, but no reported racism in school. Students deal with incidents of bullying themselves quickly and very effectively through established 'bully courts'. Members of the court, under the guidance of a teacher, listen to all sides of the argument and decide on the appropriate action.
28. Students' personal development is very good. They enjoy the opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Spiritual development is good and students appreciate their roles and responsibilities in the school community in wider society. One Year 11 student has taken part in the National Youth Cabinet. The Year 8 student receptionists perform their duties conscientiously, helping visitors and tracking the attendance of some students. Members of the School Council discuss issues such as behaviour, attendance, environment and uniform. There is an active Amnesty International group raising awareness of human rights issues through presentations to students in assemblies. Students raise large amounts of money for a wide range of local, national and international charities each year, such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, Save the Children and The Bluebell Wood Hospice. Students of all ages participate very well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, drama and music. This contributes very positively to students' personal development. A good number of Year 10 students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. There is very good participation in the wide variety of residential trips, many of them in Europe. Students' aspirations are raised by a good variety of visits to universities, visiting speakers and Industry Day.
29. Students with special educational needs usually behave well and have very good attitudes to their work. For example, students in Year 7 who have extra support in literacy enjoy the challenge of their individual reading and spelling tasks. The majority of students with special educational needs try hard to meet the targets in work and behaviour that have been set for them. However, there are occasional examples of challenging attitudes from those with behaviour problems.
30. Attendance in 2001/2 was broadly in line with the national average. It has improved since the last inspection when it was below the national average. This is a direct result of the numerous strategies that have been successfully introduced by the school. Truancy is broadly in line with national averages, but authorised absence is above the national average. Attendance was good in autumn 2002, but declined later in the year. Attendance is good in Years 7, 8 and 9, but declines in Years 10 and 11.

This is partly explained by the school's registration of Year 11 study leave as authorised absence. Some absence is due to holidays taken during term time, but the school's encouragement to parents not to take children away during term time has resulted in a small decline in the numbers of days lost to holidays in 2001/2. The poor attendance of a small number of students has a negative impact on overall attendance figures and on their learning.

31. The punctuality of students to school is satisfactory, although it is worse in Year 11. The large and spread-out school site makes some students and occasionally teachers late to lessons, especially in Year 7 on the Park Road site. Although improvement to timetabling has been made since the last inspection, some time is still lost in transferring between lessons.

Sixth form

32. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes towards study and this has a very good impact on their learning. Their behaviour and personal development are very good. Students enjoy the sixth form. They are keen to learn and very well motivated. They nearly all complete their chosen courses. Confidence and independence grow as they go through the sixth form. The very good relationships that exist between one another and with staff are constructive and supportive. They have a good level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and work very well together. They are becoming mature and responsible adults.
33. Students are developing a very good sense of citizenship. They are very good role models for younger students and their role in the school community has increased since the last inspection. The head boy and girl lead the School Council and along with other senior students act as figureheads within the school. Students support younger students well in the school. Many Year 12 students, mostly but not all girls, have trained as counsellors. They start working with pupils in Year 6 and then help to settle the Year 7 very well into the school. A good number listen to younger students read to help them with this important literacy skill. The sixth form are responsible for supervision of younger students during wet lunch times. Sixth formers act as sports leaders and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities along with the rest of the school. A good number of sixth formers participate in the gold Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and several students in Year 12 take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme. There is good participation in residential visits to Europe and several students enjoy the opportunity to go even further afield, for example to Namibia or Pakistan. Attendance in lessons is good although no accurate record is kept of students on the school site. Students develop a good degree of independence and have very good skills to enable them to continue their learning in adult life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

34. The overall quality of teaching is good. In around two in three lessons, teaching is good and there was some excellent teaching in seven lessons. In the main school, eight lessons were unsatisfactory. The impact made by the good teaching is seen in the levels of achievement among students and the good quality learning that is taking place. The overall quality of teaching is consistently good across Years 7 to 11, although nearly all the unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Years 7 and 9. There is also a consistency to the amount of very good teaching, which is spread evenly across Years 8 to 11. Here, around one in three lessons is very good. In Year 7, the figure drops to one in four. There is a consistency too in the spread of good teaching across subjects. Only in mathematics are students judged not to be achieving well

enough, primarily because the overall teaching students receive is unsatisfactory. The marking of students' work and ongoing assessment are not used sufficiently by teachers to match work to students' needs

35. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but seven lessons observed, good or better in the majority of lessons and very good in around one in three lessons. Excellent teaching was seen in four lessons. Teaching is good in English, satisfactory in science, but unsatisfactory in mathematics. In all other subjects the overall quality is good and is very good in art and design, music and physical education. The predominance of good and better teaching ensures good learning. As a result, students achieve well through these years. The teachers ensure in the main that there is a consistency of good learning taking place as their methods reflect those recommended in the Key Stage 3 strategy.
36. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also good. In one lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory. Excellent teaching was seen in three lessons. Students receive good teaching in English and science. The overall teaching provision that students receive in mathematics is unsatisfactory. Teaching is at least good in all other subjects and very good in art and design, music and physical education. Students' learning is good in Years 10 and 11 and they achieve well in most subjects. Only in mathematics is there underachievement.
37. The highest attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented receive good teaching and achieve well. The school is currently using additional external funding effectively to improve the teaching these students receive, both formally in the classroom and in extra activities provided outside lesson time. Additional training has taken place to ensure that the classroom teaching received by these more able students takes due account of their particular needs and promotes their learning in the specific areas of their gifts and talents.
38. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall. In the most effective lessons students learn well because teachers have a good knowledge of their needs and are usually successful in adapting their methods and learning materials to meet the different requirements. For example, the girls in Year 9 who were taking part in a badminton lesson enjoyed success because of instructions that were clear and encouraging in style, and worksheets which they found easy to understand. Similarly, in a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge of the students' needs, together with the careful choice of learning activities and excellent photographic resources, enabled students who were following a modified curriculum to produce poetic descriptions of birds and flowers. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is because work is not sufficiently well matched to students' requirements, so they have difficulty in coping with the tasks set. The school has already identified this as an area for improvement.
39. Students with English as an additional language receive good teaching, in common with their peers. Where necessary, there is joint lesson planning by subject teachers and additional support staff. There is appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning received by these students in order to reduce any inequalities.
40. Teachers have a very good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects and, in a number of areas, a particular expertise and experience of examining in their subject area. This is often used to very good effect to respond to students' differing needs as they arise and to ensure that they are prepared well for the examinations they take. The quality of teachers' planning is good throughout the school. For

example, in a Year 11 mixed attainment group, the teacher's detailed and thoughtful planning made a difficult poem interesting to the class. They responded with enthusiasm and all students, including two with special educational needs, made very good progress in their learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers finish by reminding the class about what they set out to learn at the outset and emphasise, in a planned summary session, just what has been learned. This practice reinforces students' learning effectively and, in the best lessons, is further consolidated and extended by the good use of homework.

41. Teachers' class management techniques are good. Teachers use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good pace to lessons so that good learning takes place. For example, in a Year 11 French class, the lesson was managed very well to produce a brisk lesson of high pace with tight discipline. The teacher used very well drilled conventions to which students were entirely accustomed. A feature of this very successful lesson was the very vivid and appropriate question and answer session that targeted boys with special educational needs. This was done in such a way as to challenge them and ensured that they consolidated their earlier learning and made very good progress in the lesson. The response of the whole class was very good and they demonstrated very positive attitudes and very good behaviour, as they were captivated by the approach and stimulated by the learning materials used.
42. In the best lessons, teachers use methods that are appropriate to the needs of students in order to focus on how students learn and to improve their ability to learn for themselves. In an excellent chemistry lesson with Year 10 students, the computer presentation at the start captured students' interest. Very good questioning took the work further and tasks were given that were clearly identified so that students knew precisely what they had to do and why, at the different levels at which they operated. An excellent plenary session summed up the work covered, and the learning that took place in the space of one lesson was impressive. The very positive attitudes and behaviour of the group were testimony to the quality of teaching received and their enthusiasm for the subject reinforced the excellent learning that took place.
43. The relationships that teachers engender with students and between students help to ensure classes where students expect to work hard and where they enjoy their work and learn well. Teachers are also effective in ensuring that students behave well when necessary. Here, they are helped by the positive approach of students so that behaviour is often very good and sometimes exemplary. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, it is clearly linked to inappropriate lesson material and teaching that is undemanding in its level of challenge. This is more often the case than poor behaviour by students, although there is usually a link between the two. Overall, there was a disproportionate amount of unsatisfactory teaching by temporary teachers in the school and too much unsatisfactory teaching by permanent members of staff in mathematics. Where such teaching occurred, students' learning was slowed by lack of pace and too little attention being given to the amount of progress students made in the lesson.
44. Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high and teachers provide good role models for students. Increasingly, assessment is being used effectively to keep students' expectations high regarding their own progress. Targets are set to help students stay on course and give them a point of progress to aim for. These targets are becoming more precise and accurate as the school is improving its use of the data it has collected about students.

45. The setting of homework is satisfactory overall. There is some good practice across a number of subjects where homework is set regularly and to a timetable to extend the work of the classroom. However, some inconsistencies occur, resulting in patchiness in the demands made upon students. In the main, students' work is marked conscientiously and is done in a manner that helps students understand how to improve their work. This is not universally the case and in some subjects work is left unmarked for too long a period.
46. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. Literacy is given a high profile within the school and the Literacy Action Plan focuses on the development of reading and understanding. An effective whole-school training day, in which all departments participated, resulted in a greater awareness across the school of literacy approaches. Some departments have begun to incorporate literacy approaches into their schemes of work and there is evidence of an emphasis on reading skills and the learning of key words. As yet, however, there is no consistent systematic teaching of reading and writing skills across all subjects.
47. The most recent national guidelines for mathematics have been adopted by the school in order to improve standards in numeracy. However, the strategy for learning is applied inconsistently and thus it is not having sufficient impact on standards. The lack of the implementation of a whole-school policy for numeracy across the curriculum, despite suitable staff training, is resulting in an unsatisfactory contribution being made by subjects to teaching students numeracy skills. Numeracy, its use and development are rarely included in schemes of work nor is there sufficient guidance in departmental documentation to help teachers to plan effectively. The best practice is seen in design and technology where a wide range of measuring skills and data presentation are used regularly in lessons, and errors corrected.
48. The provision of ICT by subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11. There is some good practice, in design and technology, music and in modern foreign languages for example where ICT is taught well and the demands of the National Curriculum are met. Some of the skills of ICT are taught in English and science, but in mathematics this is not done although graphical calculators are used regularly. The school has tackled the issue of insufficient teaching in ICT and there is a comprehensive and well-designed development plan which is being put into effect. This will remedy this situation in the next academic year to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met.
49. The school has improved its teaching since the previous inspection and there is now a greater proportion of very good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, the quality of learning is now good. The work undertaken by the head teacher, and governors and senior staff to consolidate performance management in the school is having a clear impact and is further improved by the structured and formal monitoring of teaching within departments. The school has responded well to the previous report in this respect and the process is now more rigorous and systematic in its approach. There is a clear indication of good capacity to improve the quality of teaching further and the school is making good headway in ensuring that students' learning experiences are improved by widening the repertoire of approaches taken by teachers.

Sixth form

50. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. In around nine in ten of the lessons observed, in the subjects focused upon, there was good teaching. In nearly one in two lessons, the teaching was very good. Excellent teaching was observed in six lessons. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Students in the sixth form with special educational needs also receive good teaching. The highest attainers and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress in response to the good teaching they receive as do students with English as an additional language and they make good progress in line with their peers. The progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.
51. Teachers demonstrate very good specialist subject knowledge, augmented by a good knowledge of and experience in examining their subjects. Lessons are very well prepared, and good provision is made for higher and lower attaining students, ensuring their good learning and progress. Question and answer sessions are used skilfully in order to produce good quality class debate. In this way, concepts are reinforced, and this leads to good learning. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend students' learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students and students respond with enthusiasm. Students are frequently given imaginative and challenging tasks to complete, and teachers encourage students to be creative, as they raise their intellectual curiosity. In subjects such as sociology, students have acquired the capacity to think for themselves, and they have a high degree of independence. In some of the best lessons, for example in science, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that focuses on building up students' knowledge and understanding and leads them on to extend this process to studying independently. As a result, students of all levels of attainment are consistently challenged.
52. Teachers have very positive relationships with their students, based firmly on mutual respect and this enables them to demand and challenge. These very good relationships that exist, allied to the very positive attitudes shown by students, result in classrooms where there is a good climate for learning. Teachers use procedures for assessing students' attainment that are generally good and there is some very good practice, for example in design and technology. Here, assessment is very thorough and clearly informs students about their marks and why they are given. Systems and strategies are in place to raise standards of teaching further by providing students with well-informed targets and predictions of the grades they are capable of attaining.
53. The poor accommodation impedes students' learning in school. The opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners are constrained by a lack of suitable private study areas and a lack of resources to extend their research. The book stock in the library is inadequate and students' access to computers is unsatisfactory.

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

54. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The time allocated to the curriculum meets recommendations although the size of the school site and the distance students have to travel mean some lessons do not start punctually and some learning time is lost. The school has effectively dealt with issues raised at the last inspection concerning design and technology courses in Years 10 and 11. The response to improving provision for ICT has been uneven. There is now an adequate separate ICT course in Year 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 there is no separate course although one is starting

for Year 10 students in September 2003 and for Year 11 in 2004. A number of subjects are not fulfilling requirements to teach ICT in their lessons in Years 10 and 11.

55. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are good. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. ICT is a separately taught subject in Years 7 and 8 and part of the design and technology provision in Year 9. The impact is good because of this provision, but would be made stronger still were the planning in other subjects of the curriculum to improve. The implementation of the national strategies is satisfactory for literacy but is unsatisfactory for numeracy. The overall grouping of students into broad bands has resulted in some difficulties, caused by the range of attainments in some sets, especially in Year 8. Following action by the new head teacher, the school is reviewing its grouping arrangements. All students study a second modern foreign language in Year 8 and, as befits the school's Language College status, some take two modern foreign languages and Latin from Year 9. Students also take courses in drama.
56. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. There are strengths in the range and number of conventional GCSE subject courses. These include a double science course as well as separate courses in physics, chemistry and biology. Courses are offered in French, German and Spanish as well as Latin. All students take a full GCSE course in religious education. This is changing from September 2003 to a GCSE short course for all, or a full course for those who wish to take it to accommodate the improved ICT provision for all. However, the range of courses leading to alternative accreditations and methods of assessment for less academic students is insufficient as indicated by the below average proportion of students attaining five or more grades at A*-G in 2002. Although there is a transition group for a small number of less motivated students who take more vocationally-gearred courses, the range of courses is not broad enough to meet fully the needs of all students. The new head teacher and his senior management team have, however, identified this shortcoming and their well-formulated plans to improve the provision were available during the inspection.
57. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities. Foreign exchanges and trips emanating from the school's specialist Language College status are a significant part of the provision. The international dimension to residential visits is excellent and includes visits and exchanges to France, Germany, Sicily, Hungary and Colorado. There is a good and well-supported tradition of involvement in competitive sport with many football and rugby teams representing the school in weekend fixtures. Other sports teams flourish: cross-country running, athletics, cricket, netball and hockey. Sporting and fitness sessions at lunchtimes and after school are also popular. There are good opportunities for additional study support. Teachers support extra GCSE revision classes for Year 11 students; the school library is open before and after school for homework. Early arrivals can purchase breakfast each morning in the canteen. Drama activities are strong with the school receiving awards for the quality of the students' performances. The school has a good tradition of outdoor education activities both within and in addition to the physical education curriculum.
58. Overall, the provision for equal opportunities is satisfactory. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities and is striving to become a more inclusive school. Since the last inspection, when an equal opportunities policy was awaiting approval, a detailed, high quality, working policy document now supplements a written inclusion policy statement. Essential review and monitoring processes are outlined, to ensure

compliance with the law. However, at least four departments do not yet include reference to equal opportunities or inclusion within their departmental documentation. Departmental examination analysis does not always review the progress of different groups of students, other than boys and girls. There are very few students of different ethnic origin and no students at an early stage in their development of English. However, the results are analysed by the different racial groups in the school to ensure that equality is present. In determining the quality and diversity of the educational experience of its students, a number of strengths have been identified. These include the support given to lower attaining students by the work of the special educational needs department, the Learning Recovery Base, its reading schemes and Catch-up programmes, and the work of the Visual Impaired Unit. Now, students have increased opportunities to study foreign languages since the development of the Language College. Travel by school bus, each evening, limits access to extra-curricular activities for a large number of students. The banding policy in Year 8 is currently being reviewed to redress weaknesses in the current system for grouping students. Curriculum modifications are also being considered as the take-up for GCSE triple-science consists entirely of boys. The school has planned relevant action in all these identified areas. The sprawling split school site, with its numerous outbuildings, and the staircases of the main building, create difficulties for the movement of the physically disabled. The school is currently updating its equal opportunities policy to meet the requirements on racial equality.

59. Overall provision for students with special educational needs is good. A strength of the support for teachers is the detailed information provided by the special educational needs department on students' backgrounds and current targets, together with advice on ways of dealing with students' particular problems. In Years 10 and 11 the provision is very good because of the wide range of courses offered, the individual programmes supervised by staff in the Learning Recovery Base, and the help of the learning mentor team. Students moving from one stage of education to another are given good support and advice, for instance when preparing to move into the school at the end of Year 6 and when choosing subjects for GCSE and associated courses. Special examination arrangements are negotiated for those who require them. Most students with special educational needs leave the school at age 16 and many follow vocational courses at the local college. Those who stay at school are well supported in their sixth form studies.
60. The school makes good provision in the curriculum for its gifted and talented students. Students throughout Years 7 to 13 have benefited from additional funding that is used effectively by the school to ensure that those students who are gifted and/or have particular talents are provided with activities to challenge and stretch them further. The most able students are being given opportunities outside the immediate school environment such as master classes in mathematics at a local university. In addition students can exercise their talents and gifts through the numerous clubs and extra-curricular activities that extend and enhance the curriculum. The grouping of students by attainment is effective in ensuring that these students are challenged during their lessons. The school is currently moving towards planning at departmental level to ensure that schemes of work recognise the need to meet the needs of these students. There is currently some very good practice to be found in this respect in departments such as physical education, art and design, design and technology and modern foreign languages. The co-ordinators responsible for managing provision for these highest attainers lead and manage effectively and have produced very good documentation to support the development of provision for these students. The few students with English as an additional language receive good curricular provision in common with their peers.

61. The school has a good programme for personal, social and health education that contributes well to students' development. It is taught on one morning every half term when normal lessons are suspended, and is delivered mainly by form tutors. No lessons were seen during inspection and little written work was available for scrutiny, but students value personal and social education lessons. There is a good input on sex education, drug education, environment, careers, health and safety, and citizenship. The programme is well supported by a good variety of visitors, such as a reformed drug addict, and by drama productions. Assemblies and form time enhance personal and social education.
62. Provision for careers education is good. It is taught mainly by form tutors and begins in Year 7 and Year 8 with work on self-esteem. In Year 9, students are introduced to the careers library and given good guidance on option choices for Year 10. An Industry Day and a Careers Fair are held for Year 10 students and some in Year 11. This is a good opportunity to meet employers, armed forces personnel, colleges and training providers to help students with career choices. In Year 10, students take part in three weeks of very well organised and useful work experience. They are encouraged to find their own placements, which are then formally checked for health and safety requirements. A few students follow a modified curriculum with appropriate extended work placements that improve their attendance and enhance their learning. There is good support from the professional careers service, especially for pupils with special needs and some targeted students in Year 11. The careers library is useful. All students in Year 11 have personal interviews and are given good advice about post-16 choices, including alternatives to the school's sixth form. Those wishing to enter the sixth form have interviews to assess their suitability and ensure they select the right courses. There is a good sixth form prospectus that gives precise details for each course, but does not relate subjects to possible career opportunities.
63. The school has very good links with the community and these contribute very positively to students' learning and personal and social development. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by many visits into the local and wider community, for example, a Year 9 visit to a Holocaust museum. There are very good links with the local community and businesses which provided good support for the Language College status and help business education and the work experience programme, all of which aid students' personal development. There are very good links with the local church, and visits to churches of other faiths widen students' understanding of the world in which they live. Students participate in community events such as the Carol Service and the 'Commonwealth Games'. The school runs several joint projects with the Youth Centre next door. There are excellent links within Europe helped by the Language College status. Students develop language skills and an understanding of European history through visits to a good number of European countries. The school has supported language development in the local community very well. Good links have developed with the global community as part of the citizenship programme.
64. The school has very good relationships with partner institutions. These make a very good contribution to students' academic progress and personal development. Although students come from a large number of primary schools, most join the school from seven local primary schools. The strong Language College and pastoral links with these schools ensure a smooth transfer of students into Year 7. There is a good induction programme for Year 6 pupils, which is supported by students in Year 12. Good extra support is given for those with special educational needs. Some of them attend school regularly in Year 6 to familiarise themselves with routines and to ensure a successful transfer. Curriculum links are particularly good in modern foreign

languages, but also in physical education, drama, music and science. There is a very good range of sporting fixtures with other secondary schools and good liaison with schools and colleges on post-16 options. Students represent the school well in regional school sports events. There are very good links with other schools in several European countries and even in the United States of America. The excellent links with Dearne Valley College enhance the curriculum by supplementing the alternative curriculum provided for a few students. There are excellent links with a variety of universities including colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. Visits to universities raise the aspirations of students.

65. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. Although there are still no planned opportunities in schemes of work, there has been significant improvement in provision since the last inspection. The school is successful in its aims to create a caring community based on tolerance, understanding and concern for other people. Citizenship, drama, music and art make strong contributions.
66. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies focus on spiritual aspects such as students' responsibilities to society. Students are encouraged to work together and support each other and those less fortunate than themselves. There is no provision for a regular daily act of collective worship, so there are lost opportunities to extend spiritual development and the thought for the week is insufficiently addressed. Overall, insufficient time is set aside for students to reflect upon their own feelings, values and beliefs. There are good links with the local church and visits from representatives of other faith communities. Subject contributions to spiritual development are sound but variable. Some make a good contribution, for example in religious education where students reflect on the persecution of the Jewish people in the Second World War. All Year 9 students visit a Holocaust museum and speak to survivors. This is a very moving experience that gives students a good insight into the consequences of racism and hatred. The Amnesty International group has a high profile in school and raises awareness of human rights issues well. All teachers rightly emphasise mutual respect and understanding. Students are encouraged to express their opinions confidently and to listen to others carefully. Students are encouraged to support a wide range of local, national and international charities and show concern for the poor, the needy and the sick.
67. The school's provision for students' moral education is good. Teachers are good role models and have clear expectations of good behaviour. The behaviour policy is positive and rightly rewards good behaviour and attitudes. The Code of Conduct, based on basic human rights, was negotiated by students and is printed in student planners. Students understand the rules and consider sanctions and rewards to be fair and used consistently by staff. This encourages students of all abilities to come to school on time, work hard and behave well. The students' involvement in 'bully courts' to manage bullying in each year group develops their social responsibility very well and makes an excellent contribution to moral development. There is good provision for moral development across all areas of the curriculum. Moral issues such as global warming are covered in geography and capital punishment in religious education. Fair play is consistently encouraged in physical education. Assemblies reinforce moral messages. There is occasional good use of registration times to discuss moral dilemmas such as the possible war with Iraq, but opportunities for moral development are frequently missed. Teachers place a good deal of trust in students to behave well in and around the school and they respond well to this.

68. The school's provision for social development is very good. Students are given very good opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups. The school aims to promote personal responsibility in school and the wider community. This has a positive impact on learning and personal development. The excellent opportunities for residential experiences at home and abroad make a very positive contribution to social development. Students have very good opportunities to take responsibility in extra-curricular activities, but opportunities to undertake routine classroom duties such as handing out books or returning registers are limited. Members of each form are elected to year group councils and representatives of the year councils join the School Council, which considers a wide variety of issues affecting the school community. The consultation process does not yet effectively involve the whole school. There are very good opportunities to form relationships across the year groups, for example, in drama and musical productions, and in many extra-curricular activities such as charitable fund-raising and Amnesty International. Year 11 and sixth form students support Year 7 integration and reading programmes. The breakfast club provides good opportunities for social interaction, but the small dining room and the number of students using it hinder lunchtime dining socialising. There are no social areas where students may gather during break times. The school's very good links with the community encourage students to take an active part in the local and wider community and develop an understanding of citizenship.
69. Provision for students' cultural development is very good and has improved very significantly since the last inspection. Cultural development is planned into all schemes of work. Students gain a very good insight on their own and other cultures across the curriculum and this contributes very positively to academic progress and personal development. The contribution of the language department is excellent. There are very good opportunities to visit other countries in Europe, as well as a celebration of the cultures in other continents such as Africa. Through the Comenius project a number of students exchange information about their local areas with students in Sicily, Hungary, France and Africa. Design and technology, physical education and religious education make strong contributions to cultural development. In religious education, students visit a Hindu temple and a Mosque and discuss Eid and Haj. In geography students study Japan, Italy, the tribes of Kenya and the Amazon Indians as well as the local area. They also look at the effects of tourism on Majorca. There is a constant input on global citizenship and the school is planning to develop further links with Africa and Pakistan. Each week there is a 'country of the week' and students are given a brief insight into other cultures. During inspection week, students were topically looking at Iraq. Unfortunately, insufficient time is given to developing these themes in the majority of registration sessions.

Sixth form

70. The curriculum provided in the sixth form is very good and highly appropriate to the students' learning aspirations. It is primarily a traditional A-level curriculum. Nevertheless it is very well-suited to the two thirds of Wath students who choose to continue their studies in their school's sixth form and to the needs of the significant number of students who join from other schools. The successful rate of entry to higher education – typically more than 90 per cent of each cohort – confirms the appropriateness of the provision.
71. The wide range of academic subjects includes design and technology, computing, business studies, drama and theatre studies, physical education, psychology, three different English courses, French, German and Spanish, religious studies and sociology. The curriculum planning of subjects is a strength, often reflecting the

extensive examination expertise of the teaching staff. In addition all students take A-level general studies which provides good opportunities to discuss and reflect on modules such as ethics and politics. There is an accredited key skills course in ICT targeted on those who would benefit from additional support.

72. Sixth form students have good provision for enrichment activities. These contribute well to students' personal development. Students take part in extra-curricular music, dance, drama and sport. A good number are working towards their gold Duke of Edinburgh Award and several take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme. Community sports leader awards are offered to sixth formers. The opportunities for taking responsibility within the school community have increased since the last inspection. Students help to settle new students by visiting Year 6 pupils in their primary schools, counselling Year 7 students and listening to younger readers. They act as very good role models for younger students. The head boy and head girl chair the School Council and lead discussions on issues affecting students' life in school. Sixth formers supervise younger students during wet lunch times. The good opportunities offered to sixth form students to take responsibility encourage them to become independent, caring and responsible citizens.
73. The sixth form curriculum makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All students follow a general studies course, which includes a very good range of topics that contribute very positively to students' personal development. Although there is no formal collective worship, sixth form tutorials make a good contribution to personal development, for example in a Year 12 group discussion on euthanasia. Only a few students study GCE A-level religious education in the sixth form, but spiritual development is enhanced in other subjects, for example in music through comparing symphonies. Students discuss moral issues in many subjects, such as in the study of *Hamlet* in drama. Students have excellent opportunities to visit foreign countries and this makes a very good contribution to their social and cultural development. All students have very useful personal and social education at the same time as the rest of the school. This is taught by tutors and includes good driving, citizenship, democracy and careers guidance. Students find financial advice particularly helpful. A good range of visiting speakers complements this course. Work experience is not compulsory, but students wishing to follow a profession are encouraged and helped to find suitable placements, for example in veterinary work, medicine and law. The sixth form common room is too small and handicaps social interaction. Study facilities are unsatisfactory and this hampers students' opportunities to work together. The school's overall provision helps students to become mature and considerate adults.
74. Students' personal and academic development in the sixth form is supported by very good links with the community and partner institutions. There is very good use of the local and wider community to support learning, for example in modern foreign language courses and in geography. There are excellent links with universities. Good opportunities are given to students to visit universities. Subjects such as business education and sociology have good links with industry. A local company supports the Young Enterprise Scheme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

75. The school provides a good level of pastoral care for students, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is good educational and personal support and guidance to enable students to make further progress with their learning. Monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is satisfactory. The care

for students' welfare is unsatisfactory because of a number of health and safety issues.

76. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. They have improved since the last inspection with a consequent improvement in attendance. The school has a very good number of initiatives aimed at improving attendance. An electronic registration system is used effectively to monitor attendance and track individual students' attendance. Registration time is used well to establish good relationships between students and their tutors. Registers are marked efficiently. Good material is produced to promote personal and academic development during the long morning registration period, but its use is variable. In the best sessions, form tutors stimulate good debate on topical issues such as safety and terrorism, but more often, time is wasted. This discourages students from being punctual to registration. The school rightly emphasises the importance of good attendance to parents and students are rewarded for good and improved attendance. The routine use of telephone calls on the first day of absence has encouraged better attendance, as has the introduction of an alternative curriculum for a few less academic students. The Learning Recovery Base provides good support for a few students with poor attendance. These initiatives have a positive impact on the learning of students involved. There is very good support from the educational welfare officer who is based in the school and has very good relationships with staff, students, parents and support agencies. A satisfactory system is in place to monitor students who arrive late to school, but punctuality to lessons because of the large and diffuse site is a problem, especially in Year 7. Year 8 receptionists closely track the attendance of students with known truancy problems.
77. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy is positive and used very effectively. Good training has been given to staff in managing behaviour positively. Most teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and students respond accordingly. The Code of Conduct is simple and well publicised. Students know what is expected of them. They believe sanctions to be fair and appreciate the merit reward system. The senior staff who act as case officers and the isolation unit are used effectively to defuse unsatisfactory classroom behaviour so that other students' learning is undisturbed. Students with more persistent bad behaviour work in the Learning Recovery Base, where they are well supported. Incidents of bullying, racism, poor behaviour and those resulting in exclusions are properly recorded. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying are excellent. Awareness of bullying is high and students are encouraged to report all incidents directly to staff or sixth form students or discreetly through 'bullying boxes'. Students and parents are confident that any reported incident will be resolved to their satisfaction.
78. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good. There is good liaison with primary schools and a well-organised induction process. Year 6 primary school pupils have good opportunities to visit the school so they become familiar with the school and its procedures. Extra support is given to those students with special educational needs. The collection of academic data from primary schools is unsatisfactory in a number of subjects except for students with special educational needs. There is a good programme of guidance and personal, social and health education to support students' personal development. Students have careers lessons from Year 7. They are offered sound guidance on option choices for Year 10. There is a very well organised work experience programme in Year 10 that gives students a good insight into the world of work. Good advice is given on post-16 options including appropriate alternatives to the school's sixth form, but the

sixth form prospectus does not relate subjects to career choices. Learning mentors give very good support to targeted students from all year groups and this has helped to raise their achievement significantly. Form tutors play an important role in supporting and mentoring. Most tutors stay with the same form throughout their time in school and get to know individual students' needs very well. Tutors monitor student planners in form time. They monitor academic progress and personal development with the help of interim and annual reports. There are regular pastoral meetings, which are very effective in maintaining the progress students make. Students are confident they can turn to tutors, heads of year or learning mentors for help and support. Very good use is made of outside agencies to support students. Students are well prepared for adult life.

79. The school's care of students' welfare is unsatisfactory because of the health and safety risks to students, primarily as a result of accommodation issues. The health and safety policy outlines roles and responsibilities but not the procedures. A member of staff has responsibility for co-ordinating health and safety. Risk assessments are in place within departments and teachers give good attention to following safe procedures in lessons. Appropriate risk assessments are made for all outside visits. However, formal risk assessments have not been made for a number of whole-school issues. These include a number of health and safety problem areas. The movement of students between sites is hazardous and mostly involves the youngest students whose traffic sense is often poor. The constant and large amount of traffic on the main school site includes inexperienced drivers, buses and lorries, which use the same hard surface area as students, and is dangerous. The poor condition of many of the buildings creates numerous other health and safety risks that have been brought to the attention of the school. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and effective and the school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies. There is good awareness of the designated child protection teacher and appropriate training has been given. There are appropriate first aid procedures and good records are kept. Weekly 'drop in' clinics offer students confidential professional medical advice on request. Evacuation drills are carried out properly and recorded appropriately.
80. The quality of care for students with special educational needs is very good. Students' progress in improving standards of work, behaviour and attendance is very efficiently monitored on a regular basis by teaching and pastoral staff and the reports on students' progress for annual reviews are comprehensive and clear. A strength of the provision is the detailed information provided for staff by the special educational needs department on students' particular problems, and advice on ways of dealing with them. The quality of the learning support is very good. Support staff are successful in creating relationships based on trust, which encourages students in their personal and social development, and gives them confidence to succeed in their academic work. However, support staff and subject teachers do not always have enough opportunities for joint planning of lesson activities. The school has a good liaison with the local specialist services, and this ensures access to a wide range of professional help for students' different needs.
81. Assessment procedures are satisfactory with some good features. Since the last inspection there has been some progress in establishing consistent procedures across the school and in making use of the now more readily available assessment data for checking on students' progress and setting targets. The procedures for the whole school, together with guidance on how individual subject departments should link in to these, are the main feature of a well-written and comprehensive document. This has ensured that there is at least a satisfactory arrangement in almost all

departments. Only in mathematics is assessment weak. In some subjects there is good or very good practice. For example in history the procedures are very thorough and, in line with whole-school practice, linked well to examination requirements. There are subjects where students are well informed relating to National Curriculum levels. In physical education, for example, the National Curriculum level descriptors have been translated into simple and straightforward activity-based targets in order for individual students to know at what level they are working. This encourages and supports their learning. In the last 12 months there has been some acceleration in the pace at which assessment information is being introduced into and used by departments. This is mainly a result of there being more and more reliable data available. Much is processed by a member of the school's management group and then offered to departments for their use. One key area central to the school where this is happening is relating to the banding and/or setting and grouping arrangements when students arrive at the school. From September 2003 this process will be strengthened and more widely used across the school.

82. The availability and subsequent processing of information available on entry to the school present a problem in terms of the preparedness of all departments to make best use of it. Some departments lack skills training in using the electronic systems required to maximise the benefits for staff and students. This initiative is as yet not well embedded across the whole school. This is hindering the pace at which target setting can be used to best effect. This is the case in terms of whole-school, department and individual target setting. The beginnings are clearly in place and need to be strengthened and extended to benefit all departments, all teachers and ultimately all students.

Sixth form

Assessment

83. The overall assessment procedures for students in the sixth form are good. Reports are satisfactory. There is a strong focus on setting grade targets and monitoring the students' progress towards their targets as well as monitoring how well they are keeping up to date with work requirements. Targets are set based on prior performance at GCSE. Year 12 students learn of these in September. Inspectors, however, noted some unevenness between the strong awareness of Year 13 students of their grade targets compared to a less secure knowledge in Year 12. The identification of targets is based on an in-house system. It is rigorous and provides a good indication of the students' achievement. The head of sixth form, however, has correctly identified the need to refine the process in order to reflect more precisely different starting points of attainment – a clear indication of the school's commitment to self-evaluation.
84. Monitoring is very rigorous. Progress towards targets is recorded on a monthly basis. Each half term there is a study level review which evaluates and reports students' attitudes to work requirements such as meeting deadlines using a manageable three-point scale. Tutors interview students if there is any falling below the expected level of commitment to study and commend those whose commitment is above that expected.
85. Overall assessment within subjects is good. It is very good in design and technology, religious studies, drama, French, biology and sociology. It is good in all other subjects except mathematics where it is satisfactory. In design and technology the considerable examination experience of the teachers ensures the students know

precisely what and how they have to improve to gain higher standards. The standards of drama students also benefit from the rigorous application of GCE A-level assessment criteria during the course of their lessons. The quality of written feedback to the students is an outstanding strength in religious studies. The application of assessment criteria closely allied to rigorous academic investigation significantly enhances standards in sociology.

Advice, support and guidance

86. Overall, the personal and educational guidance and support given to students is very good. Career guidance and guidance for future courses and career opportunities are very good. Students are very pleased with the support and guidance they receive. The very good relationships with subject teachers and the sixth form pastoral team are very supportive and helpful. Students find the one-to-one tutor support and the careers library particularly valuable in guiding their decision making.
87. Health and safety issues in the sixth form are similar to those in the rest of the school. Systems for the registration and monitoring of sixth form students on the site are unsatisfactory. Students sign in outside their form room, but do not sign out when they leave school. There is no good record of students on site during the day. This is unsatisfactory in the event of an emergency. There is no alarm bell in the sixth form common room and students there are not aware of emergency evacuations. Responsibilities for student safety during an emergency evacuation are unclear. No risk assessment has been carried out to minimise the hazards.
88. Year 11 students receive good advice regarding entry into the sixth form. The sixth form prospectus gives clear information about the content of examination courses, although these are not clearly related to career opportunities. The 'New Sixth' evening informs prospective students and parents about the sixth form options. There is a well-established application procedure that includes a formal application form and interviews. The entry of new students to the school is helped by the very good relationships and contacts with other schools in the area. The interview process ensures students are on the right courses. There is sufficient flexibility for students to change courses at the start of Year 12.
89. Each student belongs to a tutor group. Tutors are very supportive and monitor closely personal development as well as academic progress. Students also receive personal, social and health education and find the financial advice for life after school particularly useful. All students follow a general studies course that includes consideration of ethical issues and contributes positively to their personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. The school has good links with parents that support students' education well. The school is popular and parents are supportive. Parents have a good impact on the work of the school. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs. Most of these parents contribute towards their children's annual and transitional reviews and are very appreciative of the different ways in which the school helps their children to make progress.
91. Parents like the high expectations that the school has of their children and the good progress that is made. Their children like school and parents find the school approachable. Inspectors agree with these positive aspects. A small number of parents expressed concern about the behaviour and discipline of a minority of students. Inspectors found behaviour to be very good with only a very few incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour. A high proportion of those who responded were concerned about the level of homework. Inspectors found the use of homework to be satisfactory. A number of parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents. The school makes good efforts to keep parents informed and encourages them to be members of the Friends of Wath.
92. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about students' progress, is good. Newsletters and occasional letters are very informative. The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents provide parents with useful information, although some statutory information is missing. The report does not contain information about: the next election of parent governors; a summary of Key Stage 3 public examination results; a description of the arrangements for the admission of students with disabilities; action taken to prevent disabled students being treated less favourably than other students; nor details of facilities to assist access to the school by students with disabilities. The prospectus does not have national comparisons of Key Stage 3 public examination results.
93. Student planners are used well to monitor merits and homework and parents are encouraged to use them to communicate with school. Students' reports are satisfactory, but subject comments are variable. Students set themselves targets, but targets are seldom academically specific and little indication of progress is given. The use of National Curriculum levels is good practice and parents appreciate this information. It is unsatisfactory that no report is made on personal and social education. Parents are invited to a consultation evening each year and attendance is high. Alternative arrangements for parents who are unable to attend are not publicised well enough. Parents are invited to the Careers Fair. The links with parents of students with special educational needs and through the Learning Recovery Base are good. Heads of years maintain good contact with parents. Parents are well informed whenever there is a problem and often invited into school. They visit school as a matter of course if their child has been excluded.
94. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at school and home is good. Parents are interested in their children's education. They are consulted on a variety of issues such as annual reports, uniform, homework and the behaviour policy. The Friends of Wath is supported by a small but committed group of parents and makes a very good contribution to the social and financial life of the school. They are often used as a sounding board for parental views. The parent governors have a good impact on the work of the school. Parents enjoy students' performances, which are well attended. Many provide Internet access at home to help their children develop study skills.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

95. The recently appointed head teacher has had a strong impact in creating a vision for the development and further improvement of the school. Along with the senior management team, he has led the way in refining the school's priorities and giving a sharper focus to planning for the school's development. The governing body, too, has been part of the process and its influence is now becoming more marked at subject department level. The school's priorities are appropriate to its current position. The cycle of school development planning ensures full consultation with staff and governors and provides an effective framework for budgetary decisions. Overall, the leadership and management are good. However, very good leadership has been shown in the manner in which the education direction to be taken by the school has been clarified by the head teacher and his colleagues.
96. The major issues arising from the previous inspection have been tackled with mixed success. Accommodation and some safety issues have been particularly difficult to deal with. There has been no lack of willingness, but, paradoxically, the plans to renew most of the school buildings over the next three years has led to a lack of sufficient spending on improving the present accommodation. A consequence of this is the continued hazards to health and safety that are associated, particularly the hazard presented by the shared access to and through the sites by pedestrians and traffic, including buses. Other issues have been dealt with effectively apart from the improvement of ICT provision. In this area, there are well-established plans to tackle the problem of ensuring satisfactory provision in Years 10 and 11, which are to be in place by September 2003. Overall, the response to the findings of the previous inspection has been satisfactory.
97. The head teacher and senior management team have developed their roles and responsibilities to ensure a clarity of purpose and a very well defined leadership role. Throughout the school, teachers who have management and leadership roles are clear in terms of what this entails and to whom they are accountable. Good systems and strategies have been put into place to guide progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. A good example of this is to be found in the rigorous and systematic way in which teachers undertake further professional training. Any such training is now tied firmly to expectations of improvements in students' attainment. The school's positive response to the previous inspection has ensured that there are now good systems and strategies in place for the evaluation of the school's work and there is good capacity and commitment to improve further. Senior managers and staff leading subject departments and year groups demonstrate energy and good commitment to raising standards further. Their overall contribution to managing the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility is good.
98. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are good. Better methods for gathering data are now in place to measure how well the school is performing. The school now monitors the quality of teaching and learning effectively and this has led to an improvement in both areas. As a result, there has been an improvement in these areas, and where there are weaknesses, there is a good awareness and steps are being taken to make improvements. The establishment of learning mentors to help underachieving students is an example of the benefit to students of the systems put into place. Areas for further improvement in teaching have been identified and effective measures are being taken to deal with weaknesses. The improvement of teaching and the spreading of good practice were areas

identified at the previous inspection as needing improvement and the school has responded very well.

99. The school is well organised, and governors and staff deal effectively with the bureaucratic demands made upon its administration. In this process, ICT is used satisfactorily. Targets for whole-school improvement are realistic and challenging and are now increasingly based upon accurate information about students' attainment levels. The setting of individual targets for students is becoming well established, but needs to be further improved by better use of assessment so that students know what they need to do to progress.
100. Governors take an active role in the leadership of the school and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken, particularly in the areas of accommodation, staffing and finance. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the school is good and this is enabling closer links to be made to individual subject departments, which will better inform the governors about the curriculum. The governing body has a good knowledge of the strengths of the school and the areas needing further development. Their overall contribution is satisfactory and they are in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided. Overall, governors are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, but the school does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship or the provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11. In addition there are some omissions in information to parents.
101. The process of financial planning is very good and there are effective procedures in place to ensure that the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied well in the school's use of resources. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial situation of the school and the school's bursar and deputy head teacher are very effective in their roles in ensuring the sound basis of financial control. Financial administration is very good and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. There is a satisfactory programme of audit. The strategic use of resources is very good and specific grants are used appropriately. The school gives good value for money.
102. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The head of department manages her many responsibilities very efficiently and the support staff work together very well as a team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. Statutory requirements in respect of students with statements of special educational needs are met and the specific grants are well used for their designated purposes. The two areas for improvement relate to the further development of teaching techniques and learning materials that match students' requirements, and the establishment of formal links between subject departments and the special educational needs department to improve communications and joint lesson planning.
103. Overall, resources for learning are satisfactory, as at the time of the previous inspection. Most subject departments have enough books, equipment and materials to allow all students to benefit from the curriculum. In art and design and geography, resources are good. In mathematics, however, there are not enough textbooks for all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to take home, and inadequate practical resources in Years 7 to 11. The modern foreign languages department has greatly benefited from the school's Language College status and now has excellent modern ICT equipment

and new textbooks. These are put to very good use and enhance students' learning. The school has improved its ICT resources since the previous report and now has a fast and reliable network of up-to-date computers, although the ratio of students to each computer, at 7:1, is slightly above the national average.

104. The library (learning resource centre) is satisfactory as a resource for learning. Well run by qualified staff and open for longer than the school day, it is a very well used facility. It is amply provided with modern computers, which are increasingly used for research on the Internet. The library's book provision, however, is low for the size of the school. Relatively little up-to-date reference material is kept in the library to allow students to do research. In the absence of an electronic tagging system, individual departments are concerned that such material could go missing. The library's role in promoting literacy and as a centre for student research needs clearer definition.
105. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The level of subject qualification is good. Nearly a third of the staff have held, or are currently holding, positions with examination boards, thus further augmenting their experience. However, a long-term staff absence in mathematics has necessitated non-specialist cover in Years 7 and 11 and there is a shortage of one specialist teacher in mathematics in Years 7, 8 and 9. Overall, the support given to non-specialists is good, particularly by the senior management team. The ten teachers who help to teach ICT also have qualifications and responsibilities in other subject departments. The staff is very stable and many teachers have given long service to the school. Newly appointed teachers help give a good balance in this respect. To cover staff absence, efforts are made to keep to known supply teachers, many of whom are former teachers at Wath. Currently, a small number of teaching staff are on long-term absence. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum in science, ICT and design and technology, as do the language assistants in the modern foreign languages department. In design and technology there is a shortage of technical staff support in the food/textiles area. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The senior management team is very aware of the increased demands being made on these staff as the school develops. Within the teaching areas, learning support assistants, child support assistants, learning mentors and librarian give valuable individual support to students.
106. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the school. There is very good mentoring, departmental and senior management support. The school is a very good provider for initial teacher training. There are effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Priority is given to training that accords with the broad aims of the school improvement plan. Evaluation and feedback systems attempt to ensure that the school receives best value from the courses attended by its teachers. The school has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are good. The school received the Investors in People Award in March 2001.
107. Overall accommodation is poor. Despite much hard work, the sheer scale of the problem, highlighted at the last inspection, has determined that no significant overall improvement has been achieved, although there have been improvements in individual aspects of the accommodation. There is a long and impressive list of replacements, refurbishments and renewal. This includes completion of CCTV in the main building, security fence extensions in several areas and a safety crossing, all part of a clear effort to improve security, challenge vandalism and provide a safer school. In some subject areas there has been a concerted effort to improve the drab

and uninspiring classrooms with displays of students' work, for example in geography, though there is more scope for similar initiatives in other parts of the school. In modern foreign languages most elements of accommodation are satisfactory and the provision for using ICT equipment in the department is good. There are, however, some weaknesses in the way rooms are allocated to the subject and spread out across the site. Consequently some teachers do not have a dedicated base for their lessons.

108. Two key problems remain. Firstly, the poor state of many of the buildings: most departments report unsuitable conditions for learning, ranging from poorly lit and inadequately ventilated temporary classrooms to leaking roofs, from decaying woodwork to a very poor state of decoration. Secondly, the nature and positioning of the specialist subject accommodation: rooms including laboratories and changing rooms are unsuitable through being too small. Many are drab and uninspiring and give clear negative messages about the subject and the school. Other subjects are taught in isolation from each other and certainly from the main school building. This too often results in lost lesson time as a result of the distance between different lessons that students are required to walk and much of it is in open areas with no protection from the weather, across ill drained and uneven surfaces. A planned new building will undoubtedly change all of this, though completion is a long way off. There are currently a number of health and safety matters that have been drawn to the attention of the school and these should be properly attended to alongside continuing efforts to improve the existing conditions for learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

109. The leadership of the head of sixth form is very good, conveying the highest expectations of staff and students. A clear commitment to the ethos of high academic standards and provision clearly underpins the educational direction of the sixth form. The head of sixth form has played a significant part in establishing a successful sixth form that has expanded considerably over time – and is still expanding. The school's reputation for effective teaching at GCE A-level makes the sixth form a popular destination for students beyond the immediate Wath locality. The range of courses on offer is very good and has expanded to match the increasing number of students, stimulating yet further demand. There is a clear focus on achieving high standards and this ethos is reflected in the work of the sixth form. For example, clear examination grade targets are set in September of Year 12 and the students' progress towards them is then closely monitored. The sixth form tutors play a key role in the process of half termly monitoring of students' study skills and attitudes. One-to-one interviews ensure that any problems are explored thoroughly. This close monitoring also effectively supports the induction of students new to the sixth form. In-house training provided by the head of sixth in those areas where new tutors operate is a significant means of ensuring very effective guidance for the students. The monitoring of university applications is rigorous as indicated by a successful university entrance rate that is in excess of 90 per cent.
110. A significant strength is the extensive subject expertise of the teachers, often including considerable examination experience. All students take general studies to examination levels and this requirement enriches their academic curriculum and provides opportunities to develop their awareness of citizenship and religious education via the ethics module. There is no work experience scheme for all sixth

formers but those seeking to study medicine, law or education have opportunities to undertake work experience within the local community.

111. The school's leadership has taken appropriate action to widen its curriculum to offer courses at the school that meet the needs and aspirations of its students. The head teacher and governors have taken appropriate action to create a strong and effective senior management team for the sixth form. There is good teaching provision in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. Most students state that they are able to follow the courses they wish to from the existing options. This results in a very good retention rate with almost all students completing the courses they start. The management of the sixth form budget is very good and the sixth form is cost effective. The leadership in the school goes to great lengths to ensure that Year 11 students who wish to take vocationally based courses receive good advice and guidance on courses on offer locally. The school has generated very good relationships with other local providers of such courses so that it can ensure that all students can make informed and suitable choices for their post-16 development. The governors have a good understanding of the issues facing sixth form provision and are actively involved in making decisions about the courses on offer. They are in a good position to account for the standards attained by these students.
112. Students in the sixth form develop into mature and responsible young people through the range of experiences and opportunities offered. There are good opportunities provided for students to take wider responsibilities within the school. However, there are specific areas that require improvement. These include the need to make better provision for students to pursue independent and private study within the school and to make better arrangements for the daily registration of students.

Resources

113. Resources for learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. All departments have an adequate supply of books, equipment and materials. The lack of suitable study facilities, however, reduces students' opportunities for doing quiet research during their non-taught periods. This is true, for example, in sociology where independent investigation is a critical element of GCE A-level study. Students of sociology have restricted access to reference material because books have to be kept in a locked cupboard in the mobile classroom. The school library is of only limited value as an area for sixth form study because it has few reference books and is in frequent use by groups of younger students.
114. The match, qualification and subject expertise of teachers are very good across the very wide range of subjects taught in the sixth form. Their expertise, often widened by experience with examination boards, has a significant impact on the learning and success of sixth form students.
115. Sixth form students use the same specialist accommodation as the main school. Thus they share the same catalogue of disadvantages. Conditions are judged to be unsatisfactory in almost all focus subjects and for much the same reasons. For example, laboratory space in biology is cramped and as such unsuitable. The sixth form common room has recently been refurbished and this is a clear improvement. However, when set against the serious lack of a dedicated library/study area for A-level work, the impact on learning is not of any great consequence.

THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS WHO ATTEND THE RESOURCE BASE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS AND PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WHO ATTEND THE LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT

THE RESOURCE BASE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

116. The overall quality of provision is good. The teacher of the visually impaired and support staff know and understand the learning needs of the students with visual impairment. As a result of this, students with visual impairment make satisfactory progress in lessons and learn at their appropriate ability levels across the full range of subjects. Every effort is made to ensure that students with visual impairment access the full range of the curriculum despite their need to access a specialist curriculum to meet their mobility and rehabilitation needs. As a result the achievement of these students is satisfactory. Good support from the teacher of the visually impaired and from support staff of the visual impaired resource base enables students with visual problems to learn at or above their expected levels in response to the good teaching they receive. This was apparent in a Year 10 English lesson where the teacher of the visually impaired used appropriate questioning to keep a student with visual impairment on task without doing the work for him. Some teachers take account of the needs of the visually impaired students in their planning and either make the necessary adaptations to curriculum materials themselves or ensure that the Visually Impaired Unit has the materials in time to adapt them for a lesson but this is not consistent across the school. Evidence of good practice was seen in a Year 10 food technology lesson where the subject teacher had liaised with the Visually Impaired Unit and given prior notice of a video to be viewed which enabled the support teacher to preview the video and summarise the contents for the student with visual impairment. Staff of the Visually Impaired Unit are very adept at modifying visual material during lessons to ensure the full inclusion of visually impaired students where lesson planning has not been made available in advance. This was evident in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where a considerable amount of work was written on the whiteboard which the two visually impaired students were unable to read. The support staff scribed the work for them in black felt tip and then also provided enlarged graph paper and other visual aids to enable them to complete the work.
117. The staff of the service for visual impairment and of the resource base work hard and effectively to engender a positive attitude in the students. In lessons the behaviour and attitudes of students with visual impairment are very good. They respond well to the help and support they receive and are helpful in setting the level of their independent learning. The four students with visual impairment seen on the inspection visit had good self-esteem and were mainly unconcerned about their need for specialist equipment and support. There has been a resource base for visually impaired students at the school for many years and the ethos of the school is accepting and inclusive.
118. Students with a visual impairment access all areas of the National Curriculum, though in order to make provision for the 'specialist' curriculum it may sometimes be necessary to disapply visually impaired students from a second modern foreign language. Students with visual impairment are taught to touch-type in order to access the technology needed to compensate for difficulties in recording their material. All computers in the school have been provided with appropriate software so that when a visually impaired student logs on they can use enlarged icons and fonts. Desktop CCTVs are available, particularly for humanities and science and in other areas of the curriculum as required. The staff make appropriate arrangements to allow students additional time, modified scripts and access to any specialist equipment or to a

reader as appropriate to individual needs in both internal and external examinations. Staff in the resource base work hard to ensure equal access to all areas of the curriculum for students with a visual impairment but while there appears to be a commitment to equal opportunities on the part of senior management in the school some further work is required to monitor the planning of individual teachers to ensure this is happening in all lessons.

119. Good provision is made for the development of students' independence skills through mobility and rehabilitation sessions, which are taught by an appropriately qualified support assistant from the local education authority visual impairment support service and all of the designated students access these specialist sessions. The specialist curriculum is offered through the Life Skills course, which is the alternative curriculum offered in place of a second language. Staff of the resource base encourage students to be as independent as possible in lessons and to participate in extra-curricular activities. This can be problematic for children who live some distance from the school. The students with a visual impairment clearly feel they are accepted in the school and staff of the resource base reported that other students look out for the needs of the visually impaired students and are caring and tolerant of their special needs.
120. The local education authority service for visually impaired children provides effective support to the school. This relationship further enhances the quality of support offered. Transitional and annual reviews ensure appropriate support to visually impaired students as they move through the school and individual education plans are reviewed termly to monitor the educational, social and emotional needs of pupils.
121. The school, led by senior staff, takes overall responsibility for the management of visually impaired students and gives good support to the staff of the resource base as exemplified by their dealing effectively with a case of bullying of a visually impaired pupil. The new head teacher has shown a particular interest in ensuring the educational entitlement and welfare of the designated students. Good support is given to teachers in the school in order to help them meet the needs of visually impaired students. The Visually Impaired Unit provides new teachers with in-service training at the beginning of each academic year to ensure they have an understanding of the students' special educational needs for their teaching. Senior staff in the school work hard in partnership with the specialist staff to meet the needs of students with visual impairment but there is still some work to do in monitoring teachers' planning to ensure all teachers remember to plan effectively and with sufficient time to ensure adaptive materials for visually impaired students can be produced.
122. Staff from the Rotherham Service for Visually Impaired Children are effectively deployed in the school to meet needs as outlined in students' statements of special educational need. Although some facilities are good, for example, ICT software, blinds in some classrooms and in many areas, the school building itself is not conducive to the effective inclusion of students with visual impairment. Needs of students with visual impairment have changed over the years and the school works hard to include the students in mainstream classes rather than being taught separately within the unit as used to be the case and this is clearly beneficial to all the students concerned.

THE LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT

123. The school's learning support unit, known as the Learning Recovery Base, was set up in May 2000 as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative. It is a specialist provision, managed by a full-time teacher, who works alongside two behaviour support

assistants. The accommodation includes offices for the school's re-engagement mentor and learning mentors who are also available to help students using the base. The aim of the Learning Recovery Base is to provide identified students with support which will minimise their absence from school, increase their sense of belonging to the school community, and enable them, where possible, to be quickly reintegrated into main school lessons. Provision for students is very good. Each student works to an individual, structured programme, designed after a comprehensive assessment of need, involving consultation with the student, parents and carers, pastoral and academic staff, and, where appropriate, outside agencies. The staff in the Learning Recovery Base have a very strong commitment to the academic and personal development of the students in their care. Despite the limited amount of available space, they have been successful in creating a welcoming, attractive and well-ordered learning environment in which students can boost their self-confidence, make effective use of the ICT facilities and develop good study habits. As a result, most of the students who are referred to the Learning Recovery Base improve their work and behaviour, and are eventually reintegrated within the school community. Examination results at GCSE have been encouraging. A major strength is the very good relationship between staff in the base and the parents and carers of students who are receiving support. Some parents have chosen to become involved in the learning activities and general administration through working as voluntary helpers. Another strength is the close collaboration with the school's re-engagement mentor who works in partnership with the local college to find work placements for students to enable them to stay in education. In addition, the good rapport with a wide variety of outside agencies ensures that students receive helpful advice on suitable courses and possible careers. Management of the provision is very good. There are clear entry and exit procedures, students' progress in work and behaviour is carefully monitored and assessed, and areas for further development have been identified. Daily routines run smoothly and staff have regular contact with the subject teachers who set students work. The provision in the Learning Recovery Base is a good example of the school's commitment to the welfare of all its students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

124. In order to improve standards further, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

1. Improve standards and achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics by:
 - providing strong leadership and management to ensure that teachers work together as a team to develop and implement common policies and practices;
 - making more effective use of the most recent national guidelines for mathematics in Years 7,8 and 9 and increasing the number of specialist teachers;
 - marking more effectively and using this to match work to individual needs.(Paragraphs 136, 141, 143)

2. Improve accommodation and reduce the hazards to health and safety by:
 - ensuring that formal risk assessments are in place for every aspect of school especially:
 - traffic and pedestrian use of the site;
 - movement of students between sites;
 - addressing the health and safety problems brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.(Paragraphs 75, 79, 108, 202)

3. Improve the unsatisfactory attendance among a minority of students and reduce lateness to lessons by:
 - reinforcing the range of strategies that exist to improve attendance;
 - give more emphasis to the need for punctuality to lessons;
 - spreading existing good practice to make all registration sessions a period for positive learning experiences.(Paragraphs 30, 31, 54, 67, 69, 76)

4. Improve arrangements for developing skills of numeracy and ICT by:
 - updating and implementing the numeracy policy more rigorously to ensure a more consistent approach by subjects to planning and teaching numeracy skills;
 - ensuring that all subjects make a consistent contribution to teaching the skills of ICT;
 - ensuring that National Curriculum requirements for the teaching of ICT are met in Years 10 & 11.(Paragraphs 11, 47, 48, 194, 195)

Sixth form

1. Improve the facilities for independent learning and private study by:
 - increasing the availability of areas for the specific use of sixth form students for private study;
 - ensuring greater access to ICT to support independent study;
 - disseminating the very good practice that exists that results in students' secure use of research and note taking.(Paragraphs 17, 22, 53, 73, 104, 112, 113, 115, 225, 226, 237, 238, 241, 248, 271, 279)

2. Improve the procedures for the registration of the students and monitoring of the presence of the students on the premises by:
 - undertaking a formal risk management of the current situation;
 - ensuring an accurate record of students on the site and clear responsibilities for checking rolls during an emergency evacuation.
(Paragraphs 33, 87, 112)

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:
Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
(Paragraph 54)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	170
	Sixth form	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	7	50	57	48	8	0	0
Percentage	4	29	34	28	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	6	27	34	6	0	0	0
Percentage	8	37	47	8	0	0	0

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

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1481	275
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	213	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	78	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	233	2

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
	19

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
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)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	142	157	299

		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	92	99
	Girls	121	106	103
	Total	209	198	202
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (78)	66 (71)	68 (67)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (53)	42 (41)	34 (33)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	93	99
	Girls	125	109	104
	Total	216	202	203
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (67)	68 (70)	69 (70)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (30)	42 (36)	36 (38)
	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	161	124	285

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	62	136	158
	Girls	61	108	113
	Total	123	244	271
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	43 (47)	86 (87)	95 (96)
	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	36.9
	National	39.8

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 examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	53	69	122	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	19.6	18.8	19.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	N/A	N/A	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1719	131	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	8	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	11	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	107.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	41
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1174

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	20.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	5238230
Total expenditure	5242730
Expenditure per pupil	2972
Balance brought forward from previous year	-25464
Balance carried forward to next year	-29964

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1750

Number of questionnaires returned

393

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	49	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	46	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	51	7	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	15	4	2
The teaching is good.	31	56	7	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	49	21	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	46	9	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	49	21	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	27	55	5	1	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	51	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	43	9	2	12

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

- There is good leadership and management, especially in planning and identifying priorities.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- The teaching of basic skills is very good.
- Teaching in general is good.
- Achievement of students is good in Years 7 to 11.

Areas for improvement

- The further development of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning so as to ensure consistency within the department and sharing of good practice.
- Further develop ICT within English
- Develop students' listening skills, particularly in Year 7.

125. When students enter the school, their standards in literacy are below average and there are relatively few high attainers. Current standards are broadly average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. The effective introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is helping students to make good progress. Good teaching enables students in all years to develop their skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening. They have positive attitudes and respond well to teachers' high expectations. This has had a strong impact on their level of achievement.
126. In 2002, the results in national tests for 14 year olds were average when compared to national figures and to similar schools. Girls outperformed boys, particularly at Level 6. English results were higher than mathematics and science at Level 5 but lower at Level 6. In the 2002, GCSE English language examination, the proportion attaining grades A*-C or higher was below average when compared to all schools. The results fell in line with the overall school performance. Girls outperformed boys with the gender gap widening in 2001 and 2002. In GCSE English literature, the students performed strongly, above national averages and significantly better than in most other subjects. Trends indicate that results in English literature are improving and that girls perform better than boys.
127. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall in Year 9 are in line with national averages. Students have made good progress as a result of the impact of the National Literacy Strategy and have achieved well. Whilst the more able have extended their learning, showing that they can write accurately, read fluently and express themselves clearly, other students are struggling with lower levels of literacy. Standards of work vary. Those with special educational needs write very simply and struggle with sentences and spelling. Higher attaining students paragraph appropriately, are able to draft their writing and demonstrate strong information retrieval skills. A good example was an assignment on smoking. It had been thoroughly researched and the student could present a case logically and clearly using emotive language where necessary. There has been a strong emphasis on speaking and listening skills and this was evident in lessons and in students' responses to oral work. When studying *Macbeth*, for instance, all of the students

were able to explain motives and plot, while the more able used their understanding of language to comment on mood and on Shakespeare's intentions. Most students spoke with confidence and the teacher's emphasis on listening skills ensured that students could respond to the views of others. However, the listening skills of students in Year 7 need to be improved. Overall, students make good progress throughout, irrespective of level of ability and literacy skills, although listening skills need further improvement. Boys achieve as well as girls.

128. In Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good. These students have done well to consolidate the good progress they made in Years 7 to 9 that resulted in above average standards in their Year 9 examinations. Higher attaining students are able to write in an assured way about a range of texts, for example, *A View from a Bridge*. They are analytical and perceptive. Lower attaining students use guidance sheets well to support their understanding of poems from other cultures. Although they found the vocabulary and imagery difficult, they could respond to the themes and gave evidence for their views. Boys are achieving as well as the girls. The highest attainers were able to debate the merits of a film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They spoke with confidence, identifying the sometimes-subtle differences in the portrayal of the characters or the scene. Their written assignments were well above average, demonstrating the highest language skills and a full appreciation of a wide range of literature. All the students have achieved well, improving their basic skills and developing their understanding of texts.
129. The quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. It is equally good in Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11. The introduction of the literacy strategy has had a positive impact on students' learning. Teachers' planning focuses clearly on learning objectives and time at the end of the lessons is used well to check on students' progress. The management of students' behaviour is strong and, consequently, the students work hard and learn effectively. Teachers' expectations are high and ensure that the students are challenged. As a result, the highest attainers' needs are met and those with special needs are given support so that they too make progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength and supports students in acquiring new skills and knowledge. The teaching of basic skills is thorough and systematic. Excellent practice was seen in a lesson with a Year 7 class where students were taught how to infer meaning from texts. Similarly, a Year 10 class was explicitly shown how to structure writing and students gained the confidence to write at length.
130. Teaching was at its best in lessons where students were given an opportunity to be actively involved in their learning. For example, in one Year 8 lesson, the students worked in groups to prepare for a performance of *Henry V*. Questioning of the groups by the teacher ensured that understanding was checked and all students were able to talk critically about what they had seen. Teaching was less effective in lessons where teachers gave students notes and talked without giving them the opportunity to discuss their learning or their views. The English department adopts a highly inclusive approach to its work. Students with special needs have the same opportunities as other students, and likewise those for whom English is not the first language. The department is careful to ensure a gender balance within all groups and the effect of this is that boys are performing as well as girls. ICT skills are being developed satisfactorily with some interesting schemes of work in Years 7 and 8. ICT is not, however, used as part of the English curriculum in all years.
131. The behaviour of students is good. Most are enthusiastic, respect each other and are able to accept responsibility for their actions. They show pride in their work. This

results in a good climate for learning. A small minority can be immature, ignore teachers' instructions and fail to listen. When this happens, learning is less effective.

132. The department is well led and managed. Priorities are identified and a clear sense of direction is evident in the department development plan. The department works well collaboratively, even though communication is difficult because of the site arrangements. Two successful residential workshops enabled the department to plan for the literacy strategy in Years 8 and 9 and there are plans to extend this into Year 9. The head of department has begun to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning using an internally produced database to supplement the school's systems. This will help the department to target students more effectively and ensure a greater consistency in teaching within the department. There is also a need to ensure that the good practice that is evident in teaching is disseminated through the whole department. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; there are more opportunities for speaking and listening, writing skills are less variable and provision for English is steadily improving.

DRAMA

133. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades was above average. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. In one Year 11 lesson observed, the very good teaching enabled the students to develop their understanding of dramatic technique. The students were well motivated and the teacher's skilful questioning and high expectations resulted in very good learning. By the end of the lesson, all of the students could analyse the appropriateness of style and language, commenting effectively on the difference between a monologue and a soliloquy. Both boys and girls enjoyed the lesson and responded with enthusiasm to the teacher's guidance. The very good teaching and learning indicate that the students are on track to achieve their targets.

Key skills: literacy

134. As a result of involvement in the Key Stage 3 Strategy, the school has begun to address issues at a whole-school level and the teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. A whole-school policy on literacy identifies clear aims and acknowledges the important role that all staff play in improving literacy skills. An action plan lists specific ways of raising the profile of literacy and has begun to focus on key areas for development. An effective 'Literacy across the Curriculum' training day and two twilight sessions improved teachers' understanding of literacy and, in particular, writing styles. The 'Literacy Matters' group, made up of teachers from all subjects, is an excellent forum for discussing literacy issues. Students' spelling is improved through staff across departments suggesting three spellings to appear on daily notices. Students respond well to learning these key words. A 'Spellathon' further enabled students to revisit the focus words. A literacy booklet, requested by staff, improved colleagues' understanding of technical terms and gave them the confidence to support students in all subjects across the curriculum. Several reading initiatives, for example the sixth form paired reading scheme with Year 7 and the Year 9 reading scheme, are clearly helping students to develop their reading skills. Particularly important is the intervention programme, which uses literacy progress units to target students who were working at Level 3 upon entry to the school. There is already evidence of good progress being made with these students.
135. There is good practice in subjects other than English. Vocabulary is developed in physical education for example, with key words on permanent display and in music

where appropriate technical vocabulary is reinforced and tested. In history there is a strong emphasis on reading skills in the study of sources and the geography department focuses on the proper use of sentences in Years 9 to 11. There is not yet, however, the consistent development of reading and writing skills across departments. Whilst some departments help students to practise locating relevant information efficiently, for example in ICT lessons, these skills are not reinforced across departments. Similarly, writing skills are developed in some lessons by using writing aids but again not all departments support students in this way.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge, classroom control and relationships with students.
- There is good potential for improvement.
- Support for students with special educational needs, provided by classroom assistants, is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are below average throughout the school and students' progress in learning is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Too many teachers of mathematics carry major responsibilities elsewhere that restrict the time given to mathematical development.
- The implementation of common policies and practice is unsatisfactory.
- The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, as marking and the use of ongoing assessment are not used effectively to plan work matched to individual needs.
- The current system for grouping students does not provide them with equality of opportunity to learn.
- Accommodation is poor and not conducive to learning or good overall subject management.

136. When students enter the school their standards are below average. Standards remain below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory, despite an average number of students reaching the nationally required standard in national tests in Year 9 in 2002. This is because provision for students with different levels of prior attainment in Years 7 to 11 does not allow them all to make suitable gains in their learning. This is due to a banding system that does not support equality of opportunity, a lack of strong leadership and teamwork among teachers to ensure that policies and practice are consistent, insufficient specialist teachers, and ineffective marking to help students learn and plan further work.

137. In 2002 the proportion of students gaining the nationally accepted standard in Year 9 was close to the national average, although below that of similar schools. Results in mathematics were not as high as those in English and science. Standards in test results are improving at a similar rate to the national trend, but remain just below average overall. GCSE results were well below the national average in 2002 for students attaining A*-C and below for A*-G. This cohort had below average attainment in their National Curriculum assessments in Year 9. The trend in results is below the national trend. Standards have deteriorated since the previous inspection when they

were judged similar to the national average. Neither Year 9 nor Year 11 students achieved the school's overall targets for attainment in 2002.

138. In the work seen in the inspection, attainment in Year 9 is below average. This is because a broad band of students do not show satisfactory achievement, although groups of students containing those with the highest attainment perform well in Years 8 and 9, and students with special educational needs make good progress in learning when they have additional classroom support. Written calculation techniques and knowledge of shape and space are satisfactory. Data-handling skills, and in particular the construction and use of graphs, are unsatisfactory and students do not use these effectively to support learning in other subjects. Learning overall is impeded by uncorrected bad habits, in presenting mathematics, that are developed in Year 7. In this year group, achievement of all levels of students except those with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in all aspects of mathematics. Students with special educational needs achieve well due to the quality of classroom assistants and the support they provide.
139. Standards in Year 11 are below average and students' achievement is unsatisfactory except in very small groups for those with very low attainment who achieve satisfactorily. Although the knowledge of routine calculation skills is satisfactory for many students, problem-solving skills are not sufficiently developed. This has a particularly detrimental effect on coursework. Graphing skills and presentation of data are generally poor; however, those with low attainment present simple bar graphs with great pride. Diagrams are not sufficiently well drawn, impeding learning in shape and space. The lack of appropriate mental arithmetic skills of all but those with the highest attainment impedes learning in all years.
140. No evidence was seen of ICT skills used to support learning in any year groups except the use of simple calculators. The development of literacy skills is inconsistent. In few lessons is key vocabulary identified, developed and used and spellings recorded correctly for future reference. Students have few opportunities to explain their work to the class.
141. Teaching is unsatisfactory. Most specialist teachers of mathematics have good subject knowledge and explain theory clearly although they do not consistently identify concise learning objectives and share them with the students. Few show a real understanding of how to use a mental activity to develop learning, rather than test skills. Unsatisfactory achievement throughout the school and unsatisfactory teaching are due to the lack of effective diagnosis of learning needs through regular marking of work completed in class or of homework. This leads to an unsatisfactory match of tasks to the needs of students with different levels of attainment in each set. Students are rarely given sufficient guidance on how to improve through the marking of their work. As a result, books are often untidy and much work is unfinished. Teachers often expect students in the same group or mixed ability class to complete exactly the same work, regardless of their attainment or learning needs. There is an over-dependence on whole-class teaching. Thus, those with higher attainment are not challenged and those with lower attainment complete little work with understanding. Practical equipment is not used often enough to help those with lower attainment to develop concepts or stimulate learning. Where this was done well, it was effective in stimulating good learning, for example in a lesson where dice were used to generate numbers to put into simple algebraic formulae, thus reinforcing simple addition, subtraction and multiplication.

142. Teachers' classroom control is good; it is very good in most lessons and classroom routines and relationships with students are well established. This means that students listen well, concentrate and try hard, even if tasks are unsuitable. Behaviour is very good, thus little time is wasted in lessons. In a small number of lessons behaviour management is unsatisfactory and leads to unsatisfactory learning.
143. Since the previous inspection, when standards were average, they have deteriorated. Few of the areas requiring development have been addressed, thus improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory although much work has been done to begin to develop suitable schemes of work. Leadership and management have been impeded by long-term absence due to illness and by too many staff having major responsibilities elsewhere in the school. This limits the time that is given to the necessary development of agreed policies and practice. This is particularly evident in Years 7 to 9 where the most recent national guidance for the teaching of mathematics is not consistently implemented despite the school's commitment to this teaching strategy and the provision of suitable training opportunities. The poor accommodation also restricts regular communication between teachers and makes it difficult to access the limited range of practical resources available. There are insufficient specialist teachers to meet the full demands of the subject and this also has a detrimental effect on consistency of practice and students' learning. The checking and evaluation of teaching and their use to improve standards are in the early stages of development. Records of test results are used to identify some groups of students needing additional support, but are not yet used sufficiently to inform planning and provision. For example, in Year 7 a small group of students who are close to the standard expected nationally for students leaving the primary school are given additional lessons. However, the identification of topics and work to be covered in these lessons is not securely based on needs identified by all teachers of Year 7. Despite the many weaknesses there is good potential for improving provision and practice.

Key skills: numeracy

144. Standards of numeracy are below average. The teaching of written calculation skills is satisfactory in mathematics, but the development of mental arithmetic skills and data handling is unsatisfactory and therefore does not support learning in other subjects well enough. Also most subjects make an unsatisfactory contribution to the teaching of students' numeracy skills, as there is inconsistency in the implementation of a common policy, despite staff training. Both the students' lack of ability to use skills and the lack of correction of skills were clearly evident in science, for example where graphs seen were not always carefully labelled and line graphs were incorrectly drawn, or very messy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- There is good management and leadership, and a shared commitment within the department to improve standards of attainment.
- There is good teaching overall, especially in Years 10 and 11, and this leads to good learning.
- The strategies adapted to support work to raise standards of attainment.

Areas for improvement

- The development and consolidation of ICT.
- The quality of display, within the science suite, to overcome the poor state of decoration, and to create an appropriate learning environment for students.

145. When students enter the school their levels of attainment in science are below the national average. In the work seen in the inspection, levels of attainment are broadly average at the ends of Years 9 and 11, showing good achievement at both stages when account is taken of their starting point in Year 7. Students respond well to the overall good teaching that takes place, and their very positive attitudes and good behaviour have a significant impact on their level of achievement.
146. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests, the average points score in science was average, when compared to all schools and broadly average when compared to similar schools. Based on prior attainment, this shows good achievement. Within the school, the average points score was similar to that in English but better than that in mathematics. Since 1998, the trend in results has been broadly in line with the national trend. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The majority of students are entered for GCSE double award science. In 2002, the percentage of students gaining A*-C was below the national average, and the percentage was above the national average for those gaining A*-G. Students achieved better results in science than in mathematics but not as good as in English. Other students achieve very well in GCSE single award science. In 2002, one third of these students achieved A*-C, which is significantly higher than the national average.
147. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall in Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly average. Investigative skills are predominant in Year 9, where middle and lower attaining students work effectively and collaboratively. They are able to determine the point of neutralisation, using a soluble base with an acid, and can interpret the meaning of the results of a starch test when used with a variegated leaf. Year 8 students, using differentiated work tasks, independently research facts related to the solar system and Year 7 mixed ability students can competently read scales using voltmeters. Often very good or better teaching, with regular marking and constructive comment, assists Year 11 students to reach day-to-day work standards higher than those achieved in the past in external examinations. Higher attaining Year 11 students, taught in a manner often seen in the sixth form, are able to draw correctly an illustration of the carbon cycle, after group discussion. Middle attaining students investigating osmosis competently calculate the percentage change in mass, using calculators. They draw comparative graphs confidently and correctly. Lower attaining students, some having difficulty with the spelling of technical terms, make notes, whilst watching a video concerning the distillation of crude oil. They show a mature attitude as they develop their concerns about the effects of global warming. In all years, students with special educational needs make good progress, and benefit from appropriate levels of differentiated work, well-prepared worksheets and additional classroom support. There is evidence of appropriate extended work used well for higher attaining students.
148. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is satisfactory, and on occasions good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good, and is on occasions very good or excellent. The high quality of teaching has a positive impact on students' learning. A stable, committed staff of 15 teachers, mainly long-serving in this school, demonstrate good subject knowledge. A significant number hold positions as assistant examiners with examination boards and use that experience to assist teaching and learning. Four technicians, who are unobtrusive in their working, give good support to teachers on two sites, and efficiently

manage the department's equipment. By the use of appropriate teaching material and method, teachers encourage students' active interest and enthusiasm for their work. In Year 10 a variety of activities, including a spelling test, a *PowerPoint* presentation and a test, using student whiteboards, related to the extraction of iron, have a significant impact on students' learning. Year 8 students, revising their understanding of energy, enjoy a computer-generated 'Blockbuster' game as they compete to be the winning team. However, in Years 7 to 9, there is not yet a common framework to all lessons. Where teaching is weakest, written lesson planning is minimal, and lesson objectives, although nearly always discussed, are not always displayed, and consolidated in a plenary session.

149. Teachers make good provision for students with differing needs. The needs of individual students with special educational requirements are known, and students are supported well by teachers and learning assistants. Learning support assistance is of good quality, in particular the support given to those students with visual impairment. These students are assisted by lap-top computers, and enlarged textbooks, produced within the school. The provision of revision and booster sessions for Year 11 and Year 9 students, and master lectures for higher attaining Year 11 students, assists the raising of standards. Year 10 higher attaining triple science students attend a residential field study held in the Lake District to widen their investigative skills. CASE (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education), taught to Year 8 students, provides opportunity to extend and challenge the thinking skills of the most able students. Assessment procedures are good. However, reports to parents contain insufficient information about the work students have covered and what they need to do to improve. The standard of presentation and organisation of work by students is mainly of a high quality, allowing them to use their exercise books profitably for revision purposes. Appropriate and adequate homework is set, but it is not clearly identified when in exercise books.
150. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is well developed within the department, but is not consistent in approach because teaching is not aligned to written policies. A scrutiny of work indicates that graph work requires development in both quantity and quality throughout all years. Although currently satisfactory overall, it is necessary to continue to develop and consolidate the use of ICT. There is not a network facility within the laboratories. There is insufficient, appropriate, computer hardware to further extend data-logging and students' use of the extensive scientific software available within the department. The importance of health and safety procedures is stressed in lessons, departmental documentation and investigative procedures.
151. Standards of behaviour are good overall. In Years 7 to 9, attitudes are good and are never less than satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, attitudes are very good. Students respond to the challenge of their teachers to achieve the highest standards. Higher attaining Year 11 biology students respond in a mature manner to a style of teaching which gives good preparation for sixth form education. The distance between teaching areas affects punctuality to lessons when they are not split by a break. Students normally settle quickly, mainly show interest in their work, and keep on task. Opportunities for taking responsibility and for independent learning are limited. When performing investigative work, students handle equipment carefully and confidently, and work collaboratively. Relationships between students and between teachers, support assistants, and students are good. Students mainly enjoy their science and openly say it.
152. The good leadership of the department, the commitment of teachers to raising standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are strengths of the department.

The monitoring of performance, teaching and learning by the head of department is good. Links with primary schools are good and a common topic has been taught in these schools at the end of Year 6. Standards of accommodation are poor, and because of the withdrawal of one laboratory due to arson at the beginning of the year, there is a necessity to use non-specialist areas. Improved display, including students' work, in the laboratories and corridor within the science suite, is needed to help diminish the effects of poor decoration and to improve the learning environment. There has been a satisfactory response to the issues raised at the last inspection, but the lack of a departmental handbook, containing all departmental policy statements, hinders common practice by all staff.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and teach basic skills well.
- Planning is very good and teachers make very good use of exemplar material.
- Students have very good attitudes and respond very positively to the tasks that are set by their teachers.
- Improvement is good since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Broaden the curriculum to incorporate more design work in a vocational context.
- Provide students with ready access to photography and ICT.
- Improve assessing and recording procedures to ensure more accurate feedback to students.

153. Teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2002 showed that students were working well above average. In the 2001 GCSE examination in art and design, the number of students that attained the highest grades, A*-C, was just above the national average. In 2002, however, there was significant improvement and this figure was well above the national average. These students performed much better in art and design than in all other school subjects that they took that year. Attainment by both boys and girls was much higher than the national average. Girls' attainment in the school was much higher than boys' attainment. All students with special educational needs are very well supported and they are encouraged to work to their full potential. Overall they show good achievement.

154. In the work seen in the inspection, Year 7 students worked with sustained concentration to learn how to apply paint smoothly to a flat surface. Achievement is very good between the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 9. At the start of Year 7, students enter the school with levels of attainment in art and design that are below the national average for students of their age. Basic skills in drawing, painting and manipulating craft materials are underdeveloped which accounts for the difficulties that many students experience in producing accurate observational drawings of simple objects. However, it is soon very apparent that most enjoy art, craft and design activities and they make rapid progress in their first year as they work well to acquire new skills.

155. By the time students enter Year 9 the majority have acquired good basic drawing and painting skills. They make very good use of line and tone to produce accurately drawn studies of simple three-dimensional objects and are beginning to use paint and colour

in a controlled manner. The highest attaining students make very good use of available time to acquire new knowledge and technical skills. The lowest attaining students are producing work of a standard that is broadly average, but the majority are working above. Achievement is very good from the start of Year 7 when students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below, to the end of Year 9, when standards of work overall are above, national expectations.

156. In the work seen in the inspection, the standard of work produced by Year 11 students is well above average and the level of achievement is very good. In Year 11 the nature of the set tasks is largely determined by the GCSE examination syllabus. The overwhelming majority of students work with sustained application and concentration to acquire new knowledge and develop new technical skills in drawing, in painting and in the manipulation of a wide range of craft materials. They have acquired the capacity for carrying out research away from the confines of the art studios. The majority demonstrate that they are capable of resolving problems independently without any undue interference from their teachers. They are also working with much greater confidence and relying on their own ideas, attitudes, values and beliefs as starting points for their art and craft work. For the most part, they work within the constraints of a narrow fine art, and craft model of the curriculum. There was little evidence of any significant use of modern technology such as photography or ICT in the production of images. Overall the standard of work produced by girls is higher than that produced by boys. However, the majority of lower attaining students, who are boys, continue to make good progress. Students with special educational needs are integrated very well into teaching groups and they are expected to work to the best of their ability to produce interesting art and craft objects. They are making very good progress and achieving very well when account is taken of their starting points.
157. Teaching ranges from good to excellent and is very good overall. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and are very well qualified to teach basic skills across a range of art, craft and design specialisms. Preparation before lessons is very good and teachers come with good exemplar material. There is some opportunity here to make even greater use of film-strips, transparencies, video cassettes, television and even CDs and DVDs when introducing lessons. Teachers set clear objectives for students, and as a consequence they know what they must do during each lesson. Generally speaking the tasks that are set for students make demands upon their creative and their intellectual abilities so that their learning is enhanced. Most students respond positively to these tasks. Teachers ensure that students have sufficient opportunity to resolve problems for themselves and to work independently.
158. Leadership and management are very good and there has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. The head of department is committed to improving the provision of art and design for students in the school and recognises the need for the curriculum to be broadened to incorporate more design work in a work-related vocational context. Accommodation is adequate but storage space for both students' work and equipment and resources needs to be improved.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management provided by the co-ordinator are very good.
- The structures that have been put in place for delivering citizenship are good.
- The School Council is used effectively to involve all students in decision making.

- Students have responded positively to the greater demands that have been placed upon them.

Areas for improvement

- Systems for assessing and recording students' progress are not fully in place.
- Some subjects have been slow to become involved in the delivery of citizenship.

159. Overall the standard of work that is being produced by students in Years 9 and 11 is above average. Achievement is also good and most students are working well to increase their knowledge and understanding of what they must do to become informed citizens. They are developing skills of enquiry and also skills in oral and written communication that will enable them to express their own views clearly. Many of the activities that students are involved in require them to participate fully and act responsibly. Through subjects such as English, religious education, drama and art and design, students in Years 7 to 9 develop awareness of the diversity of national, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom today. They are also developing greater understanding of the need for mutual respect in a complex multi-ethnic society. Students in Years 10 and 11 are developing greater understanding of the important role played by the media in informing public opinion. They have examined closely the language used in newspaper articles, in news bulletins on television, in advertising and on the Internet to identify sources of bias and propaganda. They have looked at films to locate examples of stereotyping. Through the School Council and the 'bully court', students are given ample opportunity to demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes toward themselves and others.

160. Overall the quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is good. Most subject areas have responded positively to the challenge of delivering citizenship within the National Curriculum. Students too are keen to find out more about what is involved in becoming informed citizens, in acting with much greater independence and in accepting the consequences of their actions. Teachers' planning is good and activities are designed to match the abilities of most students. The English department has set out to devise activities that will enable students to develop their thinking skills by improving their skills in oral and written communication. This is to ensure that students will be able to play a much more active role in decision-making processes and so make a positive contribution to public debate. Students of all ages have been involved in producing the *Wath Chronicle*, which is written and edited by them. This has enabled them to express views on a wide range of issues that concern them. The School Council is another vehicle for all students to exercise their understanding of participating and voting. At the beginning of each year, students in their tutor groups elect representatives to sit on their year council. Due to concerns raised by many students, the constitution and the role of the School Council are presently going through a process of change. As a result of these changes it is intended that the School Council will more accurately reflect the needs, aspirations and values of the students themselves. 'Bully courts' also provide students with the opportunity to elect two representatives from each tutor group. 'Bully courts' have scheduled meetings and have the power to 'try' their peers for bullying. These processes help students to develop deeper understanding of their rights as individuals, their responsibilities as citizens, the importance of participation and the need to take responsible action.

161. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are designed to extend students' understanding of their legal and human rights and to develop greater awareness of the need for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding. The Language College funds an annual visit to the Beth Shalom Holocaust Museum in

Retford. The visit involves going through the interactive museum, experiencing the peace of the gardens and hearing a survivor of the Holocaust speak. The students' written responses demonstrate vividly the emotional impact that this visit has on them. There is also an Amnesty International Youth Group for students in Years 8 to 13 and in addition a separate Year 7 group. This group meets once every week and in the past has designed Christmas cards that have been sent to Prisoners of Conscience throughout the world. This group is also responsible for raising awareness through taking part in assemblies and mounting displays and this year it will send a delegation to the Amnesty International Youth Conference in London. Through the activities of the Comenius project, students from all years are involved in projects with students in schools in France, Hungary, Sicily and Africa. Usually these projects are concerned with environmental issues. There are also links, through the modern foreign languages department, with schools in Spain and Germany that provide an international dimension to citizenship in the school.

162. The school has demonstrated its commitment to citizenship through the appointment of a co-ordinator for citizenship and an assistant co-ordinator and by establishing formal links with senior staff. Leadership and management are very good and the co-ordinator has succeeded in producing very good systems and structures at this stage in the programme. Most subject areas have produced informative policy statements that clearly demonstrate their support for citizenship in the National Curriculum and are actively pursuing their stated aims. However, there remain a few subjects such as history and mathematics that have been slow to respond to the demands of teaching citizenship. Although procedures for assessing, recording and tracking students' progress are in place, there is a need for a whole-school policy to ensure consistency across all departments.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The department has made very good progress since the last inspection.
- Students' standards of work improve steadily over the five years in school and are well above average by the end of Year 11.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of teaching is good. The teachers know the students well and give very good one-to-one help in lessons to help them to reach their targets.
- The behaviour of students in lessons is very good and results in good quality learning.
- Leadership is good and the department's targets for developing and improving the subject have been reached.

Areas for improvement

- The amount and type of homework given to students need increasing and extending, and the general quality of students' written work in Years 7 to 9 needs improving.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, and some resources are lacking.
- The department has insufficient funds to supply the required range of materials for the practical assignments in Years 7 to 9.

163. Standards in design and technology are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. This demonstrates very good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged as average. It also shows very good achievement over the five years in school, as students enter school with varying experiences in the subject and attainment on entry is average. The quality of teaching and learning is good in lessons, which also shows good improvement since the last inspection.

164. The overall attainment of students in design and technology at the end of Year 9 is above average and demonstrates good achievement. In the most recent teachers' assessments at end of Year 9, the percentage of students attaining Level 5 and over is above the national average. In work seen in lessons and students' folders, attainment matches the teachers' assessments. Students work on set basic projects in electronics, food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles to help them to build up their skills before progressing to creating things in answer to specific design problems. There is little difference in the quality of boys' and girls' practical work, but in theory work, girls produce more and neater work than the boys do. Students with special educational needs who have low levels of literacy are helped closely by teachers and are encouraged to set themselves realistic practical projects, so they gain in confidence in what they attempt. Students who are gifted and talented are expected to demonstrate individuality and produce better and larger project work. Students develop their products, using a wide range of techniques, tools and materials, showing good skills in manufacture, and assessing their finished results. Most, with help, work safely when they are working and generally pay good attention to measuring and marking.

165. The overall attainment of students in design and technology at the end of Year 11 is well above the national average and reflects very good achievement over the two-year course. The percentage of students gaining grades A*-C in GCSE is above the national average. Overall results show an upward trend and students' results in

design and technology are among the best they attain in GCSE. Results are consistently high in electronics, systems and control, food and graphic products. By the time they are 16, students understand the processes of designing from examining commercial products to developing final ideas and know that innovative results stem from thorough research and effort, taking account of value for money and fitness for purpose. Most students' portfolios show good quality lettering, drawings, side notes, investigations, examples, evidence of working on proportions and processes, and evaluations of finished results. A few students, usually boys, are careless about handwriting and do not spend enough time on portfolios, so they get lower marks than they should for coursework. Many students show good use of ICT and skill in merging text, graphics, charts and graphs and use of the digital camera to record results. They use the Internet successfully and what they find is increasing their knowledge and understanding. In practical work, students are skilled and confident in using both hand and power tools. For example, during the inspection, students in Year 11 created original dishes to help people with special diets, presented information in three dimensions in graphic products, devised electronic systems, made storage furniture and sewed garments for different occasions. Work showed attention to detail and clear evaluations of finished products against original specifications. The higher attaining students, usually girls, tend to produce the best results.

166. The quality of teaching is good, and this secures good learning. During the inspection, there was no unsatisfactory teaching and the majority of lessons were good or better. Teachers' subject knowledge is high. They are good demonstrators and successfully pass on their practical craft skills to the students who gain confidence from seeing teachers producing high quality work. The technician, too, gives very good support in and out of lessons by helping students with, for example, metal casting, and by ensuring all resources are available and that the teachers can focus more of their attention on the students. Teachers plan and prepare well for their lessons to ensure students have enough information and resources. They try to make the modules realistic, enjoyable and challenging, give clear instruction at the beginning of lessons to focus students on the tasks, and ensure no time is wasted. They pitch language suitably so students gain understanding and correct vocabulary. In many lessons, teachers increase students' numerical skills by, for example, introducing concepts of time, proportion and accuracy in weighing and measurement. The quality of one-to-one help given to all students is strong in the department. It helps teachers to assess progress and work rate and encourages students to improve. It helps students who are struggling, encourages the less confident ones, including those with special educational needs, and ensures that the higher attainers are attempting higher-level tasks. Classroom assistants are well deployed, especially to help and ensure the safety of students who have visual impairment. At the end of sessions, teachers question students about what they have learned, mainly to ensure they understand the next stages, and this is effective in reinforcing learning. Teachers help students to set their own targets and constantly check that these are being reached. Homework is set, but there should be more of it, to counterbalance the small amount of timetable time given to the subject, especially in Years 7 to 9.
167. Most students have very good attitudes to the subject and they respond well to their teachers' high expectations. They listen attentively to instruction, watch carefully and try hard to communicate by answering questions politely, but only the higher attaining students tend to offer comments. Behaviour is very good. Students know the rules, respect school property and the displays, and behave very sensibly in practical work areas. Most students are polite to the teachers, heed their advice, and thank them for their help. A few students, usually boys, try to help others if the teacher is busy, showing mature attitudes and increasing confidence in their ability. During the

inspection, students were proud to talk about and show their finished work, which indicates that they enjoyed it, and some were very generous in sharing their food products in taste testing sessions.

168. Leadership of the department is good and the department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Weaknesses in the department were recognised and the criticisms in the last report have now been successfully tackled. The curriculum fulfils requirements and all students can now take the subject in Year 10 and 11. Since the last inspection, leadership, standards, teaching, learning and the basic skills of numeracy and literacy have improved and have raised the status of the subject within school. The development plan is good and appropriately includes intentions to extend work on computer-aided design and manufacture and more use of ICT as a tool for presentation when the department gains equipment, such as the badly needed A3 printer. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory, as most of the rooms, originally designed for single materials, are badly in need of redecoration, redesign and refurbishment. Textiles, for example, is taught in food rooms. Storage is inadequate, especially for students' ongoing work, and the technician's room is small and oppressive. The current level of funding is insufficient to provide the necessary consumable materials for the next academic year.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is good teaching in most lessons.
- Enquiry projects and fieldwork are well used to develop independent learning skills.
- There is good provision for the use of ICT in all years.
- The pace of lessons is good and a variety of resources is used well to motivate students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 11 need to be raised.
- The schemes of work need detailed revision.
- More strategies need to be developed to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills.

169. Standards are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9. They are well below average at the end of Year 11. The teaching is mostly good and this is reflected in the good achievement at the end of Year 9. The department is addressing the low GCSE results at the end of Year 11 with a variety of strategies including changes to GCSE coursework procedures, and strategies to address the problems associated with low achievement from boys at GCSE.
170. By the end of Year 9 the percentage of students at National Curriculum Level 5 or above is close to average and shows a steadily rising trend. These students are achieving well. There is good progress for low attaining students in the presentation of work, the use of key words and the development of factual knowledge. Higher attaining students also develop the ability to select information and produce detailed and extended writing. Results in GCSE are well below average, with 39 per cent of students gaining grades A*-C compared to a national average of 56 per cent. Standards have fallen over the last four years. This partly reflects the changing cohort. With no requirement to take a humanities subject the numbers taking geography have fallen significantly and there is a significant imbalance in the proportion of boys to girls. The cohort for 2002 was 73 per cent boys and 27 per cent

girls. The results gained by students showed that 61 per cent of students gained or were above their predicted school grade. Low attaining students completing coursework made satisfactory progress whilst high attaining students gained high grades reflecting their ability. These students achieved satisfactorily.

171. In work seen with students in Year 9, attainment is average. Higher ability students produce detailed enquiry projects and those from gifted and talented students show very good ability to select information, and very good creativity. All higher attaining students can develop reasoning from factual knowledge; for example, they explain why the effects of an earthquake are so complex and widespread. They also have good map and graph skills and frequently use computer software to enhance and record their work. Lower attaining students can describe erosion processes and record examples but are less good at explaining why it happens in particular places. They have satisfactory skills in map work, produce simple graphs and competently use computers to record their work. All middle and low attaining students have weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. This affects both their willingness and ability to do written work. Students come into the school with below average standards and they achieve well in response to good teaching. This enables students to develop and consolidate skills and build on their knowledge through, for example, the use of case studies.
172. In Year 11, work seen is in line with the national average. This is an improvement on recent GCSE results and comes about because the department has modified its teaching to take account of the changes in the make-up of groups taking the geography option. Standards in GCSE coursework vary with ability. For low attaining students there is little or no evaluation of methods and data analysis is unsatisfactory. Both middle and high attaining students write satisfactory to good evaluations, and for higher attaining students there is very good detail and good links are made between analysis and evaluation. Numeracy skills are mostly satisfactory but many lower attaining students require much teacher support. Literacy improves for all students in Years 10 and 11 but spelling and grammar weaknesses persist for lower attainers. All students use computers with confidence and low attainers enjoy the support they provide for writing skills and are more able to demonstrate their knowledge when computers are used. All students have good knowledge of where places are in the world, gained through a variety of case studies. In a Year 11 lesson, higher attaining students produced very good writing for a case study of farming in India with causes and effects described in detail. Lower attaining students wrote confidently about the farming year but they had difficulty recognising the effects of change in Indian farming villages. The work seen is satisfactory, and achievement compared to levels on entry to the school is good.
173. Teaching is good in all years. Lessons have good pace and the use of a good variety of resources ensures that students stay motivated throughout the lesson. Good questioning provides good support for the understanding and use of geographical terms. Good support for student responses encourages participation in lessons, but in many lessons the boys dominate oral work and girls are less involved. In lessons where students are targeted for responses, girls respond well. In some lessons teachers explain too much and do not ask enough probing questions to develop students' understanding. Where students are given responsibility for their own learning they respond very well. In one very good Year 9 lesson, students worked in groups to explore data and reach managerial decisions related to the location of a company in South America. From exploring roles as managers in one group, they changed groups to form companies and then gave presentations explaining their decisions. The lesson was very well organised and supported by the teacher and the

level of participation from students and their ability to present and explain decisions to the whole class was very good. All students have good computer skills and students in all years use them frequently. Low attaining students receive good individual teacher support in lessons but do not have enough literacy support to develop their writing skills in all years. High attaining students and gifted and talented students are able to develop independent learning skills through a good mixture of extended enquiry projects and fieldwork. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and teachers are beginning to develop more opportunities for graph skills.

174. Students' behaviour in all lessons is good and in most lessons it is very good. They listen well to each other and to teachers, which enables good learning to take place. They co-operate well, work well in groups and pairs, share ideas and have good relationships with each other and with their teachers. This mutual respect ensures that in all lessons there are good opportunities for learning. In some lessons their ability to work together sharing computers is impressive.
175. The department is led by an enthusiastic and committed teacher. Since the last inspection assessment procedures have improved and teachers have greater understanding of assessment criteria. Students have more opportunities for collaborative work and the use of ICT is now a department strength. The documentation is, however, unsatisfactory and many policies need development. The schemes of work are inadequate; they need specific direction on skills teaching and are currently over-reliant on textbook and examination board syllabus provision. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and results in good learning.
- Students' achievement is good.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- ICT needs to be further developed in schemes of work, and access improved.
- A shortage of textbooks in Years 7 to 9 limits students' independent study opportunities.

176. Standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This demonstrates good improvement from the last inspection when standards were judged as average. Students' achievements in relation to their starting points are good. Teaching is consistently of a good standard in the great majority of lessons, with some very good teaching throughout the age range. Students respond very positively to the way the subject is taught.
177. GCSE results for 2002 were above average, with similar results in 2001, confirming an upward trend in the department's results. The above average results were particularly strong in comparison with the national average in the A*-C range. Girls' results were better than boys', but there was no significant difference in their work, as seen during the inspection.

178. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above average. Students' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and this is confirmed in teacher assessments. There are good opportunities for students to develop subject specific skills. In Year 7 students use a variety of sources to investigate Becket's murder and reach conclusions on the extent of the king's guilt. Their literacy skills also develop well. Higher attainers explain how the feudal system could work against the king and lower attainers write imaginatively about a day spent in a castle. In Year 8, students complete well-structured investigations into the lives of Native Americans. They study the problems faced by Elizabeth I and explain why she needed to look strong. Students with special needs show a good understanding of why Elizabeth could be in danger when travelling. In Year 9, students investigate and report on living conditions in 19th century Britain. Students develop good awareness of their own learning and of the skills required to reach higher levels. They are encouraged to reach independent conclusions from their study of sources and higher attainers, including gifted and talented students, achieve this by the end of Year 9.
179. In Years 10 and 11 students' achievement is good. Students' knowledge of their own learning develops well and students gain a good understanding of examination requirements that will achieve higher marks. They identify shortcomings in specimen answers. Skills in source analysis develop well because they are constantly reinforced. Both higher and lower attainers comment on the reliability of the evidence of an American journalist writing about Germany's territorial expansion in the 1930s. Literacy skills again develop well and support students' good achievement. A gifted and talented student writes a convincing letter dated 1924, from a German perspective, "cursing" the Treaty of Versailles. A student with special needs takes notes from sources on tactics used at the Battle of the Somme, in preparation for coursework. Students produce well-organised notes giving arguments for and against appeasement. They link attitudes towards appeasement in the 1930s to the wider context of the period, including the fact that Hitler was not the only dictator influencing world events. In essay preparation they link ideas well to examine the various reasons why international peace had collapsed by 1939.
180. Teaching is good overall and there is some very good teaching throughout the age range. In some lessons, taught by non-specialists, teaching is satisfactory. A particular strength in the teaching is its consistency. Founded on very secure knowledge, the great majority of lessons 'unfold' with progressive levels of complexity. This builds students' confidence and enhances their learning well. Step by step they learn relevant detail and how it fits into the 'bigger picture'. This approach is effective with different groups including higher and lower attainers. In a Year 8 lesson the emphasis moved from Elizabeth I's appearance (studied in the previous lesson) to pressures at home and abroad. Lesson planning effectively achieved a higher level of understanding with students required to explain why Elizabeth I needed to control her image. There is a constant emphasis on what to do to achieve higher levels. This approach is used very effectively throughout Years 7 to 9 with, for example, resources structured to inform students of essential content and skills required to achieve a higher National Curriculum level. In Year 9, a group of higher attainers were given lots of time to study sources on their own with the minimum of direction so that they started to reach independent conclusions and thereby achieve at the highest levels.
181. Similar approaches are used in Years 10 and 11 with students, for example, studying specimen answers to identify ways in which higher marks can be achieved. The consistency of this approach gives students good knowledge of their own learning and of how to improve. Literacy skills are taught well and students learn well, for example methods for analysing historical sources and producing a written response

that will attract high marks. Numeracy skills are also taught well, for example the interpretation of data in sources. Examination requirements are constantly emphasised. In a Year 10 lesson, students engaged in a detailed discussion about the reliability of photographic evidence before producing their own written responses. Thorough preparation gave them a good basis for writing and they critically questioned the reliability of one source, raising questions about who might have taken the photograph and the possibility of the scene depicting the greeting of German troops being 'staged'. Such thorough preparation subsequently gave them confidence and skill to attempt an 'unseen' source question on reliability. In a Year 11 lesson, careful explanation and a well-managed discussion prepared students well for evaluating the significance of the Battle of the Somme.

182. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They have confidence in the way they are taught and respond very well to the secure learning environment. They display very positive attitudes in class discussion. When required to examine sources independently their study skills are impressive.
183. Leadership and management are very good. Despite some staffing difficulties the department has sustained a strong profile of improving attainment. The department questions and develops its own practice very well, for example in modifying its curriculum in the light of assessment results. Assessment has been particularly well developed, not only in terms of procedures in place for each year group but more especially the way in which students are constantly informed of assessment requirements so that they can see what is necessary to achieve higher levels. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although resources have been developed very well to guide students in achieving higher levels there is a shortage of textbooks in Years 7 to 9 that limits students' independent study opportunities. ICT opportunities within the subject are limited. The limits on access to ICT facilities make planning to enhance such opportunities difficult.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching during Years 7 to 9 leads to good progress by students.
- Detailed teaching plans for ICT courses ensure that GCSE syllabuses and the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are taught systematically.
- There is detailed development planning for improving the ICT curriculum.
- The school is committed to improve the provision of equipment for ICT teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Raising students' attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Using data about students' performance more effectively to set targets and raise standards.
- Developing teaching to increase the variety of strategies used and improve the consistency of the quality of teaching.
- Improving arrangements to develop students' ICT skills in all of the subjects of the curriculum.

184. The distinction is drawn in this section of the report between ICT taught, firstly, as a separate subject in both Years 7 to 9 and in optional GCSE courses and, secondly, the teaching of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum. The provision is satisfactory in ICT courses but the contribution of other subjects is unsatisfactory and for students

who do not follow a discrete course in ICT in Years 10 and 11, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not met.

185. Results of teacher assessments of students' work in 2002 show that the proportion of students gaining Level 5 and Level 6 or better at the end of Year 9 is about average. Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average and the achievement in ICT during Years 7 to 9 is therefore good. Girls did better than boys in the examinations in 2002 but in previous years boys did better.
186. GCSE results in 2002 were below average and the results declined compared with 2001. The GCSE course is an optional course. The attainment of the students before starting the course was below average but the grades they obtained in ICT were very similar to the grades they gained in the other subjects they studied. This shows that the progress made by students during Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory and that their achievements by the end of the course were also satisfactory.
187. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection is broadly average; this represents good achievement because the students' starting point was below average. There are no significant differences between the work of boys and girls, and students with special educational needs make good progress. By the end of Year 9, students can make good use of a spreadsheet to calculate the speed of falling objects; they can sort the data and produce a graph with the correct labels. They can put tables of results and their graphs into word-processing software and write an accurate account of their work. The numeracy skills of some students of lower attainment are below average and they do not find it easy to work out the mathematical formula that they need to use within the spreadsheet. Designs of logos for a supertram system are good and higher achievers produce well-written speeches about the advantages or disadvantages of the system; in general, students' skills of literacy are good. The work of low achieving students is too often incomplete and these students do not make enough progress.
188. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course in ICT is optional and standards are below average. They were below average when the students began the course and in maintaining this position students have made satisfactory progress and achieved satisfactorily. High attaining students' work about databases is well organised and critical and their work about control systems and feedback shows a good understanding of the principles they are learning, but low attaining students' work about databases and standard letters is often incomplete and their work will not be useful for revision before examinations. Boys and girls make similar progress but their oral skills are underdeveloped and they are sometimes hesitant when asking or answering questions; this happens because teachers do not provide them with enough opportunities to discuss or present their work.
189. Teaching and learning are good during Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory during Years 10 and 11. They vary between very good and satisfactory during both periods of time and no lessons were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons explanations are clear and relationships are good so that students know exactly what to do. For example, written instructions about coursework are well prepared and extensive so that good use is made of time, students begin to work quickly and copying of notes is reduced. Skilful use is made of electronic interactive boards and students in Year 10 quickly learn the techniques they need for searching for information on the Internet. In Year 11, the same techniques are used well to teach how web pages are written and about the requirements of the Data Protection Act and students consequently make good progress. In Year 8, enthusiastic teaching interests students in the development of a

supertram system and gives them opportunities to reflect on its implications. Students with special educational needs are provided with sensitive and effective support.

190. In some lessons there is over-reliance on individual use of worksheets so that opportunities for independent learning through group discussion, through planning or through writing summaries of what has been learned are missed. In some lessons in Years 10 and 11 the pace of the lesson is slow and teachers do not expect high enough standards of work, time targets for completion of work are not set and students' progress is slow. Teachers do not always provide an introduction to the lesson or a summary of what has been learned and this aspect of the Key Stage 3 Strategy needs to be used more consistently. Some students do not make a suitable choice of subject for their coursework because they needed better advice when they made their choice. Homework is not set often enough although in a Year 9 lesson it was used very well to ensure that students were well prepared for a lesson about timing and speed.
191. Students' behaviour is good and their attitudes to their work are satisfactory. Most behave well and work hard and in Years 7 to 9 they are enthusiastic about their work. In general, students are dependent on their teacher and do not often show initiative or a willingness to take responsibility for their learning; this happens most often in lessons which are led by the teacher or in which what is done is closely prescribed by a worksheet. Some students are easily satisfied with a superficial approach to their work and, for example, in Year 10 spend too much time exploring the Internet unproductively; this happens when a teacher does not have high enough expectations of students' work. Other students in Year 11 are very keen to improve their coursework and are willing to work during half term because their teacher's absence from school has caused progress to be slow.
192. The management of the department is satisfactory. New schemes of work have been produced since the last inspection; these ensure coverage of the National Curriculum within ICT courses and provide much information about teaching resources. The two full-time teachers of ICT provide very good support to the ten teachers who each teach a small number of ICT lessons. They provide the European Computer Driving Licence Course to all members of staff and to a group of gifted and talented students in Year 9 and many members of staff have benefited from this course. Monitoring of teaching is now done well but has not yet had an impact on teaching and its consistency in the department. Coursework for GCSE is well planned and supported by detailed information sheets so that students know what is required of them but there are not enough books and students cannot read more widely about ICT. The ratio of modern computers to students is close to the national average but there are not enough digital cameras or scanners to allow students to explore a variety of techniques for using graphics in their work. The school network is well managed and works well; it replaces old Acorn computers, which had become unreliable. However, during the period between removing the old computers and installing the new ones, students were unable to use a computer during lessons or for their coursework, and examination results declined. Information about students' test scores and marks is readily available but it is not used well to set targets for students, to raise standards of achievement or to evaluate the success of the curriculum.
193. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; new teaching plans have been written, standards have been raised and progress is now good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Although the cross-curricular ICT provision and teaching of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are still unsatisfactory, the

school action plan, part of which is complete, will remedy this. The school is committed to improving its ICT facilities and its teaching and is making good progress in doing so.

Key skills: ICT

194. The National Curriculum in ICT is not taught to students who do not choose the GCSE course in ICT during Years 10 to 11. However, there is a comprehensive and well-designed development plan which is being put into effect that will remedy this situation in the next academic year. It includes a completed audit of work done in other subjects and plans to provide ICT resources that will ensure that the requirement of the National Curriculum are met partly through teaching ICT in other subjects of the curriculum and partly through the introduction of the European Computer Driving Licence Course. Progress in this area has been impaired by staff absence and by the small number of full-time teachers of ICT.
195. At the moment the provision for ICT across the curriculum is variable and overall it is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In design and technology, music and modern foreign languages, ICT is taught well and the demands of the National Curriculum are met. In music, students use software for composition and they have good access to keyboards. Desktop publishing software is used during lessons about basic design during which students also use the Internet confidently as a source of information; the design and technology department is well equipped, having its own computer room with a scanner and a digital camera. Language teachers make excellent use of a digital whiteboard; the modern foreign languages department has two rooms equipped with computers and has clearly benefited from the school's Language College status. Teaching plans include systematic use of computers, and in a Spanish lesson, teaching engaged and absorbed students. In English, mathematics and science, insufficient use is made of ICT; in these and in other subjects students' use of ICT is not recorded or assessed. The English and science departments use ICT during their teaching and include it in their plans but in mathematics this is not done although graphical calculators are used regularly. In art there is not enough equipment; plans for using ICT do not exist, but it is used for word processing. The library is well equipped with modern computers and suitable reference software, and learning mentors are providing a revision programme on the school intranet.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, much of it very good, ensures that students learn well.
- Students' very good behaviour and positive attitudes help them achieve well.
- Standards at GCSE in Spanish and German are well above the national average.
- The modern foreign languages department and the Language College make an outstanding contribution to students' cultural development and international understanding.
- The department's very good use of its excellent new resources enhances students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the teaching does not use the foreign language enough in the classroom, or insist that students use it themselves.

- Year 7 students learn less than they could because movement to and from their classrooms significantly reduces teaching time.

196. The award of Language College status in 2001 has allowed the school to create a strong team of well-qualified teachers and support staff, and to acquire the latest in language teaching technology. Good new leadership of the modern foreign languages department, and of the Language College, is ensuring that these excellent assets are put to best use for the benefit of students. As a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes, students of all ability achieve well. Many benefit from learning a second foreign language and from the unusually rich programme of foreign visits and cultural events.
197. In 2002 GCSE French results at grades A*-C were similar to the national average. Almost all Year 11 students were entered for French and all were awarded a GCSE grade. This represents good achievement. In Spanish, German and Latin, taken as a second foreign language by higher attaining students, GCSE results were well above the national average in both years. Girls did better than boys by a wider margin than nationally.
198. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards in French are average in Year 9. Given students' prior attainment this shows that students are achieving well. High attaining students are pushed hard by strong teaching and achieve results that are better than those expected at their stage of learning. For example, they confidently manipulate verbs in French to write about events in the past and to say what they are going to do in the future. In Spanish, German and Latin, which they have studied for a shorter time, students understand and apply difficult rules of grammar for adapting language. Students of lower attainment, and those with special educational needs, boys and girls alike, are also achieving well. The teaching they receive is demanding, but well tailored to their pace of working. Standards of speaking in French in some groups are not as high as they could be. Teaching makes too little use of French and does not always give students enough opportunity to speak it. Students have frequent opportunities to use the department's excellent ICT facilities and as a result they are confident in using it.
199. By Year 11, students' standards in foreign languages are above average. Students are achieving well. This is especially the case in Spanish, German and Latin where higher attaining students are achieving standards of work that are well above average. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, for example, students were able to make immediate sense of a passage from a Spanish newspaper taken from the Internet. Many of them have unusually good fluency and pronunciation when they speak. Standards in French are average. Students are well drilled in the requirements of GCSE. Writing in the foreign language presents a problem, particularly for lower attaining boys who are more careless than girls and have less of an eye for grammatical accuracy. As in Year 9, many students have difficulty with the pronunciation of French and need more practice in speaking.
200. Students learn well because the teaching of foreign languages is good overall. In four out of ten lessons it is very good. A very small amount of teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers are all very competent linguists and in many lessons are demanding in their use of the foreign language. Students learn to listen carefully and to understand the language when spoken fast. Most teaching has high expectations of the students. In a very well taught French lesson, for example, Year 9 students of low attainment, most of them with learning problems, made very swift headway in their understanding of how to adapt verbs. The teaching built gradually on their small successes and

challenged them to go further. Teachers are very skilful at making best use of language assistants and trainee teachers so that students have good opportunities of working in small groups and learning independently. Good use is also made of dictionaries and of the department's excellent ICT and other resources to improve students' skills and their enjoyment of languages. In one important respect teaching could be even better. In too many lessons teachers do not use the foreign language enough in the classroom. Also, they do not insist enough that students themselves use the language to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. In such cases students make less progress because they hear and use too little of the language, and their pronunciation is inaccurate.

201. Students learn even better because they behave very well in lessons and have positive attitudes. Students of very high attainment work with unusual maturity and independence, showing real intellectual curiosity; those with learning needs try hard and behave very sensibly. Students co-operate well so that teachers can trust them to work productively in pairs or groups, or on their own.

202. Leadership of the modern foreign languages department and of the Language College is good. The recently appointed managers work well together and have a very clear sense of direction. As a result of this the department is an effective team with high morale. Good delegation of roles means that everyone has a stake in the department's effectiveness. The head of department and other experienced teachers observe teaching regularly and help to spread good practice. The outstanding programme of foreign visits, exchanges and international events orchestrated by the Language College enormously enriches students' cultural and linguistic experience. The department has very good active links with seven of the school's partner primary schools. Much of the languages accommodation has been refurbished and is now well suited for its purpose. However, Year 7 students lose much of their teaching time because of the movement of teachers, and occasionally students, between the two sites. Also, there are not enough classrooms for each of the teachers in the department so many of them waste time in moving between rooms. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Good teaching and students' consistently good achievement have been maintained. The main areas for improvement mentioned in the report are now strengths. The department is very well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

Overall, the provision for music is **good**.

Strengths

- Good leadership and management.
- Very good teaching, leading to very good progress in lessons.
- Very good attitudes of the students.
- Effective use of ICT to enhance learning.
- The very good practical musicianship of many individual students.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient time allocation in Year 8.
- Poor accommodation and inadequate resources.
- Underdeveloped procedures for assessment in Years 7 to 9.

203. Students enter the school with overall standards below the national average, though with a significant minority who already receive instrumental tuition, who have above average standards of attainment. The most recent Key Stage 3 assessments showed students in Year 9 to be attaining above average standards. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were slightly below average. The music department has an open access policy to all students who are prepared to work hard, regardless of their technical ability.
204. In the work seen during the inspection, students in Year 9 demonstrate above average standards of attainment overall. This supports the school's assessment, and demonstrates the very good progress that students make in Years 7 to 9. These students have achieved very well. In Year 7, most students have a limited knowledge of music notation, and have done little in the way of composition or class ensemble work before coming to the school. By Year 9, standards of performance are good. In a lesson observed, in which students practised themes from James Bond film music, two thirds of the class could confidently play independent right-hand and left-hand parts together on keyboards by the end of the lesson. Higher attaining students could successfully add a rock accompaniment, a counter melody, and finish on an appropriate discord. End of lesson performances reveal the very good progress made by most students to very challenging tasks. In larger classes, students' learning is hampered where they have to play two to one keyboard, due to the limited number of keyboards. The reason why achievement overall is very good is the very fast rate of development teachers expect and get from students in practical lessons, even though some have to share keyboards. In the current year, Year 8 students are making more limited progress because they only receive one lesson a fortnight and this hampers the continuity in their learning.
205. Standards are above average in Year 11, and when account is taken of their starting points, their achievement is very good. More than half of the Year 10 group are very talented practical musicians who are on course to gain high grades and they are attaining standards that are well above average. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 have more advanced musical practical skills than students in recent examination groups. They have very good aural perception, and understand how to use dissonant harmonies when composing. They recognise instruments correctly when listening to music, and can identify cadence points and modulations. Their composition and performance skills are of a high order. Year 11 students, doing a music appraisal exercise in one lesson, showed that they accurately recognised different styles of music. Individual students have quite outstanding talent, as exemplified by one pianist who played a stunning jazz improvisation, expertly using syncopation, blue notes, added notes and the whole range of the keyboard. Students in both years use computer software very effectively to create and record their compositions. There is a good balance of boys and girls in each year.
206. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have huge enthusiasm for their subject, and high expectations. They have produced modules of work for practical performance based on music which appeals to the students, and which enables them to progress very quickly, despite many students having limited knowledge of music notation. Teachers use imaginative ways of introducing students to the appraisal and performance of music and this has a strong impact upon their learning. They ensure that students experiencing difficulties receive individual help, while, at the same time, they give higher attaining students challenging extension work, knowing that those students will get on with their individual tasks. Poor soundproofing between rooms occasionally hampers the quality of students' learning. In a Year 11 lesson observed, students taking an aural examination had great difficulty when loud music technology

sounds from an adjacent room could be heard. Assessment procedures are established, but they do not fully inform students at what National Curriculum levels they are working, and what they must do to improve. Good provision is made for students of all ability to achieve well in practical work as they are given appropriate targets.

207. Students have overall very good attitudes to music. In Years 7 to 9, they enjoy the music presented to them to work with, and they are anxious to achieve the targets set. Students in Years 10 and 11 particularly enjoy creating compositions, using computers.
208. The music department is well led and managed. There has been overall satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and good improvement in the development of ICT, which attracts students to the subject, and which contributes towards the raising of standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11. Visiting instrumental teachers work closely with the music staff, and contribute towards the reputation of the department, despite having to teach in very unpleasant accommodation. There are many exceptionally fine young instrumentalists in this school, and they are well catered for, through activities such as the school band. It is excellent practice that students do not have to pay for instrumental tuition. Good use has been made of funds acquired through Excellence in Cities finance to develop technology, provide extra-curricular activities and purchase instruments. No improvement has been made on the accommodation since the last inspection. It is desolate, and isolates the department from the main body of the school. Rooms are far too small for classes. There is no security system, leaving valuable instruments and technology exposed to theft. The environment is unsuitable for a creative arts subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Results in GCSE examinations are well above the national average and students in most year groups achieve well.
- Students in all years have a most positive attitude to their work in physical education.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good and especially so for older students.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- There is good breadth and balance of the curriculum including a very good provision for extra-curricular sports and games.

Area for improvement

- The unsatisfactory condition of the specialist accommodation.

209. GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average for A*-C grades. This represents very good achievement based on general standards of attainment on entry to the school. Results in physical education were well above the school's average. Over recent years the overall trend has been upwards and in the main boys and girls do equally well.
210. Overall standards on entry to the school are below average. In physical education there is a most varied and variable earlier experience of the subject and evidence from some Year 7 lessons supports this judgement. For example, in a rugby lesson, despite good teaching, standards in the game were below average for the age group as were the levels of personal fitness relating to mobility and co-ordination. By the end

of Year 9 most students have reached average levels of attainment and there are some above this average, showing overall good achievement. By the time students leave school, standards are also in line with what might be expected nationally; again some students reach higher than average levels. This improvement is a direct result of good or better teaching and learning, and a positive approach from most students, and demonstrates continued good achievement.

211. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are average at the end of Year 9, though teacher assessments for 2002 were below this level. This inaccuracy can be remedied by taking greater care in the standardisation process and this is already included in the current subject development plan. In some work observed in lessons, standards were above the national average. For example, in a Year 9 girls group, most students had a good level of knowledge and understanding of the principles of warming up ready for physical activity. In the same group many could sustain worthwhile rallies in badminton and had already developed a wide range of shots showing above average standards of consistency. By the end of Year 11 most students achieve at the national average; in some groups standards are higher. For example, boys in the GCSE short course play badminton at above average levels, their range of shots is good and they are already developing an awareness of skill in manoeuvring opponents around the court. Students achieve well in all year groups and there is no significant variation in the rate of achievement across different groups. Those with special educational needs make similar progress to all others, especially where the tasks set are designed to challenge for individual improvement. Success in such tasks increases levels of self-confidence and encourages them to seek for further improvement in more complex tasks.
212. Overall the quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. Almost always all teachers demonstrate very clear and well-developed knowledge and understanding of their subject. This enables them to plan, devise and manage activities that are designed to challenge for improvement. The response from students is eager and energetic and their efforts indicate quite clearly that they know what to do to improve. Most lessons have a commonly used shape encompassing a preparation for activity, both mental and physical, a series of activities and then a review of what has been learned. The search for improvement is interwoven throughout this framework. Teachers make regular checks on progress, for example in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson where showing sequences from pairs or individuals highlighted the areas for improvement. Then all students had a clear view of how improving the quality and control of balances would raise the overall standard of all sequence work. This was very good learning. The needs of all individual students are well known to teachers, who are able to work with sensitivity to raise the levels of self-confidence amongst students with special individual needs that will strengthen and support their efforts to improve. Relationships in the subject amongst students and between students and teachers are very strong and underpin much of the successful teaching and learning. The teaching of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is good.
213. Almost all students in all lessons display a most positive approach to physical education. They seize the opportunity to succeed and enjoy what is offered and work eagerly and co-operatively together in those lessons. This is true for students of all ages, both genders and all activities. For example in a Year 7 rugby lesson the level of concentration and physical effort devoted to improving basic passing skills was equal to the energy and enthusiasm for improvement amongst the Year 11 short-course GCSE badminton players. The level of participation across all years is very high in comparison to that found similar secondary schools. The high personal kit standard of

most students is a clear and telling example of their attitude to the subject and indeed of support for their work in physical education from their homes. Standards of behaviour are consistently very good and the progress and purpose of lessons are never challenged by any lowering of these standards.

214. The head of department provides a very good standard of leadership and management. There is a very broad but well-balanced programme of study across all years with clear links between the earlier and later year groups including a successful and popular course at GCE A-level. The department also offers a popular and well-supported programme of extra-curricular sports and games for all students of all ages in the main school. A real strength is the provision of outdoor pursuits. Relations with primary schools are strengthened by the work of older students whose qualification in the Junior Sports Leader course, in Year 10, is now being used to assist Year 6 pupils in preparation for physical education in the secondary school. The specialist accommodation for physical education remains unsatisfactory, both indoors and outdoors. Teaching and changing areas are drab and uninspiring despite the best efforts of teachers to display information about the subject around the walls. Clearly this weakness has not had an adverse effect on current standards of achievement, though deterioration in some areas since the last report has already been reflected in the views of students and parents. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. The department is now very well managed, and clear and successful attention has been given to upgrading assessment procedures and longer-term development planning. The quality of teaching is even further improved; in the majority of lessons seen it is very good. These strengths ensure that students in all years achieve well and there is clearly the capacity and commitment to sustain and/or improve further on these standards. The problem of accommodation remains, though this is a school management issue.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well through Years 7 to 11.
- All teachers are specialists in the subject and the quality of teaching is good.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- All students follow an examination course in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons there are not enough opportunities for active learning.
- Learning materials are not always well matched to the different needs of students.
- Teachers' responsibilities within the department are not clearly defined.

215. Standards at GCSE in 2000 and 2001 were above average. However, in 2002 there was an unexpected drop in standards. The school's representations to the examination board met with limited success. Although a number of scripts were remarked, and subsequently up-graded, the majority of the results that were the subject of inquiry remained unchanged. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C was below average and students did less well in religious studies than in their other subjects.

216. Work seen during the inspection shows that at this stage in the new examination course, introduced in 2001, students are attaining average standards. Religious

education has a secure place within the curriculum and all students follow an examination course at GCSE. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11, and students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are good. This is because of good teaching and students' own very positive attitudes towards the subject.

217. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 matches the expectations as set out in the locally agreed syllabus and exceeds them in some areas. Work observed during the week of the inspection shows that most students have a firm grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity, and of other major world religions such as Islam and Judaism. Students achieve well and make good progress over time. They come into the school with standards of literacy that are below average, but by the end of Year 9 most of them can express themselves with reasonable clarity, both orally and in writing. For example, in class discussions they are adept at explaining what they have learnt about religious traditions, such as the importance of the Hajj and the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in Islam. Written work is generally well presented, with effective use of spider graphs to record information in an easily accessible way. Higher attaining students write at length, and often very perceptively, particularly when considering spiritual concepts, such as the nature of sacrifice and the value of fasting. Although the written responses of lower attaining students often lack sufficient detail, research work is done carefully and there are examples of lively imaginative writing, such as a day in the life of an early Christian. However, assignments are not always completed, and students of all levels of attainment tend to retrieve information wholesale from the Internet without selecting the relevant sections.
218. By the end of Year 11 most students attain average standards. This represents good achievement when account is taken of their starting points. They can carry out a critical survey of media coverage of moral issues, as in popular television serials, and they have a clear understanding of similarities and differences in different religious standpoints on contemporary problems, such as responsibility for the environment. Lower attaining students, including students with special educational needs, can give practical examples of ways in which prejudice and discrimination are demonstrated in everyday life. They follow a Certificate of Achievement course at GCSE and their written assignments, such as lesson notes, and information booklets using ICT are usually carefully produced. Middle attaining students show that they understand the significance of Karma and Dharma in Hinduism, and they set out well-reasoned arguments for and against the existence of God. However, they do not always give enough detail in answers to examination-style questions. The extended essays of higher attaining students, such as those on euthanasia, and the analyses of the treatment of moral issues in the media, are thorough and well written. Work is regularly marked with helpful advice on ways of improving the quality of the response, but GCSE grades are not always used.
219. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers in the department are all specialists, and a major strength of the teaching lies in the high level of their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers expect a lot from their students and want to enable them to understand different religious traditions, and the complexities of the moral issues with which they are dealing. They provide good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which students appreciate and respond to in a positive way. Some of the resources, such as video clips and objective evidence, have a significant impact on students' learning because they provide the stimulus for students to think deeply and to weigh up the arguments for and against a certain line of action. This was well illustrated in a Year 11 lesson dealing with capital punishment, where students watched episodes from a

video film based on an actual murder case. As a result of the teacher's skilful and challenging questioning, the students were able to probe the different motives and standpoints of the people involved and thus gain a greater awareness of the issues involved. Teachers also manage their students effectively, creating good relationships within the classroom, and so students have the confidence to venture their ideas in discussion or in role-play. Homework is well used to consolidate learning and teachers are prompt to praise students' efforts. In the most effective lessons, students make good progress because they know what is required of them, and they enjoy taking an active part in the learning activities.

220. However, there are two aspects of teaching and learning that are in need of further development. These relate to inefficient use of time in some lessons, and lack of variety in teaching methods and learning materials. In those lessons seen which were satisfactory rather than good, and on one occasion unsatisfactory, teachers spent too much time on explanations and general whole-class discussions. Consequently there were not enough opportunities for students to contribute information in other ways, for example through pair and group tasks. In addition, the end of lesson review was too rushed to be an effective evaluation of what students had learnt during the lesson. Learning materials are not always well matched to students' different needs and so sometimes higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged while lower attaining students find difficulty in coping with the work set. In Years 10 and 11, not enough use is made of newspaper articles on contemporary moral issues to provide students with up-to-date information on current thinking and research that they can use to good effect in their written responses.
221. Most students of all levels of attainment have very positive attitudes towards the subject. Both girls and boys achieve well because they are lively and interested and enjoy taking part in lesson activities. For instance, students in Year 7 were keen to show what they knew about medieval pilgrimages and organised themselves efficiently in groups for role-play. In discussions and individual presentations students generally listen attentively to the teacher and to each other and concentrate well on the task in hand. In a Year 8 lesson that focused on Ramadan and the significance of fasting, students were particularly receptive, and their attitudes and behaviour were excellent. The unacceptable behaviour of a small minority of students does not hinder the learning of other students because it is dealt with swiftly and firmly by school staff. Students with special educational needs usually make good progress because they are well supported by staff and their fellow students. Those students for whom English is an additional language progress at the same rate as other groups of students because they generally have a confident command of the language and express themselves well.
222. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. There is firm leadership but a lack of clarity regarding areas of responsibility within the departmental structure. The revised arrangements for the monitoring and assessment of students' progress are very good, and assessment information is used effectively to guide planning. For example, a new GCSE examination course has recently been introduced that caters well for students' interest in ethical issues. The department benefits from the support of the designated governor who is the local vicar, and there is a well-established programme of visits to places of religious interest. Accommodation is a weakness. In the main school it is barely adequate because although there is a subject base, some lessons have to take place in different areas of the school, with consequent difficulties in the use of resources. In the Year 7 annexe the accommodation is poor. One classroom has boarded up

windows and peeling walls. This sterile environment gives young people negative messages about the importance of education.

223. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, despite the dip in standards at GCSE in 2002. The overall quality of the teaching has improved from satisfactory to good and students' attitudes and behaviour are now very good. As a result students make good progress as they move through the different years, although there are still not enough opportunities for them to become active and independent learners. Nevertheless, religious education continues to be a strong subject with a high status within the school.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	N/A	N/A	70	N/A	31	N/A	2.2
CHEMISTRY	15	100	86	53	41	3.5	2.8
BIOLOGY	29	100	83	34	34	3.1	2.6
PHYSICS	7	100	85	57	40	3.6	2.8
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	17	100	83	35	25	3.1	2.3
BUSINESS STUDIES	32	94	86	22	27	2.5	2.4
ECONOMICS	15	100	89	40	47	2.8	3.4
COMPUTER STUDIES	19	100	80	32	22	2.7	2.1
ART AND DESIGN	13	100	78	31	43	2.9	2.9
MUSIC	2	100	91	0	47	2.0	3.4
DRAMA	11	100	N/A	64	N/A	3.8	N/A
GEOGRAPHY	27	96	90	18	39	2.7	2.9
HISTORY	22	95	93	68	42	3.5	3.0
RELIGIOUS STUDIES	14	100	91	50	41	3.1	3.0
SOCIOLOGY	17	100	N/A	71	N/A	4.1	N/A
OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES	15	100	N/A	20	N/A	2.7	N/A
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	41	95	94	37	37	3.0	2.9
ENGLISH LITERATURE	20	90	93	30	36	2.5	2.9
FRENCH	12	100	90	42	46	3.5	3.1
GERMAN	4	100	91	75	42	4.0	3.0
GENERAL STUDIES	110	63	80	8	26	1.3	2.3

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	23	83	87	35	43	4.7	5.8
CHEMISTRY	16	81	90	44	43	5.8	5.9
BIOLOGY	19	95	88	32	34	5.4	5.3
PHYSICS	7	86	88	43	40	5.7	5.7
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	16	81	91	6	30	3.8	5.4
BUSINESS STUDIES	19	100	92	53	32	7.1	5.5
ECONOMICS	13	100	89	31	36	5.4	5.5
COMPUTER STUDIES	8	88	86	13	23	4.3	4.6
ART AND DESIGN	12	100	96	50	46	7.2	6.6
MUSIC	6	100	93	17	35	4.7	5.7
DRAMA	10	100	96	50	46	7.2	6.6
GEOGRAPHY	18	100	92	39	38	6.4	5.7
HISTORY	24	88	88	13	35	4.2	5.5
RELIGIOUS STUDIES	14	100	92	29	38	5.1	5.8
SOCIOLOGY	11	100	86	73	35	7.5	5.3
OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES	7	100	87	43	34	6.0	5.3
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	29	100	91	48	30	6.1	5.3
ENGLISH LITERATURE	30	100	95	27	37	5.4	5.9
ENGLISH/LANGUAGE	1	100	92	0	30	6.0	5.3
FRENCH	14	93	89	50	38	6.0	5.6
GERMAN	4	100	91	50	40	7.0	5.8
GENERAL STUDIES	84	88	85	24	30	4.9	4.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, biology and chemistry were the focus subjects. Physics was also sampled: one lesson in each of Years 12 and 13. Standards were average and the quality of teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students in Year 12 carried out a planned experiment to measure the resistivity of saline solution with a sound degree of skill and accuracy. Year 13 had good recall of the magnitude and evolution of stars. Most carried out calculations using Stefan's Law effectively.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The subject knowledge of teachers is very good.
- Teachers are deployed effectively to maximise their expertise.
- The students' very good attitudes result in a high retention rate.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for students to learn independently and develop self-study skills.
- More effective assessment in lessons through marking of work and its use in planning.
- Access to and use of computers to support learning and enhance understanding.

224. In 2001, standards attained in A-level mathematics were below average and achievement was unsatisfactory given the students' prior attainment. Otherwise results have been consistently average since the previous inspection. Results for 2002 indicate that standards have returned to the school's usual levels and that achievement was satisfactory. This is due the modifying of the course to a modular structure for AS and A2 students that provides a secure structure for learning over two years. No students completed the AS-level course in 2001. A wise decision was taken not to enter students for the third required module and undermine their overall examination grade since they were not fully prepared. Consequently entry was held over until 2002. Results in AS-level in 2002 show that achievement is satisfactory based on results attained at GCSE. Students achieve equally well in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Retention is high on this well-subscribed course.
225. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are average. They represent satisfactory achievement from Year 11 in all three areas of study. Students with all levels of attainment on entry make satisfactory progress in their learning. This is helped by the setting system in place that can operate effectively throughout the two years due to the large numbers that opt to take the subject and the relatively small number that drop the course either during Year 12 or after AS-level. Students with English as an additional language achieve as well as others in their class due to the support they receive. Algebra skills are above average and support learning well in mechanics and statistics. Students learn to use correct notation and communicate their work effectively. Self-study skills are not developed well since students are provided with notes, rather than required to develop independent note-taking skills. They also do not receive enough homework. This restricts their progress in learning and their standards.
226. Teaching is satisfactory. Despite very good or excellent teaching in individual lessons, overall teaching provision is satisfactory because insufficient work is marked in detail

to assess weaknesses in conceptual development or to plan further activities to improve standards. Teachers have very good subject knowledge in all subject areas. This is used well to argue through each step that is needed to present each topic. This was particularly evident in a statistics lesson, where students were learning how to manage probability through the use of Boolean algebra. In this lesson vocabulary associated with the topic was carefully explained. Where teaching is most effective students are made to think. For example in one excellent lesson, two students voluntarily took the responsibility for learning a topic from text books and then preparing and delivering the whole lesson to their fellow students. This effectively improved their study skills and their learning: they gained an unforgettable understanding of how to split algebraic fractions into simpler expressions. It also enabled them to practise the key skills of communication. The lesson engaged all students because others in the class were challenged to keep up with the students leading it. The teacher intervened sensitively to help redirect the lesson without damaging the students' pride in presenting the topic. However, there were not enough examples of this high quality and challenging teaching and learning. Suitable records and test data are kept to plot students' progress through the course and used to challenge them to re-enter for modules to improve their grades, but generally not enough use of assessment is made to direct teaching in each lesson. Graphic calculators are used effectively to support learning, but insufficient use is made of computers, for example in statistics and mechanics to help students develop understanding, either in lessons or in homework tasks. This is partly due to the restricted access students and teachers have to suitable resources.

227. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, although personal development is less effective. Students express an enthusiasm for the course and appreciate their teachers. The respect that they have for the teachers and the very good relationships between the students and the permanent teachers mean that they concentrate in lessons and do not waste time. They are keen to succeed, and try hard.
228. The management of post-16 provision is satisfactory and means that the expertise of the teaching staff is deployed appropriately to maximise learning. There are sufficient texts for students to use in class but a very limited range in the library to support self-study. The accommodation is poor and not conducive to learning, or to communication between teachers of mathematics. Nevertheless a difficult situation with much long-term absence of different key staff over a long period has been managed well to minimise the effect on the standards that students attain. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

Chemistry

Overall the quality of provision for chemistry is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and this enables the students to make good progress in their learning.
- The students have very good attitudes to learning and achieve well.
- The teachers use a good variety of methods to make lessons interesting and relevant.
- The students' work is assessed thoroughly and regularly.

Areas for improvement

- More use needs to be made of the assessments of students' progress so that individual targets for improvement can be set.
- There are not enough opportunities for the students to use computer equipment to enhance their learning in lessons.

- Formal assessment of practical work is good but there is a need to increase the amount of routine practical work carried out in lessons.

229. The standards attained by the students in the 2001 A-level examinations were average overall. The proportion of students attaining grades A-B was average; the proportion of A-E grades was below average. A2 results in 2002 were higher than in 2001 by more than one whole grade – a notable improvement. Since 1998, the subject has been taken up by larger numbers of students, with a wider attainment range than in the past. This has led to an overall decline in average points' scores until 2002. Examination results in the 2002 AS-level were significantly higher, with more than half gaining grades A-B. The subject is an increasingly popular choice for students and the retention rate is high.
230. Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are above average. In both years, the majority of students can remember earlier work well and have a good understanding of the topics they are now studying. The highest attaining students in Year 13 reach above average standards in their work on optical isomerism and they are able to carry out successfully chemical calculations with the required degree of accuracy. Their experimental work shows clear understanding of key principles such as fair testing and ensuring the reliability and validity of results. Lower attaining students reach average standards in their work on acids and bases and they carry out calculations on this topic well. Their work on aldehydes and ketones shows sound understanding overall but there are some weaknesses in their understanding of reaction mechanisms involving nucleophiles and in their ability to predict reaction products. The highest attaining students in Year 12 are reaching well above average standards in their experimental work. Write-ups are detailed and thorough and calculation of results is done well. They occasionally make errors in assigning correct units. The lower attaining students are reaching average standards in much of their work but some are below average. For example, their work on bonding shows only partial understanding and some students have difficulty in applying their knowledge of this topic to new examples.
231. In both years, the students are achieving at least the standards that would be expected on the basis of their GCSE results and many are achieving better than this. They make good progress and achieve well because they are well taught, they work hard and they are well motivated. For example, in one Year 12 lesson on the chemistry of alkenes, the students made good progress in their understanding of cis-trans isomerism because the teacher had planned the lesson well, delivered it in an interesting way and had produced suitable resources to help the students to learn. The use of a mini-practical helped to reinforce their learning. The students responded well to this and showed good attitudes to work throughout the lesson. A Year 13 lesson on transition metals was very well taught and well planned to meet the students' needs. The lesson involved the students actively in their work, using a variety of teaching methods in an interesting and lively way, so that they worked conscientiously and sustained interest throughout the lesson, making good progress in their understanding of the chemistry of transition metals. The key skills of numeracy and literacy are developed well in this subject.
232. Overall, the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good, with some very good teaching in Year 13, and no unsatisfactory lessons. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, which helps them to link the work to real-life situations so that the students' interest is engaged. They generally plan their lessons well and use a good variety of teaching methods, including computer-based presentations, to make the work interesting and challenging. In order to further improve the teaching and learning, there is a need to build in more opportunities for the students to use

computers in their lessons and to carry out routine practical work as well as formally assessed practicals. The students respond well to this engaging work and their attitudes are very good.

233. The head of chemistry leads the subject well and there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Courses are planned well and sufficient equipment and materials, including textbooks, are available. The students' work is assessed thoroughly and regularly but there is a need to use the information gained from these assessments more effectively, so that the students' progress can be tracked and targets for improvement set. The students are given good advice about university courses linked to the subject and they are able to get support and guidance on their work from the staff. There are effective arrangements within the science department for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and there is a clear commitment and determination to continue to improve the standards attained.

Biology

Overall the provision for biology is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average.
- Teaching is very good and this enables the students to make good progress in their learning.
- The students work hard and have good attitudes to learning.
- The teachers assess the students' progress very effectively and make it clear to them what they need to do to improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities for the students to use computer equipment to enhance their learning in lessons.
- There is a need to increase the amount of routine practical work carried out in lessons.

234. The standards attained by the students in the 2001 A-level examinations were above the national average overall. There were no significant differences in the results obtained by male and female students when compared with national averages. The A2 results in 2002 improved significantly. The average points' scores have declined since 1998, since the subject has been taken up by larger numbers of students with a wider attainment range, than in the past. However, overall pass rates at A-E have been above average during this period. Results in the 2001 AS-level examination were above average and results in 2002 were maintained. The subject is a popular choice and the retention rate is high.

235. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall in Years 12 and Year 13. Most students recall their previous work well and have a good understanding of topics they are currently studying. The highest attaining students in Year 13 reach well above average standards in their work on human biology, genetics, variation and cells. This work shows evidence of the sustained effort expected at this level. Lower attaining students reach average standards although their work has less depth and contains some weaknesses in understanding of ideas such as photophosphorylation. The highest attaining students in Year 12 are reaching well above average standards in their work on proteins, biochemistry and molecules, cells and systems. Their work is accurate, complete and shows the deeper understanding that is expected at this level. The lower attaining students are reaching

average standards in, for example, their work on mitosis and cell structure. This work shows that they have quite good understanding of the key ideas although they tend to make some mistakes due to poor examination technique or carelessness.

236. In both years, the students are achieving at least the standards that would be expected on the basis of their GCSE results and many are achieving better than this. They make this good progress because of the very good teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work. For example, in one Year 12 lesson on the industrial uses of fermentation, the students quickly grasped the new ideas that were introduced and they could apply their previous knowledge about enzyme denaturing and pH buffering to explain the conditions required in an industrial fermenter. The lesson was very well planned to introduce the topic logically and to build on existing knowledge in an interesting way. The students responded well to the teaching, worked hard and were keen to succeed, so that they made rapid progress in their understanding. A Year 13 lesson on control systems in blood was similarly well planned to meet the students' needs. The lesson was closely linked to examination requirements, with emphasis on understanding why an answer might be wrong or incomplete, so that high standards could be achieved. The students worked conscientiously and sustained interest throughout the lesson, making good progress in their understanding. This response exemplified the students' consistently very good attitudes towards the course.
237. Overall, the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was consistently very good, with some excellent teaching and no unsatisfactory lessons. The teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject, plan their lessons well and use a good variety of teaching methods, including computer-based presentations, to make the learning interesting and challenging. In order to further improve the teaching and learning, there is a need to introduce more opportunities for the students to undertake routine practical work and to use computers in their lessons. The key skills of numeracy and literacy are developed well in biology.
238. The head of biology leads the subject very well and there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Courses are planned well and appropriate resources are available, with the exception of computer equipment, which is not easily available for students' use. The students' work is assessed thoroughly and regularly and they are given good feedback on their progress and how to improve it. They are also given good advice about university courses linked to the subject. There are effective arrangements within the science department for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and the teachers are keen to continue improving the provision for biology.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are well above the national average.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work, and make very good progress over the two-year course.
- The quality of teaching is very good and brings about very good learning.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and ensures students are moved on at an appropriate rate and depth.
- The sixth form students appreciate help and act upon advice, thus raising the standards of their work.

Areas for improvement

- The sixth form students do not have their own work areas and have to share the workrooms with other students.
- A few students are falling behind with theory work, although the standard of their practical work is well above average.

239. The product design course is taken at both AS and A2 levels. The well below average results in the 2001 GCE A-level examination were unusual given the average results in 2000 and the well above average results in 1998 and 1999. Results improved significantly in the 2002 A2 examination. The proportion at grades A-B increased to 31 per cent and the overall standards were more than one grade higher than in 2001. All gained grades A-E, eight out of ten at C or higher. In the 2001 AS examinations the average grade was nearly one grade higher than the national average. Results improved further in 2002 by the equivalent of one half grade and most students exceeded their targets. This was very good achievement. The course has increased in popularity: the number of Year 12 students is three times the 1998 figure. Retention rates are high.

240. Standards in the work seen are well above average, the result of very good teaching. Learning is very good because the course suits students' needs and aspirations. Students' achievement in relation to their starting points is very good, particularly in planning their own work and setting targets and time-scales on sophisticated projects. Many students enter the course with above average GCSE grades, but only a few have taken GCSE in resistant materials. Therefore most must quickly amass knowledge, skills and information about materials, their properties, tools and equipment before they can begin the design process. There is little difference in the attainment of male and female students although females are more methodical and diligent when completing theory work. Although a few male students are not producing the amount or quality of portfolio work needed for high grades, portfolios are generally very well presented, showing good use of ICT. Students understand the necessity of a thorough analysis of a problem to arrive at sensible decisions with professionally presented solutions. Good research of the Internet and other media helps most students to reflect the styles of real artists, architects and craftspeople such as Gaudi, Rennie Macintosh and Tiffany. Students in Year 12 are currently enjoying doing a mirror project and their innovative and exciting designs are impressive. In practical

work, students extend their range of skills and make prototypes carefully, which helps them when manipulating unfamiliar materials. Major projects in Year 13 show that most students work to full capability with a wide range of materials and on a large scale. As part of evaluation, and in order to maintain high literacy standards, they assess their own results against existing products, and defend their decisions. Skills in explaining their thinking are better developed in Year 13 than in Year 12 because of better critical, organisational and analytical approaches.

241. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are very well skilled, and know the subject and the requirements of the examining boards thoroughly, which ensures students have opportunities to gain information and understanding of what is required on an advanced course of study. Lesson planning is very good; teachers give the students challenging projects. The scope for personal choice and development motivates them. The designation of lessons as theory or practical helps students keep up with each aspect. The quality individual help is very high, characterised by purposeful, thorough dialogue and questioning which help students to organise and extend their ideas. They receive honest appraisal of their work, suggestions for improvement and very effective practical assistance which they appreciate and put into action. Evaluation is used well at the end of each lesson, ensuring students develop questioning ability and confidence in their judgement. However, the sixth form students do not have their own work areas and, in their free time, have to share the available workrooms with other students, which restricts the amount and type of work they can attempt and their concentration levels. Relationships are very good, based on mutual trust and respect. The students' behaviour is exemplary and they show very positive attitudes towards their work.
242. Leadership is very good. The teachers in the department work as an effective team, and monitoring of teaching and sharing good practice are well developed. Teachers have clear roles and responsibilities for different aspects of the course and meet regularly to plan, pool ideas and agree assessment. They have a strong commitment to ensure the students' success. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Results in GCE AS and A-level are rising and are now well above the national average, numbers are increasing and course completion is high.

BUSINESS

The focus for the inspection was business studies and included economics. A-level economics results were average in 2001. Results were similar in 2002. AS results in economics were below average in 2001. In comparison results were lower in 2002. One Year 12 lesson was observed. The teaching and learning were good and students made good progress. Their attainment was above average. Two Year 13 lessons were seen. The teaching and learning were good and very good respectively and students' attainment was broadly average. In all lessons seen, the students' behaviour was very good and they showed very positive attitudes and a maturity towards their studies.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and some is very good.
- Students' achievement is good and standards are above average.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The sharing of good practice needs to be extended.
- The establishment of more links with local businesses is needed.
- The limited availability of ICT facilities restricts opportunities to incorporate ICT in lesson planning.

243. Advanced level results in business studies were well above average in 2001. The results in 2002 were not at such a high level and were broadly similar to the average of the previous year. AS results were broadly average in 2001 but improved significantly by more than half a grade in 2002. There are no significant differences in the achievements of girls and boys. Retention rates are good.
244. The work seen shows that standards are above average in business studies and achievement is good. Students are developing a good grasp of theory and terminology. Higher attainers have a very good understanding of cause and effect, for example the link between rising output and average cost. Literacy skills are good and essays well constructed, although lower attainers do not always focus securely on the question. Year 12 students displayed good recall of previous learning when categorising a firm's costs in holding stock. They applied their knowledge well to the real world and identified different problems faced by different firms. They interpreted a stock control graph to identify a firm's re-order level and had good awareness of the difference between the theoretical rationale for stock control decisions and practice. They wrote well-reasoned essays on strategies to eliminate spare capacity and on the benefits and drawbacks of niche marketing. Year 13 students identified the key objectives of government economic policy and how the government can achieve its objectives. They applied relevant terminology to the topic such as 'aggregate demand' and 'gross national product'. They examined theoretical explanations of businesses choosing alternative strategies and applied the theory to real-world examples. They identified problems of growth in a case study and how they were overcome by a particular company.
245. Teaching is good with some very good teaching evident. Staff have very secure knowledge. Teachers emphasise theory and appropriate terminology so that students learn at the appropriate level. Students have many opportunities to apply their learning to the real world because teachers make good use of case studies. A commercial video gave students a very good real-world insight into the causes and impact of changes in business culture. In the best lessons, teachers responded very well when interacting with students in order to take up their answers and take the work further. Individual points made in discussion are summarised very well to emphasise key points and teachers constantly challenge the students to explain themselves. Year 13 students were constantly expected to explain mechanisms such as a reduction in taxation during a discussion on government economic policy. This deepened their understanding because they had to explain the impact on other aspects of the economy. Occasionally not all students were drawn in to participate fully and teachers tended to summarise key points without reference to students' contributions and checking individual understanding.

246. Occasionally, students need more direction regarding their note-taking during discussion. Only some display good initiative in this. The group's range of ability is sufficient to require them to make a more detailed record of key ideas during discussion. The learning needs of all students need greater emphasis in this respect. Relevant aspects of numeracy are well taught with students interpreting graphs depicting key theoretical concepts.
247. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they show a maturity in their approach to their studies. They respond very well because lessons are challenging and relevant to the real world.
248. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very strong sense of direction and purpose in a department where staff teach a variety of courses and all have other major responsibilities. Teachers have ensured that lessons combine a study of current issues with theoretical rigour. Improvement from the last inspection is good. The sharing of good practice amongst very experienced staff is well established but nevertheless needs to be taken further. Links with local business are not well developed. Access to ICT facilities is limited and therefore not incorporated sufficiently into lesson planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus was on AS and A2 level computing and AS level key skills.

Computer studies

Overall the quality of provision in computer studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in lessons, in answering questions and during discussions and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is good; the sessions are well structured with a range of activities which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students work well together; they share ideas and information freely.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The quality of planning and assessment is good.

Area for improvement

- Better access to the subject for female students by improving the choice of courses available.

249. The department offers courses at AS and GCE A-level in computing studies and AS-level in key skills. The numbers taking courses in computing and key skills are appropriate and these options are popular in Year 12 and Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS computing course complete the year and take the examination. The majority choose to continue in Year 13. GCE A-level results were in line with the national average in 2001 and students gained similar results in computer studies as they did on average in other subjects. Results were better in 2002: 21 per cent of students gained A-B grades and 100 per cent gained A-E grades. In 2001, AS results were above average. In 2002, five of the 18 candidates were graded at U and the average points score fell. The number of female students taking part in either course is low.

250. The standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national average in the current Year 13. Students are achieving good standards in relation to predictions based on GCSE results when they came into Year 12. Students make good use of their research and investigation skills and their project folders show attention to detail. The number of female students in the computing option is low. In lessons, students demonstrate good levels of practical skills and can use applications and processes with confidence. Male students produce practical work to a higher specification and make better progress. Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are average for this stage in the AS courses. This represents good achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were below average for students taking AS.
251. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and in discussions confirms that standards are overall about average and achievement is good. In general students do well on those parts of the course which are concerned with their own ability to use software. They confidently create complex data systems using linked spreadsheets with macros and data entry screens, and are designing and starting to create relational databases. Standards are average on the parts of the courses which are concerned with understanding how organisations use ICT. Students are able to talk in some depth about the real uses of ICT systems which they have investigated; their understanding of this aspect of the subject comes from textbooks, work assignments and teachers' first-hand knowledge. Students work hard at ensuring that their design will fully meet the needs of the intended user.
252. Overall, teaching is good. In all the lessons observed teaching was good. The teachers have a very good command of the subject, including good knowledge of uses of ICT in organisations other than the school. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for the subject to their students. They are good at anticipating aspects which are likely to be misunderstood and they make good use of questioning to check on students' understanding. When students are working individually, teachers generally make good use of their time, discussing work with students, and there are opportunities to stretch students by asking challenging questions and showing them further possibilities. Teachers focused their attention on the quieter students ensuring that they understood the work; they also directed the work of the more enthusiastic students. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject – a high level of skill and expertise. Teachers have high expectations as indicated in the work planned; the evidence from the work presented shows that students have the necessary skills to meet the demands of the coursework requirements.
253. All students show an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When they are working individually on computers in lessons, they are good at helping each other and discussions are common: they are always relevant to the work and contribute usefully to the good learning. Students are able to do some of their work on computers in their own time. No students reported any difficulty in gaining access to the resources they need. In the sessions observed, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students make good use of access to a central network, the Internet and a good range of specialist software.
254. The subject is well led and managed. A well-organised system of recording individual results for each unit, and comparing current standards with previous attainment, ensures successful monitoring of individual students' progress and identifying any underachievement. The consistency in the quality of teaching has led to improvement

in standards in the last two years. A good level of feedback is given to individual students about progress and attainment and comments about how they might improve their work. There is a good level of self-assessment by students. The attainment in Years 12 and 13 for current students is sufficiently high and higher attaining students are on course to gain the highest grades. There are too few female students choosing courses in ICT. The present GCE A-level and AS-level computing courses do not appeal to female students. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection; there has been an improvement in the quality and quantity of resources. A key skills option is now offered in Year 12, providing better access. There is a good level of course material to guide teachers and students through the courses offered.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects were focused upon in this subject area. However, physical education was sampled. Two lessons were observed. In both, students showed good achievement. They are attaining above average standards as a result of the good teaching they receive.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on drama and music, but art was also sampled. Teaching and learning were very good in a Year 13 art lesson because of very good specialist knowledge and planning. Standards are above average. Students have very good attitudes and have made very good progress in working independently.

Drama

The overall provision for drama is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject are of an exceptionally high standard.
- Very good and often excellent teaching presents the students with high levels of challenge.
- Examination results and standards of attainment are well above average.
- The students' excellent attitudes help them to achieve very well.

Area for improvement

- The accommodation is poor.

255. Students commence drama courses in the sixth form with above average GCSE results. They make very good progress during each year and achieve very well in the GCE A-level examinations. In the 2001 A2 examination, results were well above average. Seven of the ten candidates gained grades A-B. The overall point score fell in 2002, largely because of an extended period of absence by the head of drama. As a result there were no grade A passes, although 60 per cent of the candidates did gain grade B. All achieved grades A-E. In the 2001 AS examination more than 60 per cent achieved grades A-B; there were no entries for this examination in 2002. Retention rates are very high, with all students completing their courses.

256. In the work seen during the inspection, students worked at well above average standards in Year 12, and very high standards in Year 13. In Year 12 practical lessons, students demonstrated a secure knowledge of stagecraft. They projected their voices well and accomplished theatrical gestures with authority. Their

improvisations were carefully thought through, and they presented them confidently and fluently. They analysed texts quickly and accurately. Year 13 students showed intellectual awareness when they led discussions about deeply philosophical aspects of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. They had all researched widely round the text and could comment in considerable depth about the differences of characterisation of Hamlet in performances by Olivier, Branagh and Ecclestone. They have a thorough knowledge of theatre production, being able, for example, to talk easily about how set design, masking, raking and other aspects affect overall productions. They are widely read, very naturally bringing into discussion comparisons between Pinter and Shakespeare. Students have very well developed key skills: they debate and discuss effectively, use ICT for research and solve complicated philosophical hypotheses. Their overall achievement is very good.

257. Students have excellent attitudes to their work. All take their studies very seriously and demonstrate commitment. They are alert, and respond positively to the ongoing challenges presented to them. They are self-critical and make sensitive but perceptive comments about each other's performances. Three students have already been offered places to take drama in institutes of higher education.
258. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with many excellent features. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They know exactly how to prepare students for success in examinations. They have very high expectations: they insist on students working out their own solutions, and they constantly present them with intellectual challenge. Teachers will not accept superficial answers, but press students to reflect more deeply on controversial issues. They provide them with superb resources such as the CD-ROM on *Hamlet*, which they used in one lesson, to research, in pairs, a range of contextual issues in the play. Students' progress is regularly assessed on an individual basis. The quality of assessment is excellent. The quality of teaching leads to very high levels of interest, concentration and independence on the part of the students. The pace of their work is very good.
259. The subject is exceptionally well led and managed. The head of department is very experienced at a national level, having been involved in the preparation of the examination syllabus. He is working effectively to give the two relatively new members of the department opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge for A-level teaching. The department contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school. This is apparent in the video recording Year 13 students made of *Paradise Grove*, a performance which they had created as part of their coursework, and which was presented as a public performance. Although it does not directly impact upon the quality of students' learning, the poor quality of the teaching environment does little to enhance the reputation of a department giving such excellent value for money, and which attracts students from other schools onto its GCE A-level courses. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, though the learning environment is still poor.

Music

Overall, the provision for music is **good**.

Strengths

- The management and leadership of the department are good.
- The students' achievement is very good because of very good teaching.
- The department makes very good use of music technology and computers.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the development of the students' key skills.

Areas for improvement

- The results in public examinations.
- The quality of specialist accommodation.

260. Students start their sixth form studies in music with overall average standards. GCE A-level results in 2001 were below the national average with only one of the six entrants gaining a grade at A-B although all candidates obtained grades in the A-E range. In 2002, the one A-level entrant gained a grade E which was good achievement in relation to the student's starting point. The 2001 AS results were below the national average but improved in 2002 by the equivalent of one whole grade overall. The retention rate is high with all students completing their courses.
261. In the work seen during the inspection, overall standards of attainment were above average. Year 13 students have a sound working knowledge of musical literacy and history. They score read efficiently, and make informed comments when comparing the symphonic writing of Haydn and Tchaikovsky. They are on course to achieve similar results at A2 level to their B-D grades at AS. Year 12 students are particularly able and their standards securely above average. They started their course with grades A or B in GCSE results, and with above average standards of practical performance. Many of them are very good instrumentalists, and they have a very secure knowledge of musical literacy. They are competent score readers, easily able to recognise cadence points, interpret ornamentation and understand difficult harmonies, including augmented and diminished chords. They identify modulations and the shape of minuet and trio form. Standards of composition of some are quite exceptional. One student brilliantly and evocatively wrote a score for brass and string instruments entitled *Fantasia on the Sea*, which was inspired by the orchestral writing of Mendelssohn.
262. Students have very good attitudes to their studies. They are bright and alert, and most take an intelligent approach to the intellectual demands of their courses. They research diligently, and spend much time using computers to formulate and print their compositions. The completion rates for the course are good.
263. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers have a tremendous enthusiasm for their subject, and this encourages students when they are finding challenging score analysis difficult. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and are able to lead students successfully through a critical analysis of scores. They always make them think for themselves, and work out their own solutions to problems. Lessons are taken at a fast pace: this contributes to the very good progress made by students and also to their very good intellectual and creative efforts during lessons.
264. The department is well led and managed. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection, but a particular improvement since the last inspection is the very effective use made of computer technology in the sixth form. *Sibelius* and *Cubase* software has greatly contributed to the teaching of composition. Key skills are developed well by A-level music students. They have good communication skills when they discuss works they have listened to. Students have good standards of speaking and essay writing, using appropriate music terminology. Problem solving is implicit in score reading. ICT skills are well developed through composition and recording with computers. The department is housed in poor accommodation. This adversely affects decisions whether or not to come into this sixth form to study music by Year 11 students from this, and other, schools.

HUMANITIES

The focus subjects were religious studies, geography and sociology. Psychology and history were also sampled. Teaching and learning were very good in the psychology lesson observed. Standards were above average and the students made very good progress on developing their independent learning skills. In history, one Year 13 lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were good and the students made good progress. They worked with real enthusiasm to secure their knowledge and understanding of Britain's role following the end of the First World War by using contemporary sources and maps.

Geography

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

Strengths

- There is very good use of ICT.
- There are good opportunities for fieldwork, which supports students' coursework and learning.
- Numeracy skills are well developed.
- Teaching is good and there is very good support for students.

Areas for improvement

- The schemes of work need detailed development to support all aspects of teaching.
- Students' oral participation in some lessons is insufficient.
- More help in note-taking skills is needed to assist learning.

265. Results in the 2001 GCE A-level examination were above average. All gained grades in the A-E range: the proportion at A-B matched the national average. Results were not as high in the 2002 A2 examination because of a fall in the proportion of A-B grades (with more students at grade C). In the 2001 AS examination, results were broadly average although the proportion at grades A-B was below average. In 2002 overall results were similar, but more students gained the higher grades, A-B. The student retention rate on this well-subscribed course is very good.

266. Students in Years 12 and 13 are working at a level that is above average. Students produce good detailed analysis of fieldwork and research on a variety of topics including coastal and retail studies. Work in files shows good use of Internet research and of the information provided by teachers. There is, however, little variety in the format of notes. Tabulation is used for comparisons in some topics but there is little evidence of thoughtful use of spider diagrams or detailed annotated diagrams to replace notes and improve understanding. Essay writing is good with well-researched information and well-developed reasoning. Numeracy shows very good improvement by the end of Year 13 with the use of a wide variety of graphical and statistical techniques. Since the students started the course with average levels of GCSE attainment these standards represent good achievement.

267. Teaching is good. Resources such as maps, photographs, printed sheets, statistical data and textbooks are used effectively. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate their enthusiasm to the students. They give good support to students: in one lesson the teacher developed numeracy skills by providing a graph template to assist students and regularly checked the progress of the lower attainers whilst higher attainers developed their skills with further work and analysis. In another,

the teacher developed an in-depth understanding of lava flows through questioning that provided frequent checks on the understanding of terminology. This also led to a high level of concentration and ensured lower attainers were able to make satisfactory notes. Extended essays and answers to examination questions are well written and regularly marked with helpful and constructive advice, and this is appreciated by the students. In some lessons, students make too many notes or spend too much time listening. When they are encouraged to be more actively involved in their own learning through oral discussion and questioning of resources there is significantly greater motivation. Students learn well, are attentive and respond well to teachers. Students are very well supported with coursework. A residential course develops their research skills, mostly in physical geography, and they also have day courses, which develop their skills in human geography. For coursework they receive regular monitoring to ensure that all deadlines are met and students very much appreciate this support. All students use computers for presentations, coursework and fieldwork and the Internet selectively for research. When producing reports from fieldwork, students analyse data and link this to outcomes and decisions, which is good support for independent learning.

268. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Staffing for the subject is well organised and the sound leadership ensures a co-operative and supportive approach to both teachers and students. There are good stocks of well-managed resources for students and they have very good access to computers through the department and the learning resource centre. Good marking and discussions about work ensure that students are aware of what they have to do to improve. The schemes of work need a clearly detailed format to ensure that there is sufficient coverage of all topics and themes, and that there is greater development of students' communication skills. Regular meetings ensure that teachers are able to share best practice in teaching.

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well. Results are usually well above average. In 2002 over 70 per cent gained passes at grades A-B.
- Teachers give excellent feedback on written work which improves learning and extends the more able.
- Students have very positive and committed attitudes towards their work.
- The department has effectively managed the change in planning for and delivering the AS course and options offered.

Area for improvement

- Increase the variety of strategies in teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students.

269. The results in the 2001 GCE A-level examination were below the national average although all candidates gained a pass at grades A-E. In the 2002 A2 examination the results improved significantly – by the equivalent of more than one grade. The 2002 results were far more typical of the well above average results gained in 1999 and 2000. More than 70 per cent of the candidates achieved grades A-B: a notably strong performance. In the AS examination of 2001, standards were broadly average although half the candidates gained grades A-B. In 2002 the results were higher.

Students achieve very well in relation to their prior standards. Recruitment and retention rates are very good. More girls than boys still opt for religious studies, which is a reflection of the national situation.

270. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of a sample of students' work confirm that standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Students can explain why Buddhism came to the West as well as identify a variety of groups within Buddhism. They are able to reflect intelligently on information given: one student commented with surprise and interest about the movement of one Tibetan Buddhist, Trungpa, from Scotland to the USA where he founded a Buddhist monastery. Teaching of essay writing is structured well so that students build upon information. This is processed very clearly in order to plan a draft that is then revised before completion of the final product. The high quality of the teachers' feedback challenges students to extend their thinking by considering views beyond their own. Teachers' comments are a continual part of this process. Specialist vocabulary and concepts such as 'numinous' and 'mysticism' are introduced appropriately and very clearly in teaching so that weaker students can use them effectively and appropriately. Columns of notes help students understand the difference between 'Mecca before Islam' and 'Mecca after Islam' and well-produced notes help students have an overview of Islam. Students are very enthusiastic about the subject. They say it helps them develop evaluative skills and makes them more open minded, and they can understand both sides of an argument. They especially enjoy studying Buddhism and the problem of evil in philosophy and Buddhism.
271. The quality of teaching is very good. Subject knowledge is excellent – a real strength. Analytical skills for answering examination questions are developed by the teacher exploring the difference between 'Explain' and 'Describe': students know that the term 'explain' demands reasons as well as facts. Use is made of the computers in the library, to investigate the Hajj, using the BBC website: there is no computer within the department. Excellent marking of students' work gives constructive criticism and clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers approach religious studies academically, offering auditory and written tasks at a high level of challenge and students contribute confidently and willingly to oral discussion. Although some use is made of videos, the teaching is predominantly oral. There is not enough use of active learning strategies such as 'hot-seating', card sorting and interviewing that would help students to be more involved. These activities would also ensure that visual and kinaesthetic learners could experience a style of learning more suited to their preferred learning style. Teachers and students relate well to one another. There is mutual respect and enthusiasm for religious studies. Students respond well to the high expectations of the teachers, especially in their essay writing.
272. Students learn very well and make very good progress due to well-focused, clear planning and challenging tasks and questions. Homework effectively built upon the knowledge of the spread of Buddhism gained during the lesson by setting students the task of making a presentation to peers. The continuous, sharp focus on examination expectations greatly helps the achievement of all students. Learning is enhanced and supported by student A-level conferences and visits to a Buddhist temple and a mosque.
273. The department is very well managed and teaching and learning are monitored as part of the school's performance management process. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The present schemes of work are being evaluated and altered along with teaching approaches to build upon the current successful student performance. Teachers' handouts are used to supplement

textbooks: a greater variety of resources could encourage a greater diversity of teaching strategies. The teaching is strengthened by two members of the department attending examination board meetings as examiners and then reporting back to colleagues. Teachers are also supported by attending a local network of A-level religious studies teachers. The department is rightly proud of the contact with past students who take teacher training courses in religious studies or who return to visit the school. The continuing enthusiasm of past students is a measure of the success of the department.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- The students learn very well because of the very good teaching and teachers' high expectations
- The students' achievement is very good in relation to their starting points.
- Students' attitudes are excellent.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Self-evaluation is a strength.
- The learning methods greatly enhance the students' key skills.

Area for improvement

- Students do not have sufficient access to resources.

274. GCE A-level results for 2001 were well above average. 2002 A2 results demonstrated very good achievement. Although not at the level of the previous year, they matched the above average results of 2000. Over 70 per cent of students entered for AS-level in 2001 achieved A or B grades. This was repeated in 2002. There are no significant differences between the achievements of male and female students. Retention rates are good and the course is well subscribed.

275. The work seen during the inspection shows that levels of attainment are well above average at the end of Year 13. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are very good. In Year 12, students develop study skills very well. They use ICT well to investigate and summarise a wide variety of research methods for coursework. They are very aware of the limitations of different methods. Their well-structured essays explained changes over time in educational attainment and evaluated relevant research findings. By Year 13 students achieve an impressive 'formal' academic approach to oral and written work. The coursework of all students achieves a highly professional outcome. Their challenging investigations produced include 'The priorities for working class girls in the twenty first century' and 'Does the hidden curriculum produce a passive conformist workforce?' Their clearly-structured coursework includes rationale, context, methodology, evidence, and evaluation. Students explain their research methods clearly, using ICT and graphs to clarify their findings. In some excellent group work, students prepared and produced highly professional seminar presentations on theories of crime and deviance. Their formal, detailed presentations made very good use of terminology and ICT to explain clearly different theoretical perspectives and summarise key points succinctly.

276. Teaching is very good. It is particularly strong in Year 13, where it is occasionally excellent, because of greater consistency. Teachers have very secure knowledge.

Their methods are very well matched to examination requirements. Assessment of oral and written work is very thorough. In a Year 12 lesson students investigated different research methods very effectively as preparation for coursework. The lesson was a very effective introduction to the key elements of coursework requirements. They investigated and reported back on a variety of research methods and were required to use ICT to summarise their findings. ICT was incorporated well into lesson planning. The challenging questioning kept the key ideas of the coursework at the forefront of the discussion. This demanding approach carried their learning forward about the importance of reliability and validity, and the link between methods and theoretical perspectives. Although strong in Year 13 this level of challenging question is less evident in Year 12. In most lessons teachers gave a substantial critical response to each student's contribution. Questions and comments were very well matched to individual learning needs. This, in turn, motivated students to strive for higher standards. They were not deterred by the criticism. Management of students in the classroom is very effective. Students feel greatly involved in their learning and so are highly motivated. Group work is very productive because tasks are clearly identified and relevant sources of information made available. Students are given very challenging tasks and they respond very well.

277. Teachers develop key skills effectively. Year 12 students investigated different sociological perspectives on the family and developed their study skills well through scanning text and identifying key points. Year 13 students' work on crime and deviance helped them become accomplished in the use of new terminology. Numeracy skills are also taught well, with students able to present research findings clearly in a variety of forms.
278. Students display excellent attitudes and develop independent study skills very well. This independence is strongly encouraged by the teachers and incorporated very well into lesson planning. A striking feature is the enthusiasm and productivity of group activities. They listen intently to each other's contributions as well as to their teachers. They ask each other to explain and clarify points from individual and group research. Their level of maturity is impressive.
279. Leadership and management are very good. The teachers' clear sense of direction and very good self-evaluation achieve high standards. There is a very good ethos for learning, with students given a great deal of responsibility for their own learning. This motivates them very well. However, students do not have adequate study facilities outside lessons or easy access to relevant resources.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were French and English but German, Spanish, English literature and the combined English language and literature course were also sampled. In a Year 12 German lesson, teaching and learning were good and standards were broadly average. The students had very good attitudes towards their studies. Two Spanish lessons were observed: one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching and learning were very good in each lesson and the students' attitudes very positive. Standards were well above average. In a Year 12 English language and literature lesson teaching and learning were satisfactory and standards average. In English literature, Year 13 students worked very well during a good lesson on Tennyson's *Engagement*, closely analysing the poet's use of language and its impact. Standards were above average. All three English courses are well subscribed.

English Language

The provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and the students' achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching is good because of very good specialist teachers and excellent teacher-student relationships.
- The students' attitudes to the course are very good.
- Day-to-day assessment is highly professional and clarifies strengths and weaknesses.

Areas for improvement

- Better planning that focuses on a wider range of learning methods and more observation opportunities to spread best practice.
- Ensuring the students are more explicitly aware of their target grade assessment objectives for each unit of the course

280. Standards in the 2001 A-level examination were above average – a significant improvement on the below average results of 2000 and 2001. Nearly half the candidates achieved grades A-B. All students gained grades A-E. In the 2002 A2 examinations, standards matched those of 2001. GCE AS examination standards were above average in 2001. More than one third gained passes at grades A-B and all gained a pass at grades A-E. There was a fall in standards in the 2002 examination. Fewer students gained grades A-B and A-E.
281. Overall achievement has been good for the last two years. The department exercises a degree of flexibility when admitting students to the course. Although some have gained high grades in GCSE others have only below average grades. All work with great resilience and the overwhelming majority complete not only AS but A2 regardless of their prior standards.
282. Observation of work shows current standards to be above average in Year 13. Higher attaining students assuredly apply frameworks to analyse specifically different forms of dialogue. When analysing examples of conversation they refer appropriately to features such as informal tone, exaphoric allusion, control of dialogue and turn-taking. They consistently and cogently support their judgements with well-chosen examples. Their use of the technical language of the subject is accurate and assured. They also refer tellingly to linguistic research to support their judgements. Their writing is accurate and engaging. Occasionally the impact of analysis is undermined by some tentative judgements but overall judgments are secure and well substantiated. Average attaining students also refer frequently to research but are less secure in their use of exemplification and do not consistently make clear the impact of the linguistic devices they outline. Some make technical errors in spelling, expression and punctuation. The range of the grammatical devices they analyse is not as wide as higher attainers. Lower attainers describe and outline the main linguistic devices they study but their work lacks detailed analysis and examples. They make too many inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and grammar to reach higher standards. However, their coursework – in a range of genres – is of a standard closer to the average, because of a good response to teachers' feedback.
283. In Year 12, standards are above average. Higher attainers use a confident style, not only deploying effectively the technical language of the subject, but enhancing the maturity of their analysis through the use of mature and cogent vocabulary. They precisely highlighted the vocabulary that added a positive tone to a piece of reportage accurately explaining the vocabulary's impact. Precise analysis is less consistent in the work of middle attainers: they sometimes undermine the impact of their analysis

through imprecision when referring to linguistic genres. They do not use enough detailed exemplification to support their arguments. As in Year 13, the standards of lower attainers are undermined by technical errors. They point out the main linguistic strategies of a text but their use of detail and examples is superficial.

284. The students' very good attitudes were exemplified by their hard work in lessons and the careful organisation of folder work. They are very positive about the course. All believe they have made good progress on a demanding syllabus. They are especially pleased about the increased maturity of their essay work and greatly appreciate their teachers' strong support, especially on grammatical issues.
285. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject expertise regarding the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teacher-student relationships are excellent and establish a productive working atmosphere, so helping the students to work hard and giving them confidence. Marking is very good and specifically points out strengths weaknesses. However, the clear focus on assessment objectives that effectively aids improvement in coursework is not extended sufficiently to other units. The range of teaching methods observed tended to be narrower than usually seen in post-16 English. The exception was a dynamic Year 12 lesson in which students analysed trends in dialect using the terminology covered in the course. For this excellent lesson the teacher's planning had focused precisely on how the students would learn. Learning objectives were clear, tasks strictly scheduled. A starter activity consolidated prior learning. Use of a competitive group organisation engaged interest. Clarifying the assessment criteria enhanced the quality of the answers. The resources – clips from the 'reality TV' genre – were motivating and highly relevant. High quality planning led to excellent learning.
286. The course is well managed and led and the department has shown good improvement since the previous inspection. The teachers closely monitor progress in line with the school's policy and this helps students to keep up to schedule. There is a good sense of teamwork but not enough formal monitoring of teaching and learning or of methods such as peer observation to help spread and secure the very best practice.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average and the achievement of students is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning.
- There is very good use of ICT, including the Internet.
- Students learn very well because of the excellent staffing of the subject including two native speakers,
- There are good opportunities for direct experience of France and French culture.

Area for improvement:

- Teachers should encourage a wider range of students to take AS-level.

287. Results at GCE A-level in 2001 were above the national average. Six of the 14 candidates obtained grades A-B and all but one A-E. Female students performed

better than male students as is the case nationally. The 2002 results show a marked improvement: more than half the students obtained grades A-B and all obtained grades A-E. The average points score in the 2002 A2 examination was the highest of all the focus subjects in the inspection. Results in the 2001 AS examination were above the national average. They improved significantly in 2002 with all five students obtaining grades A-B. This low number of candidates is an exception. Recent numbers taking the course have been in double figures as is the case in the current Year 12 and retention rates are high.

288. Standards of work observed in Years 13 and 12 are well above average. Each year group has the advantage of being taught by a native speaker of French as well as by another teacher, which leads to the development of very good speaking and listening skills. The Year 13 students, for example, could cope with a mock TV discussion of the pros and cons of EU membership, showing themselves well versed in contemporary social issues which they can competently handle in French. They are well used to researching for information on the Internet, and much of their reading is in electronic form. The Year 12 group had been collecting information on the French press, which formed the basis of pair work and individual presentation to the class. As they move forward from GCSE to sixth form work, students acquire a sound knowledge of grammar, in part through using resources from the Internet, and they develop sufficiently adequate writing skills to express their own view on issues specified for the course. However, their writing has yet to reach the quality of their speaking and listening. Some students say that their understanding of language structure has benefited from their study of Latin in earlier years. Achievement is very good in each year: well above average standards are maintained.
289. Teaching is very good. The deployment of teachers who are native speakers of French in tandem with teachers whose background is English is a special strength, because they complement each other very well. For example, one teacher, adapting to a classroom with bare walls and poor acoustics, challenged the students, all with top grades at GCSE, by requiring them to construct their own examples of the future perfect and present subjunctive forms of verbs. These students then went on to a lively French language lesson taught by a native speaker of French. A forthcoming exchange visit to Blois for Years 11 to 13 will reinforce language skills and contribute to the students' personal development, as earlier experience of receiving visiting French students already has. The students' learning is very good. They show very high levels of interest and concentration and also work very well independently. They have a secure grasp of how well they are doing and also of what they need to do to improve. Student/teacher relationships are good. Students say that they can communicate easily with their teachers. Their enthusiasm is clearly reflected in the high rates of course completion.
290. Leadership is a responsibility shared between the director of the Languages College and the head of department, who again complement each other well. The outcomes indicate that strategic planning, educational direction and day-to-day management are very good. The match of specialist staff to the needs of the curriculum is excellent enhanced by the presence of native French speakers. So far no students have taken French as a one-year course to AS-level to complement other specialist interests and this is an area for further development. At the time of the previous inspection in 1997, A-level results in French were described as average. They are now well above average. This, as well as the maintenance of well above average standards, demonstrates very good improvement.