

ERRATUM

EATON BANK SCHOOL

Design and technology

Line 2 of paragraph 30 in 'How well are pupils taught?' should read 'It is good in all year groups in mathematics, art, **design and technology**, history ----- '.

Similarly, in the **Teaching and Learning section of the summary (page 9)**, the second sentence in paragraph three should read ' It is good in mathematics, art, **design and technology**, history----'

Physical education

The provision for physical education should read very good on page 12 (in the sixth form annex) and at the top of the Physical education paragraphs on pages 51 and 62.

INSPECTION REPORT

EATON BANK SCHOOL

Congleton

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 132747

Headteacher: Mr P. Roberts

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey
20270

Dates of inspection: 13th - 17th January 2003

Inspection number: 249684

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 pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Jackson Road
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Cheshire

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Telephone number: 01260 273000

Fax number: 01260 297352

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M. Stonard

Date of previous inspection: Not applicable. New school - September 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20270	June Tracey	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
13762	Norman Shelley	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
27803	Joseph Clark	Sixth form inspection co-ordinator	Information and communication technology	
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Psychology	
11966	John Clay	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (sixth form)	
11508	Christopher Griffin	Team inspector	English	
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23926	Douglas Howorth	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27665	Arlene Lees	Team inspector	Music	
12897	Maurice Mealing	Team inspector	Health and Social Care	
10308	John Paddick	Team inspector	Mathematics	

19452	Antony Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education Citizenship	
23709	Ann Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
31680	Philip Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
5851	Miles Robottom	Team inspector	Business studies History	
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	Religious education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Eaton Bank School is a large, mixed comprehensive school with 1111 pupils on roll, including 228 in the sixth form. It was formed in September 2000 as a result of the reorganisation of schools in Congleton. Most pupils come from the town of Congleton. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (9%) is below average. It is lower than in the previous year. The majority of pupils are white British, a small number come from Asian, African and Chinese backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is low. None is at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is 9.4%, which is lower than in many schools. The school provides for pupils with a range of disabilities including physical, learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with formal statements of need is below average. Attainment on entry is slightly above average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average. The school's organisation is evolving to meet the needs of pupils and students, some of whom started their education in other schools. It is involved with a number of initiatives such as the Peer Education Project and Best Practice Research Scholarships for classroom based work in teaching and learning.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Eaton Bank School is a very good school that provides a high quality education for its pupils and students. Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11. They are above average in the sixth form. Overall, pupils and students achieve very well in response to the very good teaching. The school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils and students respond well to teachers' high expectations.
- Governors have a clear vision for the school's future. The leadership and management are very good. They promote a good team spirit that fosters learning.
- The school thrives on partnership between parents, staff and pupils. Relationships are very good.
- The school provides well for the personal development of pupils of all abilities. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) could be further improved within the context of the four-year strategic development plan.
- The quality of the satisfactory teaching could be raised to that of the best.
- More opportunities could be provided for the study of vocational subjects in Years 10-13.
- More opportunities could be provided for sixth form students to participate in enrichment activities outside the normal timetable.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There is no previous report for Eaton Bank School. Prior to, and since, its inception in 2000 governors and staff have worked hard to establish secure practices and systems. These underpin the curriculum and pupils' personal development. They are also forward looking and anticipatory of future developments in secondary education.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	Na	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	Na	C	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

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

Years 7, 8 and 9

Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Pupils' average point score was above the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. It is not possible to compare results with those of previous years as this was the first Year 9 group to have been wholly taught at Eaton Bank School. Currently, the overall standard of work in Year 9 is well above average. Pupils are achieving very well in relation to their attainment on entry. Standards are well above average in English, drama, German and science. They are above average in all other subjects except ICT where they are average.

Years 10 and 11

In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was well above the national average. A significant number of the grades were at the highest levels A*/A. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades was above average; almost all pupils gained at least one GCSE grade. Overall, pupils' average point score was well above average compared with all and similar schools. This exceeded the realistic target set by the governors. Girls outperformed boys to a greater extent than found nationally. Comparison with results of previous years is inappropriate because in 2001 Year 11 pupils were taught on three different sites. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the well above average performance in 2001 was sustained in 2002. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in the current Year 11 are well above average in English, drama, German, science, geography and music. They are above average in all other subjects except French, history, physical education and ICT where they are average.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to other pupils. They achieve equally well because of the highly focused support that pays specific attention to their needs.

Sixth form

The A2 (advanced level) results in 2002 showed a significant improvement on those of 2001. National averages are not yet available for comparison. The 2001 results were those of students who completed their education in their original schools. In 2002, more passes were at the higher A and B grades (40 per cent compared to 29 per cent in 2001). Male students did significantly better than females. The overall standard of work in Year 13 is above average. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are very positive. Most pupils work conscientiously and give of their best. They are enthusiastic and take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite and thoughtful. The school is an orderly community that fosters a good learning environment for its pupils. The number of exclusions is relatively high resulting from strict adherence to the discipline policy.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Teamwork throughout the school is good. Pupils respect and value others' contributions in lessons and extra-curricular work.
Attendance	Attendance is above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good throughout the school. The high quality teaching, combined with pupils' and students' very good attitudes, are contributory factors to the very good achievement.

The school creates a good learning environment in which pupils and students of all abilities are motivated to learn. Teachers have investigated how pupils learn and have successfully adapted their teaching methods to reflect this. The strengths in the teaching, throughout the school, lie in teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations and meticulous planning. Teachers work well together in teams within each subject area. This enables them to share good practices and have an overview of pupils' progress towards individual and whole-school targets. Praise and encouragement are used to raise pupils' confidence, especially when tackling challenging work. Written work is generally well marked with useful comments showing how it could be improved. Weaknesses are few, but where they do exist they are linked to the poor behaviour of a very small minority of pupils and insufficient variety and challenge in the work in mixed ability groups.

In Years 7-11, teaching is very good in English, drama, science, music and religious studies. It is good in mathematics, art, history, physical education and citizenship. In geography, teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Year 10 and 11 whilst in modern foreign languages it is very good in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory overall in ICT. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in English and mathematics. They are reinforced and used well in other subjects of the curriculum.

In the sixth form, students are encouraged to become more independent in their studies. Teachers encourage provocative discussion that assists students to question for themselves and mature in attitude.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs of the majority of pupils and students. Too few vocational courses are offered but parents are satisfied with the options available. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of high quality extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, music and the performing arts. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. It includes an imaginative programme for the teaching of citizenship.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Teachers and learning support assistants create relationships based on stability and trust, which give pupils the confidence to succeed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. These pupils are well motivated. They receive good support from teachers and from specialist teaching provided by the local education authority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' social development is outstanding. The school pays very good attention to pupils' awareness of moral and cultural issues. Pupils' sensitivity to spiritual matters is good, as demonstrated in particular by their aesthetic appreciation of art, music and drama.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Support and guidance for pupils' educational and personal development are very good. Pupils' progress is monitored well on a regular basis; the information gained is used well to guide planning for lessons. Pupils share in the setting of their own targets and in evaluating the degree of success in achieving them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior staff are effectively supported by a committed team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Morale is high. It underpins the school's caring and purposeful ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are vigilant and energetic in their concern for the school. They have a sound understanding of its strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. The strategic plan for the future reflects well their vision for the school. Statutory requirements for the provision of ICT in Years 10-11, religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is self-critical of its own performance. It focuses attention on areas identified for development and sets itself targets for improvement within set time limits.
The strategic use of resources	The school understands and applies the principles of best value well. Evidence of this is seen in the consultation, planning and provision that underpinned the opening of Eaton Bank School.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is well led and managed.• The school is very approachable and responds promptly to enquiries.• Teaching is good.• Pupils make good progress. The school expects them to work hard.• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.	<p>A small number of parents expressed concern about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The variable quantity and relevance of homework, especially in Years 8 and 9.• Information on their children's progress.• The closeness with which the school works with parents.• The lack of lockers to store books.

Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed by parents. They find that homework is set appropriately in most subjects and that it usefully complements lessons and contributes to pupils' independence. Annual school reports provide very good information and they are supplemented by an interim report and adequate consultation opportunities. Approximately one out of every six of the comparatively few respondents to the questionnaires considers that the school should work more closely with parents but those who attended the parents' meeting expressed satisfaction with communications and the school's prompt responses. Inspectors judge that the school is keen to involve parents in numerous ways. The school understands parents' concern about the lack of storage space for pupils' books and outdoor clothes. It has not yet been able to resolve this issue because of pressure on the use of all available space for lessons and to facilitate movement about the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

This is a relatively new sixth form of 228 Students. It is larger than average. Entry does not depend on prior attainment at GCSE level and students of all abilities are accepted. Attainment on entry is average. Students are predominantly white British; a small number come from ethnic minority backgrounds. The sixth form provides a very good range of GCE A2 courses but few vocational courses. Around two thirds of students continue from Year 11 at Eaton Bank into the sixth form. Others come from neighbouring schools in and around Congleton. About three-quarters of students leaving at the end of Year 13 go on to higher education courses. Very few students drop out.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very effective sixth form that serves the local community well. Standards are above average. Students take a pride in their school and enjoy being here. Their attendance is good. They have very good attitudes to their work and are mature and responsible young adults. They achieve very well, principally because of the very good teaching they receive. Leadership and management are good. The sixth form is cost-effective

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- A very good range of academic GCE AS and A2 courses is offered.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good; teachers provide very good personal and academic support.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work.

What could be improved

- The curriculum could be widened in order to include more vocational courses, statutory religious education and PSHE.
- More enrichment activities could be provided.
- The quality and relevance of advice about career opportunities from external agencies could be improved for those students who do not proceed to higher education.
- The monitoring of attendance and attendance procedures could be more rigorous.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgements
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
Chemistry	Very good. Teaching is very good. Experimental and investigative work are major strengths. Standards are well above average. Attitudes are very positive.
Product design	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students' attitudes are very good. The assessment of students' work is a strong feature.
Business studies	Very good. Standards are rising as a result of very good teaching and learning. High expectations raise students' self-confidence.

ICT	Satisfactory. Results in 2002 were as expected from students' GCSE results in spite of serious staffing problems in the area. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory and students are achieving average standards.
Physical education	Good. Standards in lessons are above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated and value their learning experiences. They achieve well.
Health and social care	Good. Results are better than would be expected from students' GCSE results. Teaching is consistently good. Students work well as a combined Year 12 and Year 13 group.
Art	Good. Standards are above average and students use materials vigorously and boldly. Teaching is good. However, there is a lack of urgency in some lessons.
Music	Very good. Standards are above average and students are achieving very well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are highly skilled, both musically and technically. They share a great enthusiasm for music and music technology with students. Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
Geography	Very good. Standards are well above average and results have improved because teaching is very good and students are highly motivated.
Psychology	Good. Student attitudes, the quality of teaching and learning and activities matched to students' needs cause the quality of learning in psychology to be good.
English	Very good. Students achieve very well to reach well above average standards. Very good specialist teaching enhances their learning in both the language and literature courses. Lessons are lively and students' attitudes are excellent.
French	Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated and achieve very well.

Lessons were seen in eleven other subjects. Teaching was excellent in drama and very good in further mathematics, sociology, history and German. In biology, physics, media studies, dance and food technology teaching was good. In computing, teaching was satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are provided with good information about life in the sixth form and the courses available. The induction process is very effective. Students receive good educational and personal support and guidance. Frequent feedback from their tutors effectively provides a focus for improvement and informs them about progress towards their targets. They are particularly well prepared for higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are good. Entry to the sixth form is open to all and students have very good access to the courses of their choice. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are very good. A clear vision exists for the future development of the sixth form. Of immediate concern is a review of the curriculum, the promotion and provision of enrichment activities, which are insufficient, and an improvement in the procedures for monitoring and recording students' attendance.

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 good quality of teaching and courses.• The support and guidance that they receive.• The very good relationships.• Preparation for higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of enrichment opportunities outside the curriculum.• The quality and relevance of careers advice from the external advisory service.• Opportunities for students in Year 12 to work off-site when not engaged in lessons.

Students are right to be very pleased with the quality of education that is provided in the sixth form. The sixth form does not have its own self-contained centre, for example registration groups are dispersed throughout the school and private study facilities are limited by the constraints of the accommodation. The common room is too small for the numbers involved and Year 12 students are not permitted to leave school and undertake private study at home when there are no lessons for them. Inspectors judge that the school offers the right balance between regulation and independence. Students are justified in saying that there are limited opportunities for quality private study time. Inspectors are unable to comment on students' remarks about the quality and relevance of the careers advice and information that they receive from external agencies but judge that the advice and information that the school itself provides meets the needs of the students. The enrichment experiences that are in place, such as peer education, are very good but inspectors agree that the range of experiences is not wide enough.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall standards of work are well above average in Years 9 and 11; they are above average in Year 13. Pupils and students are achieving very well throughout the school, particularly bearing in mind that these standards have been attained and sustained during the period of reorganisation of schools in Congleton.

Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9

2. Currently, pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is slightly above average. The majority of pupils have a sound foundation of basic skills.

3. In 2002, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. They were well above average in each of the three subjects compared with schools of similar background. The proportion of pupils that exceeded the level expected for their age (level 5) was well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls compared to boys and girls nationally. It is not relevant to compare the results with those of the previous year because Year 9 pupils were then being taught in the three original schools in Congleton. However, it can be noted that pupils' average point score in 2001 and 2002 was above average. The school did not meet its targets in 2002. These were aspirational because the school did not have sufficient knowledge about pupils' prior attainment at this stage. The current targets for Year 9 are realistic but challenging. They are soundly based on information obtained from the school's good assessment procedures.

4. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that the overall standard of work is well above average in Year 9. These pupils have benefited from a settled education from the start with all the school's energy being focused on the one Eaton Bank site. Standards are well above average in English, drama, German and science. They are above average in all other subjects except ICT where they are average. Overall, pupils achieve very well in Year 7-9.

Standards in Years 10 and 11

5. Pupils' average point score in GCSE examinations in 2002 was well above the national average. It was also well above the average of that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was well above the national average. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades was above average. Almost all pupils in Year 11 gained at least one A*-G grade; the few that did not rarely attended school. Overall, girls attained better results than boys, and also to a greater extent than they do nationally. The school is conscious of this and every subject department is developing strategies for narrowing the gap between the performance of boys and girls. Comparison of the 2002 results with those of the previous year is not wholly appropriate because in 2000/01 Year 11 pupils completed their education in their original schools and were taught by staff from both of the new schools. Nevertheless, it should be noted that pupils' average point score in both years was well above average. Two of the three GCSE targets set by governors in 2002 were achieved. The third, for one or more A*-G grades was not because of a few pupils' absence from the examinations. Future targets are realistic, but there is the potential for them to be raised further.

6. Overall standards of work in Year 11 are well above average. These pupils are achieving very well, especially taking into consideration that a number of them began their secondary education in other schools prior to reorganisation. Standards of work are well above average in English, drama, German, science, geography and music. They are above average in all other subjects except French, history, ICT and physical education where they are average. Staffing difficulties affected pupils' achievement in

history and ICT last year. In history, these have now been resolved. A good start has been made in establishing citizenship as a new subject this year. The average standard at this stage represents good achievement. Overall, pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and better in the vast majority.

The school as a whole

7. The standards of work attained by pupils with special educational needs match their teachers' expectations and often exceed them. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school, in common with other groups of pupils. They achieve very well in English, science and music, and their achievement is good in most other subjects. There is a high entry rate at GCSE and most pupils gain a grade in their chosen subjects.

8. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve very well. Most of them speak and write English with reasonable fluency when they come into the school, and they progress at the same rate as other groups of pupils. Those pupils who enter the school with little or no knowledge of English make very good progress because they are very well motivated, and because they are well supported by their teachers, and benefit from specialist teaching provided by the local education authority.

9. Although pupils enter the school with secure standards in literacy they make very good progress to enhance these to a well above average standard. Most read fluently and effectively and are able to identify relevant information from a range of texts. Most are confident writers, able to explain their knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. They organise their writing well into paragraphs and punctuation is mainly accurate. This benefits them in examinations. Some middle to lower attaining pupils are less secure in these skills. However, the highest attaining pupils write very effectively in a range of forms. The control of poetic structure and devices shown by Year 8 pupils in their poetry about war was remarkable for their age.

10. The school builds well on pupils' sound numerical skills on entry. Pupils experience very few problems as they progress through school because all subject departments contribute to the development and use of mathematical skills. The consistent use of units and methods in tackling arithmetic, algebraic and graphical problems benefits pupils of all abilities and gives them confidence. Overall, pupils are competent users of mathematics. Standards of numeracy are above average.

Sixth form

11. The first set of advanced level results for the new sixth form was published in 2001, although many of the students who took the examination had been taught in several different institutions. The 2002 A2-level results showed a significant improvement on those of the 2001. Results exceeded what might have been expected given students' GCSE results and they achieved well. Male students did significantly better than females. One in two students entered for mathematics, chemistry, history, or sociology gained grades A or B. In drama and theatre studies, media studies and general studies more than two in three students gained A or B grades. Apart from in mathematics, biology, and business studies, every student entered for an examination gained a pass. A tiny minority of students, all females, took an Advanced GNVQ and although there were no higher A or B grades in their results, given their attainment on entry to the sixth form they achieved well.

12. It is not possible to compare the results at the end of Year 12 in the new AS level in 2002 with those of 2001, because results for the new sixth form in 2001 were, at AS level, a combination of results from different institutions. In 2002 at least half of the AS entries in mathematics, chemistry, sport and physical recreation, geography and English language gained a grade A or B. Only a very small percentage gained the higher grades in computing and psychology.

13. Overall standards in Year 13 are above average and rising. In the subjects focused on during the inspection, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, chemistry, geography, French and

music technology. They are above average in art, business studies, physical education, product design and psychology; standards are average in health and social care, ICT and computing. Taking into consideration these standards and that the education of students in the current sixth form has been disturbed through reorganisation, they are achieving very well.

14. Very few students drop out once they have joined the sixth form. About seventy six per cent of leavers proceed on to higher education. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. From the outset students are set targets for both vocational and academic subjects and results from 2002 indicate that the targets students were set were both challenging and realistic.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Their behaviour and attendance are good. Parents are pleased with pupils' personal standards.

16. Pupils in all year groups are very enthusiastic about the school and relate numerous things that they are pleased about. These include relationships with teachers, sport, teaching, extra-curricular activities and the school council. They say the school is a friendly place and they feel safe. They find very few things to complain about. Inspectors believe that their views are well justified. Almost all pupils undertake their work conscientiously and do their best. They take full advantage of the many activities and experiences that are available to them. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their education and school contribute much to the good level of attendance, academic and personal standards achieved and the quality of life in the school.

17. Behaviour is good overall. The behaviour of many pupils is exemplary. They are polite and conduct themselves in an orderly manner. The good standard of behaviour enables learning to proceed well in the large majority of lessons. A minority of pupils, in some lessons and around the school, fail to exercise appropriate self-control and this is reflected in the higher than average number of exclusions last year. A similar trend continues this year. The number of exclusions is justified because it reflects the school's enforcement of its disciplinary procedures, which are clearly understood by all pupils. The number of recorded incidents of bullying is few and pupils confirm that they are effectively dealt with although a few are not reported. Relationships between pupils of different race and background are harmonious, as is reflected in the good ethos in the school. When unacceptable conduct occurs pupils are required to consider the consequences of their actions. They then carry out a suitable task that reinforces their understanding of the results of their actions. Improved attitudes and behaviour almost always ensue.

18. Pupils with special educational needs usually behave well and have very good attitudes towards their work. For example, those who take part in the paired reading programme have very good relationships with their adult helpers, and enjoy the variety of their individual reading tasks. However, there are some pupils whose behaviour can be challenging because of the nature of their special needs. They generally do not interrupt the learning of other pupils in the same class because the teachers and support staff are effective in dealing with problem behaviour.

19. Relationships between pupils are very good. They are very tolerant and co-operative. When directed to form groups in lessons they do so readily, not minding whom they team up with, and are mutually supportive. Teamwork, for example in physical education and drama is extremely good. They respect the contributions of their peers.

20. Pupils' personal development is very good. They have a respectful awareness of the beliefs and lifestyles of others. Pupils in Year 10 listened with interest to a member of a trade union and developed an understanding of social and employment issues, often asking thoughtful questions. Pupils use their initiative well in the course of their studies and research. When given opportunities for responsibilities, such as representing others in the school council, pupils respond in a mature and sensible manner. Participation in school productions and other extra-curricular activities is high and pupils take pride in their

performance. Residential experiences, including abroad, contribute much to pupils' social development and independence. Pupils in Year 10 were commended for their maturity during work experience.

21. Attendance is above the average for secondary schools and unauthorised absence is below the average. Pupils arrive on time for the start of the school day.

Sixth form

22. Students are very positive about the school and the sixth form. Their personal development and attendance are good. They are very pleased with the quality of education, advice, guidance and support that they receive. Students are very conscientious about their studies and persevere with them. Their independent study skills are developing well despite the limited facilities for private study in school. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. They work together very well and are mutually supportive, not hesitating to ask for help or to give it. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.

23. Whilst students achieve a good degree of maturity and have responsible attitudes, their breadth of experiences is limited somewhat because the range of enrichment activities is not yet well developed. A number of students are not engaged in these partly because few activities are available and partly because the activities are not effectively promoted. Some students participate very well in a peer education scheme within the lower school and in primary schools.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Overall, teaching is very good throughout the school. Pupils and students respond well to teachers' high expectations. Teaching is equally good in Years 7 - 11 and the sixth form. A high proportion (40 per cent) of the 188 lessons observed during the inspection were judged to be very good or better. Of these, five per cent, were outstanding. A further 45 per cent of lessons were good. Almost without exception, the remainder was satisfactory. The high quality of teaching underpins all the work in the school; combined with the pupils' very good attitudes it accounts for the high level of achievement.

25. A significant factor in the quality of teaching, and hence learning, is the high profile given to understanding how pupils learn effectively. The school is making good use of the principles of accelerated learning, which focus on the preferred styles of learning for the teacher and pupils in the particular teaching group. Teachers incorporate specific learning strategies, matched to their knowledge of the pupils, into lesson plans. As a result, pupils are engaged in the work and achieve well because they recognise that lessons have been tailored to sustain their interest and present challenge. The difference between the satisfactory and better lessons emphasised the higher level of achievement in those where teachers practised the policies outlined in the school's Teaching and Learning plan. This has been the focus of professional development in the past year.

26. The major strengths in the teaching are the teachers' high expectations, good subject knowledge and meticulous planning. In addition, teachers work well together in teams within subject departments. This selfless sharing of ideas and good practices invigorates teaching and saves time, which teachers can then dedicate to other activities in the school. This they do, as indicated by the high level of involvement in extra-curricular activities. Lessons are carefully planned, taking into account pupils' prior attainment. The imposition of time limits on different activities within lessons keeps pupils 'on their toes' and ensures that lessons move at a pace controlled by the teacher. Other features of very good lessons include the good use of praise and encouragement to raise pupils' confidence. Similarly, a touch of humour in a Year 10 geography lesson on the advantages and disadvantages of the growth of a retail park resulted in lower attaining and gifted and talented pupils making equally good progress. Where the marking of written work is particularly good, pupils are given very helpful advice that informs them how to improve further. In Years 10 and 11 this is clearly linked to target grades for GCSE, encouraging pupils' aspirations. The school has identified this aspect of its work, focused on the use of information from assessment, as an area for further development in Years 7 and 8. Less effective aspects of teaching, even in satisfactory

lessons, result from the lack of clear aims and the tendency to work through answers before giving pupils the opportunity to tackle the work independently and learn from their own mistakes.

27. Ten outstanding lessons were observed during the inspection in English, science, music, drama, modern languages, geography and art. All of these took into account the strategies being promoted through the school's teaching and learning initiative. In each, the teaching was dynamic. It placed high demands on pupils for their own learning and required them to be critical and self-evaluative of their own efforts. A typical example was the Year 8 drama lesson in which pupils were learning communication techniques through studying 'silent movies'. In groups, they prepared and dramatised their version of a moving storyline. Pupils evaluated each other's work without embarrassment through pertinent comments such as " I liked the way ----- opened all the cupboard doors and indicated her frustration on finding them empty".

28. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. Pupils learn very successfully because teachers match their teaching methods and learning materials effectively to the different requirements. Teaching is purposeful as teachers make good use of pupils' individual education plans in organising lesson activities. This is because the targets for improvement are clear and concise. The quality of the learning support is very good and it has a positive impact on pupils' rate of progress. Classroom assistants are well informed about pupils' strengths and weaknesses and they work very skilfully to support the teacher and to enable less confident pupils to take an active part in the lesson. However, in some lessons, although satisfactory, the objectives lack precision and so progress cannot be measured as effectively.

29. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are effective. Pupils are given good grounding in basic skills in English and mathematics. These are transferred well and further developed in many other subjects. In geography, for example, pupils are encouraged to write in various forms, including poetry, to convey impressions of difficult working conditions. Pupils' course work for public examinations is enhanced by the quality of writing and its presentation, often using ICT. However, there is little evidence of the explicit development of writing skills in ICT lessons. Expanding links between the mathematics department and others are providing pupils with common methods of working. This gives them confidence when using numerical, measuring and graphical skills, and in the handling of data.

30. Throughout the school, teaching is very good in English and drama, science, music and religious studies. It is good in all year groups in mathematics, art, history, physical education and citizenship. In geography, teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 whilst in modern foreign languages it is very good in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory overall in ICT. It is not as good as in other subjects because the content of lessons in Years 7-9 is not devised to cater for the wide range of abilities and levels of prior attainment in each class.

31. The high quality of teaching reflects the commitment of staff. Parents recognise this and inspectors agree with their views. A small number of parents expressed concern about the variance and quality of homework, mainly in Years 8 and 9. Inspectors found that in most classes homework suitably supplemented classwork.

Sixth form

32. Teaching is very good overall. The proportion of very good and better teaching observed during the inspection was higher than found in many sixth forms. Students respond very well, learning effectively and interacting vigorously in discussion. In the subjects focused on during the inspection, teaching was judged to be very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, geography, business studies, French, music and physical education. It was satisfactory in ICT and good in art, health and social care, product design and psychology.

33. The overall strengths of the teaching lie in the students' response to the teachers' high expectations. The teachers have a good understanding of students' capabilities and challenge their intellect to its

optimum limit. Lessons are well managed and students are encouraged to take personal responsibility for their own learning. They are assisted by the teachers' support and guidance in one-to-one discussion and through constructive comments in relation to students' written work and practical projects. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is evident and is one of the reasons students give for choosing particular subjects. For example, in music, teachers' practical skills in music technology extract a good response from students.

34. Teachers know their students and capabilities well. Because of this, students trust their judgements. Fruitful discussion about predicted grades and where they might lead form a sound basis from which students can plan their future. In all, teachers challenge students and inspire them to exploit and articulate their opinions. Consequently, students learn to value the opinions of others and to modify their own in the light of reasoned argument. In doing so, they develop into mature young people who are well prepared for the next phase in their life.

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

35. The curricular provision is very good in Years 7-11. Statutory requirements are met except in that some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have sufficient experience in developing their skills in ICT.

36. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. The time allocations match those usually found with the exception of that for religious education in Years 10 and 11. This is insufficient to allow for full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

37. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, dance, drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Years 8 and 9 almost two thirds of pupils take German as well as French. Pupils are keen to participate in the extra German lesson that takes place once a week before school. This accelerates progress in this second language.

38. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of pupils study nine GCSE subjects including English literature, a modern foreign language and the double science award. There are few vocational courses. However, pupils select three subjects from a very wide range of 18 courses including six design and technology subjects and two art and design subjects. Parents feel that their children have ample choice within the option structure. This very well organised system enables all pupils to study a range of subjects suited to their needs and aspirations. They receive very good advice to follow a broad curriculum. Another very successful feature of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the alternative provision of 'On-Track' and Life skills courses for the few pupils who are not inspired by the main curriculum. The courses are accredited through a national award and pupils have the opportunity of extended work experience. The school is planning to expand this provision.

39. Careers education is good but the time allocated in the curriculum is barely adequate. It leaves little opportunity for extended discussion. Work experience in Year 10 is a strong feature of the programme and local employers support the school very well. A small team of specialists and form tutors teach careers education and in the lessons sampled during inspection teaching was good. Relevant training and resources are provided for careers teachers but placements in industry, to keep up to date with current practices, have not yet been arranged. A careers advisory service supports the department and careers advice interviews are provided mainly on a selective basis. Although all pupils can apply for an interview with the adviser not all choose to do so. The department is well resourced with literature and software applications.

40. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. For example, the extension opportunities provided for gifted and talented pupils are open to all and specific arrangements are made to ensure that disabled pupils are included in extra-curricular activities.

41. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers know their pupils well and the school offers a broad range of curricular opportunities for those requiring extra help. The organisation of classes in subjects such as English, mathematics and science enables pupils to be taught in groups that are smaller than usual so they can benefit from well-focused support. Younger pupils gain in confidence and reading fluency through the paired reading programme. Study sessions allow the very small number of pupils who do not take French at GCSE to concentrate on improving their skills in English. However, opportunities for small group withdrawal classes are limited because the special educational needs co-ordinator has other specialist teaching responsibilities, and because the learning support room is used on a regular basis for other classes. Pupils moving from one stage of education to another are given good support and advice, for instance in settling into a new school in Year 7, and in choosing suitable subjects for GCSE and for further education.

42. The school's provision for its gifted and talented pupils is very good and is much appreciated by parents. The wide scope of the programme enables pupils to work together creatively and explore new areas of learning. The programme is carefully planned for mixed age groups in order to develop pupils' social skills, and pupils have responded enthusiastically to the various challenges devised by subject departments. Activities have included putting together a competition quiz for each year in the school, using ICT, and working in groups of three to produce an original piece of music. Pupils also take part in national competitions such as the science award sponsored by a local based company.

43. Elements of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills have been successfully incorporated into the teaching and learning programme in all subjects. The effects are clearly evident in the quality of pupils' spoken and written work.

44. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities and almost all pupils take part. Parents are especially pleased with this provision. Pupils appreciate the time teachers give to these activities and this work does much to extend their learning experiences. This provision has some outstanding features. The contribution of the performing arts subjects is excellent. There are many concerts, performances, theatre visits and workshops run by professional artists. A recent production of 'Grease' was highly successful and attracted large audiences. There is an extensive range of overseas residential experiences for pupils in all years during which, for example, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of languages, history and art. The library effectively supports special events such as the 'Science Week'. It is readily accessible and used throughout the day and after school to support pupils' learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular sports and participation rates are high. Those who attend are very committed and pupils have gained success in the national trampolining championship.

45. The pastoral curriculum (PSHE) is very well planned and includes drugs, sex and relationships education as well as many aspects of citizenship. Citizenship is a very recent addition to the curriculum. The programme of study has been thoughtfully planned to provide opportunities for pupils to consider their responsibilities and rights within local, national and international communities. The majority of form tutors are confident with the content of the PSHE course and the methods of teaching. They are provided with regular training and are involved in evaluating and revising the flexible programme. Parents and pupils have also been involved in planning the content and writing the statutory policies that have been adopted by the governors. The subject is well supported by visiting speakers who make a significant input. For example, in Year 10 a day is given to health education with numerous workshops and presentations. The workshop on mental health provided by Year 13 drama students was especially powerful and moving. The whole programme was very popular and successful. Other excellent features include residential experiences for all pupils in Years 7 and 9 and the 'Peer Education Project' in Year 8. Overall, the provision for PSHE is very good.

46. Links with other institutions are very good. Although inspectors did not consult with partner primary schools, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the transition arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7. The school is engaged in good liaison with these schools and curricular bridging projects are well

developed. Regular meetings take place and all the schools in the local group are currently examining how academic assessment is managed in their respective schools.

47. The school has established very good relationships with institutions of higher education and they contribute well to students making informed choices about the next stage of their education. Links are good with colleges of further education and some pupils attend them for alternative vocational experiences. A college uses the school's premises for some adult courses. Organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and South East Cheshire Enterprise are involved with the school, for example, to support business studies. Some departments have developed useful links, for example mathematics, with a university to research the use of interactive whiteboards.

48. The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Many subject departments supplement lessons with field trips to places of interest and various establishments related to pupils' studies. Business and community organisations support the school very well. They include several health services, for example to support year group health days, theatre and religious groups and a road safety organisation. Numerous employers provide work experience and sponsorships. Outdoor adventure residential experiences play a very important part in the schools provision for pupils' personal development. Trips and exchanges abroad contribute very much to language skills, cultural awareness and pupils' independence. The school takes advantage of many competitions including Maths Challenge, Young Inventor and Future Chef. A variety of visiting speakers, such as a trade union representative and authors, share their expertise and experience with the pupils.

Sixth form

49. The sixth form curriculum in this relatively new sixth form is at an early stage of development. The first objective, the establishment of a wide range of academic subjects, has been achieved. In addition to the traditional subjects, students can study law as a remote learning option through video conferencing, and music technology. Given that some students who are recruited onto AS and A2-level courses have achieved modest grades at GCSE, it is not unexpected that they find the work in academic subjects particularly challenging and sometimes struggle to achieve an acceptable standard. The lack of alternative vocational courses, other than at Advanced level, makes it difficult to offer such students other more suitable pathways to success.

50. Students feel that there are insufficient opportunities to widen their horizons through enrichment activities and inspectors agree that more could be done. What is on offer is of good quality, especially the Peer Education Programme and the programme of visiting speakers during tutorial time. However, these and other timetabled activities are not promoted enough and there is insufficient variety or choice. Wednesday afternoons have been set aside for students to participate in enrichment activities but few do so.

51. Students have an open list of academic subjects to choose from and are not restricted to choices from pre-determined groups of subjects. Having allowed students to choose their subjects in this way, every effort is made to timetable groups so that students can study the subjects of their choice. This is a commendably flexible system that so far has worked well. Most students take four subjects to AS level and then continue with at least three subjects up to A2 level.

52. There is an excellent induction process at the start of Year 12. Although there are no entry qualifications, every potential student is interviewed by a senior teacher to ensure that the student's aspirations can be met. A three-day residential experience develops a sense of community and purpose and is particularly valued by students transferring to the sixth form from other institutions. This purposeful and well-planned initiation into the sixth form ensures that very few students who start in Year 12 drop out.

53. Students meet with their tutor for one hour each week, apart from registrations. This time is set aside principally for students' personal, social and health education but little takes place. These tutor periods are used for sixth form assemblies, usually with an outside speaker, and whilst these talks are interesting

and informative, they do not add up to a cohesive and comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education.

54. There are no key skills or general studies lessons but programmes are provided for students' own independent study and students can gain qualifications in both key skills and in general studies. Groups of students from any subject can form a Young Enterprise Team, a valuable initiative supported through local business sponsorship.

55. The statutory requirement to provide religious education and a daily act of collective worship is not met and this aspect of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

56. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school is very good. Many departments are actively planning for this though some have yet to formally include it in their schemes of work.

57. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies are used as opportunities for pupils and staff to share and celebrate their beliefs, experiences and successes, and to promote and develop the school's sense of community. However, there is not always time for silent personal reflection and tutor periods are not used for form assemblies. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for collective worship. Spiritual development is promoted through many different activities and curriculum areas, for example, in the production of a booklet by the religious education department in which pupils and staff contributed words of wisdom and shared their aspirations. Very obvious in displays and discussion with pupils is the sheer enjoyment and development of aesthetic appreciation experienced in music, art and drama.

58. The school's provision for moral education is very good. Pupils respond positively in their work and behaviour to teachers' high expectations. Unacceptable behaviour is always challenged and dealt with. Pupils are taught to treat the school resources with care and to respect property. They satisfactorily learn about the differences between right and wrong in assemblies, tutor periods and the daily routines of school life. Moral issues are explored in the very effective programme of personal, social and health education. Most subjects within the curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to learn about controversial issues and develop their own views. Good examples are discussions about the morality of war and capital punishment in English lessons, the study of aspects of slavery, of racism and religious conflict in history, of issues of fair trade in geography and of medical ethics in biology.

59. Provision for social development is excellent. Pupils develop sensitivity, self-esteem and self-awareness in their dealings with others. An outstanding example is the Peer Education Project in which a team of sixth form students manage and run a project to provide lessons and individual support, including counselling, for younger pupils on many aspects of personal and health education. There are plans to extend this into local primary schools. The 'paired' reading programme is very successful, as are group projects in art, drama and musical performances. Innumerable sporting activities are available to pupils, all of which help them learn how to work collectively. Good support for exchange visits organised by the modern languages department promotes pupils' understanding of international matters and ways of life in the European community.

60. The school makes very good provision for cultural development. In addition to enlarging and enriching knowledge of their own culture, the school offers many opportunities for pupils to experience and understand others. All pupils visit Sikh and Hindu temples and a Mosque. They study the poems, art and music of other cultures as well as their contribution to the development of scientific thought. The art department provides for a very wide range of visits to galleries in London, New York and Florence, which inspire pupils with new ideas. Visitors, such as practising artists, also make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' cultural awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good. The monitoring and support for pupils' academic and personal development are good. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are very good. Parents are pleased with the quality of care provided.

62. Child protection procedures are appropriately in place and health and safety matters are very well managed. Arrangements for first aid are good and specialist agencies provide supportive welfare services to the school. All members of staff, and especially the pastoral team, go to considerable lengths to meet the personal needs of pupils. Relationships between adults and pupils are constructive and cordial. A sense of community prevails in which pupils feel valued and safe. Parents are contacted promptly in the event of significant concerns. The school makes excellent arrangements to ensure that the transition from primary schools is as smooth as possible and that pupils integrate quickly and confidently into the school.

63. The school adopts the best method of promoting good attendance, that is by providing very good teaching and activities that are stimulating so that pupils enjoy school and want to attend. Good attendance is effectively recognised and celebrated. Attendance is monitored well over time but the school is not able to react as quickly in the afternoon, as it can in the morning, to any absence because it registers the pupils in teaching groups as opposed to form groups. Consequently, form tutors are not so immediately aware of afternoon absence if they need to follow up missing pupils.

64. Almost all teachers manage the behaviour of pupils very well. This is because most of the teaching thoroughly engages the pupils so that misbehaviour in lessons occurs only occasionally. Effective strategies are implemented to deal with instances that occur. The school applies temporary exclusion, usually for one or two days, to pupils who persistently defy or verbally abuse others. In the majority of cases the measure deters recurrence. Where appropriate, the school involves parents and monitors pupils' subsequent conduct. The strength of relationships in school and pupils' moral and social attitudes minimise anti-social behaviour. Pupils are confident to report most anti-social incidents. Older pupils operate a one-to-one surgery at lunchtimes to support pupils who have difficulties in coping with situations.

65. The care of pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school. The arrangements for identifying pupils in need of extra help and monitoring their development are very good. Pupils' progress in improving standards of work, behaviour and attendance is monitored on a regular basis by both teaching and support staff. A particular strength of the monitoring procedure is the programme of regular reviews of pupils' progress carried out by the 'link' committee, which includes representatives from each subject department. The quality of the learning support is very good and the work of the support assistants is much valued in the school. Classroom assistants are founts of knowledge as regards pupils' personal development, and they are successful in creating relationships based on stability and trust which give pupils the confidence to succeed. They keep daily records of pupils' progress and work closely with subject departments in the development of modified lesson materials that help pupils to cope successfully with the demands of coursework, for example in English and science. The school's very good liaison with the local specialist services ensures access to a wide range of support and advice for pupils' different needs.

66. The programme for personal, social and health education and careers contributes much to pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their work and to evaluate their own performance. The various activities in and out of school offer many social and cultural experiences. Pupils learn to represent others through the school council and initiate social events and fundraising for charitable causes. The school's merit system identifies and recognises the efforts and achievements of pupils as well as their service to others. The several residential experiences provide very good opportunities for the development of independence and interdependence.

67. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. In several subjects they are very good, particularly so for work at GCSE level. Here marking is of high quality, detailed, regular and thorough and is closely linked to the requirements of the examination. It gives details of standards achieved with helpful comments on how to improve. Teachers' comments on pupils' work are positive and encouraging. Pupils' work is well assessed in Years 7-9 but they do not know the National Curriculum levels in all subjects. Assessment procedures at this level, whilst good in most subjects, do not match the very good quality found in higher years.

68. Pupils' progress is well monitored through careful recording of their grades which are collected using a well-developed system of the school's own devising. Overall, this friendly and manageable system is used well to help teachers to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. It has become a useful tool for teachers, many of whom seek information from it about individual pupils' progress. Information gleaned from the system is also helping teachers to plan for raising standards through better teaching and learning. The system now in place is effective from Year 9 onwards. It is less effective for lower year groups. Several subject areas recognise that this is an area for further development.

Sixth form

Assessment

69. Assessment in the sixth form is good and a great strength in science, geography, business studies and English. Students are assessed regularly according to the requirements of the examinations. Individual strengths and weaknesses are the focus of one-to-one tutorials with teachers in design technology, where coursework is thoroughly examined on a regular basis. Marking is a strength in all subjects at this level and students have detailed written feedback with advice on how to improve. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Useful data is kept on all students' progress and the standards they are achieving. As in the main school, assessment information is used well overall to maintain momentum in students' progress.

Advice, support and guidance

70. Educational and personal support and guidance for students are good. The monitoring of attendance is not sufficiently rigorous.

71. Students are provided with good information about life in the sixth form and the courses available. This is supplemented by impartial and helpful advice. The induction process is very effective and includes an initial residential experience that promotes a team spirit and positive attitudes to sixth form studies. Students declare that this gives them an excellent start.

72. Tutors provide relevant support and guidance to students about their work and are available for consultation when needed. Frequent feedback from their tutors provides students with a clear focus for improvement and informs them about progress towards their targeted results. Alternative arrangements are almost always amicably made if a student realises that a course is inappropriate. Students feel well informed about and prepared for higher education; and are assisted with their applications. Those following other routes sometimes need more help at an earlier stage when considering career opportunities beyond the sixth form.

73. Students and parents confirm that the sixth form staff are very sensitive to their needs and provides very good support regarding personal matters. Attendance is not monitored with sufficient accuracy and the procedures are not rigorous enough to ensure that the whereabouts of students are known at all times.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

74. Parents think well of the school and express considerable confidence in it. The partnership between school and parents is good. It contributes well to the standards achieved and maintained in the school. Relationships are strong.

75. Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education that is provided and with the academic and personal progress that their children make. They believe the school is well managed. It is very approachable and many parents comment on how promptly the school responds to their concerns. Some parents are not happy with the amount of homework set but inspectors find that homework is set appropriately in most subjects and it usefully supplements lessons and contributes to pupils' independence. A number of parents feel that they are not well enough informed about their children's progress. Inspectors consider that opportunities for parents to be informed are very good and annual school reports are very well prepared. A minority of parents suggest that the school could work more closely with them but inspectors believe that the school is keen to involve them and does so in numerous ways.

76. The school has a very good partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Most parents contribute towards their children's annual and transitional reviews and they are very supportive of their children's efforts in improving work and behaviour. Parents are also very appreciative of the close contact with the special needs department and the different ways in which the school helps their children to make progress.

77. Parents are consulted about most of the major developments in school and some have been involved in working parties. Some parents take part in lessons from time to time. The business studies department values the contribution of parents who offer their services by sharing something of their vocational expertise and experiences with pupils. Many parents take part in a shared reading scheme, providing good individual support for pupils who need regular practice to improve their skills. Parents' attendance at consultation meetings and other events is very good. Parents, with their children, are invited to attend meetings to consider subject options and post-16 education. They support their children very well when they participate in productions, sport and various activities. Parents are welcomed in the school. The school successfully engages their co-operation in strategies to support their own children, for example with regard to attendance. The school's website and a regular newsletter are good sources of information.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The school has made good progress since reorganisation in establishing Eaton Bank as an effective and enterprising secondary school. It provides a high quality of education due to very good leadership and management and the dedicated commitment of teaching and non-teaching staff. Together they drive the school forward, constantly seeking new ways to provide for the ever-changing needs of pupils and students. The school was very successfully managed by two deputy headteachers last term until the current headteacher took up appointment in January 2003. They maintained the momentum for putting in place policies, assessing the relevance of the curriculum and evaluating performance against pre-determined criteria. The flexible approach to incorporating modifications in the curriculum and pastoral systems is clearly evident. In the first year of the school's existence, 2000/01, it operated on two sites whilst building progressed on the current site. The maintenance of above average standards during this period of change is the result of good management and the determination of staff to ensure the success of the new school.

79. The leadership team has established a very good ethos for learning. There are high expectations of effort and achievement. The vision and aims for the school were shared with staff at an early stage. Prior to the school's opening all staff had the opportunity to attend a residential course to get to know each other and share in the formulation of policies and practices. The team spirit and loyalty to the school is clearly evident in discussion with staff and pupils. All aspects of the school's work are monitored systematically and there is a good system of performance management. Arrangements for the induction of new teachers, and teachers' professional development are good. The latter is closely aligned to priorities in the school's overall strategic plan. Managers with curriculum and other responsibilities have worked hard to ensure that their department's work reflects the aspirations of the reorganised school. Apart from ICT, where the management is satisfactory, the leadership and management of curriculum and pastoral areas are at least good, and often better.

80. Management of special educational needs is very good. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively as a team. The provision for gifted and talented pupils, for which the special needs department has responsibility, is also very well managed. The well-established links between the special needs department and the subject departments ensure a whole school approach so that pupils' needs are quickly identified and progress is carefully monitored. Statutory requirements in respect of the provision for pupils with statements of special educational need are met. The school has made good progress in implementing the requirements of the revised Code of Practice with the result that teachers, pupils and parents make a well-informed contribution to the targets on pupils' individual education plans. The main area for development relates to improving the provision by making the well-equipped learning support room fully available for use for its designated purpose, thus enabling staff to work with small groups of pupils.

81. The governing body is active and very effective in carrying out its responsibilities, although it does not fully provide for ICT in Years 10 and 11, religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship. Governors have been deeply involved in the setting up of the new school since its inception. Since then, much of their time has been spent in managing the transition period and monitoring performance, whilst simultaneously working on a strategic plan for the future. They give good consideration to local and national initiatives, particularly to new routes of learning through the use of advanced technology. The governors and senior staff work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value through comparison of costs and consultation with stakeholders such as parents, local primary schools and further education establishments.

82. The school is efficient; its finances are well managed. It is meeting its commitment to the staged repayment of the deficit resulting from reorganisation, mainly from the high cost of staffing during the period when the school operated on two sites. Monies are spent prudently and thoughtfully to provide equally for pupils and students of all abilities. Administration runs smoothly contributing to the school's effectiveness. Technical and education support staff make a strong contribution to the quality of education provided. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the requirements of the curriculum.

83. The school buildings are extensive and provide well for the varied curriculum on offer. The accommodation and surroundings are well maintained and pupils are encouraged to respect the property. Interesting displays of pupils' work add to the attractiveness in corridors and subject areas. Resources are adequate to meet pupils' needs; the learning resource centre is attractive and inviting and is a hub of activity within the school's provision.

84. The school has been successfully led through its first two years and there is good capacity and will for further development. Taking into account the standards achieved, the very good quality of provision, the expenditure per pupil and the staged repayment of the deficit, the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

85. After only two years of operation the sixth form is already a very effective, successful and thriving enterprise. From the outset there has been clear direction for the development of the sixth form and the decision to establish, as a priority, a strong base of successful academic A-level courses has paid off.

86. The rationale for entry to the sixth form has been carefully thought through and the open entry policy currently in place is working well, to the benefit of both students and school. There is rigorous evaluation of what students achieve, through a detailed value-added analysis of results, and targets are set for every student in every subject.

87. Very good procedures are in place for the evaluation and development of teaching. Leadership and management are good and there is clear view of the strengths and areas for improvement in the sixth form. Despite the sixth form's clear strengths, the school is not complacent and there is a determination by all senior managers, including governors, to improve all aspects of sixth form provision even further. Foremost in the areas targeted for improvement is the development of the curriculum to meet the needs and aspirations of current students and future recruits. The monitoring of attendance needs to be more rigorous so that the school knows, at any given time, which students are on site.

Resources

88. This is a cost-effective sixth form. Resources for sixth form students are good. Where courses require specialist resources and facilities, these are generally available. However, in the sixth form, social areas and facilities for private study are limited. This is partly due to the school's own success in attracting a substantial number of students. The school is aware of students' needs and is seeking ways of meeting them. Students have good access to up-to-date reference texts and computers. There is easy access to ICT resources in the learning resource centre and the sixth form study centre, both of which are accessible during school time and after school. In product design, students have insufficient access to computer-aided design and manufacturing software and are unable to develop their independent learning skills to the full.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. In order to consolidate the good start to this recently reorganised school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve the provision for information and communication technology within the context of the four-year strategic development plan by:
 - meeting the statutory requirement to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology to all pupils in Years 10 and 11,
 - resolving staffing issues through the establishment of a clear management structure with permanent leadership.

(Paragraphs 35, 162, 166, 230)

- (2) Raise the quality of the satisfactory teaching to that of the best by ensuring that teachers in all subject departments work together as a team and share the best practices.

(Paragraphs 25, 26, 30, 165, 228)

- (3) Provide more opportunities for pupils and students to study vocational subjects in Years 10 -13.

(Paragraphs 38, 49)

Sixth form

- (1) Extend the breadth of the curriculum by:

- widening the range of vocational courses available,
- providing for religious education and student's personal development.

(Paragraphs 49, 53, 55)

(2) Make better provision for, and encourage students' involvement in, enrichment activities.

(Paragraphs 23, 50)

(3) Review the procedures for providing advice on careers through external agencies to ensure that all students have the relevant information at a sufficiently early stage in their planning for the future.

(Paragraphs 72)

(4) Improve the procedures for monitoring attendance to ensure that the school knows which students are on site at all times.

(Paragraphs 70, 73, 87)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	127
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7– 11							
Number	6	38	60	22	0	1	0
Percentage	5	30	47	17	0	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	28	24	5	0	0	0
Percentage	7	46	39	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 pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	883	228
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	82	4

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	104	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.8

School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	81	85	166

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	62	63
	Girls	65	61	61
	Total	123	123	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (59)	74 (79)	75 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (21)	57 (52)	43 (49)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	62	61
	Girls	68	66	65
	Total	122	128	126
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (68)	77 (87)	76 (74)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (39)	58 (61)	41 (43)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	93	87	180

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	57	84	89
	Girls	63	85	86
	Total	120	169	175
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	67 (67)	94 (97)	97 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	47.4 (46.5)

per pupil	National	39.8 (39.0)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	40	63	103
	Average point score per candidate	18.3 (15.1)	16.1 (17.3)	17.0 (16.2)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	40	61	101	0	6	6
	Average point score per candidate	18.3	16.0	16.9	-	5.6	5.6
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

**National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

Ethnic background of pupils

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	1097	78	1
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	0		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0		
Mixed – White and Black African	0		
Mixed – White and Asian	0		
Mixed – any other mixed background	0		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	1	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	0		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	2		
No ethnic group recorded	0		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	470

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	20.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3129105
Total expenditure	3267774
Expenditure per pupil	2918
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-138669

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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

1111

Number of questionnaires returned

99

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39.2	48.1	8.9	2.5	1.3
My child is making good progress in school.	40.6	54.3	5.1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22.8	54.3	7.7	2.5	12.7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20.3	50.6	17.7	10.1	1.3
The teaching is good.	27.9	64.5	2.5	1.3	3.8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41.8	39.2	15.2	2.5	1.3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62.0	35.4	0	1.3	1.3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59.5	38.5	2.5	0	2.5
The school works closely with parents.	35.5	44.2	16.5	1.3	2.5
The school is well led and managed.	34.2	53.2	2.5	0	10.1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39.2	46.8	11.4	1.3	1.3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39.2	44.3	7.6	0	8.9

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average and the level of achievement is very good. Girls' literature results in 2002 were outstanding.
- Teachers' expertise in the subject and high expectations result in highly effective and motivated learning.
- The subject matter and learning methods make a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- There is a very strong team ethos and a commitment to improve learning further.

Areas for improvement

- More use could be made of information gained from assessment procedures in Years 7-9.
- The planning for teaching English in Years 7-9 is incomplete.

90. The pupils enter the school with secure average standards in English. They attain well above average standards by the end of both Years 9 and 11 because of very good teaching and learning. Their achievement is very good.

91. In the 2002 national tests for fourteen year olds the pupils' results were well above both the national average and the average for pupils from similar backgrounds. There was no significant difference in the relative standards of boys and girls. Nearly half the pupils achieved the higher Level 6 or better: nearly one fifth were at the very high Level 7. Results were significantly better than the below average results of 2001, although the 2001 results need to be treated with caution. A sample of the pupils' scripts resulted in a higher mark for most pupils.

92. In the 2002 GCSE English language examination, results at grades A*-C were well above the national average. Girls did better than boys even though the boys' results were significantly better than those of boys nationally. In English literature, the A*-C grades were significantly above average: more than eighty per cent achieved these higher grades – twenty per cent higher than the national figure despite the school entering a significantly higher proportion of its pupils. All the girls in Year 11 were entered for the examination and over ninety per cent gained grade C or better: an outstanding performance.

93. In both the current Years 9 and 11, standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are well above average. In Year 9, about four out of every five pupils reach the standards expected for their age and more than half are attaining above or well above average standards. Higher attaining pupils are fluent speakers. When discussing irony in 'Macbeth' they understood and then explained complex ideas with maturity and clarity. Perceptive readers, they closely analysed a challenging text, noting Shakespeare's deliberate irony and ambiguity. Their writing about life in the First World War was extremely accurate: its precise and descriptive vocabulary highly powerful. Middle attaining pupils also speak fluently in class. They also analyse texts but without the degree of detail of the higher attaining pupils. Their writing is well-organised into clear paragraphs and generally accurate in spelling and punctuation. Although other pupils are broadly average in their speaking and listening their reading and writing skills are below average. They can describe features of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers but are less secure in commenting on the impact of the features. Their writing lacks the consistent accuracy of most pupils.

94. In Year 11 about seven out of ten pupils are working at the standards associated with grade C or better. The highest attaining pupils eloquently discussed the potential tragic merit in 'Of Mice and Men'. Their perceptive critical responses to the dramatic impact of Act 3 Scene 1 in 'Romeo and Juliet' were models of high quality discursive writing. The course work of most middle attaining pupils shows them to be assured in writing well-organised, mainly accurate lengthy assignments. They do not have the range of vocabulary of the highest attaining pupils but when discussing two contrasting translations of a Russian poem were effective speakers, able to convey articulate responses to new ideas. Lower attaining pupils are less assured in forming judgements about texts. When discussing the cultural features of 'Presents from My Aunt in Pakistan' they depended on the teacher's skilful prompting to identify relevant points. They write with clarity but lack the accuracy and range of mature expression of other pupils.

95. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Teachers are fully informed about the nature of the pupils' needs and adjust their methods and materials appropriately. Pupils with the most significant learning difficulties receive well-focused teaching that enables them to, for example, clarify the sequence of the narrative of a text. Pupils with English as an additional language also achieve very well. Most of them speak and write English with a satisfactory level of fluency when they join the school. Those who need additional support are very well motivated and progress quickly because of the good support they receive from their teachers and specialist help provided by the local education authority.

96. Teaching and learning are very good and at the heart of the pupils' very good progress over time. All English teachers are specialists in their field. Their enthusiasm for their subject motivates the pupils. Their high expectations about the quantity and quality of the pupils' work result in hard working responses. The teachers also have high expectations of themselves. They put all their expertise into lesson planning which helps pupils to learn effectively and with interest. Teachers are clear about what pupils are to learn and identify relevant activities. These qualities have a dramatic impact on learning. Pupils are constantly challenged to think for themselves through interactive class discussion, group work or individual response. Methods match the pupils' abilities. The 'hot-house' learning environment provided by shared analysis of a passage from 'Macbeth' was very well suited to the intellectual needs of Year 9 higher attaining pupils. Alternatively, middle and lower attaining Year 9 pupils benefited from a different approach when looking at the historical context of Shakespeare's plays and theatre. A rapid succession of activities fired their interest, built progressively on previous learning, and enhanced their knowledge and understanding. It was notable that each pupil had arrived well prepared for the lesson because of independent research.

97. Marking in Years 10 and 11 is very strong and there are some examples of very good practice in Years 7-9. There is, however, a lack of consistency in procedures in the latter. It was notable that some pupils did not know their current or potential levels of attainment. Better use could be made of assessment information for setting targets and monitoring the pupils' progress. Pupils were not always clear about the skills they needed to consolidate and those to develop. Opportunities for the use of ICT are also inconsistent and not planned on a progressively challenging continuum.

98. This is a very strong department. The improvement of learning is at its core. Leadership and management are very good. The teachers are committed to further improvement. Self-evaluation is rigorous. The material studied and the learning methods make a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development and their awareness of the world and human behaviour. The leadership has correctly identified the need to introduce consistent procedures into the scheme of work in Years 7-9. The incorporation of methods to improve the spelling of the lower and some middle attaining pupils would be beneficial.

Drama

99. Drama is a significant part of the school's provision and one from which the pupils derive considerable benefits. In the 2002 GCSE examinations standards were broadly average, although the

entry rate was significantly above the national figure. The proportion attaining grades A*-A was above the national average.

100. During the inspection the standards seen in lessons in Years 8 and 9 were above average. In the Year 11 GCSE group, standards are average. This represents very good achievement given the wide range of ability and experience in the group at the start of the course.

101. Teaching is excellent and dynamic, characterised by a strong emphasis on developing performance techniques whilst retaining a clear focus on personal development. The fast pace of lessons and the very good progress are outcomes of teachers' great commitment and enthusiasm as well as considerable subject expertise. As one inspector wrote about a Year 8 lesson: 'The teacher put her all into this lesson and the pupils did the same'. Very good use of the excellent facilities in the drama studio helps to lift the pupils' performance. Teamwork and mutual respect were prominent features of all the lessons observed. Pupils are successfully coached on how to give and take constructive criticism.

102. In addition the subject plays a prominent role in extra curricular activities though clubs, performances, visits to theatres and visits into school from performance groups and actors. Leadership of the department is very good, full of energy and aspiration.

Key skills across the curriculum - Literacy

103. The school makes good provision for the development of literacy skills. The learning resource centre makes a good contribution to the enhancement of pupils' reading. The centre is attractive and inviting with good quality resources. Additional events such as book weeks promote the pupils' interests. The manager has good contacts with subject heads and arranges for texts to be available to support study. The amount of books in the library is below the recommended level but the quality is good.

104. The school has previously carried out some worthwhile training on speaking and listening and on reading. Currently, the main focus is on reading. A 'Reading Discovery' scheme has recently been initiated which makes very good use of the library with Year 7 English pupils. There are plans to develop this further. The school has also introduced 'catch up' materials to help those who arrive at secondary school behind most pupils in reading and writing. The school needs to ensure that all pupils who will benefit from this provision have access to it. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support for their reading and writing needs.

105. The enhancement of technical vocabulary is good with some very good practice in history, religious education and geography. It is a constant point of reference in history and business education. Terms such as atheist, theist and agnostic are prominently displayed and referred to in religious education. Elsewhere there is good practice in geography, physical education, ICT, design technology, mathematics, science and art.

106. The development of reading is uneven. Good practice occurs in science and design and technology where pupils often read aloud from sheets and text books and use texts with differing reading difficulty. In geography, pupils apply their reading skills well when researching for field-work. Elsewhere, the promotion of reading skills is satisfactory.

107. There is little evidence of the explicit development of writing skills in ICT. Otherwise practice is good overall and very good in geography where pupils write in a wide range of genres including news reports, persuasive article and poetic forms to convey difficult working conditions. Examples of good writing enhance the work of pupils in business education and history. In physical education teachers use good models of writing from commercial sources to guide effectively the pupils' course work. There are good opportunities to write up mathematical process in mathematics though investigations.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good.
- Teaching is good.
- Management and organisation are good.

Areas for improvement

- Learning is constrained by a few pupils' restlessness in a minority of lessons.
- A small number of pupils in several year groups are underachieving.

108. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average, and similar to those of 2001. They were well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds and represented good progress from Year 7. Proportions of pupils achieving levels five and six in the national tests were above average and well above average respectively. There was little difference between boys and girls as was the case nationally.

109. GCSE results in 2002 were above average and represented good progress in Years 10 and 11. However, girls did considerably better than boys whereas nationally there was little difference. Results were well above average in the range A*-C but broadly average in the range A*-G.

110. Current standards are above average in Year 9. This represents good achievement because pupils' attainment on entry to the school was only just above average. Pupils' standards in mental and written arithmetic are well above average and support their work in algebra, geometry and statistics well. Investigative work is of good quality. Higher attaining pupils can work out the volume and surface area of cylinders and have little difficulty in solving linear simultaneous equations. Average pupils are competent with questions involving squares and square roots of whole numbers and decimals. They understand the effect of multiplying and dividing by numbers greater or smaller than one. Even the lowest attaining pupils handle questions involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers with reasonable competence. Pupils in Year 10 have made particularly good progress in only one term. They are building quickly on the good foundation of their work in Years 7 to 9.

111. Standards are above average in Year 11. Achievement is generally good because these pupils' attainment was broadly average at the beginning of Year 7. These above average standards result from teaching that is usually effective in enabling pupils to master the GCSE topics that they study. Above average standards in arithmetic support the pupils' learning in algebra, geometry, trigonometry and statistics. GCSE coursework is of good quality. The highest attaining pupils understand algebraic fractions and how to solve quadratic equations by factorisation and with the use of the formula. They are moving confidently towards GCSE grades A* and A. Some of the average pupils are relatively confident with topics involving the interdependence of fractions, decimals and percentages and have a reasonable grasp of the algebra connected with simultaneous equations and the removal of brackets. Their work is consistent with GCSE grades B and C. Some average ability pupils have adopted a rather casual attitude and are underachieving. They are producing work consistent only with D and E grades when they are fully capable of better.

112. Most of the pupils in the lower ability groups are doing well. They have developed reasonable numerical skills and their work is consistent with GCSE grades F and G. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school because they are taught well. Many begin their studies of mathematics in Year 7 with a fairly feeble grasp of addition, subtraction, multiplication and

division of whole numbers yet by Year 11 they are able to access GCSE at the lowest grades with success.

113. Pupils' attitudes to their work in mathematics are good overall throughout the school and have a positive effect on their learning. Consequently, the learning atmosphere in most classrooms is good or very good. Pupils usually listen well, concentrate, try hard and ask for help in a mature manner. Nevertheless, there are a few pupils in several year groups who distract others during lessons and slow the pace of learning for the majority in some classes.

114. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 11. They are good or very good in over half of all lessons. Generally, teachers prepare pupils well for the national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE in Year 11. This strong overall quality of teaching enables pupils of all levels of attainment to make good progress. Teachers pay particular attention to the development of pupils' numerical skills, both mental and written, to enable them to work quickly through examples in all areas of the subject. There is also good attention given to investigative work, providing opportunities for varying avenues of enquiry and the testing of hypotheses. Work is often very challenging and expectations are normally high.

115. In the best lessons, teachers manage their classes very well and there is a real sense of urgency. Planning is very good and the sequencing of an interesting variety of activities, often including ICT, maintains pupils interest so that they utilise lesson time fully. Careful questioning identifies areas that need further emphasis to ensure that the pupils master them fully. Classroom assistants work very effectively in special needs classes, providing good individual help to pupils so that they can experience success. In the least effective lessons, there is too much talk and explanation from the teacher, leaving the pupils with insufficient time to fully practise and consolidate what they have been learning. Sometimes there is insufficient variety of approach causing pupils to become restless and slow the rate of learning.

116. The management and organisation of mathematics are good. The head of department leads by example in the classroom and has very positive presence around the subject base, supporting staff well when they need help. Staff morale is good and teachers are particularly keen to play their part in ensuring that pupils reach their potential. In this respect, the number of extra classes after lessons is impressive and greatly supports the learning of large numbers of pupils. A bridging course, linking Years 6 and 7, helps to ensure continuity of learning as pupils transfer to their new school. The National Strategy for Key Stage 3 has been incorporated well into the work of the school and has had an impact upon the quality of teaching and learning. Arrangements for assessment are good but they need to be applied more consistently by all teachers. When used well, they are clear about the standards being achieved and show pupils exactly what they need to do to improve. In order to improve provision further, some teachers need to use more variety of approach and the small number of pupils who are restless and underachieving need to be challenged effectively.

Key skills across the curriculum - Numeracy

117. There are growing links between the mathematics department and other subjects in the school, enabling pupils to be presented with common methods of working in arithmetic, algebra and data handling. These links are particularly strong in physical education and science where pupils benefit from particularly good liaison with mathematics. Pupils' numerical skills and competence in mathematics are developed strongly between Years 7 and 11 so they encounter very few problems in using and applying them across the curriculum. Graphs, numerical work, and the use of algebraic formulae in science pose no real difficulties for most pupils. The same applies to measurement, units and the use of scale in design and technology. Equally, few difficulties are encountered in geography with the interpretation of graphs, charts and data.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well and standards are well above average.
- GCSE results are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good. All staff contribute to successful teamwork in the department.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in lessons.
- Some lessons could be improved further through a sharper focus on what pupils are to learn.

118. The schools' results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average. They were well above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. There was no significant difference overall in the results of boys and girls.

119. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average both in terms of A*-C and A*-G grades. Girls did better than boys in line with the national trend. Significantly both boys and girls did much better in their science GCSE than in many of their other subjects.

120. Standards are well above average in Year 9. Achievement is very good as a direct result of the very good teaching. For example, above average pupils understand the effect forces have on objects. They use their knowledge of physics to explain why a longer lever requires a smaller force when, for example, removing a wheel nut. Average pupils have a good understanding of biology, such as when they explain the mechanisms behind variation in organisms and how this affects population growth. Below average pupils steadily improve their understanding of scientific concepts but they sometimes struggle with the chemical reactions involved. All pupils are improving their experimental skills in science. They successfully plan and carry out experiments to test their predictions and have a very good understanding of the concept of fair testing.

121. Standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching from specialist teachers coupled with pupils' very good attitudes towards the subject. Above average pupils have a very good understanding of the chemistry of reactions such as neutralisation. They can write word and molecular equations for a great variety of reactions and can generally balance these equations. Average pupils understand concepts in biology such as immunity. They have a very good understanding of the way the body is able to defend itself from antigens by the production of antibodies. Below average pupils work hard to improve their understanding of how drugs affect health although their detailed knowledge of how this happens is somewhat limited. All pupils are developing their enquiry science skills very well due to teachers' very good focus on this aspect of the work. This contributes significantly to the grades pupils obtain in GCSE examinations.

122. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets set for them. This is because the work they do is well structured and meets their needs well. They work very well together and take a pride in the presentation of their work.

123. Pupils' attitudes to science are very good and this helps them to improve their learning. Concentration is good and pupils are able to work independently when required. For example, Year 11 pupils worked very well independently on a practical investigation designed to improve their analysis and evaluation of experimental work. Pupils enjoyed doing this type of task and this improved their motivation. Behaviour is very good and relationships are very positive.

124. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching was good and often better in almost all lessons observed. One excellent lesson was observed. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms and explain concepts and theories with clarity. This improves pupils' learning. Teaching their own subject specialisms in Years 9, 10 and 11 serves to drive standards up. Lessons are very well planned; this promotes very good learning because content is well matched to pupils' needs. The management of pupils' behaviour is also very good, particularly with lower attaining pupils, resulting in very good progress in lessons. For example in an excellent lesson on weathering with lower attaining Year 8 pupils the teacher matched the work extremely well to the pupils' capabilities giving clear explanations of chemical and physical weathering in a manner that the pupils could easily understand. This resulted in excellent progress. Very good control and discipline ensured that the pupils' attention was sustained throughout the whole lesson. A variety of approaches such as "Here's the answer, what's the question?" resulted in pupils' motivation and interest being high throughout the lesson. A weaker aspect of teaching in a few lessons was that teachers did not always focus sharply enough on the aims and outcomes of pupils' learning. Progress was then slower than it might have been. The department has very effective procedures for measuring pupils' attainment and progress. Day-to-day marking of pupils' books is good but pupils in Years 7-9 would benefit from an indication of the National Curriculum level they were achieving in their work. This would give them a better idea of their strengths and weaknesses in science.

125. Pupils gain a very good experience of wider issues in science. The curriculum is planned so that they are able to discuss, for example, ethical dilemmas such as the triple-vaccine. Pupils use ICT in their science lessons but it is not used sufficiently enough to support and extend pupils' learning in science. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good. For example, pupils investigate scientific terminology and are shown how to structure their writing to make its meaning clear and effective. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud to improve their fluency and comprehension.

126. The management and leadership of science are very good. Teachers have worked together very well to produce essential policies and schemes of work in a relatively short time. The introduction of the national strategy for science has been very well managed and is helping raise standards. The technical staff work hard and efficiently to ensure that the department functions well on a day-to-day basis. A very effective learning environment has been established since the opening of the school.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils learn well as a result.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes and motivation of a small number of boys in Years 10 and 11 could be improved.
- The pace in a small number of lessons is too slow.

127. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results were in line with the national average. More girls than boys took the examination. Boys' results were not as good as those of boys nationally. Many pupils did not do as well in art and design as they did in their other subjects.

128. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average. Pupils achievement overall is good, as their standards when they come to the school are average. They make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Higher attaining pupils have well-developed construction skills, and they

produce chalices from scrap materials such as plastic bottles and paper. These are well made and richly decorated with glitter and feathers. Average ability pupils use colour brightly and boldly, and they create painted paper constructions, which form very attractive displays, based on the work of Keith Haring. These investigate the shapes made by the human figure in motion; for example, when running and jumping. Pupils also produce large paper lanterns, decorated with leaves and twigs, which glow serenely in the twilight. Sketchbooks are not always used often enough to fully develop pupils' ideas and experiments.

129. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average. This is an improvement on recent GCSE results. This is because the accommodation has recently improved, and the subject is no longer taught in temporary classrooms. This means that the full range of activities, including printing and clay work can now be undertaken. In addition, it is now possible for pupils to work on a much larger scale. Achievement is now good. Pupils make good gains in their painting skills, and produce large abstract work on canvas, which shows a growing confidence in composition. They make interesting composite views from photographs, which shed new light on everyday scenes, such as kitchen interiors. These are informed by the work of David Hockney. Work in textiles is delicate, and higher attaining pupils use intricate needlework to represent ivy climbing a wall. In addition, pupils create large mixed-media pieces in paper, card and cloth, which are bright and bold. However, some lower attaining pupils rely too heavily on copying images, or creating patterns, and their skills in observation are not developed enough as a result.

130. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because teachers usually give good demonstrations, and materials are used vigorously. This means that all pupils can clearly see what they need to do to succeed, and can engage physically with the materials.

131. Attitudes and behaviour are good, and the great majority of pupils enjoy their art lessons and try hard to do their best. This produces good levels of interest, and good learning. However, a small number of boys in Years 10 and 11 show little motivation or interest in their work, and do not try as hard as they could. This restricts their learning to a satisfactory level.

132. Teaching and learning are good in all years. A major strength of the teaching is the vigorous use of materials, which produces busy lessons with a good pace. This was seen in a lesson where pupils were provided with a very wide range of materials, including paint, collage, silicon and plastic sheeting. They showed high levels of interest, and enjoyed physically cutting materials, spreading paint and plastic, and scoring and marking surfaces. This approach created a busy, active and confident learning atmosphere, and very good levels of engagement. Very good learning was the result. In a small number of lessons, however, methods are not as exciting, pupils begin to chat without really concentrating on what they are doing, and the pace of the lesson slows. This restricts learning to a satisfactory level.

133. Leadership and management are good. The move to the new accommodation has been well managed, and there is a clear educational direction in the work of the department. This is having a positive effect, and standards are rising. The subject also makes an excellent contribution to pupils' cultural development. The programme of visits and workshops is imaginative and exciting, and includes trips to New York, London, and Florence. Practising artists work with pupils to broaden the range of activities still further, for example, in textiles and sculpture.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The programme for citizenship is very well planned and implemented.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessing pupils' work are not yet fully implemented.
- More opportunities are needed for all pupils to be involved in demonstrating their initiative and accepting responsibility.

134. Overall, pupils throughout the school reach above average standards and achieve well in this newly implemented area of the compulsory curriculum. This is because they have an enthusiasm for learning, the overall quality of teaching is good, and the curriculum for citizenship has been very well planned and introduced into the school.

135. In Years 7 to 11, the vast majority of pupils are prepared to join in learning activities which involve them in pair and group work and, for example in a very good Year 7 lesson that examined the issue of bullying, have the confidence to explore feelings and emotions. In this, and other areas such as the contribution made by diet to a healthy lifestyle or the issue of fair trade in the global economy, pupils are developing a good understanding and sense of personal and group responsibility. At the moment, the capacity to translate this sense of responsibility and initiative into individual personal action can only be demonstrated by a relatively small proportion of pupils through, for example, membership of the School Council or involvement in the organisation of charitable activity. However, this is well understood by the school and is included in its development planning for the subject.

136. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the lessons observed during the inspection the learning was particularly good where teachers used their specialist subjects skills and knowledge to teach appropriate aspects of citizenship, for example in geography and religious education. Lesson planning makes good provision for pupils of all abilities. Relationships are good, which encourages participation. Particular teaching skills, for example in drama, were used to very good effect in a class's citizenship lesson. The teacher gave pupils the confidence to explore their emotions and feelings through a 'hot seating' strategy because she was prepared to take part in the experience as well. Occasionally, where form tutors have not previously taught parts of the citizenship curriculum, the pace of learning becomes inconsistent because teachers have to adapt their planning in response to the pupils' reactions to the particular activities.

137. The citizenship curriculum is well planned. It makes effective use of existing PSHE modules of work as well as introducing new aspects, for example, concerning rights and responsibilities in the law. Substantial contributions are also made through other National Curriculum subjects. The planning has very effectively drawn these together, carefully avoiding any overlap. A good programme of visits is included in the curriculum. For example, the Year 11 unit of work on law is backed up by a visit from the 'Street Law' group from the Chester Law School. Leadership and management are very good, reflecting the very well planned programme for teaching citizenship which owes much to the training of staff and the enthusiastic support of other subject leaders and pastoral staff. Also crucial to the successful introduction of the subject is the fact that its aims and objectives sit very well alongside the school's philosophy and its distinctly developing ethos. For example, the School Council is expected to discuss and evaluate the newly devised citizenship policy before it goes to the governing body for approval. Current strengths and weaknesses are well understood. Assessment procedures are not yet securely related to the subject's specific targets nor do they provide effective ways of gathering relevant evidence on pupils' attainment and progress.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average in Years 9 and 11. Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.

- Relationships between adults and pupils are good; they foster good attitudes towards work.
- Good use is made of assessment procedures to help pupils to reach high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use is made of ICT, including CAD/CAM.
- The consistency of format in pupils' design folders could be improved in Years 7 to 9.

138. Overall standards are above average due to pupils' positive response to good teaching and the on-going development of practices and procedures.

139. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work in Year 9 in 2002 were above the national average. Similar standards of work were seen in the present Year 9 during the inspection. From average attainment on entry in terms of design and technology experience, pupils make good progress. Practical work is usually good and the better design folders are neatly presented. Good use of planning, colour, consideration of cultural issues and modelling were seen in an information booklet on Pasta in Year 9 and a project on torch key rings in Year 8. Evidence that pupils are learning to be self-critical in assessing the quality of their work was seen in their evaluation of the final products in a Year 7 project on sandwich making. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to shallow research, initial ideas not being developed and poorer presentation, both written and graphical.

140. Overall standards of work in Year 11 are above average. Pupils achieve well. In 2002, GCSE results were above average in food technology and resistant materials and well above average in graphic products and systems and control. 'Systems and control' is a particularly strong specialism. During the inspection good work was seen in all areas. In Year 11, good research into mechanisms and user needs led to feasible designs and practice. In Year 10, work on a promotional project for young children in graphics demonstrated pupils' confidence in using ICT for research and in the production of good annotated drawings. Weaker aspects of the work in all areas are characterised by generally poorer presentational skills, limited research ideas, incomplete work and spelling errors. Overall, progress and achievement are good and the standard of practical work is good. Pupils' literacy skills are good; the use of technical language is well promoted. The use of numeracy and ICT skills is satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

141. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They usually come to lessons prepared for work and respond well. There are sometimes minor distractions during teachers' explanations or demonstrations. Most pupils, including those with learning or behavioural difficulties, integrate well and make good progress. They talk confidently about their work and enjoy the lessons.

142. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. All the lessons observed were satisfactory or better, some were very good. In the best lessons, learning was accelerated and good progress made because teachers used their good subject knowledge to develop or expand ideas; the pace was fast and sustained pupils' interest. Teachers questioned pupils effectively and disciplined them well. High expectations increased pupils' awareness of the quality of work required of them. A good example was the Year 10 food technology lesson in which pupils worked well in teams to disassemble a product and identify its sensory and aesthetic qualities. Satisfactory lessons could be improved further through increase in pace and consolidation of previous learning.

143. The leadership and management of the department are good. Policies and practices are effective and there is a shared vision for improvement by a team of teachers who work well together. Assessment procedures are used well and are having a positive effect on standards. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking is not always consistent in helping pupils to improve. Pupils do not have sufficient experience of ICT including CAD/CAM. The SCANTEK facility has good potential but it is not yet fully operational. Good relationships between adults and pupils are a strong feature of the department. A common approach to the presentation of design folders would improve the consistency of practice and assist in

monitoring standards and progress across all areas. Not all pupils take a technology subject in Years 10 and 11.

144. Accommodation is satisfactory but some areas need upgrading. There is a good display of work in all rooms and in the foyer of the school. Not enough reference material is available for independent study and there are insufficient textbooks for graphics.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in Year 11.
- GCSE results were high in 2002; almost half the candidates gained A* and A grades.
- The use of imaginative teaching methods results in very good learning and progress.
- Leadership is dynamic and ensures very effective teamwork.
- Assessment procedures are used very effectively to improve standards and monitor pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT could be developed further.

145. Standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are above average overall and achievement is good. The attainment of girls is higher than that of the boys and this is reflected accurately in the teachers' assessments. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of different places from a local to a world scale. Through fieldwork, they make good progress in developing their skills of map-reading, interpretation of photographic information and the collection and presentation of data; for example, in enquiries about where to build a wind farm in Congleton. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils begin to untangle the complex economic, social and political problems of exploitation and advantages that multi-national companies bring to less economically developed countries. Lower attaining pupils achieve well and reach average standards in their descriptions comparing working conditions in England and India. Pupils' understanding of the processes of coastal erosion and the related patterns of development, population growth and industrial structure could be developed further.

146. Standards of Year 11 pupils' work are well above average overall and achievement is very good. Higher attaining pupils gain high marks in their investigations into environmental damage in National Parks and land use patterns in Congleton and Macclesfield. They use ICT very well to research, handle data and present their work. The work of a small number of lower attaining pupils is less accurate and sometimes incomplete. Their analyses and evaluations are less detailed. Nevertheless, their standards are average and represent very good achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.

147. In 2002 the GCSE results were high in comparison to national averages. All pupils gained A*-G grades, most gained A*-C grades and nearly half obtained the highest A* and A grades. Overall, boys and girls performed equally well but a higher proportion of girls achieved the highest grades.

148. Pupils with special educational needs whose literacy skills are weak make good progress in Years 7-9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11 because the work is carefully matched to their needs. For example, in one lesson on weather they were given partially completed maps to enable their pace of learning to keep up with the rest of the class. Gifted and talented pupils make similar progress making good use of extension sheets.

149. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are almost always very good and occasionally excellent. They work very effectively in pairs or groups sharing ideas and helping each other, such as, for example, in identifying the inputs, processes and outputs of an industrial system. Pupils' very positive attitudes enable learning to proceed with interest and pace and make a substantial contribution to their standards of work.

150. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have high expectations and devise very interesting ways through which pupils learn very effectively. For example, they invented a 'Citizenship Cube' on which pupils illustrated how the profits of industry could be used to improve the standard of living in less developed countries. Teachers use a variety of role-play and decision-making exercises. Such very good methods and interesting resources that are carefully matched to pupils needs ensure the concentration and progress of all pupils. Occasionally in Years 7-9 explanations are too long and planning is over ambitious. In a lesson on coasts pupils partially completed an annotated diagram of cliffs and a stack. The teacher then moved learning on to the process of deposition before consolidating pupils' learning of the processes of erosion. Good learning in Years 7-9 sets a foundation for very good learning in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and this includes an understanding of what pupils need to do to achieve well in examinations. In a very good lesson pupils were challenged to describe statistics of North Sea fishing in detail and to account for the fluctuations and the overall trend. Consequently, their knowledge and understanding of this industry and their examination technique developed at a rapid pace. Marking is regular and informs pupils how to improve their work, especially in Years 10 and 11.

151. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught with an appropriate emphasis on the use of technical language. Pupils use a range of writing styles including reports, persuasive writing, poetry, letters and information leaflets effectively. They use a variety of graphs competently. The use of ICT to support pupils' learning, as indicated in planning, needs to be fully implemented so that all pupils have similar opportunities.

152. Leadership and management of the department are very good. A key feature has been a rigorous focus on how pupils learn. This has raised standards in the short time since the school opened. Very good teaching is vigorously promoted. The very experienced and committed staff share good practice and continually revise learning programmes as a result of the regular evaluation of lessons. Assessment procedures are used very effectively to check and promote pupils' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results could be raised further.
- The achievement of boys could be improved.
- The use of ICT could be extended.
- The quality and range of textbooks could be improved.

153. Pupils' results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were average. The proportion gaining A*/A grades was above the national average. Girls did not achieve as well as boys in 2002, a reversal of the situation in 2001. Staffing difficulties affected results somewhat in 2002.

154. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9 but girls achieve better than boys. By the end of Year 9 there is a significant gap between the attainment of girls and boys. This is evident from the scrutiny of written work, observation of lessons and teacher assessments. In most classes, girls are quicker in understanding the main points and are more productive in their work, although boys' and girls' enthusiasm and interest are equally good. Pupils respond readily to opportunities to work together in groups. In a Year 7 class, pupils were invited to work out ways of attacking a castle, with very good direction and materials supplied. This resulted in very good consolidation of knowledge and good collaboration. The exercise led to above average development of pupils' writing skills, comprehension and discrimination. Girls were noticeably more successful and achieved more, although all pupils were very interested and involved. In Year 9, pupils were moved by stories of trench life in World War One, as a result of very well planned activities and very good materials. The lesson made a strong impact emotionally and raised profound social and moral issues, leading to good written work, with girls writing more fully than boys. Some poor behaviour by a few boys restricted their output of work.

155. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work are average. In each year, the groups consist of a few very able girls with a majority of boys of lower ability. Pupils achieve well and make good progress as a result of skilful teaching, using textual and visual resources designed to stimulate all abilities. In both these years, more able pupils were challenged with additional work. The textbooks available, however, are often inadequate and some are out of date.

156. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years. This is because all teachers are consistently applying a literacy policy that incorporates vocabulary, reading and listening skills in their plans, with materials suited to all needs. Teachers successfully apply strategies to promote pupils' independence. Classroom assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs.

157. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are generally good and are a contributory factor to their good progress. Pupils respond well as they are mostly engaged by the topics and materials used. There is a need to develop further the use of ICT. Where it is used for research, for instance in retrieving information about local workhouses, pupils work enthusiastically and make effective use of their findings.

158. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and plan work very carefully. They cater for the needs of pupils of all abilities by setting clear goals in their planning. Teachers use a good variety of methods, which engage the interest, and sometimes the emotions, of the pupils. In a lesson in Year 9, a variety of effective methods were used, including the use of music, poetry and meditation. Teachers work closely together and use assessment procedures consistently to provide informative reports for pupils and parents.

159. The department is well managed and staff morale is high. This follows a period of instability in staffing which affected the progress of those pupils now in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and a good start has been made in using ICT for research. Pupils would benefit from access to more updated textbooks. The department now needs to recruit more pupils for GCSE and to raise standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage pupils well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes that support their learning.
- Resources are good and are widely available for pupils' use outside of lesson times.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work, which are not as high as in other subjects.
- Provision should be made for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to develop their skills in ICT to an appropriate level.
- The planning of lessons in Years 7-9 could be improved to take account of the wide range of abilities and to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

160. Pupils were entered for GNVQ examinations in ICT in 2002. Pupils did not do as well as in their other subjects; results were affected by staffing problems. A significant minority of pupils who followed the course were not entered for the examination. There are no national comparators for GNVQ examinations.

161. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicated that pupils' attainment was above average in ICT. Evidence from the inspection, including observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that, currently, standards in Year 9 are average. Most pupils can create good quality presentations for particular audiences showing above average skills in the use of word processing and desktop publishing software. They have good design skills when using PowerPoint for presentations and can create interesting slides, inserting text, pictures and movie animation. They have below average knowledge and understanding of data handling in the use of spreadsheets but can create and retrieve information from a database, generating charts and graphs from the data. All pupils have a very limited understanding of the use of ICT to solve problems by building models, constructing procedures and then measuring or controlling the results. Very few pupils have developed the independent learning skills expected of pupils of this age. Given their attainment on entry to the school, achievement is satisfactory.

162. Standards of work in Year 11 are average. They have been affected by the staffing difficulties experienced last year and are not as high as in other subjects. Approximately half of Year 10 and 11 pupils follow a GCSE or GNVQ course and for these pupils standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. They can apply their skills in a number of different situations and use applications of ICT to solve real world problems. They are confident when working in multi-media. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take an examination course do not have any timetabled lessons in ICT and their experience of ICT through other subjects is limited. They are largely unaware of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of new technologies and most are not yet confident and autonomous users of ICT. These pupils are not following the National Curriculum in ICT in sufficient breadth or depth. Their standards are below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory.

163. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Their teachers have detailed information about their needs and see that they do not get left behind. Pupils whom the school identifies as being particularly gifted or talented make satisfactory progress. Both groups of pupils in Years 7 - 9 would make better progress if, in the teaching of mixed ability groups, the planning of lessons took into account the different levels of attainment within the groups.

164. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They come to lessons on time and are prepared to listen to explanations and instructions at the beginning of lessons. They share resources sensibly and co-operate well when working in groups. These positive attitudes are not being fully exploited as pupils are given too few opportunities to develop their independent learning skills and show initiative. Too often they have to wait for their teachers to direct them onto the next stage of learning.

165. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good subject knowledge is a common feature of the teaching and an important factor in motivating and encouraging pupils to learn. Effective classroom management, particularly in Years 7 to 9, ensures that the unhelpful lay out of the ICT rooms is not allowed to disrupt learning. Relationships with pupils are good and give them confidence to ask questions and risk making mistakes. Assessment procedures are good and help pupils to move on. Lessons in Years 7 to 9 are planned as if pupils were all of the same ability despite the wide range of attainment

evident within the groups. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. They have few self-help resources and have to rely too much on their teacher directing them onto the next task.

166. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Last year's staffing crisis has been temporarily resolved and the day-to-day management of the department is good. New GCSE examination courses have been introduced which are better matched to pupils' needs and teachers' expertise. There are effective procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning. The strategic plan, put in place when the new school was created, has been very effective in improving provision in the key areas of hardware, networking and support from technicians. Resources are better than found in many schools and pupils have good access to computers at lunch times and after school. The monitoring of the progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take an examination course is unsatisfactory. The department makes no planned contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Key skills across the curriculum - Information and communication technology

167. Most subjects include elements of computer work in their teaching, typically in the use of the Internet for research and word processing and desktop publishing for presentation. Pupils use computer-aided design and manufacture software effectively in design and technology and in physical education, digital and video cameras are used well to record and analyse performance. ICT is used very well in music. Excellent resources and a range of appropriate software are used extensively for recording and composition. The use of ICT across the curriculum could be developed further, especially in science, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

In French

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and are rising quickly in Years 7 and 8.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well.

In German

- Pupils' achievement is very good and standards are well above average.
- Teaching is very good so pupils make rapid progress.

In modern languages as a whole

- Leadership is very good.
- Assessment procedures are used well to inform pupils how to improve.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

In French

- Some pupils, mainly boys in Years 10 and 11, do not achieve high enough standards.
- Teaching and learning strategies could be developed further to raise the overall quality of teaching to that of the best.

In modern languages as a whole

- More opportunities could be provided in lessons for pupils to use and develop ICT skills.

168. All pupils study French from Year 7. German is introduced as a second language in Year 8 to approximately two thirds of the year group, based on attainment in French at the end of Year 7. No pupils in Year 11 study two languages.

French

169. In 2002, equal numbers of boys and girls, representing a high proportion of the year group, entered for the GCSE examination. Results at grades A*-C were just above average and all pupils achieved a pass in the range A*-G. However, the difference between the performance of boys and girls was significantly greater than that found nationally. Girls' results were well above average compared with girls nationally and the proportion gaining A* or A grades was high. Boys' results were below average for boys nationally and they did significantly less well in French than in their other subjects.

170. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average and achievement overall is good. Standards are rising more quickly in Years 7 and 8 as the sharp focus on progression makes its mark and good teaching strategies are succeeding in motivating boys more effectively, thus narrowing the gap between the achievement of girls and boys. Pupils develop comprehension skills well, picking out details from tapes and printed materials. The recent introduction of reading short stories for enjoyment is developing pupils' reading skills further. Pupils build up their knowledge of grammar structures and vocabulary over time, which enables them to speak and write in sentences with increasing confidence. Most work is still in the present tense but most pupils can make simple reference to the future also. However, pupils have not yet learnt the past tense, which would enable them to move more quickly to a higher level. Some high attaining pupils in Year 9 show very good progress in writing more extended pieces, using a wider variety of expressions and structures, though there is some variation across parallel classes. Pupils with special education needs make good progress because teaching methods and materials are suitably adapted to their needs and they benefit from being taught in smaller sized classes grouped by ability.

171. Fewer pupils study French in Year 11 compared with last year because a much higher proportion of pupils who studied two languages in Year 9 opted to continue with German rather than French to GCSE. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average, which is lower than the most recent results. This represents good achievement overall for this year group. Higher attaining pupils in particular make good progress in learning a wider range of language structures and in using different tenses appropriately, which is reflected in their written coursework. Most average and lower attaining pupils also make quite good progress in coursework, though spelling errors occur. In speaking, higher attaining pupils benefit from working in small groups for conversation practice with the French assistant, which helps to build up their confidence. However, average and lower attaining pupils make only limited progress in developing oral skills and responses are often very brief. Good progress is made in developing reading and listening skills.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but is variable. The proportion of very good teaching seen during the inspection was low, although there is some very good practice. One Year 8 lesson about finding one's way in town was excellent. In this lesson, the teacher skilfully used a whole host of different strategies, resources and activities to build up pupils' knowledge and understanding of the language and to encourage greater use of French for real purposes in everyday situations. New learning was carefully sequenced and broken down into manageable steps and then thoroughly practised before moving on. Pupils were actively involved in their learning at all stages, including working at the front with the overhead projector, practising dialogues with a partner and solving a challenging map reading activity. The pace throughout was unrelenting, the teacher conducted the entire lesson in French and boys and girls kept up their very good efforts right to the end. Teaching of such high calibre needs to be shared. In general, teachers have very good subject knowledge, they plan lessons well, objectives are clear and resources are well chosen. In the main, they manage pupils well because they employ good strategies to keep them focused on their work and relationships are good. There are shortcomings in some lessons, located mainly in Years 10 and 11, where a small but significant number of disaffected average and lower attaining pupils, largely boys, are not doing well enough. Even where effective teaching and learning strategies are in place to improve motivation, there is some resistance. Sometimes, the more traditional

style of teaching does not engage the pupils effectively. Teachers then do too much of the work for them and sometimes the pace is not brisk enough to capture and sustain pupils' attention.

173. Attitudes are very good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and pupils behave very well. They enjoy the oral activities, including games and songs. There is good support for the annual visit to France. In Years 10 and 11 attitudes and behaviour are more variable, though good overall. A small number of average and lower attaining pupils sometimes behave inappropriately and disrupt the learning of other pupils in the class.

German

174. In 2002, GCSE results were well above average, with a high proportion of pupils gaining A* or A grades. All those entered achieved passes in the range A*-E and they did better in German than in other subjects.

175. A much higher proportion of girls than boys studies German in Years 8 and 9. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and pupils achieve very well in very limited time. They show ready understanding of instructions and develop comprehension skills well, picking out information from what they hear and read. They speak with good pronunciation because they get regular practice, often in pairs, and new words are drilled routinely. They achieve a high level of accuracy in speaking and writing because they learn to apply grammar rules correctly. In Year 9 they write lively letters and accounts containing a good variety of opinions.

176. Standards in Year 11 are well above average, reflecting recent GCSE results. Despite the threefold increase in numbers compared with last year, high standards are being maintained and pupils are achieving very well. Girls continue to outnumber boys but both sexes achieve equally well. Pupils continue to progress rapidly. They learn to use different tenses appropriately and increase their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar structures, which enables them to write and speak confidently on a range of topics, for example a holiday in Germany. Some higher attaining pupils produce fluent and accurate accounts of an exceptionally high standard. Many pupils develop higher level comprehension skills and can recognise attitudes and draw conclusions from tapes and texts

177. The very good rate of pupils' progress is underpinned by the consistently very good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers speak German fluently and conduct lessons entirely in the foreign language. They make very good use of resources such as flashcards, visual displays and the overhead projector to focus pupils' attention, to introduce new language and as a stimulus for oral work. Relationships are very good. Teachers manage pupils very well and pupils learn very effectively because they are actively involved in their learning. In an excellent Year 11 lesson about work experience and jobs, the teacher used the overhead projector to practise key language phrases in a very brisk manner. Spurred on by the teacher's enthusiasm and words of praise, the class, which comprises mainly boys, became increasingly confident in talking about different jobs and workplaces and expressing opinions. The dice game that followed to consolidate what they had just practised prompted an excellent response from the pupils who produced accurate spoken German quite spontaneously. Next, pupils worked through a challenging letter of application for a job, answering questions and noting key phrases. This quick change of activity ensured pupils kept up their good efforts. Because the teacher explained clearly the purpose of the letter and how it fitted into the planning of a future piece of coursework, pupils worked with even greater purpose, discussing points with the teacher and persevering despite its difficulty. Learning in this lesson was very good; boys and girls achieved very well.

178. Attitudes in German are very good. Pupils enjoy what they do and come ready to work, maintaining their high level of concentration and effort throughout the lessons. Year 8 pupils show a very high level of commitment by attending an 'early bird' lesson before school each week. Behaviour is very good. There is very good support for the annual exchange to Wadersloh, which contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development.

Modern Languages

179. Leadership and management are very good and are leading to significant and rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning overall. However, teaching and learning strategies to combat identified underachievement in French need to be developed further. Standards are rising quickly as teachers work more closely together as a team and very good practice is shared. Marking and assessment practices are very good. They play a significant part in raising standards. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to enhance their learning through the use of ICT in lessons.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average because teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils enjoy music.
- Extra-curricular activities are of a high standard.
- Leadership and management of the department are outstanding.
- Very good use is made of resources and technology.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work for Years 7-9 is in the process of revision; assessment procedures in these year groups need to be brought up to the standard in the older age groups.

180. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were above the national average. Although there were very few high grades, the results were characterised by considerable success among lower attaining boys. They were very attracted to the subject and achieved better than expected grades.

181. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils make very good progress during this stage and achieve particularly well considering their low starting point in Year 7. Pupils in Year 9 play 12 bar blues on the keyboards, drums and guitars. Most play both the 'head' and the bass or chord part and some improvise a solo, a few confidently and imaginatively. Their knowledge and understanding of the 12 bar blues, and the influence it has had on jazz and pop music, are considerably enhanced by the end of the lesson because of the practical way in which they are taught. They talk about the Blues using correct musical vocabulary. Boys achieve very well in practical tasks designed especially to appeal to them. Their standards are very similar to those of the girls. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well, many of them needing no extra support in lessons. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Pupils in this group are good instrumental performers on a range of orchestral or pop instruments. Most play regularly in groups and bands both in and out of school. Pupils compose confidently and many use technology to enable them to hear what they write. One or two compose very ably on manuscript paper, having the ability to hear in their heads what they write on paper.

182. Pupils enjoy music. They behave very well and their very good attitudes positively affect their learning. This is particularly evident in the GCSE classes. At all stages though, teachers make the lessons into enjoyable practical experiences for the pupils. Pupils are given the opportunity to play and compose music that appeals to them. The teachers manage pupils very well, and promote a very friendly and positive atmosphere in the department. Music is for pupils' enjoyment and they achieve very well, including those with special educational needs. Teachers give these pupils appropriate work and suggest ways of working which are helpful. A particular strength of the department is that lower and middle attaining pupils at all stages are helped by their teachers to make very good progress. Pupils are very keen to use the technology resources and are often in the computer suite in their spare time and before the lessons start.

183. Teaching and learning at all levels are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and skills in music and, by very practical means, pupils are acquiring these steadily and strongly. Pupils are inspired

by their teachers and learn quickly through high quality demonstrations. Lessons are very well planned and pupils know what they have to achieve. Teachers have high expectations in lessons and pupils make considerable demands on themselves, especially in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are taught at a very good pace and as a result pupils work quickly and with interest. They make very good creative physical and mental effort. Teachers need to ensure, however, that at the earliest levels pupils are encouraged to develop basic musical skills of maintaining a steady beat and clapping two half beats as equal proportions of the whole beat. Pupils are very well assessed in Years 10 and 11. At GCSE level teachers use the examination criteria to assess the pupils. Pupils are very well advised and guided and consequently they have a very good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and what they have to do to improve. Pupils are well assessed in Years 7-9 and their progress is checked. Teachers, though, need to be more familiar with the National Curriculum requirements and share these with their pupils.

184. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. Recent demanding changes to GCSE and A level have meant that attention has been focused on these, but teachers are also conscious that the music course and assessment of the pupils in Years 7-9 now needs reviewing. This is underway. 120 pupils learn instruments and most of these pupils take part in the Choir, Concert and Jazz Bands. The quality of these is very high and they provide rich social and cultural experiences for the pupils. Extra-curricular activities, very good resources, and the strong practical ethos of music for all, considerably enhance the provision for music in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and pupils achieve well.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning.
- The curriculum for all pupils is strongly enhanced throughout Years 7-9 by a programme of dance.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in compulsory physical education and examination classes could be raised further in Years 10 and 11.

185. GCSE results in 2002 were average. Results fell slightly in comparison with 2001. In 2002, girls outperformed boys, particularly in obtaining the highest grades. The proportion of boys who obtained the higher A*-C grades was below, but close to the national figure for boys. All pupils taking the examination, creditably, obtained at least an F grade.

186. Overall standards of work of pupils in Year 9 are above average for their age. Pupils achieve well in relation to their generally average starting points. Particular strengths are in major games and dance. In netball, higher attaining pupils confidently lead each other in appropriate warm up activities. Skills and tactics are well understood and developed and pupils make accurate and confident judgements when assessing performance. They are equally confident in discussing the extent to which their performance improves through practice. In football, higher attaining boys demonstrate secure mastery of difficult skills such as the 'Cryuff' turn. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and appreciate the need to prepare carefully for strenuous physical activity.

187. Progress through Years 7- 9 is good. Pupils quickly gain a good grounding in basic skills and tactics in Year 7 and this provides a firm base on which to build in future years. Teachers carefully base their starting points for each new unit of work on an analysis of pupils' earlier performance so that the

level of challenge is consistently good. From Year 7, pupils are also encouraged to listen and watch both the teacher and each other carefully, and are given good opportunities to talk to each other about their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their teachers are provided with accurate information about their particular learning requirements and, where these are appropriate to learning in physical education, ensure that they are included in their lesson planning. Pupils who have particular talents in sport also make good progress because classes in Years 8 and 9 are organised according to pupils' capabilities, which helps to ensure that there is an appropriate challenge. There are also extensive opportunities for pupils to further develop their particular skills and interests in sport through extra-curricular activities.

188. Overall standards in Years 10 and 11 are average in both compulsory physical education and examination classes. The range of opportunities has been enhanced since reorganisation, for example, pupils learn to play games such as badminton and basketball. Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning have ensured that progress in these activities has been rapid. Overall, pupils achieve well. Pupils practise trampolining before or after school; standards are well above average. They produce complex fluid routines with the better performers including difficult bounces such as somersaults. In examination classes the standards reached in some aspects of practical performance are good. Boys and girls work well with each other in doubles play in badminton. Shot selection is good with some well-disguised drop shots, and tactics are used effectively, for example, to move opponents around the court. Standards in theoretical aspects of the subject are broadly average.

189. Throughout the school, the pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute well to the good progress. A particular feature of this inspection was the way in which pupils persevered cheerfully with their work in very difficult weather and pitch conditions. Pupils also work well with each other. For example, in a hockey lesson, Year 8 girls co-operated very well with each other in small groups devising their own practices for improving the accuracy and consistency of the Indian dribble. A good proportion of pupils choose to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are provided. Individual pupils and teams, for example in netball and trampolining, enjoy a significant level of success in competition at local, area and sometimes, national level.

190. The overall quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good and has some very good features. A very strong feature of many lessons is the quality of planning, based on a good understanding of pupils' prior attainment in the activity. Teachers are not afraid to stretch pupils beyond the confines of the scheme of work if the pupils have reached the appropriate stage of development, for example in Year 9 classes in netball and dance. Equally, in a Year 10 basketball lesson and Year 11 badminton lesson, the teachers wisely restricted the work to that more typically expected in Years 7 - 9 because the pupils' levels of skill were not yet sufficient to cope with the work normally expected from older pupils. Relationships are friendly and relaxed but have an underlying discipline, which ensures that pupils remain focussed on their work, respond well to the teachers' high expectations and persevere with demanding physical activity. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are used effectively in explanations, demonstrations and in the analysis of pupils' performance, which helps them to see how they can improve their work. Occasionally, when assessing progress at the end of lessons, teachers concentrate too much on pupils' understanding of technique rather than what and how well they have learned.

191. The management of the subject is good and has created a shared commitment to improvement. Assessment procedures in Years 7- 9 are very good and recent improvements are ensuring that pupils are beginning to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in performance. However, the information obtained about pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 9 is not yet being analysed in order to bring about further improvement. Good curriculum links with the mathematics department are ensuring that physical education is well placed to make an effective contribution to the development of pupils' numerical skills. Development planning is not yet sufficiently well focused on improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

Dance

192. The physical education curriculum is strongly enhanced by a good programme of dance provided for all pupils throughout years 7 to 9, and offered as an examination subject in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning in dance are good and, together with the generally positive attitudes to learning displayed by pupils, have resulted in above average standards reached by the end of Year 9. Many pupils have acquired a good understanding of the vocabulary of movement, which they use well in individual and group composition. They are moving from a thematic approach towards the more demanding development of complex dance skills. A small number of pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in dance in 2002 and all were successful in obtaining the higher A*-C grades. Dance makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development, for example through experience of a wide range of dance forms from different traditions and through the very good range of opportunities to experience professional performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and overall standards of work are above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- There is an excellent range of visits to places of worship.

Areas for improvement

- Lower attaining pupils are not always engaged sufficiently in group activities.

193. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9. The standard of work in Year 9 is above average.

194. Pupils in Years 7-9 study a wide variety of topics and respond with enthusiasm. Higher attaining pupils can identify and describe the key aspects of six world religions. They know what they have in common and what makes each unique. Very good work is produced in Year 8 in more detailed studies of Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism. In Year 9 pupils have written extensively on human rights and responsibilities and the response of religions to suffering and prejudice. Some pupils were inspired by the work of Jane Elliot, a pioneer in raising awareness of racism. Others were moved to write to the parents of a child suffering from Down's Syndrome after watching a video in lessons. Higher attaining pupils develop good research skills, appreciation of different faiths and cultures and the ability to make their own moral judgements. Lower achieving pupils also reach a simple understanding of religion and begin to develop the ability to explain their own opinions.

195. The overall standard of work in Year 11 is above average, despite the fact that non-GCSE pupils do not have sufficient time to complete the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The GCSE course has been running for just one term for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils make very detailed and thorough notes. They make clear distinctions between the teachings of Christianity and Islam and express their own views logically. They enjoy what they are doing and find the course lively and interesting. Lower attaining pupils tend to leave gaps in their work and produce arguments that are one-sided and not backed up by good reasons. The pupils understand what is required of them and how to improve their results. Most are working at a good standard and achieving well.

196. Girls and boys generally make equally good progress and are keen to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is an additional language also make good progress because they are well supported in class and work is appropriate to their needs.

197. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They enjoy what they are doing and are sometimes surprised by their own success. They enjoy setting and meeting their own targets and learning to think for themselves. A calm and disciplined environment is created which results in concentrated effort and good learning. Pupils' participation in discussions and their research into world religions contribute well to their moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is evident in pupils' enjoyment of meditation exercises and their response to topics in lessons. Pupils present their written work with care and most complete their homework regularly. Lower attaining pupils do not always complete the tasks that are set. Sometimes they fail to make enough progress during the group activities in lessons.

198. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. No lessons were seen that were less than good. Pupils are expected to do their best. A wide and interesting range of strategies is used so that pupils are kept alert and interested. Lessons are vibrant and well paced. The department makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and ICT skills. Pupils read aloud, keep glossaries of important words, discuss a wide variety of topics and enjoy research and creative tasks set

to develop ICT skills. They have produced a very good series of leaflets explaining the ritual of Passover to non-Jewish audiences. Pupils have created imaginative displays illustrating their study of the eightfold path in Buddhism. They learn about religion and from religion and benefit greatly from an excellent series of educational visits to places of worship. Pupils' work is marked positively and effectively and they are given good advice on how to improve.

199. The department is very well led and managed. Teachers have created a stimulating environment in which trust and respect between pupils and staff flourish. The department is aware of its own strengths and has identified areas where improvements can be made. These include the need to promote academic rigour in the new GCSE course and to fully engage lower attaining pupils in all lessons.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	30	83		57		3.0	
Chemistry	28	93		50		3.1	
Biology	30	100		47		3.4	
Physics	29	86		31		2.9	
Product design	7	100		29		3.4	
Business studies	19	84		16		2.4	
Computing	16	31		6		0.6	
Information and communication studies	7	86		14		2.4	
Sport and physical education	22	100		61		3.4	
Art and design	24	88		42		2.6	
Media studies	18	100		17		2.6	
Music	7	100		29		2.5	
Music technology	15	100		47		3.6	
Dance	3	100		0		2.3	
Drama /Theatre studies	9	100		44		2.8	
Geography	22	95		55		3.5	
History	13	77		15		1.6	
Sociology	11	100		18		2.0	
Psychology	43	67		9		1.4	
English language	28	100		50		3.8	
English literature	9	100		33		2.8	
French	8	63		13		2.0	
German	5	80		40		2.2	
General studies	49	94		41		2.9	

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	19	90		53		6.5	
Further mathematics	2	100		100		9.0	
Chemistry	16	100		50		6.4	
Biology	20	85		35		5.4	
Physics	15	100		27		5.7	
Electronics	2	100		100		10.0	
Business studies	12	92		8		4.3	

Economics	2	100		100		10.0	
Computing	9	100		22		4.4	
Information and communication technology	11	100		18		4.9	
Sport and physical education	9	100		44		6.6	
Travel and tourism	2	100		0		5.0	
Health and social care	4	100		14		6.0	
Art	12	100		42		5.8	
Music	4	100		0		5.5	
Music technology	5	100		20		6.0	
Dance	3	100		0		3.3	
Drama and theatre studies	12	100		75		7.3	
Media studies	14	100		72		7.8	
Geography	15	100		40		6.6	
History	10	100		50		6.6	
Government and politics	2	100		100		9.0	
Sociology	8	100		50		6.5	
Psychology	22	100		32		5.6	
English language	16	100		44		6.2	
English literature	23	100		22		5.8	
French	2	100		100		10.0	
German	2	100		50		6.0	
General studies	9	100		67		8.2	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

200. The main focus was on mathematics and chemistry but biology and physics were also sampled. One lesson of each subject was observed. In each lesson the teaching was good. Students worked well and were eager to learn. Teachers' very good subject knowledge led to well planned lessons where students made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied. The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to AS and A-level qualifications in mathematics in Years 12 and 13. A-level further mathematics was also sampled in Year 13. Here, the teaching was very good and standards were well above average.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 13 are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not always cater fully for some of the weaker students.

201. A-level results in 2002 improved significantly compared with 2001 and represented very good achievement. Over half of the students gained the higher grades A and B whilst all except two passed in the range A to E. Results at AS level in 2002 were also relatively strong. Again over half the students achieved the higher grades A and B but several of the weaker candidates failed to record a pass grade in the range A to E. Most students complete the AS/A2-level courses once they have embarked on them.

202. Standards of work in Year 13 are well above average and represent very good achievement. Students have had slightly more success in statistics than in pure mathematics and mechanics. However, standards in all three elements of the course are well above average. Students frequently demonstrate very good numerical and algebraic skills, which allow them to work quickly and logically through challenging written questions. They are generally good at using their knowledge of number, algebra, calculus and trigonometry to select the correct series of mathematical processes to solve problems. A strong feature is their ability to work out new mathematical relationships for themselves rather than being fully dependent upon their teachers. Written work is of a very good standard. It is usually presented well, logically sequenced and sufficiently detailed to satisfy examiners at this level. However, a few students do not do justice to the depth of their knowledge and understanding because they do not show enough detail when working through examples.

203. Students in Year 12 are also doing well. Achievement is good, especially as some students' GCSE results in mathematics are rather modest for supporting study at this level. Attainment is above average overall and most students are producing work of genuine AS level standard in the range A to E. Higher attaining students are moving securely towards A and B grades. They are confident with topics such as the manipulation of surds, differentiation to find turning points on curves and integration to find areas underneath them. Weaker candidates, moving towards grades C and D, can follow most of the topics quite well, and can often work quite complicated questions through to a conclusion. However, they sometimes make fundamental algebraic errors in work involving fractional and negative indices, transposition of formulae and factorisation. A few students with rather modest GCSE results in mathematics are not really coping with the subject at this level. However, the teachers are offering them every support and encouragement, often outside normal lesson time, in an effort to help them to make up lost ground.

204. Teaching is very good and enables most students to learn very quickly. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are well organised, ensuring that the course is covered in sufficient depth to enable students to learn new techniques and practise them adequately. However, the necessary pace at which the course is taught sometimes leaves the weakest students with only a vague understanding of the material covered in class. Questioning of students in class is good. It checks understanding well and enables teachers to know when to proceed to new areas of learning. A very good feature of teaching is the way that students are encouraged to investigate and derive mathematical relationships for themselves, thereby providing them with a deep understanding of some relatively complex concepts. Help for individuals with problems is of good quality. Marking is very good, it always shows students how to improve their work, and frequently includes full solutions to questions where errors have been made.

205. Students speak very positively about the course and the help that they receive. They display very mature attitudes in class and usually produce extensive amounts of homework and practice solutions. Very importantly, they understand where their weaknesses are and usually take suitable steps to eliminate them by seeking extra help from their teachers. Higher attaining students use words, especially the technical language of the subject, very well to link equations and expressions in their written solutions. However, the weaker mathematicians' work is often characterised by a full dependence on mathematical language and an almost complete absence of the use of English. Work with graphical calculators enhances students' understanding of the advantages of ICT in solving problems set in words and symbols.

206. Management of mathematics at this level is very good. The course is well organised to ensure that all elements of the syllabus are completed on time and in sufficient depth. Assessment is very good.

It enables pupils to have frequent regular feedback on all aspects of their work, and keeps them informed about how they are doing in relation to the A-level grade scale.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Relationships between students and teachers have a positive impact on standards.
- Students' progress is effectively monitored.
- Students develop their practical and experimental skills very well during the course.

Areas for improvement

- ICT could be used more frequently in chemistry lessons.
- The sharing of good practice could be more effective.

207. In 2002, the great majority of students gained A-E grades in A2-level examinations; a high proportion obtained higher A-B grades. The retention rate on the course was high and most students exceeded expectations based on their GCSE results. Results were similar to the combined results of sixth form students who were taught in the three original schools in 2000/2001.

208. Current standards are above average in Year 12 and well above average in Year 13. These standards are achieved as a result of very good teaching coupled with very positive students' attitudes. Taking into account the examination results and current standards of work, achievement in chemistry is very good overall.

209. Standards of work in Year 12 are above average. Students are making very good progress in their understanding of AS chemistry although the theories and concepts are of a much higher order than those they have studied previously. For example, they have studied in detail the fractionation of crude oil. They can explain why oil fractions have different boiling points by considering the size of the intermolecular forces that act between the molecules in these products. The standards of work in Year 13 are well above average. Students continue to build on their achievements in Year 12. For example, in organic chemistry they are improving their knowledge of the many ways by which organic compounds can be synthesised.

210. Teaching and learning are very good and this is confirmed by scrutiny of students' files. In particular, the quality of their experimental work is high and this makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and explain concepts and theories clearly. This makes it easier for students to make very good progress. For example, in one lesson, a very clear explanation of the concept of renewable energy resources quickly dispelled popular misconceptions. As a result the students' understanding of this topic improved considerably. A strength of teaching is the very good relationships that exist between teachers and students. This enables students to improve their confidence in the subject and make better progress. For example, in a revision lesson on organic reaction mechanisms, teacher and students co-operated together well to identify different functional groups and their importance in synthetic chemistry. This enabled the students to successfully predict how a variety of organic substances could be made in the laboratory. Although ICT is used to enhance chemistry lessons students would benefit from more hands on experience of it in when carrying out practical work.

211. Across the age range students display a very mature attitude towards their work. This is seen in the student – teacher interactions in lessons and the quality of their written work. Students have very positive views of chemistry and value greatly the extra help and advice freely given outside the laboratory situation.

212. Modules of work are well written and match examination criteria well. There is a shared commitment to do the best for students and strive to improve results. The subject is very well managed and teachers work well together as a team. Monitoring arrangements are largely informal and are not yet used sufficiently as a tool for sharing the good practice that exists in the department. However, teachers have made a very good start in a relatively short time to produce an effective learning environment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

213. The focus was on product design with food technology sampled. In food technology teaching is good and students are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry. Students' attitudes are good. Standards are average.

Product design

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

Strengths

- Assessment procedures and tutorial sessions are good.
- Students' design folders are well presented.
- The number of students taking the subject is increasing.
- Working relationships between staff and students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More use could be made of CAD/CAM to extend students' experience.
- Students' learning could be extended through more access to local industries.
- More resources are need for students to work independently.

214. In 2002 only two candidates entered the 'A' level electronics examination and both achieved success. This course is no longer offered. The AS 2002 results for the current Year 13 product design students represent good achievement for the students involved.

215. Attainment in lessons and work seen is average in Year 12 for this stage of the course, and above average in Year 13. Overall, students achieve well. Predicted grades and current standards of coursework support this judgement. In Year 12, students make satisfactory progress when developing graphical techniques and skills in coursework design folders. The better work shows good research methodology, good use of colour, and annotated sketches to illustrate ideas. Weaker work shows poorer levels of presentation with ideas that are too simplistic for this level of study. Drawings are not always annotated. In Year 13, students make good progress and reach above average standards in their coursework. Consideration of aesthetics, user needs, manufacture and materials are researched and often lead to good discussion about environmental, social and moral issues. Standards of presentation are usually high; they include very good analysis and evidence of the research undertaken. Students make good use of problem-solving techniques. Where the work does not meet high standards it is mainly due to lack of depth in research, ideas not developed fully and a general lack of urgency in the work leading to coursework deadlines not being met. Practical skills are good. Communication skills are satisfactory overall.

216. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned to include theory and practical sessions and a good feature of the teaching is the individual tutorial sessions regularly held to review

standards and progress. A Year 12 lesson demonstrated how students increased their learning of what is expected in their individual case studies because the teacher used assessment criteria in the marking and gave constructive oral feedback about standards and what to do to improve. More resources are needed to promote independent learning, for example, greater access to ICT design packages and reference material.

217. The teaching is shared by three members of staff, each bringing their own expertise to the subject and adding to the learning experience of the students. The wider use of ICT, particularly CAD/CAM needs to feature more prominently in the work. More external visits to industry or commerce would also extend the students' experience. Relationships are very good and contribute significantly to students' achievement. Numbers taking the subject have recently increased and this is an encouraging sign. The department is attempting to redress the gender imbalance in the subject.

BUSINESS

218. The focus subject in this area was business studies but economics was also sampled. Provision for economics is very good. Standards are well above average. Teachers are well qualified and have high expectations of students. Teaching and learning are very good. They are complemented by students' very good attitudes. The number of students taking the A2-level examination in economics in 2002 was small but results were at the highest level. Most students complete the courses once they have embarked on them.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Marking of students' work and feedback to them are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities are needed for staff to keep up to date with examination requirements.
- The supply of textbooks is insufficient.
- The accommodation is too cramped.

219. Results at A2-level in 2002 were as expected considering students' prior attainment. Few students attained the higher grades. In the AS examinations in Year 12, results were similar in relation to the proportion gaining grades A-E but there was a significant increase in the proportion of A and B grades.

220. Standards of work in the current Year 13 are above average. The students are achieving very well, have very good command of the technical language required and are able to use it fluently. In a lesson on collective bargaining, they showed very good mastery of theoretical concepts, which they were able to apply in a role-play between managers and a trade union. They use ICT very well to write up their results. A high standard of literacy in students' folders underpins their extended use of business terms. They are making progress rapidly and are already exceeding the grades predicted by school data, which is based on their AS grades.

221. Standards of work in the current Year 12 are above average and students are making very good progress. They respond very well to the high expectations placed on them to learn, and use, correct business language. This is effectively reinforced by the excellent wall displays that help them to

understand business theories. Students are very good at problem-solving exercises and make very good presentations. Their folders reveal very good standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT, explaining why they are making more progress than their predicted grades would indicate.

222. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject. They waste no time in settling down to work, are punctual, and work intensively in class. When interviewed, they indicated appreciation for the pressure on them to learn and for the rapid feedback on written assignments. Most have developed a strong interest in the subject and a desire to pursue it in higher education.

223. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned and are very rapidly paced, leading to very good learning. Teachers constantly emphasise correct language and are benefiting from a research project on the application of thinking skills. This is reflected in their challenge to students to argue and work out solutions, which develops their self-confidence. Assessment is used as a positive tool to motivate and guide students.

224. Students are given clear direction about the exact nature of requirements of the examination board, and its links to the curriculum. Teachers would benefit, however, from more outside contact and updating, in a rapidly changing examination context. This would assist the students to achieve better results to reflect their high standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

225. The focus was on ICT but computing was also sampled. In computing in 2002, students did as expected at A level considering their GCSE results, but at AS level results were poor due to serious problems with staffing throughout the academic year. Three lessons were observed in which the teaching was at least satisfactory and had some good and very good features, for example, very good use was made of a teacher's previous industrial experience to illustrate the use of different applications of software. In another lesson a very good variety of teaching strategies ensured that students understood thoroughly how to approach the design of user interfaces. Standards of work in these lessons were average and students are now making satisfactory progress.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Students achieved satisfactorily in spite of serious staffing difficulties last year.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of a clear long-term management arrangement currently affects standards.
- Students are not given sufficiently clear guidance about the standards they are achieving and how they can improve.

226. The A and AS level examination results in 2002 were as expected from students' GCSE results. Students achieved a range of results from the highest to the lowest grades. Male and female students did equally well.

227. The standards of work of current students are average. The small number of students in Year 13 are mostly improving on the standards they achieved at AS level because of good individual teaching. Overall, standards in Year 12 are below average but students are achieving as well as expected from

their GCSE results. In both years students are acquiring a sound knowledge of all areas of the subject because teachers are following the syllabus and appropriate texts closely. Students are good at planning the user interface of systems because they are taught to focus on user needs prior to programming. They design the technical aspects of the systems effectively, test them and present their projects clearly.

228. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and there are some particularly good features. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Teachers have established good relationships with the students. They make good use of questioning to involve students in their learning. Lessons are thoroughly prepared but in some cases do not focus sufficiently on how students will learn or on checking their learning. Although teachers give good advice to students in lessons they do not provide sufficient written advice on the standards students are achieving and what they need to do to improve.

229. Students have usually chosen to study ICT because they enjoyed the subject last year. Several have career objectives involving ICT. Some have not yet established good work routines, for example in one lesson most did not hand work in on time. Students consider that they are doing better than last year and expressed appreciation of the help they receive from teachers outside, as well as during, lessons. Most are participating well in their learning, particularly where lessons have a variety of activities such as requiring students to work in pairs and to make oral presentations.

230. After difficult staffing problems involving absence and resignations last year the current temporary management and staffing of the subject has done well to ensure that students are achieving as well as expected. There is a good team spirit amongst staff that encourages the sharing of ideas and effective practices. The temporary management arrangement needs to be resolved.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sport and physical education is the only course offered in this curriculum area. It was a focus subject for the inspection.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve well in comparison with their starting points at the beginning of Year 12.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students have positive attitudes towards learning in physical education.

Areas for improvement

- More use could be made of ICT in teaching and learning.

231. A-level examination results in 2002 showed a slight improvement on the 2001 figure. Almost half the students obtained the higher A-B grades. Female students outperformed males and students generally maintained or improved upon their AS-level performance. In the 2002 AS- level examination, there was no significant difference between the performance of male and female students. All the candidates obtained at least a pass grade and half obtained the higher A-B grades.

232. The standards of work of current students are above average and, in relation to their starting points on entry to AS and A-level courses, students achieve well.

233. In the lessons seen in Year 13, students were revising for forthcoming examinations. In a lesson revising the history of sport, students showed a good understanding of the four dominant themes in the history of sport and both male and females contributed confidently and accurately to the discussion. All students made effective use of their notes, adding to and annotating them as they traced the history of football as an exemplar through the themes. Completed Personal Performance Profiles indicate that higher attaining students in particular, relate their action planning well to their initial analysis of relevant aspects of fitness. This is not so evident in the work of average and lower attaining students and their evaluation of improvements to both fitness and skills tends to be more superficial. Evidence from written work indicates that the technical vocabulary of the subject is well understood and used appropriately. Understanding of features of the development of physical education and sport in the nineteenth century, such as athleticism is good and well illustrated with relevant examples. Higher attaining students are particularly adept in relating theory to practice, for example in relating different psychological traits in character to success in particular activities. Lower attaining students show awareness of correct responses in their explanations but tend to lack precision, for example by not locating the emergence of 'pedestrianism' in the nineteenth century sufficiently well to the development of professional sport. Apart from the initiative of individual students, there is little evidence of ICT being used to support learning in this subject.

234. Students in Year 12 are beginning to appreciate the relationship between the theoretical aspects of the course and their own levels of performance and capacity to improve. In the one practical lesson observed, female students were more fully committed to learning than males, although all students were ultimately successful in explaining and administering a battery of fitness tests. Year 12 students were actively engaged in revision during the time of the inspection and it was not possible to analyse examples of their completed work. However, students' high levels of attainment indicated by their GCSE grades are not yet reflected in the grades earned from homework tasks and tests.

235. Students have very positive views about the subject and are particularly appreciative about the way in which their homework and other assessment tasks are quickly marked in a manner that helps them to improve. Students in Year 13 are much more aware of current controversies relating to national and international issues in sport, such as the current debate about English participation in international cricket matches in Zimbabwe, than students in Year 12. Retention rates are high and most students are considering following physical education related courses into higher education. Relationships with teachers are good and students appreciate the fact that their teachers are prepared to 'go the extra mile' in order to help both individuals and groups to improve understanding and make effective progress in learning.

236. Students' academic and personal progress is well monitored and teachers are quick to adapt their curriculum planning in the light of their analysis of students' performance.

237. Teaching and learning in physical education are very good. Lesson planning is very good and learning is related very well to examination criteria as well as the demands of the subject specification. Good quality marking results in early identification of students' needs, which are well met, for example through extra revision lessons. The marking was not as effective in picking up weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Revision lessons observed during the inspection had a good pace and contained a good variety of learning activities which effectively engaged the interest of students and prepared them well for modular examinations.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

238. The focus of the vocational programmes was the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Health and Social Care. Students can take either the six unit single or the twelve unit double award. The course is delivered to a combined Year 12 and Year 13 group and is taught across two option blocks. Students can additionally take a number of A and AS level subjects. In 2002, all students were successful in attaining grades at advanced level. Students achieved well in relation to their previous attainment. Four lessons

were observed and the good teaching encouraged students to develop an independent approach to their studies within a supportive environment.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Students have a sound grasp of technical language, which is applied in class and project work.
- Teaching is good: lessons are well planned and promote independent learning.
- Students work well together and provide help, support and additional resources for each other.
- Considerable use is made of ICT and students are proficient in its use and application.
- The subject is well led. Relevant help and guidance support teachers who are new to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Links between the theoretical content and its application to health and social care could be developed further.
- Students develop their skills at the descriptive level but few evaluate and present critical arguments.

239. Students, many with modest GCSE grades, choose the subject because of interest and the opportunity to submit portfolio work. The grades attained in 2002 reflected their interest and enthusiasm and were better than suggested by their grades at GCSE. Most students continued in further and higher education.

240. The work of current students is average in most respects. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations indicate that students are achieving well. In lessons, they respond well to the effective teaching, which reflects careful planning and close attention to the syllabus. In one lesson students carried out experiments using a peak flow meter. They took a series of readings, constructed a table and related the findings to a number of variables. This successfully led to the formulation of initial hypotheses. In another class students showed how their understanding of different research methods could be applied to their projects on topics such as food in schools, attitudes to children and smoking. Various sampling methods were discussed and students talked with confidence about the merits of the different techniques.

241. Students in Year 12, because of the joint teaching with Year 13, are quickly introduced to a number of different approaches, to independent study and group discussion. The combined year groups work together co-operatively. Students tackle portfolio work with enterprise but their skills in critical analysis are not always well developed.

242. Teaching is good overall; some of it is very good. The main features include clear lesson plans and structures that build on the content of other units of work. Teachers encourage students to develop their own specific projects and provide the necessary resources. A range of activities is used within each class and learning outcomes are suitably identified in the schemes of work. Teachers use these to further develop the key skills of communication and competence with number work. Students' experiences in a variety of care settings are used well by the teachers as a basis for teaching, but these are not always linked to classroom activities. Comments by teachers on students' folders and notes are helpful and suggest how improvements can be made.

243. Good written work from students identified ways in which relevant tests and theories could be applied in research topics. Effective and evaluative use was made of evidence. Other presentations provided adequate descriptions but limited attempts were made to analyse the evidence. Students' research projects have produced some interesting findings on disabled access to public places, including

the school and local restaurants. These findings were displayed outside the hall and stimulated discussion amongst other members of the school community.

244. Students have positive attitudes to their studies and respond carefully to questions. There is excellent support from teachers and students recognise that they can ask for help. They support each other, appreciate each other's strengths, listen carefully and participate in class discussions. They work independently and for much of the time sustain full concentration. Students are confident in their use of ICT and can interrogate websites to obtain required information.

245. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers' subject knowledge is suitably reinforced by appropriate 'in-house' staff development.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

246. The focus was on music and art and design but media studies, dance and drama were also sampled. Music, dance and drama contribute well to the performing arts. The students' commitment and enthusiasm for the subjects considerably enhance their learning. In dance, numbers are small and Years 12 and 13 are taught together. In the most recent examination, students' achievements were satisfactory. Students' experience of dance prior to the A-level course is limited and consequently they rely too heavily on the teacher in interpretation and composition of dance themes. In drama, all students were successful in gaining A-E grades in the A2-level examinations, three-quarters at grades A and B. Students in Year 12 were equally successful in the AS examinations. In the lesson observed teaching and learning were excellent and the students' overall standards were well above average. Their depiction of characters from 'Trojan Women' and subsequent discussion of the play's themes were of a very high standard. They responded positively to the teacher's enthusiastic and challenging teaching. All candidates gained A-E grades at A2-level and AS level in media studies. In the Year 12 lesson observed standards were above average. Good teaching, enhanced by very good specialist knowledge, helped the students make good progress in understanding the techniques of the usual layout of magazine covers.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- There is a high level of challenge, and a vigorous use of materials, in the best lessons.

Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of a sense of urgency in some lessons.
- Opportunities to use ICT to generate and manipulate images are missed.

247. In the AS level examination in 2002, almost half of the students gained the higher grades A and B, although a small number of students were not awarded a grade. In the A2-level examination in the same year, the spread of grades was more evenly distributed across the range A-E. In both examinations, most students performed broadly as expected, considering their GCSE grades. The great majority of students complete the course, and retention is very good.

248. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students' achievement is good, and they make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. They experiment freely and confidently, and produce attractive and unusual wall hangings on transparent plastic. These show a willingness to

explore a wide range of materials such as glue, wire and fabric. They also make striking headgear, based on the study of butterflies, using silicon and discarded metallic objects, such as thimbles. Their sketchbooks are vigorous, and they use collage, punched metal pieces and sacking to explore texture and colour. Their large-scale painting is also adventurous and they use acrylic paint to create complex compositions, based on the study of plant forms. However, their pencil drawing is less adventurous and lacks the excitement seen in their other work.

249. Standards in Year 12 are well above average; students' achievement is good. They produce drawings in mixed media, from close observation of fish, which are exciting and bold. These capture the liquid play of light on scales and skin very effectively and produce a very strong visual impact. Students' colour work, informed by the study of the work of De Kooning, is adventurous, with free brushwork and boldly contrasting colours. Their still-life drawing is vigorous and effectively explores ways to represent transparent and translucent materials. Students use ICT to research the work of other artists, but there are some missed opportunities to use it to generate and manipulate images.

250. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, there is a high level of challenge, and materials are used in vigorous and exciting ways. This was seen in a lesson on drawing, where students had to explore ways of representing covered and partly covered objects using charcoal, graphite and paint. They were encouraged to use large brushes to apply the paint and pieces of torn card to scrape into the surface. Students responded very well, and rose to the challenge, producing high quality results. They made excellent gains in their media handling skills and learning was excellent as a result. Occasionally, however, the learning atmosphere is too comfortable and lacks a sense of urgency. This restricts the pace of the lesson and the learning to a satisfactory level.

251. Students' attitudes are very good. Students respond very positively to the teaching, especially when materials and methods are exciting and vigorous. This helps to build very good relationships between students and teachers, good levels of interest and good learning overall.

252. The recently improved accommodation is being used to its full potential. This is having a very positive effect on the work in the subject. This is because the range of activities has improved and there are more opportunities for working on a larger scale. These factors are helping to raise standards, which are improving.

Music and Music technology

The quality of provision in music and music technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards in music technology are high.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The resources are very good.
- Students in both music courses are very committed to their work.
- Extra-curricular activities in the school provide very good enrichment students in the sixth form.

Areas for improvement

There are no significant areas for improvement.

253. In 2002, all the students entered for AS and A2-level examinations in music and music technology attained grades A -E, some at the highest levels A and B. Most students did as well or better than expected. Students' achievement in AS music is particularly noteworthy because not all students studied music before starting the course. Most students progress to the A2- level courses after taking AS level examinations. The introduction of music technology has considerably enhanced the provision for music in

the sixth form. Both male and female students take up the music course, but, currently, the music technology course is attracting mainly male students.

254. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in music and well above in music technology. Students make very good progress through both courses. Standards of composition and performance in music are good. Students in Year 12 are beginning to play with a sense of performance and style. In Year 13, they compose effectively and sensitively for a variety of instruments. Their good listening skills are well developed and these are backed by good knowledge and understanding of musical styles through the ages. In music technology, Year 12 students also have good listening skills and can discriminate effectively between ambient and audio recordings. Listening skills are also being applied to their studio recordings and midi sequencing; many students produce work that manipulates the technology to achieve a musically satisfying result.

255. Students are very interested in their work and are highly motivated. They are very committed to the courses. Teachers and students share great enthusiasm for the subject, which creates a very good basis for learning, especially evident in music technology. Relationships between teachers and students are very strong and a very obvious feature of the department. Students trust and respect their teachers. The excellent way their courses and tasks are organised by the teachers provides a very good framework in which students are mature and responsible in their attitude to work. Schedules for recording their work are tight and in planning for and doing this, students have to, and do, consider others. This is because, in the excellent organisation of resources and tasks, teachers are very good role-models. Students speak highly of all aspects of the provision in the department. They feel that advice given to them is sound and feedback about their work helps them to improve.

256. Teaching and learning are very good in both courses at AS and A level. Teachers are experts in their subject; skills, understanding and knowledge are evident in all that they do. Students, as a result of very good teaching, are acquiring these attributes. Teachers set demanding standards and have high expectations of their students. As a result students work hard in lessons making considerable effort. They are particular about the standards of work they are producing even if it means re-recording whole tracks of their songs. Lessons are very well prepared and students know what they have to achieve. Teachers provide very good opportunities for students to work independently. In music technology, students do this for much of the time. They become totally absorbed in what they are doing. While studying Debussy's '*L'Après midi d'un Faune*' music students were given time to assemble their information individually before the teacher discussed this with them, giving each one advice on the way to proceed. In another music lesson, each Year 13 student prepared a listening task for the others. This was a particularly good strategy because their listening skills had to be very well engaged during individual preparation of the task. Students' work is thoroughly and accurately assessed according to the examination criteria. They are given very good feedback that helps them to improve.

257. Many students studying music are involved in activities outside the classroom, taking part in Choir, Concert Band and Jazz Band. The quality of performance of these groups, seen through an extensive programme of concerts during the year, is very high. Many students also learn to play instruments in school. Standards and the quality of teaching are high. There is rigorous appraisal of results. The provision and use of the technology resources, the extra-curricular activities and the lively and dedicated ethos of the department considerably enhance the quality of learning and the students' experience of music in the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

258. Within this group of subjects the focus was on geography and psychology but history, sociology and law were also sampled. In sociology, the very good teaching allows students to acquire a critical understanding of contemporary social life. Teaching provides a clear analysis of the extent to which society affects the person and the person affects society. Learning is very good. In 2002, all students were successful in gaining grades in the AS and A2-level examinations, some at the highest levels A and

B. Skills are being developed which allow them to participate in life more effectively. The teaching of law is by distance learning through the media of video conferencing. Students' good attitudes support independent learning. There is good access to the relevant resources such as TV, video, computer and journals and a just balance of praise and criticism in the regular assessment of students' performance. The provision for sociology and law is very good. There was a significant improvement in the A2-level history results in 2002 over those of the previous year. All students entered gained grades, with half obtaining the highest grades. One lesson was seen. Teaching was very good.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
- Examination results have improved significantly and many students gain the highest grades.
- Students have very good attitudes towards their learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

There are no significant areas for improvement.

259. In 2002 all 15 students passed the A2-level examination with six obtaining the higher A and B grades. Most students attained higher results than expected in relation to their earlier attainment at GCSE. In the AS examination almost all students were successful; over half gained the higher grades. Most of the students have continued with the subject into Year 13. Geography is a popular and successful subject and course completion rates are high.

260. Students sustain well above average standards overall and this represents very good achievement. Higher-attaining students gained full marks in work requiring the analysis of evidence and the writing of convincing arguments to support the theory of plate tectonics. The work of lower attaining students was descriptive rather than analytical. In a range of personal fieldwork all students produced reports of very good quality. For example, an investigation into the environmental, economic and social impact of the development of a retail park was very professional. It was researched in detail and presented very competently using ICT.

261. Teaching and learning are very good overall. All the lessons observed were good or better; two were excellent. In one of these, very good use of assessment revealed a weakness in students' knowledge and understanding of soils. To redress, the teacher used an excellent resource pack that challenged students to analyse the processes taking place in soil formation. Students were made to think for themselves; skilful questioning by the teacher promoted intellectual effort and very effective independent learning. An excellent homework extended students' learning about soil catena. In another excellent lesson students were expected to use their prior knowledge and understanding to produce their own maps of urbanisation. They compared and contrasted the global patterns of countries where most people live in towns and cities with those that have a high rate of urbanisation. A rapid question and answer session consolidated students' understanding of the process. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject is clear in the excellent marking that informs students in detail how to improve their work.

262. Students' attitudes towards geography are consistently very good and sometimes excellent. They have a major impact on their learning. Students arrive at lessons well organised and prepared. For example, in a lesson on global change they had prepared information to share with each other. They presented this in pairs thus building up a good knowledge and understanding of regional inequality in Italy. Students demonstrated good speaking and listening skills.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Methods of research are taught well.
- Students receive good pastoral and academic guidance in their studies.
- Working relationships between students and staff are positive.

Areas for improvement

- Students' independent learning skills could be developed further.

263. Standards of work in psychology are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' knowledge of psychology causes the quality of their learning to be good. As a result, students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, is good. Completion and retention rates are good.

264. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students gain a critical understanding of the terms 'obedience' and 'conformity' for example. They understand why some psychological research provokes a public outcry, particularly concerning the ethical issues raised by the published work. Teachers use good social influence research studies to illustrate their lessons, for example, the clear focus in one lesson was on the issues from Freud's study of Little Hans, looking at the factors involved in emotional experiences. Students identified up to six issues arising from the study. Higher attaining students write well and produce elaborate descriptions of a study or a theory. The few average attaining students taking psychology occasionally run out of ideas but they are well supported to think of correct explanations of the key approaches to psychology. Male and female students successfully collect data in two ways: empirically and rationally. Both genders perform equally well in class. Students in Year 12 fully understand that human development is a dynamic process motivated or driven by certain forces.

265. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students apply a scientific process to learning about human behaviour. They make observations and produce facts about psychology. Students can construct a theory to account for a set of related facts and they then progress to generating expectations (hypotheses) from the theory. A Year 13 class on pain was well planned to exactly match the needs of the students. Numerous studies and experiments were described and evaluated. Male and female students are equally competent in collecting data to test expectations. Females' writing is better with regard to spelling, punctuation and grammar. All students can write about cognitive psychology and analyse and evaluate a range of psychology theories and studies. The higher attaining students communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology in a clear and effective manner.

266. Psychology is a new subject to students in Year 12. They make good progress through the course, as is indicated by the improvement in pass rate from AS to A2-level examinations in 2002. Female students perform better than male students over all grades, and significantly so. Students' results in Years 12 and 13 indicate that performance is better than might have been expected from their prior attainment at GCSE.

267. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have an appropriate interest in the core areas of cognitive, social developmental, individual differences and physiological psychology. Lessons are planned effectively to develop an understanding of psychology as a scientific study of behaviour and experience. Students are well advised that psychology differs from common sense in so far as it seeks to

collect objective and verifiable facts about behaviour, on which theories are then based. The teachers are good at helping students to understand the logic or important concepts of psychology. ICT is used effectively in some lessons. Students increase their understanding of psychology by discussing their writing or research. However, a greater measure of independent learning would raise the level of students' confidence. The strength of teaching is the informed commentary and thorough analysis of relevant psychological studies and methods.

268. Leadership and management are very good. The support and environment that is provided enable students to feel confident, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities in the sixth form. Students benefit from contacts with further and higher education establishments.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were French and English but German was also sampled. In German, teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.

English language and English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards of work in each subject are well above average. Achievement is very good given the wide range of attainment on entry to Year 12.
- Very good teaching is based on excellent subject knowledge.
- Curriculum planning is extremely thorough.
- The quality of teamwork and organisation is very good.
- The students enjoy the courses.

Areas for improvement

- Features of the writing of some middle and the lower attaining students could be improved.

The focus subjects were English language and English literature.

269. All students entered for the AS and A2-level examinations in English in 2002 gained grades A-E; a considerable number gained the higher grades A and B. The results represented a significant improvement on those of the previous year.

270. Overall standards in the current Year 13 are well above average. The English language students are sustaining the impressive standards gained in their AS examinations. There is a clearly visible improvement in standards in literature compared to the AS results, because the students are focusing much more rigorously and explicitly on addressing the course's assessment objectives in their assignments. Overall achievement is very good, especially given the very wide range of attainment on entry. Each group includes students whose GCSE standards were at best below average: a relatively low starting point for A level courses in English.

271. There is a consistency in the strengths of the highest attaining students in both subjects in Years 12 and 13. The quality of their written expression and accuracy is high. There are real strengths in the use of critical vocabulary. Judgements are illustrated and critically expanded. The tone is constantly evaluative: for example, references to the 'insidious prejudice' and 'self centred evil' of Rodrigo in 'Othello'. Literature students make a clear personal response. Language students are confident and accurate in their use of the very specific terminology of the subject. They ensured they made a comprehensive use of an analytical framework when deconstructing a letter dating from the Crimean War. They were sensitive to the contemporary and formal modes that governed the letter's tone but noted the unexpectedly implied warmth of the occasional colloquialism.

272. Middle attaining students are secure in their knowledge of the main features and themes of texts but their use of subject terminology and critical vocabulary is insufficient. In literature they do not include enough comment about the significance of a writer's choice of language. In English language their use of any framework is partial. In both subjects middle attaining students make some technical errors. Lower attaining students make more frequent technical errors and their comments on texts are too descriptive rather than analytical. Some of their expression is vague and there are weaknesses in their essay writing techniques, especially in constantly relating their response to the assignment's requirements.

273. Most students do well on course work elements irrespective of their attainment at the start of the course. They benefit significantly from individual tutorials with their teachers. These help students to improve the techniques of writing. Transferring this competence into other forms of essay work, including examination work, is a real challenge for lower attaining students. Nevertheless, the courses are popular. Staying on rates are good. Students speak of their enjoyment of the texts they study and the skills they develop. They value the excellent advice they receive from their teachers, both through oral and written feedback.

274. Teaching and learning are very good. There are significant strengths in the teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm. The teachers have high expectations of themselves and the students. The curriculum and lessons are planned with effective learning and the course assessment objectives very much in mind. Year 13 students made very good progress in analysing language change over time making full use of the framework provided by the teacher. This helped them to identify the impact of such features as graphology, syntax and formal semantics. They successfully linked the patriarchal tone of one text to contemporary attitudes for example. Excellent use is made of resources – a sequence from 'The Antiques Road Show' enhanced Year 12 students' understanding of the nature and impact of powerful language. They carried out a challenging but enjoyable analysis with relish. The teacher's excellent subject expertise helped other Year 12 students make great progress in their knowledge and understanding of forms of dialect. They showed very good concentration and resilience in this difficult encounter with new terms such as basilects, hyperlects and acrolects. The teacher's well-chosen examples illustrated these features successfully and sustained interest over the period of a long lesson. Year 13 literature students made very good progress in analysing Durcan's 'At the Funeral of the Marriage'. The teacher's enthusing and highly challenging questioning really challenged the students' thinking. Awareness of examination needs was always evident through the teacher's frequent references to the unit's assessment objectives and the explicit responses required in examinations. Many Year 12 literature students responded well in a lively debate on Blake's poetry, although the insecurity of some lower attaining students made full engagement difficult.

275. The organisation of the courses is very good. The commitment of the leading teachers is exemplary given their other responsibilities as members of the senior management team. They are very well-supported by their colleagues. Good practice is shared and demonstrated through team teaching that allows more experienced teachers to pass on their expertise.

French

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students have excellent attitudes and they achieve very well.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Speaking skills in Year 13 could be developed further.

276. In 2002, two students sat A2-level examinations and both achieved a pass at grade A. In AS examinations in 2002, most students attained A-E grades and results reflect the more modest GCSE grades with which some of the students began the course.

277. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and the students who have continued beyond AS level are achieving very well. They show good understanding of tapes and texts on moral, social and cultural issues and can identify and discuss the main points with some success. Regular conversation practice with the French assistant is helping them to build up their oral confidence but there is scope for them to take the initiative more readily and to develop their answers more fully. Coursework writing is of good quality and shows clear evidence of independent research. The students' ability to analyse findings, put forward their ideas and argue their case using a rich variety of vocabulary and complex structures is developing well.

278. Standards in Year 12 are already well above average and students, all females, are achieving very well. They show good understanding of challenging authentic texts and tapes and readily engage in lively discussion of matters arising from materials studied. Their command of structure and knowledge of vocabulary is such that they already speak and write confidently and fluently on a range of topics and issues. Their confidence with the spoken language reflects the very good progress they have made since GCSE.

279. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are fluent and their subject knowledge is excellent. Lessons are carefully planned and conducted with an infectious enthusiasm which encourages students to be very actively involved in their learning and ensures they learn at a fast rate. Stimulating resources are used to present new language and to trigger discussion and debate in which language skills are developed very effectively. Expectations are very high at all times. A good example was a Year 12 lesson about drugs. After a brisk oral presentation in French by the students of their summaries of texts about young drug addicts they had prepared for homework, the teacher quickly moved the class on to consider the question of whether soft drugs should be depenalised. Working from a stimulus text, students wrote full responses to the question, expressing and justifying their opinions with a high level of accuracy. Different viewpoints were then shared with the class, followed by critical checking of one another's work. Next, each student presented their poems on Aids, reading aloud with feeling before pinning them up for display. Guided by the teacher, the students then worked in pairs to analyse the language of the poems, thus raising their awareness of different parts of speech and increasing their knowledge of vocabulary to express emotions. The lesson rounded off with a song about Aids from which, despite its difficulty, students were able to identify the key words and link them to their poems. The entire lesson was conducted in French and the quality of teaching and learning was very good throughout.

280. Students' excellent attitudes contribute significantly to their very good achievement. They apply themselves diligently in class and put much time and effort into the completion of homework tasks, which include regular use of the Internet for research. Those interviewed said they found the work both challenging and rewarding. They appreciate the very detailed supportive comments they receive on their work which really help them to improve. They also appreciate the very good extra-curricular opportunities provided, citing for example recent film and theatre visits and the exchange visit to Valbonne in the south of France planned for Easter.

281. Teachers work extremely hard together, sharing ideas and good practice to achieve the highest standards.

