

INSPECTION REPORT

TUPTON HALL SCHOOL

Old Tupton, Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112933

Headteacher: Mr Patrick Cook

Reporting inspector: Mr A A Henderson
2941

Dates of inspection: 30th September – 4th October 2002

Inspection number: 249691

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: Station New Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Bradley

Date of previous inspection: 2nd December 1996

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31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
32229	M Comer	Team inspector	Business education	
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14841	M Duffey	Team inspector	History	
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19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	
32122	J Straw	Team inspector	Religious education	
32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities for students
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Tuption Hall is a community comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It is very much larger than average, occupies an extensive site, and is both popular and over-subscribed. There are 1845 pupils on roll, including 265 students in the sixth form. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, with around two-thirds from seven designated feeder primary schools. The annual intake of pupils to Year 7 comprises a broad social mix, and the school serves a varied district which includes both areas of social affluence and significant disadvantage. This diversity of intake reflects the comprehensive nature of the school. Attainment on entry is average, with a broad range of ability represented. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs, including those with statements, is below average. Most of these have learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, but some have emotional and behavioural problems. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with just one student for whom English is not the spoken language in the home. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. Since the previous inspection the school has been heavily involved in the initial training of teachers, and has gained the Investor in People award, Sportsmark, and in 2002 a School Achievement Award. For the past two years, the school has been engaged in a pilot private finance initiative. Construction work now in progress, due for completion in 2003, will replace the school's poor accommodation with an entirely new building within the existing site.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

In many respects, Tupton Hall provides a good education for its pupils, regardless of background or ability. Throughout the school, pupils and students achieve well because teaching is good, and most have good attitudes to work. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average. GCSE results were average in 2001, and improved in 2002. A-level examination results are average overall. The school is well led and managed, and gives satisfactory value for money. It is efficient, and the sixth form provision is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Standards in mathematics, geography and physical education are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the previous inspection.
- Sixth form provision is good.
- The breadth of curriculum is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The procedures for assessment and checking pupils' attainment and progress are good.

What could be improved

- Standards in ICT throughout the school are not high enough.
- GCSE results could be improved in a number of subjects, for example, science, economics and religious education.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- The school's partnership with parents in its work could be stronger.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in 1996, improvement has been satisfactory overall. Above average standards have been sustained in Years 7-9, whilst GCSE results have improved. Teaching has improved. Attendance has risen, and is now close to average. Progress in tackling the key issues raised by the previous inspection has been satisfactory. However, the improvements in ICT have not been sufficient, and pupils' spiritual development and provision for collective worship are unsatisfactory.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

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

Results in National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 in 2001 were above average overall. Since 1996, overall test results have improved at the same rate as the national trend. Girls do better than boys, in line with the national picture. In 2001, results were above average in mathematics and science, and were average in English. In 2002, results were similar. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7-9 are above average overall; and represent good achievement for these pupils, including those with special educational needs, in relation to their attainment when they began Year 7. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, design technology, geography, physical education and religious education. They are average in most other subjects, except in ICT where standards are below average because insufficient computers mean that there is not enough teaching.

In 2001, overall GCSE results were broadly average, and matched the school's targets. In 2002, results were similar, reflecting the expectations of the school. Girls' GCSE results are stronger than those of boys in the school, but the variation is less than is usually found. GCSE results in subjects vary considerably. In 2001, they were well above average in mathematics, geography and physical education, but were below average in science, English literature, history, economics and religious education. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall, and represent good achievement. They are higher than recent examination results would suggest, as a result of recent successful emphasis given to improving teaching and learning at this stage. Pupils' skills in literacy are above average, and are average in numeracy - both are sufficiently well developed to support access to learning in all subjects. However, standards in the use of ICT are below average, and pupils are underachieving in this subject.

Since the previous inspection, A-level results have declined from above average to average. However, this is misleading. The average A-level points score has dropped since the previous inspection because a considerable number of students took two rather than the more usual three subjects - in 2001, their overall pass rate was good, 87 per cent successfully completing their courses. Results were very high in geography, and were well above average in design and technology, drama, economics and English language. Results in most of the individual subjects were above average; serious staffing problems contributed to below average results in law and accounts. In the AS examinations, taken for the first time in 2001, results were above average, with the highest results in design and technology, geography, mathematics, sport studies, politics and sociology. In 2002, the overall A-level pass rate improved significantly to 97 per cent. Most subjects sustained or improved their performance, most notably in mathematics and law. Students achieve well in the sixth form in relation to their previous overall GCSE attainment, and course completion rates are high. The standards of work seen in the current Year 12 and Year 13 are above average overall, and reflect previous examination standards. Generally average standards were seen in art, design and technology, and history. They were above average in the other focus subjects, and well above in English literature.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall. The large majority of pupils have good attitudes and are keen to learn. Some are less positive, and do not value the opportunities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. In lessons, behaviour is good. Outside of lessons, it is more variable, and some do not behave well. Exclusion is rare, but the number of short-term suspensions is high.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. For the vast majority, relationships are good, and pupils generally get on well with each other, and with their teachers. Some fall

	short of this, and incidences of bullying causes concern for some pupils.
Attendance	Attendance is close to average, but unauthorised absence is high.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good overall, and has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils in the school well. Teaching and learning are good in English in Years 7 to 11. They are good in mathematics in Years 7-9, and very good in Years 10 and 11 where the degree of challenge is high, enabling pupils to gain more advanced knowledge and skills. Teaching in science is good in Years 7-9, and is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Elsewhere, teaching is very good in geography and accounts for pupils' very good achievement in GCSE.

The strengths of teaching are very good subject knowledge and good lesson planning. The great majority of pupils respond well and are fully engaged in their work. However, in some lessons, pupils find difficulty in sustaining concentration for the full 70 minute period, particularly in Years 7-9. There is good teaching in every subject, including ICT, and in these good lessons pupils are well motivated and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught, enabling them to make good progress also.

A number of lessons, about five per cent of those seen, were unsatisfactory in mathematics, French, history, art, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In most cases, this was because of a general lack of progress caused by the disruptive behaviour by some pupils, and the teachers' ineffective strategies to ensure their attention and good behaviour.

The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Literacy skills are well taught, especially in English, geography and religious education. The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory, and is a good feature of work in mathematics and geography. The use and application of ICT in subjects is unsatisfactory.

Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good, and is resulting in above average standards because students show a strong application to their studies, and a determination to succeed. Teaching is particularly good in geography, English literature, mathematics, sport studies and sociology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. It is broad, balanced and relevant, and provides good opportunities for boys and girls of different aptitudes and abilities. Careers and vocational provision are very good. However, provision for ICT is unsatisfactory and National Curriculum requirements are not met. The extra-curricular programme is a good feature.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Most pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall, but would be improved with better planning. Social and moral development are satisfactory. Provision for cultural development is also satisfactory, but arrangements for spiritual development are inadequate, as they were at the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The arrangements for pupils' social welfare are good. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development could be further improved. Assessment procedures are very good, and assessment

	information is used well to support pupils' progress.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. In conjunction with the senior staff, the new headteacher has moved swiftly in identifying the strengths and is building on them. Weaknesses have also been identified, and are being tackled through the school's strategic planning. Middle management is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are conscientious and committed to the well-being of the pupils. They are well-informed, monitor standards and set targets for improvement. They discharge most of their responsibilities well; however, statutory requirements are not met for the curriculum (ICT, and religious education in the sixth form) and the provision of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are regular reviews of test and examination results; subject performance is monitored well. The school compares its performance with that of others, nationally and locally, and has taken effective action where required.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management is good. Principles of best value are applied effectively. Spending is linked to school priorities, and specific grants are properly used. Staffing is adequate. With the exception of ICT, resources are adequate, although more books are required in the library. The current accommodation is poor; replacement is imminent.

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 progress that pupils make • The overall quality of teaching • School expects pupils to work hard and do their best • Leadership and management • Improved examination results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and frequency of information • The amount of homework and use of homework diaries • The encouragement for average attaining pupils • Consultation and involvement of parents • Control of behaviour • Provision for examination courses in ICT

Parents' positive views are well founded. Homework is used satisfactorily to supplement class work in most subjects and well in some, but the absence of a timetable and inconsistent use of diaries cause most of the parents' uncertainties. Support for middle-attaining pupils is generally satisfactory but may not seem to be so because, for example, letters of commendation for higher achieving pupils and cautionary letters for underachieving pupils are sent to parents throughout the year, whereas parents of middle-attaining pupils receive little information. Concerns about behaviour and ICT provision are shared by inspectors, as is the lack of opportunity for involving parents in the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than most with 261 students on roll, with almost equal numbers of male and female students. None are identified as having special educational needs. There is one student from an ethnic minority background for whom English is not the spoken language at home. There is a wide range of academic subjects at AS, A2 and AVCE level, supplemented by a good range of enrichment activities. The sixth form is open-access but students are generally expected to have a minimum of four grade Cs at GCSE. Standards at the start of Year 12 are average. Two-fifths of pupils from Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form, and a considerable number join from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good standard of education for its students and it prepares them very well for the next stage of their careers. It is successful and cost-effective. In 2001, results in A-level examinations were above average in most subjects, and those in geography were in the top five per cent of the country. A number of students took two rather than the more usual three subjects, and this lowers the school's overall average point score per student. Standards are above average overall, and represent good achievement. Teaching is good and consequently students learn well. Leadership and management are good and ensure that the students receive very good support and guidance. As a result most complete their courses and move into higher education or are successful in finding employment.

Strengths

- Results and standards are highest in geography, mathematics, sport studies and sociology, and are above average in most subjects.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students with low GCSE scores achieve very well in vocational courses.
- Students have very good attitudes.
- Support, guidance, assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are very good.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

What could be improved

- Standards in art and design, design and technology, and history.
- The breadth of the education of some students is too narrow. Too few students take four subjects in Year 12 and a high proportion take two instead of three subjects in Year 13.
- The proportion of very good or better teaching.
- At present, facilities for private study and ICT are poor.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. The combination of teachers' subject expertise and their very good relationships with students leads to very good achievement.
Biology	Good. Results were above average in 2001. Standards are above average because teaching is good and students have very good attitudes.
Chemistry	Good. Results were above average in 2001. Students achieve well as a result of consistently good teaching and standards are above average. However, the lack of use of ICT is a weakness.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Results were above average in 2001 but they declined in 2002. Standards are average and teaching and learning are satisfactory. More use should be made of CAD/CAM.
Business	Good. Results and standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good so that students achieve well overall.
Sport studies	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly

	motivated and they achieve very well. Assessment is used very effectively.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Health and Social Care	Good. Results and standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good and the students achieve well overall. The course is well planned.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Results were above average in 2001 but they declined in 2002. Current standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory; the pace in some lessons is too slow.
Music	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Standards are above average. In 2001, A-level results were above average.
History	Satisfactory. Standards are average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although sometimes inconsistent. Results were average in 2001, and are similar in 2002.
Law	Good. Results were well below average in 2001 but improved dramatically in 2002. Standards are above average, and teaching and learning are good.
Sociology	Very good. Standards and results are above average. Teaching and learning are very good and students have positive attitudes and achieve very well.
English literature	Good. Results were average in 2001. Standards have improved and are now well above average. Teaching and learning are very good.

In nine other subjects 12 lessons were seen. Teaching was very good in further mathematics, geography, drama and economics. It was good in English language, physics, media studies and travel and tourism, and satisfactory in politics. The achievement of students with modest GCSE scores in the full range of vocational courses is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance for students are very good. The use of assessment to check progress makes a very effective contribution to standards and achievement.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are good. Results are evaluated so that the governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses. The development plan is satisfactory. It has a very clear focus on pastoral management, but does not include improving teaching and learning or the use of target setting to raise standards and results.

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"> • They are well informed about their progress • Support and guidance are strengths • The responsibility for their own community • The enrichment opportunities • Being treated as young adults • The choice of courses meets the needs of most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of timetabled recreation • The access to computers, and facilities for private study

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors feel that students' views are justified.

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. When pupils join the school at the end of Year 6, their overall standards of attainment are average, and as expected for a typical comprehensive school. Results in the national tests taken by pupils aged 11 in 2001 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels is average in each of the core subjects – English, mathematics and science. The intake includes a broad range of ability. This is confirmed by the results of standardised tests administered by the LEA in Year 7 which confirm that the school's population is average on entry. This has been the case since the previous inspection, with little variation between year groups across the school.

2. In 2001, the overall results in National Curriculum tests taken by pupils aged 14 were above average for all schools, girls attaining more highly than boys, reflecting the national picture. Pupils' performance was above average in mathematics and science, whilst in English it was average. Since the previous inspection in 1996, the rate of improvement has matched the national trend. When compared with the results of similar schools, (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), overall performance was above average for 2001. The results for both mathematics and science were well above average, whilst those for English remained average.

3. At the time of the last inspection in 1996, results in GCSE examinations had dipped below the national average. This continued to be the case for the following two years. Results in 1999 showed marked improvement, improving to the national average. Since that time, results have been sustained at that level, matching the national trend for improvement. In 2001, the school's average GCSE points score per pupil was close to the national average. The results for both boys and girls were close to their respective national averages. Although girls scored more highly than boys, the difference was less than that found nationally. Compared with similar schools (using the free school meals indicator), the average points score and higher grade results are average, whilst the proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades is below average. This indicates that whilst the performance of higher attaining pupils is good, those of lower attainment are not doing quite as well. Overall, the school has been very close to its targets for GCSE performance in 2000 and 2001. The most recent 2002 GCSE results have sustained the steady improvement since 1999, generally meeting the school's targets, although falling a little short of its expectations for the higher A*-C grades.

4. GCSE results in subjects for 2001 varied considerably for grades A*-C. They were significantly above average in mathematics, geography and physical education, but were significantly below in science, English literature, history, economics and religious education. In the most recent GCSE examinations in 2002, the overall slight improvement in results is apparent in many subjects, with significant improvement in history.

5. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards reflect the test results in Years 7-9, and are above average. At this stage, standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, design technology, geography, physical education and religious education. They are average in all other subjects except ICT in which standards are below average. In Years 10 and 11, the standards in work seen are higher than previous examination results would suggest. Overall, they are above average in response to the school's recent emphasis in its development planning on improving standards in Years 10 and 11. This work has concentrated on developing teaching and learning styles, together with wider use of pupil performance data to set targets. Its effectiveness can be judged by the improved standards now seen. At this stage, standards in geography and mathematics are well above average, and they are above average in English, science, history, French, German, music, physical education and religious education. The standards of work seen during the inspection in design technology and art are average, whilst standards in ICT continue to be below average at this stage.

6. The school sets overall targets for improvement in GCSE results, based on predictions for each pupil using data which links their prior attainment in Year 7 and Year 9 with GCSE outcomes. Most departments are beginning to use this information to inform their planning, develop strategies for

improvement, and to track pupils' progress. Until recently, overall targets have been conservative. The well above average results achieved by pupils in a few subjects, and the variable performance in others illustrate the need to consolidate this work and present more challenge. The overall targets set for GCSE performance in 2003 reflect this.

7. The progress and achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good as they move through the school. Given the pupils' average starting points, their achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good overall. This is particularly the case in geography, English, mathematics and science, and is in response to strong teaching and high expectations. In ICT, weaknesses in provision for the subject result in pupils' unsatisfactory progress, despite the good teaching seen in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well in response to good teaching. Achievement is notably very good in geography and mathematics in which the teachers' expectations of pupils of all abilities are high.

8. The school does not yet identify its gifted pupils or those with special talents. Although there are many opportunities for pupils to exercise their talents out of school hours, teachers rarely plan extension activities for the most gifted pupils in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards which their teachers expect of them, and several do better than expected in their GCSE and other accredited courses. Most make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. However, a minority of pupils who have behavioural difficulties make unsatisfactory progress because of their negative attitudes towards learning. In lessons most pupils progress at the same rate as other groups of pupils. In geography their progress is very good, and pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science, and physical education and religious education. This is because teaching methods and learning tasks are carefully tailored to their requirements. In subjects such as art and design, history, design technology and music, in which the adaptation of teaching materials is not as well advanced, pupils make satisfactory progress.

9. Pupils usually enter Year 7 with average standards in literacy. School assessments, however, show literacy standards to be not as secure as those in numeracy. Pupils make good progress. Standards are above average in the current Years 9 and 11. They are making notably good progress in the organisation of their writing. A few pupils throughout the school are below and well below average. Because of well-targeted support they make good progress in their use of basic punctuation and in the organisation of their shorter pieces of writing. Reading standards are above average. Most pupils read fluently and select information quickly from texts.

10. Pupils' arithmetical skills are improving and are supporting their learning effectively in coping with the mathematical demands in subjects. In geography, pupils handle data effectively when constructing graphs, and their measurement skills help them to improve their map reading. In science, they make accurate calculations and handle formulae skilfully. In design technology, pupils measure and estimate accurately, and construct scale drawings well.

11. ICT is well taught in Year 7. Thereafter, the shortage of computers means that pupils' use and application of ICT are unsatisfactory. In Years 8 to 11, ICT is not used enough in most subjects to enhance learning, and pupils are underachieving. Although some subjects use ICT, notably design technology, and occasionally history, geography and art, there is little significant contribution made across the curriculum in developing pupils' ICT capabilities.

Sixth form

12. Overall attainment at the start of the sixth form is average. Given this starting point, students achieve above what might be expected, making good progress as they move through the sixth form.

13. Results in examinations in the sixth form have improved and are above average in most subjects. They reflect good achievement. There was no significant difference between the results of male and female students in 2001. Pass rate per entry improved significantly from 87 per cent in 2001 to 97 per cent in 2002.

14. The average total points score per student has been average for the last four years. Previously it was above average. During the last two years this has been attributable to some weak subject results, and to the low numbers of students taking three or more courses. In 2001, a large number of

students who took both accounts and law failed the examinations. The main reason was a serious staffing problem. In 2002, lower results in biology were due to students' performance in one section of the new course in which students did not achieve well. Only a third of students study four AS levels in the lower sixth. In the upper sixth almost a third of students take two or fewer subjects at A2 level. These factors have a very significant impact on the total average points score per student.

15. In 2001 A-level results were very high in geography and well above average in drama and economics. They were above average in English language, art and design, design and technology, biology, chemistry, mathematics, music, sociology, sport studies, and in both GNVQ business, and health and social care. The results at GNVQ Intermediate Level in 2001 were also above average. They were average in other subjects, except law and accounts in which they were well below average. In the most recent examinations in 2002, there were significant improvements in law and mathematics. There was also a significant decline in the results in art and design, and design and technology.

16. The results in 2001 in the new AS examination at the end of Year 12 were above the national average. The best results were in design and technology, geography, mathematics, sport studies, politics and sociology.

17. In key skills at level 3 results in communication have been much higher than those in the application of number and ICT. About two-thirds of the present Year 13 students took the examination in communication and three-quarters passed. The weak results in ICT are not surprising given the very limited access to these resources in school. No students are taking the application of number at the present time, and in the lessons seen during the inspection standards were average in communication and in ICT.

18. Course completion rates are generally high and 70 per cent of students move into higher education, many gaining their first choices. The remainder successfully find employment or take a gap year.

19. Students achieve well overall. The achievement of pupils with low GCSE results in the advanced vocational courses is very good. Achievement is good or better in all subjects except art and design, design and technology, and history where it is satisfactory. In 2000 and 2001, students gained significantly higher grades in geography, sport studies and sociology than in their other subjects. In the three years before 2002, students' grades in chemistry were significantly lower than in their other examinations.

20. Current standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. These standards are reached because the students achieve well in response to good teaching and learning. Standards are well above average in English literature. They are above average in the other focus subjects except art and design, design and technology, and history where they are average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes towards school are satisfactory. Their behaviour, personal development and attendance are, on balance, satisfactory. These are similar findings to the previous report. A significant minority of parents rightly express concerns about standards of behaviour.

22. The large majority of pupils have positive attitudes about the school. They like almost all of their lessons, value the support and guidance offered by their teachers, and participate well in the various classroom and extra-curricular activities. A minority of pupils place a low value on education and this affects their attitudes, behaviour and personal development. However, those in Years 10 and 11 who follow the vocational courses are very positive about the opportunities the school is providing.

23. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good and pupils get on with their studies in a co-operative and positive manner. In the few instances where behaviour is unsatisfactory, it is with particularly challenging and uncooperative pupils either because lessons are not sufficiently stimulating, or discipline and control are not effective.

24. Behaviour outside lessons is less reliable. Whilst the majority of pupils behave responsibly, a significant minority do not. During the inspection, some pupils were seen showing disrespect for adult helpers, refusing to accept correction from teachers, and having a disregard for property. Litter is an issue in many areas of the school grounds. Bullying causes concern for some pupils. Most are satisfied that it is dealt with effectively, but a few are sufficiently concerned that they identified it as one of the most important things that they would like to change about the school. The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils, and has only permanently excluded three pupils in the past five years. The number of temporary exclusions is high compared with similar schools. Some of these were attributable to anti-social behaviour between pupils, and more to unacceptable behaviour towards staff. The incidents involve male and female pupils from all year groups, although pupils in Years 9 and 10 account for a larger proportion of them.

25. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. Many pupils learn to take responsibility well, for example, through year and school council representation. Involvement in sport and a range of activities including dramatic and musical productions, trips abroad, charity support and various competitions contributes well to the richness of their experiences. They build awareness and acceptance of the beliefs and cultures of others through religious education. They develop effective study skills through the programme for personal development. However, a number of pupils lack a sense of responsibility and what is acceptable behaviour. This can be seen in their lack of respect for others and property.

26. Most pupils with special educational needs respond well to the care which they receive. They often lack confidence when they enter the school. However, the high quality of support from teachers and classroom support staff enables the majority to make steady progress in developing self-assurance and in establishing constructive relationships with staff and fellow pupils. Pupils develop positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general, and their behaviour in lessons is generally good. Some pupils with behavioural difficulties are slow to make progress in developing self-control, but the work of the learning support unit is beginning to have a positive effect on the attitudes of those pupils who receive help there. However, a minority of those with behavioural difficulties are uncooperative and, on occasion, disruptive in lessons.

27. Attendance is satisfactory. It was well below the average for secondary schools, but improved last year and is now close to average. Unauthorised absence is high. Some of this is due to the lack of explanations for absence despite the school's efforts. Punctuality at the start of school is satisfactory. Most pupils are punctual to lessons but some lack a sense of urgency when moving from one classroom to another.

Sixth form

28. Students' attitudes and personal development are very good. They have improved since the previous inspection. Students are very positive about almost all of their experiences in the sixth form. They approach their studies and other activities in a conscientious manner and seek to get the most out of their time in school. Their conduct is always very good and they are impressive role models for younger pupils.

29. Students develop mature attitudes about social and moral issues and demonstrate sensitivity towards others. They confidently express their views in a thoughtful and responsible manner. They are very clear about their aspirations and are very well able to work independently or with others. Relationships between students and adults are co-operative, constructive and mutually respectful, and form the basis of an environment in the sixth form that is conducive to learning and a good social community.

30. Many students choose to take on responsible roles in the lower school. They help in lessons, assist younger pupils with their reading or homework, and act as mentors to pupils who have personal concerns or difficulties. Students organise events, take responsibility for their own community, and participate in the whole school council.

31. Students are right to be very pleased with almost all of their experiences in the sixth form and to value the enrichment opportunities that many of them undertake in the lower school. They speak

highly of the quality of teaching and the help and guidance that they receive. They say that the range of courses meets the needs of nearly all of them, although they are concerned about computer provision and facilities for private study. However, they are pleased with the way teachers treat them as young adults. They say that teachers keep them fully informed about their progress, and they are well informed and prepared for the next stage of their careers.

32. Attendance and punctuality are regarded as good by sixth form staff, but reliable statistics are not currently available owing to the recent installation of a new recording system.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Years 7 to 11. In Years 7-9, the teaching seen is good or better in two-thirds of lessons. This proportion increases in Years 10 and 11 where teaching in seven lessons in ten is at least good. Across the school, one lesson in seven is very good or better – a lower proportion than is usually found – with more in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9.

34. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching - the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced, one lesson in twenty judged to be unsatisfactory, mainly in Years 7-9. The school has targeted work with Years 10 and 11 for improvement in its more recent development planning. The wider use of pupils' performance data in setting targets, and monitoring progress towards these, are key features of this work. The good overall quality of teaching and learning at this stage is testimony to this emphasis. Despite this, the full impact has not yet been realised in consistent GCSE outcomes in subjects. The need to secure more consistent results has been recognised by the new headteacher, who has quickly established teaching and learning as key elements for further improvement in his priorities for development for the school.

35. Teaching is notably effective in mathematics and geography. It is good across the school in English, physical education, and religious education. Good teaching predominates in Years 10 and 11 in history, modern foreign languages and music. It is also good in both science and design technology in Years 7-9. Elsewhere, teaching is satisfactory, with examples of good practice featuring in every subject area including ICT. The unsatisfactory teaching seen was almost exclusively in Years 8 and 9, in single lessons in mathematics, history, art, PSHE, and in two lessons in French. A common feature was lack of progress often owing to pupils' disruptive behaviour, and ineffective strategies employed by teachers to ensure pupils' attention and good behaviour. Behavioural problems were also at the root of the two unsatisfactory lessons in Years 10 and 11, both in PSHE, and in each case involving weaknesses in teachers' planning, preparation and commitment to the work presented. Where behaviour was unsatisfactory in lessons, learning was affected and pupils made insufficient progress.

36. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are good. The positive presentation of their subjects has a strong effect on pupils' progress and attainment, particularly where expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high. This is particularly so in English, mathematics, geography and physical education, in which pupils are consistently challenged by the work presented, and respond by quickly developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.

37. Most teachers set clear objectives for their lessons, and explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, occurring in many subjects, pupils' progress and understanding are regularly checked and drawn together in effective lesson summaries. In almost all subjects, teachers use a range of teaching strategies that are suitable for the work taking place and the pupils involved. Collaborative work is a strong feature in drama, physical education, music, geography and in some lessons in design technology and ICT. Whilst the specialist teaching in ICT is good in Year 7, there is too little teaching of specific skills and insufficient use made of it in other subjects.

38. Teachers plan their work well, and tasks in a majority of subjects are mainly appropriate to the needs and capabilities of all pupils, including those having special educational needs. The needs of the most able pupils require greater attention, although good examples of work which extended their capabilities were seen in mathematics, geography and English.

39. Most lessons are purposeful, often with effective questioning which develops pupils' speaking and listening, tests their knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. This approach was notably successful in a very good Year 7 lesson on sentence construction as part of the literacy progress unit in English. Despite generally effective planning by teachers, the full impact of otherwise good teaching is adversely affected by a drop in pace in some lessons. Teachers do not always make best use of the 70 minute lessons, and some pupils find difficulty in sustaining their concentration for the full period. As a result, some lessons are not always as productive as they should be, pupils grow restless towards the end, and their learning slows. These features were seen, for example, in Years 7-9 in geography, modern foreign languages, history, mathematics and religious education.

40. The use of assessment information is developing well across the school. It is effective in Years 10 and 11 where subject teachers make good use of GCSE grades in marking, together with effective target-setting for pupils based on their previous attainment levels. As a result, most pupils have a clear understanding of their progress and learning in their subjects, particularly in mathematics and physical education. Practice in Years 7-9 is more varied. Work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments for improvement, but pupils are not always provided with a clear understanding of their learning and relative attainment because a few subjects make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels. This is a concern in English at this stage, and also modern foreign languages. Assessment procedures in ICT are unsatisfactory because standards are not moderated properly.

41. The management of pupils in the classroom is mainly good, and supported well by positive relationships with pupils. Teachers set good examples, relating well to their classes and providing positive support and encouragement. Discipline is effective, although some teachers have to work hard to maintain full control, particularly in Years 7-9. Time is sometimes lost in checking the behaviour and concentration of a significant minority of boys and girls whose behaviour can disrupt progress, and who find difficulty in concentrating fully in lessons.

42. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught and consequently make good progress overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the standards and needs of individual pupils because they are well informed through the school's learning support booklet. In most effective lessons, teachers manage their pupils in a pleasant but firm way, and successfully adapt their teaching methods and learning materials to their requirements. For example, Year 11 pupils in a lower set mathematics class made good gains in learning how to draw and interpret scatter diagrams because of the skilful question and answer sessions in which the teacher helped them to build on the work of the previous lesson. The specifically prepared examples enabled most pupils to meet the challenge of working problems out for themselves. In geography, pupils make very good progress because of the high quality of the learning materials, such as structured writing frames and larger size worksheets for ease of reading and response. Another strength of the teaching is the good cooperation between teacher and support staff, which has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. However, in some subjects such as history and design technology, the work is not sufficiently matched to pupils' needs, and they struggle to understand what they are reading because the language used is too difficult. Furthermore, the progress of all pupils is adversely affected when teachers are not confident in managing the challenging behaviour of a few who do not want to learn.

43. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are developing well across the school. Whilst literacy is more widely featured in planning at present, both areas are supporting the good progress made in subjects generally. However, the use and application of ICT is unsatisfactory in other subjects because, despite inclusion in planning, pupils are at present unable to access computers sufficiently.

Sixth form

44. The quality of teaching in the sixth form, and the learning that it promotes are good. Approaching three-quarters of the teaching was at least good, with just over a quarter judged to be very good or better. Whilst this is a lower proportion than is usually found, the quality of teaching is consistent, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

45. A wide range of sixth form subjects was sampled during the inspection, and thirteen subjects

were inspected in greater depth. In these 'focus' subjects, teaching and learning were very good in English literature, mathematics, sport studies and sociology. They were good in biology, chemistry, law, music, business education, and health and social care. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall in history, art, and design and technology. Examples of good teaching featured in every subject.

46. The sixth form is an effective community of learners as a result of this good quality of teaching. Students apply themselves to their work with growing confidence as they move through the sixth form. This, together with their strong commitment and determination to succeed, results in standards of work seen during the inspection which match, and in some cases exceed, the above average examination results in many individual subjects.

47. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Their enthusiasm and expertise in their subjects feed students' curiosity and stimulate their learning. In the most effective lessons, expectations of students' response are high; they are required to tackle challenging tasks and activities with consequently positive impact on their progress and attainment. This was the case, for example, in a very successful Year 13 mathematics lesson which extended students' understanding of resultant equations. A similarly successful approach was seen in a practical Year 13 biology lesson on biochemical testing and the control of blood sugar levels, which students successfully analysed and diagnosed using urine samples.

48. Teachers plan work well in the sixth form. Work is carefully linked to the course specifications, although sometimes constrained by limitations in resources, including ICT. New work is introduced carefully so that students are able to work independently, although the current provision for independent study is generally unsatisfactory. Requirements for examination success are clearly rehearsed. Teachers take time at the start of lessons to identify objectives, clarify the purpose of the work taking place, and at the end of most lessons, check with students to confirm that they have been achieved. In this way, students develop a clear understanding of what they have to learn and why, as, for example, in a good Year 12 English lesson on language acquisition.

49. The range of teaching styles and working methods used is generally appropriate to developing learning skills for sixth form students. Occasionally, opportunities for collaboration and debate are missed. Where this is the case, there is some over-dependence on the teacher, and restricted opportunity for students to enjoy the challenge and enrichment of extended dialogue and debate with their peers. Where this opportunity is provided, students' learning is greatly enhanced, as in a Year 12 law lesson covering approaches to modern policing, including stop and search. Lively debate and thoughtful analysis ensued in response to the very good teaching which included role-play in which students were fully engaged.

50. There is a formal structure in Year 12 for developing students' key skills in the three components of communication, application of number, and ICT. The first two of these are also often well presented within subject specific courses, but ICT is a weakness in many. As a result, its potential for independent research and study is less well exploited than it might be.

51. Most lessons are purposeful in pace, often with effective questioning which encourages students' communication skills, and tests their knowledge and understanding. Assessment procedures are good, and information relating to students' prior attainment at GCSE is used well to gauge progress towards predicted targets for success in the A-level examinations. Homework is used effectively in most subjects, and is supported by regular marking which often provides clear guidance for improvement, notably so in English and geography.

52. Relationships are very good in the sixth form. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and work hard. They relate well to their students, and provide high levels of support and encouragement. This is highly valued by the students who feel that these qualities are key strengths in the school's sixth form provision.

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

53. The curriculum provision is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. With the exception of a major weakness in ICT, it is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. Provision in Years 7-9 includes catch-up lessons in Year 7 and booster classes in Year 9 for literacy, numeracy and science, plus drama in Years 8 and 9. Another good feature in Year 7 is that pupils follow a taster course in French, Spanish and German and then select one of these languages to study for the next four years, thus providing choice and diversity. The effectiveness of this language provision is under review. All statutory requirements are met with exception of ICT, and the daily act of collective worship. They are not met in ICT because National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered, nor is ICT being used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects.

54. The curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is now a wide range of exciting options to meet the needs and interests of all pupils, although these do not include GCSE ICT. The school has formally notified the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of its decision to disapply the requirements of the National Curriculum in respect of the study of a modern foreign language or design technology subject. This has been done to enable pupils, with parental approval, to follow either a vocational/work-related course or to pursue a particular strength by taking an extra subject in humanities or expressive arts. The imaginatively designed programme also allows pupils to study three separate sciences, or take a single science with a vocational GCSE in business studies. Currently no pupils take a second modern foreign language and this limits opportunities for some pupils in their future. The majority of pupils follow courses in ten GCSE subjects, including English, English literature, mathematics, science and religious education.

55. The school makes good provision for pupils who are in need of extra help through a wide range of curricular opportunities. The curriculum is accessible to all on the special educational needs register, although a small number of pupils are disapplied from modern foreign languages in order to consolidate their work in chosen subjects. Grouping arrangements enable pupils to achieve well because of the smaller than average class sizes, the good quality of the classroom support and the match of work to their needs. Withdrawal sessions give pupils good opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through small group and individual tuition, and the use of interactive learning programmes. Individual education plans are satisfactory. They provide useful information for staff on pupils' special needs and long-term objectives for improvement, but do not contain precise, achievable short-term targets which are subject specific. There are good opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve success in examinations because they are able to choose from a range of accredited courses as alternatives to GCSE.

56. The length of the teaching week is shorter than that of three-quarters of schools nationally, and the lesson time of 70 minutes is not always well used. In some lessons, mainly in Years 7-9, it is too long to retain pupil concentration and time is wasted.

57. Extra-curricular provision is good overall with very good opportunities for sport, where there is a very wide range of clubs and practices every lunchtime and matches after school. There is a school orchestra, a swing band, two choirs, a keyboard and a drama club. The school production is a major annual event and rehearsals are already underway for 'My Fair Lady'. There are also extra-curricular opportunities in art, design technology and chess. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities for involvement in activities which develop their social skills, such as taking part in sport, drama and music, class and group discussions in lessons and lunchtime activities in the learning house. They are actively encouraged to have a positive view of their individual potential and to achieve success in the different areas of school life.

58. There is a well-planned relevant course for PSHE which includes drugs, sex education and citizenship. There are some very good features such as 'The Real Game' in Year 8, in which pupils explore the relationship between career and life prospects, and the democracy unit in Year 7 which prepares pupils for electing their representative on the school council. The programme also includes up-to-date national and world issues, such as a sensitive consideration of the plight of Afghan refugees. Last year a group of Year 10 pupils took part in a local workshop on improving the quality of sex education in schools. PSHE is taught in a weekly form period by form tutors, some of whom lack the specialist skills and confidence to teach the programme well; consequently, lessons are of variable quality, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. This was also the position at the last inspection, and despite some attempts to support teachers through year team meetings and annual monitoring of

pupils' work folders, there has been little overall improvement.

59. The provision for careers education and guidance, including work experience, is very good. In addition to careers units within PSHE there are a number of enrichment activities arranged throughout the year, including visits from Theatre in Education and careers conventions. There is a very good work-related learning programme, which includes work shadowing in Year 9, and work/training placements for targeted pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is a carefully planned, well monitored programme of two weeks work experience for all pupils in Year 10. The school has effective links with the careers service who provide interviews for all pupils in Year 10 and on request in Years 9 and 11. In addition, Year 11 pupils have individual interviews with their form tutor, visits to local colleges, and a post-16 convention. There is a good, well-equipped careers library.

60. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, personal development and preparation for employment. Links with feeder primary schools are strong and curricular progression is developing well through the work of the advanced skills teacher together with the national numeracy and literacy initiatives. Subject departments arrange various field visits to supplement classroom studies which include visits to museums, exhibitions, theatres, the local environment and places of worship. Visits abroad provide some with first hand experiences of other cultures as well as other languages. Residential workshops for A-level students, and involvement by Year 10 pupils in a consultation initiative about sex education in schools are unusual features. Very good arrangements are in place with a college of further education to support pupils with good vocational opportunities. Employers in the area make a very good contribution to pupils' preparation for employment, for example, by offering work experience, work shadowing, mock interviews and mentoring.

61. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development through spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is unsatisfactory. There is too little purposeful planning at school or subject level to address the needs of pupils in helping them to reflect on life's questions. The senior management of the school does not have an overview of what is provided by subjects, so is not able to monitor the effect of that which is provided and to match it with the developing needs of the pupils. Much of the provision is implicit rather than explicit.

62. While there are pockets of good practice in providing opportunities for spiritual development, provision overall is unsatisfactory. For instance, the very nature of dance causes pupils to explore feelings and to display cooperation and tolerance. Similarly, opportunities arise in music, but they are not exploited. There is good practice in English through literature, and in geography through the explicit aims of the department. Religious education is making a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. However, this was a key issue at the last inspection, and has not been adequately tackled.

63. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Year 7 pupils are involved in an excellent anti-bullying workshop, which is reinforcing the need to stamp out bullying in school and society. In geography, pupils study patterns of wealth in the UK and the impact of modern life in the environment, some particularly good examples occurring in the sixth form. Through their work in art, pupils consider the morality of advertising. Displays in school show that pupils concern themselves with moral and ethical issues.

64. Social development is also satisfactory. Pupils learn how to work together through their group work in many subjects. The work of the various school and year councils helps pupils to understand the meaning of democracy and how to consider different needs. They feel through this medium that they have a say in the running of the school.

65. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There are some good examples of pupils' understanding their own culture, but the school does not yet have a race relations policy. The school has very few pupils of other heritage and does not plan sufficient opportunities to introduce pupils to the variety of culture which makes up modern-day Britain. The music department is successful in promoting a wide range of musical styles, but these are almost exclusively based in western classical and popular culture. However, in religious education, pupils are forming an understanding of other faiths through, for instance, the Muslim prayer mats which they made as part of their study of world religions.

Sixth form

66. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory and the timetable provides a framework for effective teaching and learning. Consequently, results and standards are above average. The school has implemented the recent curriculum changes and a wide range of 22 AS, A2 and AVCE courses provides good opportunities for all students.

67. Departments have planned work well to meet the requirements of the new specifications. Curriculum planning is at least good in most subjects enabling the students to progress well, building on their GCSE work. Time allocation in the timetable is just about adequate, although a little less than the five hours per subject each week that is usually found. Class sizes are viable, and sufficient for constructive debate and the effective sharing of ideas.

68. The curriculum, however, has a number of unsatisfactory features. The four options provide opportunities for students to select a broad course suitable to their needs and aspirations. However, only a third of students take four subjects in Year 12 and a high proportion take only two subjects in Year 13. The breadth of the education of many students is, therefore, too narrow as envisaged by Curriculum 2000. The statutory requirement to provide religious education is not met, and there is no daily act of collective worship. Students who were interviewed gave a clear indication of their disappointment at not being able to choose psychology and ICT, and that there were no courses in modern languages. In previous years, subjects with nine or fewer students have had a reduced timetable. This arrangement is unsatisfactory but, has improved – currently only music is affected. Current facilities for private study, and the opportunities to use ICT are poor.

69. The school at present offers courses in 19 subjects at AS and A2 level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational) courses in business, health and social care, and travel and tourism. These vocational subjects are also offered at Intermediate GNVQ level but at the present time are not in the timetable as there was no demand. Two periods of key skills are timetabled in Year 12. At the present time communication is popular and successful, but the application of number has fallen away because of a lack of demand. The facilities for ICT are severely limited. In Year 12, GCSE re-take classes are offered for English and mathematics. The quality of information and advice about subjects and combinations of subjects is very good and is a key feature of the very effective student induction process at the start of the sixth form. As a result, course completion rates are generally high.

70. There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. These include fund raising events, day trips, skiing holidays and drama productions. In music there is a senior choir, swingband and orchestra. There is a football team, but there is no planned recreation time and students would like to have this opportunity. Young Enterprise is very successfully and imaginatively linked with the provision of key skills in communication. Last year there were four companies; one – Crackin' Creations' was particularly profitable. Work experience, the sixth form council and the Community Sports Leader Award are other activities that promote very good relationships. A notable absence is community service. However, there are many opportunities to take responsibility for younger pupils, including supporting them in lessons and acting as 'buddy readers' to Year 7 and 8 pupils. During the inspection a training session for these students was very impressive. All these activities make a very good contribution to the personal development of students, the majority of whom are very responsible and mature young adults.

71. The school's PSHE programme extends into the sixth form where it has a clear focus on reviewing progress, target setting and study skills. It includes a good programme of careers advice, together with support and guidance for higher education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

72. The school's procedures for the assessment of pupil's attainment and for monitoring their progress have improved since the previous inspection, and are now good. The use of assessment data is an improving feature in the school and is reflected in the good standards seen. The school provides training for all teachers in the use and interpretation of assessment information.

73. A very comprehensive range of information, including national tests, is used to assess pupils' attainment on entry to the school, and also when they embark on examination courses at the age of 14. Pupils are then set targets and their progress towards them, as they move through the school, is closely monitored by subject teachers and pastoral staff. Effective use is made of the information obtained through the school's yearly detailed analysis of assessment information. Subject teachers also provide interim progress reports. These procedures together enable early intervention to be made in the case of pupils who are not doing as well as they should, and also allow the school to identify and commend those who perform well. The process works very well with these two groups, but is not yet used to the same extent in order to increase the challenge for the remaining pupils.

74. Most subjects have good systems for assessing attainment and recording progress, and use information well in their planning. For example, Teacher Assessments in science closely reflect national test scores, and class, as well as individual, performance is closely monitored in modern foreign languages. Assessment is an integral part of the process of teaching and learning in food technology. A growing number of subjects involve the pupils themselves in the assessment process. Pupils generally know how well they are doing in terms of the National Curriculum levels of achievement or examination grades which they reach in most of their subjects, although there is still some inconsistency in a few subjects.

75. A more consistent monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of assessment processes within subject areas will improve the overall quality still further. Annual reports are generally good. All subjects, other than ICT in Years 10 and 11 in which there are no procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, provide information on the National Curriculum levels and examination performance of pupils. There is, however, some inconsistency in the quality of information provided for parents concerning individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

76. The arrangements for pupils' general welfare are good. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development are satisfactory, and there has been improvement in attendance monitoring. Parents are satisfied with the quality of care although some suggest, with cause, that there is insufficient control over behaviour.

77. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and relevant risk assessments are carried out. There is good first aid and care for pupils who are injured or unwell. The services of specialist education, care and health agencies are used to support pupils who require specialist attention. The new pastoral structure, based on year groups instead of the previous House arrangement, is an improvement and is beginning to provide a more effective measure of care and support. The role of form tutors in monitoring pupils' personal development is a key feature of this. Relationships between adults and the majority of pupils are constructive, but teachers are not always able to command the respect and co-operation of a minority of pupils.

78. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory and the completion of registers meets requirements. A new electronic system has recently been introduced. The improved controls have already almost eliminated truancy during the day, and improved data is steadily becoming available. The daily telephone contact with parents of pupils who are absent is improving relationships and co-operation with parents but, as yet, has not significantly reduced unauthorised absence. The school publishes league tables about attendance and recognises and rewards good attendance. It has not yet been sufficiently successful in reducing condoned absence and the withdrawal of pupils for the purpose of family holidays during term time.

79. The management of behaviour during lessons is mostly good. In only a small minority of lessons is discipline not effectively exercised. The procedures to support and monitor misbehaving pupils, or temporarily withdraw them to study elsewhere, are effective. Parents are consulted appropriately. Behaviour support and mentoring staff undertake good work and improvements in pupils' attitudes and conduct often follow their intervention. The school is less successful in managing behaviour during breaks and lunchtimes. Supervision is difficult because of the vast grounds and the number of blind spots. Some incidents are unnoticed and others are not challenged. Occasionally some pupils react aggressively or unco-operatively. The school does not rigorously enforce an appropriate dress code and pupils exercise considerable licence, particularly with jewellery.

80. The school is working hard to eliminate bullying, but it remains an issue for the school. It has temporarily excluded those who have been reported. The present initiative with all Year 7 pupils is excellent; this is very effectively promoting appropriate attitudes and understanding about what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour and how to manage bullying. Some sixth form students are undertaking training to become buddies to younger pupils in order to support better behaviour. A drop-in centre is manned by sixth formers but receives few visits. The school strongly encourages pupils to report bullying through a choice of channels. Effective means have not yet been introduced to reduce anti-social behaviour by some older pupils.

81. The school provides a good range of opportunities for taking responsibility such as the year group and school councils. There is a good programme for PSHE, although the quality of teaching is variable, and sometimes unsatisfactory. The many extra-curricular activities, school productions and performances, and out-of-school experiences contribute well to pupils' personal development. Many pupils who are disaffected about school are given the opportunity of vocational courses and workshops at a college of further education or with selected employers or training organisations. Aspects of personal development however, are not specifically assessed, recorded, or reported to parents.

82. Overall, the teaching and promotion of moral and social values and standards are not sufficiently effective with regard to a significant minority of pupils. There is insufficient monitoring and reinforcement of expectations, particularly out of lessons. In addition, there is insufficient specialist behavioural support and mentoring for those pupils who need it.

83. The school monitors the performance of pupils with special educational needs effectively. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help are good. Their progress in improving standards of work, behaviour and attendance is monitored on a regular basis by subject teachers together with pastoral and support staff. The quality of support in the classroom is very good. Support staff are experienced and assured in their approach. They have a strong commitment to promoting pupils' general wellbeing, and they are successful in creating relationships based on stability and trust, which give most the confidence to succeed. Pupils are provided with targets that they understand, although these are not yet specific in subjects. The school's very effective rapport with the LEA and the specialist agencies ensures access to a wide range of expertise for pupils' different needs.

Sixth form

Assessment

84. The procedures for assessment, and its use in evaluating students' progress, are very good. Students are closely involved in the assessment process from the outset by using nationally validated performance information to negotiate realistic but challenging targets with their teachers. Their progress is very closely monitored by form tutors, with targets continually revised in the light of students' progress, and there are very effective procedures to flag up and deal with underachievement. Parents are involved at an early stage where there is cause for concern, and most interventions with underachieving students are speedily resolved. The progress of these students is more closely monitored and subsequently, in the light of their response to action plans agreed with them, their sixth form programme may be revised.

85. The school's evaluation of its assessment procedures has led to recent improvements to the process. Increased attention is paid to aspects of students' personal development alongside that given to their academic progress in the very useful and regular formal interviews which they have with their form tutors. The quality of assessment in subjects which provide courses in the sixth form is mostly good or better. Students express positive views and feel that their teachers provide them with accurate appreciation of their individual strengths and weaknesses that helps them to improve. Reports give a clear picture of students' attainment and progress. They have been recently revised in order to provide more information about students' personal as well as academic achievements.

Advice, support and guidance

86. The school provides very effective educational and personal support and guidance for its students. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory, but the registration of attendance is unsatisfactory because the whereabouts of students is not accurately recorded when they are in other parts of the school. The recently introduced electronic attendance system is not yet fulfilling this particular need.

87. The school provides very good information to students while they are in Year 11, about what is available in the sixth form, the content of courses, and guidance about appropriate courses to consider in the light of personal aspirations. The range of courses that is available meets the needs of the very large majority of students.

88. Induction procedures are very good and, once in the sixth form, students receive very good help and guidance whenever it is needed or requested about academic and personal matters. They are treated with consideration and as young adults. The school provides relevant careers information and advice that enable students to make informed choices about their future, and about the next stage of their education. They are able to visit a university and they receive guidance and assistance with regard to applications for higher education.

89. A comprehensive programme for personal development contributes very well to the enhancement of students' personal and study skills. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own community, and they are encouraged to initiate and organise social and competitive events.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education, care and support that is provided. The school's partnership with its parents is satisfactory but there is room for further development by extending opportunities for parental involvement in the work of the school. This was identified during the previous inspection but the action taken has not been sufficient.

91. Parents are right to be satisfied with teaching and the progress that their children make. The improved examination results, and the new leadership and management that are emerging, encourage them. Parents have supportive attitudes and want to be involved more in the school, but are also right to say that they have not been given sufficient opportunities and encouragement. Many want to be better informed about school and their children's progress. Inspectors agree with those parents who say that better control should be exercised over behaviour. Parents are right to be disappointed that there are too few accredited courses in ICT.

92. Some information provided for parents is good. Annual school reports give mostly good, detailed accounts of what pupils know, understand and can do, and often include relevant guidance for improvement. National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades are included so that pupils' attainment is clearly identified. Very little attention is given to pupils' personal development in the reports. The school notifies parents of pupils who are either over or underachieving at a mid-point in the year but not all other parents. The school meets its statutory requirements for academic reporting although some parents would prefer more frequent reports. Induction meetings for new parents, an annual consultation meeting, options guidance for Year 9 parents, a pre-sixth form meeting in Year 11, careers nights and post-16 meetings are all well attended by parents. The new headteacher has initiated a newsletter to keep parents aware of developments. Parents are unsure about homework expectations because pupils' diaries do not include a homework timetable. They also claim that, until last term, diaries had not been checked consistently by teachers nor used to communicate with parents. Inspectors find that diaries are currently being checked in most forms, but not used consistently for communication purposes.

93. The school only very occasionally consults with parents, and has not initiated a parents' association either for social or consultation purposes. This is a weakness. Except for parent governors, there is very little voluntary involvement by parents in the work of the school or its curriculum. Parents support their own children very well in sport, public performances and when the school calls for their co-operation regarding individual concerns.

94. The school has a good partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. There are effective arrangements for enabling parents to discuss their children's progress with school staff, and to contribute towards the annual and transitional reviews. Parents are generally supportive in helping their children make progress in improving standards of work and behaviour, and are pleased with what the school does to help their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

95. The overall leadership and management of the school are good. Four weeks prior to the inspection, a new headteacher took up post. This state of transition is heightened by a number of other inter-related factors – the imminent relocation of the whole school into new accommodation; the currently temporary senior leadership team structure; the very recent change in pastoral management from a house system to a year-based structure. Despite these major changes, the school has maintained its focus on 'striving to improve'. There is a forceful impetus for continued improvement and a determination to raise standards further.

96. The governing body is conscientious and committed to the school's well-being. Through their clear committee structure and appropriate programme of meetings, governors are kept well-informed and provide good support for the school. They have productive links with the headteacher and senior staff, and monitor school performance effectively. They check on standards well, both indirectly through subject reports, and more directly through their regular visits to classrooms. They play a major part in determining and supporting priorities for school development, and in overseeing financial processes. Their work, in conjunction with the previous headteacher, in negotiating the private finance initiative has been notably successful and is bringing tangible benefit to the school with the imminent completion of the replacement school buildings. Governors fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities well, including setting targets for GCSE examinations, although until recently the degree of challenge has been modest. However, the improvements in provision for ICT have not been sufficient to meet requirements across the school; there is no provision for religious education in the sixth form, and arrangements for collective worship remain unsatisfactory. All of these are statutory expectations that are not met.

97. The initial leadership of the new headteacher has been good. In a short space of time, and with the full support of the senior leadership team, he has reviewed the needs of the school, and has swiftly established key priorities for attention. A collective approach to management is developing which will set in place an agenda for improvement and progress – a process which has already begun with the current review of curricular provision and structures. The headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff, and the governors strongly endorse the vision for the future development of the school at this opportune moment in its history.

98. The new headteacher and senior leadership team are working hard to provide stability and consistency in this transitional phase of the school. Responsibilities are explicit, and include annual performance review with subjects, with rigorous analysis of test and examination results as a basis for developing strengths and targeting areas for support and improvement, both within and across subjects.

99. The extensive revision of arrangements for pastoral support gives high priority to improving the tracking of pupils' academic and personal development. There is need to ensure a consistency of expectation across year groups, for example, with regard to behaviour, litter, appearance, etc., and to strengthen the role of the form tutor to enable a more coherent contribution to this monitoring of pupils' progress and development.

100. Subjects are well managed and organised, although the faculty structure places disproportionate workloads on some managers, for example, in social studies. Subject heads are increasingly aware of their responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their areas, but there is a need to ensure a consistent, rigorous approach across the school in, for example, the observation and review of lessons, and in sampling pupils' written work and homework to check on progress and standards.

101. Management of special educational needs is good, with clear educational direction and leadership. Specialist staff are well qualified and experienced. They work together very well as a

team, and complex daily routines run efficiently. The flexibility in the organisation of classroom support ensures that available hours are used to maximum effect. Accommodation is good. Resources in terms of books and learning materials are also good. However, although the department has an adequate supply of laptop computers, there are not enough desktop computers available for the department to introduce an independent learning programme. The revised Code of Practice has been implemented successfully, and the department plays a strategic role in the raising of attainment within the school. The main area for development relates to improving work with subject departments in setting subject specific targets for improvement in pupils' education plans.

102. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory overall. Above average standards have been sustained in Years 7-9, whilst GCSE results have also been maintained at close to the national average. Attendance remains much as before. Progress in tackling the key issues from the previous report has been mixed. Action planning has been secure, and the school has made impressive progress with improvements to the accommodation, and developing subject development planning and the roles of middle management across the school. Registration now meets statutory requirements, but ICT requirements are not met across the school. Lack of opportunities for pupils' spiritual development remains a weakness, as does the inadequate provision for collective worship.

103. The school has sufficient suitably qualified teachers in all subject areas. The arrangements for teaching geography, history and religious education in Years 7-9 means that some teachers have to teach outside their specialist area. This does not adversely affect pupils' progress, other than in a small proportion of history lessons. For a school of this size, there are generally adequate numbers of administrative, technical and educational support staff who help ensure that it runs smoothly.

104. Very good strategies for performance management have been developed, and are closely linked to improving results in national tests and examinations, as well as being firmly rooted in both faculty and whole school development planning. All staff, including support and administrative, are involved in target setting. The school has successfully reapplied for the Investors in People status. The school's recent record of well-targeted in-service training for individual and groups of teachers is impressive, and is supporting improving standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

105. Procedures for the induction of staff new to the school are very good. They clearly demonstrate that the school has equal concern for all new teachers whether they are newly qualified, permanent new appointments, or temporary and part time appointments. The school's efforts are appreciated and valued by all these groups of teachers new to the school.

106. Improving the poor quality of the accommodation was identified as a key issue at the time of the previous inspection. The school has had some success in dealing with the situation, for example, in reducing levels of damage caused by vandalism and improving the condition of pupils' toilets by increasing the frequency of inspection by caretaking staff during the day. Nevertheless, the general state of repair and decoration of much of the site is poor, and a significant proportion of the accommodation used for teaching was not originally designed for that purpose, for example, dining rooms. This affects the quality of learning for some pupils. Teachers throughout the school work hard to improve the quality of the learning environment through displays of pupils' work in their classrooms. The drab aspect of the exterior of the buildings is made worse by the presence of extensive amounts of litter around what is potentially an attractive wooded site. However, since the previous inspection, work has begun on a complete re-building of the accommodation through PFI funding, and it is anticipated that the school will be able to move into its new premises before the end of the current academic year.

107. At the time of the previous inspection, numbers of books and computers were below average for the numbers of pupils in the school. This still remains the case. Although the library has well below the number of books recommended for the size of the school, the range and quality are, nevertheless, good. The library currently has too few computers available for pupils to use in their own time to research and present the results of their investigations. The majority of subjects have adequate resources to teach their courses. The small number of computers at present available for use in the school restricts opportunity for the expected use and application of ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum.

108. Systems for financial management are good. The budget is carefully planned and effectively administered. Forecast implications are clearly established, principles of best value are applied stringently, and specific grant, for example for pupils with special educational needs, is used for its designated purpose. Financial control is good, and the budget has been monitored very carefully by the finance officer and previous headteacher. Finances are in sound order, and the small budget deficit planned for last year is scheduled for elimination in the current year. A wider strategic involvement in planning the budget would strengthen the development of senior and middle managers.

109. The school receives average funding per pupil. The sixth form is cost-effective. Taking all factors into account, including pupils' achievement, their attitudes and personal development, the quality of education that the school provides, its funding and the local context in which it operates, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

110. The leadership and management of this successful sixth form are good. There is a very clear and apposite mission statement with a commitment to providing equal opportunities for all. The sixth form is open-access and welcomes students of all abilities and from varied backgrounds. It provides appropriate access to a variety of AS, A2 and AVCE courses for virtually all students who apply and are able to meet its modest minimum entry requirements. The information booklet is very detailed and the application and induction procedures are very good. Generally very few students leave their courses before completion.

111. The head of the sixth form is essentially a pastoral role and this has been the foundation on which the sixth form has developed. Attention to administration, care, guidance and the support of students is of very good quality. The pastoral sixth form team work well together. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The regular checking of students' progress is rigorous, sets appropriate standards and is effective. Students' personal development is strongly encouraged and supported by the good pastoral support provided.

112. The development plan has a focus on raising achievement, but does not refer to improving the quality of teaching and learning, or target setting for subjects. The examination results for the school are analysed in detail, and followed by subject reviews, but these are not linked to the development plan. The use of data to set individual student targets in all subjects is very good. However, these are not aggregated into subject and overall targets for the sixth form. This is a weakness.

113. There is need to broaden the education of many students, fulfil the aims of Curriculum 2000, and extend the aspirations of more students. A recent and timely review has identified these areas for improvement, but they have not yet been tackled. At present the average total grade point score per student is too low compared with the overall quality of provision in most subjects. However, the vision for the future is clear and firmly rooted in improving standards and results.

114. At subject level, leadership and management are good or better in all the focus subjects, except art and design, design and technology, and history where they are satisfactory. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

115. The governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form. During the last three years they have observed and discussed lessons with teachers. This process has been mutually beneficial. They are active in their role as critical friends. They are fully involved in planning with the overall aim to provide a modern 14-19 curriculum that engages all pupils and students. The statutory requirements to provide religious education and a daily act of worship are not met. The sixth form is cost-effective and provides good value for money.

Resources

116. Most subjects have adequate numbers of books and equipment, other than in sociology, business studies, and law where texts are poor or are too few, and there is insufficient access to other sources of information, for example, journals and periodicals.

117. The sixth form building suffers from the same problems as the rest of the school. As a result, the quality of learning in some subjects, for example, sociology and law is adversely affected by having to use rooms in the main school, which are inappropriate for their purposes. Provision for private study, including access to ICT, is inadequate. However, the match of teachers to the needs of the sixth form is very good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

118. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of educational provision in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve provision for, and attainment in, ICT by:
 - increasing computer provision, as finances allow;
 - meeting National Curriculum requirements;
 - ensuring the widespread development and application of pupils' skills in ICT across all subjects;
 - developing effective assessment procedures which audit and record pupils' experience and attainment in ICT across the curriculum;
 - providing suitable opportunities for accreditation in ICT.

- (2) Improve GCSE results in subjects, for example, science, economics and religious education, to those of the best by:
 - identifying those aspects of teaching and learning that require improvement through formal monitoring and evaluation;
 - continuing the use of assessment information to set challenging targets, and check the progress of pupils, students and subjects;
 - disseminating widely the good range of very successful teaching and learning strategies found in the most effective subjects, for example, geography, mathematics and physical education;
 - increasing the proportion of very good teaching and learning across the school;
 - improving current arrangements for the time allocated for teaching, and the length of the teaching period.

- (3) Improve the behaviour and personal development of a significant minority of pupils by:
 - reaffirming school expectations for behaviour, dress code, care of school environment, etc., and ensuring a corporate approach to the monitoring, supervising and implementing of these;
 - improving pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by ensuring that it is explicitly planned for, monitored and evaluated;
 - improving the consistency of teaching quality in the school's well planned programme for PSHE;
 - developing consistent and positive strategies for managing challenging behaviour in the classroom;
 - monitoring the use and effectiveness of agreed strategies for rewards and sanctions, both in the classroom and around school generally;
 - improving the monitoring of both the academic and personal development progress of pupils, and strengthening the role of form tutors in this process.

- (4) Improve the school's partnership with parents, and their involvement in the life of the school by:
 - developing regular channels for communication;
 - seeking their views regarding opportunities for involvement;
 - establishing a joint framework which enables opportunities for parents to work alongside the school in ensuring pupils learn effectively and make good progress.
 - ensuring consistent use of diaries in communicating with parents, particularly about homework and pupils' personal development.

Sixth form

Improve provision for the sixth form by:

- (1) Raising standards in art and design, design and technology, and history.
- (2) Ensuring that students follow courses that provide an appropriate breadth of educational experience.
- (3) Increasing the proportion of good and better teaching by identifying and disseminating widely the good range of very successful teaching and learning that are found in the most effective subjects.
- (4) Ensuring that improved opportunities and facilities for private study and the use of ICT are prominent features in the new sixth form accommodation.

In addition to the key issues, the following should be considered:

- Fulfilling statutory requirements for the collective act of worship, and for religious education in the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	166
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		82

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	21	86	47	6	2	0
Percentage	2	13	52	28	4	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	17	29	17	0	0	0
Percentage	0	27	46	27	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1580	265
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	166	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	254	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

School data	2.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	153	159	312

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	107	112
	Girls	108	120	119
	Total	184	227	231
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (68)	73 (68)	74 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (26)	50 (36)	43 (30)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	105	105
	Girls	116	116	114
	Total	206	221	219
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (69)	72 (73)	70 (67)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (34)	39 (40)	39 (32)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	168	141	309

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	76	146	162
	Girls	75	132	138
	Total	151	278	300
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48.9 (47)	90 (86)	97 (94)
	National	48 (47)	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	39.3 (39.1)

per pupil	National	39 (38)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	55	63	118
	Average point score per candidate	15.5 (16)	15.5 (17.3)	15.5 (17.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.7)	18 (18.6)	17.5 (18.2)

		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	51	58	109	8	7	15
	Average point score per candidate	14.8	15.5	15.2	12	11.1	11.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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	1753	112	1
White – Irish	-	-	-
White – any other White background	32	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Black African	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	-	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	-	-	-
Black or Black British – Caribbean	-	-	-
Black or Black British – African	-	-	-
Black or Black British – any other Black background	-	-	-
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	109.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	224

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	23.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	4730028
Total expenditure	4820012
Expenditure per pupil	2629
Balance brought forward from previous year	9686
Balance carried forward to next year	-80298

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	36
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	37

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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

1535

Number of questionnaires returned

259

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	6	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	51	21	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	57	16	6	5
The teaching is good.	24	64	5	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	47	17	6	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	47	8	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	16	50	23	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	31	48	4	2	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	52	10	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	40	9	6	16

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Improving trend in GCSE results.
- Improving standards in Years 9 and 11.
- Consistently good teaching.
- Pupils' good attitudes.
- Good leadership and management of a very large department experiencing a significant change of personnel.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of assessment to help pupils focus more sharply on how to improve, especially in Years 7-9.
- Provision for higher attainers in Years 7-9.

119. Pupils begin Year 7 with average standards in English. In 2001, results were average in examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In Year 9 not as many pupils attained level 5+ as should have. Amendments to the curriculum and additional classes led to improved results in the 2002 Year 9 tests. Current standards in Year 9 and 11 are above average. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are also good and have ensured a smooth induction of the seven members of the department who joined the school this term.

120. In the 2001 national tests for pupils aged 14 results were broadly average for all schools and for schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. They matched the standards attained in 2000 and were higher than the below average results of 1999. The proportion of pupils at Level 5 plus was below average for all schools and well below average for similar schools. The proportion at Level 6 or higher was average for all schools and below average for similar schools. Over time there has not been a significant difference between the results of boys and girls. In 2002, standards improved with an increased proportion reaching Level 5 plus.

121. In the 2001 GCSE English examination the proportion at A*-C was broadly in line with the average for all schools and for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Significantly more pupils gained A*-C grades than would have been expected given their earlier end of Year 9 test results. The average grade was also higher than previous results had indicated. Slightly more boys gained grade C or better than in most schools but fewer girls reached this standard in comparison to girls in other schools. Fewer pupils gained A*-C than in 2000. In the GCSE English literature examination the proportion at A*-C was below average, although the school enters more pupils than most schools, especially girls. The proportion at A*-C fell from the above average figure of the previous year. The overall grade was as expected given the pupils' earlier end of Year 9 results. Pupils tended to do better in most of their other subjects than they did in English and literature. In 2002 the proportions passing at A*-C in both subjects increased slightly.

122. In Year 9 the standard of work seen during the inspection is above average and achievement is good. Significantly, around 70 per cent of pupils are showing the standards associated with potentially Level 5 plus in their writing: a notable improvement on the test results of 2001. They have made good gains in writing extended, well-organised and paragraphed assignments with the expected accuracy in punctuation, expression and spelling. Around half these pupils consistently attain above or well above average standards because of engaging vocabulary and expression in a range of contexts, for example, the Year 9 pupils' job applications. A sharper focus on teaching the skills and structure of non-narrative writing is enhancing standards. Other pupils are below average and some well below. Their work includes too many errors in punctuation, spelling and paragraphing. Some of these pupils have special educational needs, and they are making good progress in organising their writing, benefiting from effective support in class. Overall above average standards are evident in reading.

Pupils quickly and accurately identified the themes of a Tony Harrison poem, building on the skills they had developed through their study of Keats' poetry. Some middle and lower attaining pupils (mainly boys) do not give the same degree of supporting detail when writing about texts that they do in discussion. In one lesson most pupils achieved above average standards because the teacher clearly showed how to construct an essay on Owen's 'The Sentry'. Speaking and listening skills are above average. Pupils of all levels of attainment frequently make informative and well-reasoned contributions.

123. In Year 11 standards are above average, and pupils are achieving well. Overall, above average standards of speaking and listening were consistently apparent in classes of all levels, both in whole class and in pair/group work. In written work, about six out of every ten pupils have the potential to secure GCSE grade C or better. About four out of ten are clearly at B standard and often higher. These pupils make extensive spoken contributions. They were highly articulate when discussing romantic love in 'Wuthering Heights.' One pupil's essay on the socio-economic backgrounds in fiction by Hardy and Steinbeck was a model of maturely-expressed analytical writing: it would have represented a good model of Advanced level work. The standards of a significant number of pupils cluster around the grade C/D boundary. Many of these pupils write with the expected control of the overall structure of their work. Some fail to reach C grade because of a lack of attention to detailed accuracy, some imprecision in their use of vocabulary, and further imprecision when they discuss texts in their essay work. A further range of pupils are below and well below average. Many in this latter group, including those with special educational needs, take the Certificate of Achievement. When discussing 'Charlotte O' Neill's Song' they empathised effectively with the poet's intentions, but were reliant on skilled probing by the teacher to help them understand vocabulary such as 'resentment'.

124. Teaching and learning are good. It is good more often in Years 10 and 11 where it is occasionally outstanding. Teaching is provided by well-informed specialists whose expertise helps the pupils improve their knowledge of texts and to show their understanding. The pupils consistently behaved well and showed positive attitudes as a result of well-planned lessons that were busy and productive. Teachers have a strong but fair range of class management methods. Silent reading at the start of lessons achieves a calm, working atmosphere. Some teaching is inspirational. Year 11 middle attaining pupils responded with immense enthusiasm to opportunities for role play, reading, discussion and reflection in their lesson on 'The Withered Arm'. Their support for each other was considerable. They also analysed the text deeply, using their knowledge of other texts to make comparisons. In the higher ability groups in Years 10 and 11, expectations were frequently high. Pupils are very interested in their work. Year 10 pupils relished the chance to discuss and compare media treatments of the current Middle East situation: this lesson was enhanced by some excellently prepared resources including clips from television news.

125. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils know their current standards and their potential. Higher attainers have some understanding of the learning targets they need to achieve in order to move on to better grades. Detailed course work marking and good advice during lessons help this. This awareness is sometimes less apparent with those at the C/D border. In Years 7-9 pupils are seldom clear about either their current level of attainment or their potential. Marking is not always as precise as in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are unclear about the skills associated with their current, target and potential levels: therefore they are not fully enough involved in understanding their own learning - despite the department having some very good procedures for recording assessment. The department's very good use of assessment to support learning in its A-level literature course provides a blueprint for development in the main school. During Years 10 and 11 the higher attaining pupils receive teaching that is well-matched to their needs. In Years 7-9 this is less evident. In a number of lessons all pupils were required to approach tasks in the same way, regardless of their attainments. This was appropriate to some extent in Year 9 where teaching was rightly geared to the 'top', but parity of challenge for higher attainers of all ages is not fully assured.

126. The rapid and effective assimilation of a significant number of teachers confirms the good leadership and management of the department, especially at a time when there is a senior post not filled. Since the last inspection improvement has been good, especially in providing more challenging teaching, better use of assessment to focus on gaps in the pupils' skills and learning, and in monitoring the work of teachers and pupils. The deployment of staff is very thoughtful: there are

currently more shared classes than usual, but good departmental support ensures that pupils' learning is not hindered. The department is undertaking a major and thorough restructuring of the curriculum in Years 7-9 to reflect more closely the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy. Some teaching and learning features of the strategy – clear objectives, an effective closing plenary, highly interactive teaching – are apparent but not consistently embedded. There are sound plans for the use of ICT but difficulties with resources restrict opportunities.

Drama

127. The proportion gaining A*-C in the 2001 GCSE examination was broadly average. More pupils gained C or higher in 2002. Only a small amount of teaching was observed during the inspection. Standards in Year 11 at least match those achieved in 2001. The standards of one group were well above average. As well as confidently using a broad repertoire of drama strategies the pupils quickly developed convincing pieces. Their use of gesture, tone, facial expression and repetition all enhanced the conviction of their performances. Their response to the blistering pace set by the teachers and her outstanding demonstrations was excellent. A popular subject and extra curricular activity, drama makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, including the opportunities to take part in full productions.

Literacy across the curriculum

128. The school makes good provision for the development of literacy. A comprehensive but clear school policy sets out expectations and aims clearly. Whole school developments are coordinated effectively by two teachers. They convene a school literacy group; take the lead in organising staff training and link with the literacy consultants from the local education authority. The school librarian rightly attends the whole school literacy group. However, the principles that underpin the library's role in the development of literacy, research and information skills have not been clarified. Good contact exists between the library and science and English but this is not typical of links with other subjects.

129. The school uses the 'catch up' units with pupils who have not reached expected National Curriculum levels, in conjunction with the special educational needs coordinator. The teaching of the units is good and lessons are well prepared. The principles and procedures underpinning the timetabling, staffing and procedures for withdrawing pupils for the units have not been formally established.

130. Provision for literacy is good in all subjects except art, music, history and ICT where it is satisfactory. Good examples of deepening pupils' understanding of concepts through effective learning of the appropriate terminology were clearly evident in mathematics and science. Year 11 average attaining pupils used terms such as 'percentile', 'quartile' and 'parameter' accurately in a lesson on statistics. Year 9 pupils gave clear and accurate definitions of terms such as 'microbes', 'viruses' and 'bacteria'. In geography teachers ensure that pupils not only understand geographical terms but the language of assessment such as 'compare' and 'justify'. Word glossaries are effective in design technology and in history to support learning.

131. The picture is less positive with regard to the systematic development of reading skills. For weaker readers, effective support is provided by the special educational needs department. A strength noticed in many subjects is that pupils do have the chance to read aloud. They do so with confidence and fluency. This worked very well when a middle attaining Year 11 English group read a Thomas Hardy story. However, there is very little evidence of the systematic and on-going development of techniques such as skim and scan reading and effective and efficient note taking.

132. There is good support for the development of the pupils' writing, often supported by engaging learning techniques. A Year 10 science group sequenced a series of steps in a science experiment before writing up a narrative account. In history, although there are devices such as writing frames to structure writing, their use is not consistent. There is good practice in geography with high expectations and opportunities to show knowledge in a wide range of written contexts. In religious education there is a strong emphasis on correct spelling and on ensuring those skills which achieve higher standards are stressed such as explaining any references made.

133. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of language are enhanced by their work in modern foreign languages. Particular gains are made in learning parts of speech, sequencing sentences, punctuation and agreement.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are well above the national average.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
- Positive attitudes and relationships ensure that learning takes place in a purposeful atmosphere.
- Leadership of the faculty provides clear educational direction for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Sharing good practice to enhance the quality of satisfactory lessons.
- Ensuring a variety of teaching strategies is used more consistently.
- Make more frequent use of ICT.

134. Year 9 pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests has improved since the previous inspection, particularly the number attaining the higher levels. The 2001 national test results were above average for all schools and well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. This is good progress and achievement because the pupils entered the school in Year 7 with average levels of attainment. Results in mathematics were higher than in English and slightly lower than in science. The girls' results were higher than the boys', which was contrary to the overall picture in previous years. The continuously rising trend in results is in line with that seen nationally.

135. Good progress and achievement are sustained in Years 10 and 11. In the 2001 GCSE examinations almost every pupil entered achieved a grade. Attainment was well above the national average for all schools, particularly the proportion that achieved grades A*-C. The number who obtained an A* grade was lower than the national average, but a significantly smaller proportion than nationally obtained the lower grades. Boys' results were higher than girls', particularly within the A*-C grade range, but their relative performance varies from year to year. In 2001, most pupils attained significantly higher results in mathematics than they did in their other subjects. Similar results were obtained in the most recent 2002 GCSE examinations. Results have improved at a much greater rate than nationally, and over the past five years the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A*-C has increased by 25 per cent.

136. The current standard of work by pupils in Year 9 is above average. This is because of good teaching and the impact of the national numeracy strategy on newly developing schemes of work. In nearly every lesson there is an effective balance between the rehearsal of prior learning and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Pupils at every level are encouraged to use mathematical vocabulary and, in the best lessons, they confidently demonstrate that they understand their work. All pupils meet similar topics at appropriate levels and the quality and quantity of their work ensures that they make good progress. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 can draw a range of algebraic graphs, including those of cubic equations. Average pupils are able to draw graphs of linear equations, and lower attaining pupils can plot given coordinates in order to draw straight line graphs. Pupils' fluency with number is above average and this enables them to tackle a range of topics with confidence. It supports their work in algebra, geometry and statistics. Written work is usually well structured and most pupils systematically tabulate information and accurately construct diagrams and graphs.

137. Pupils build on these good levels of achievement so that by Year 11 standards are well above average. This is because of very good teaching in the majority of lessons in Years 10 and 11. The highest attainers produce work of very good quality that meets the requirements for the highest grades A* or A in the GCSE examinations. Their work is academically rigorous and a good basis for studying mathematics in the sixth form. For example, these pupils are able to construct exponential graphs

and, when dealing with surds, competently rationalise denominators. Average attaining pupils are working at levels that, for most, will result in GCSE grades B and C. Their above average standards in arithmetic support their work in all aspects of the subject. For example, they routinely organise and tabulate statistical data. These skills are confidently used to construct cumulative frequency curves. Almost all pupils show that they can use their graph to estimate the median value and inter-quartile range. Some lower attaining pupils experience difficulty with recalling facts and, therefore, make elementary errors. However, the standard of work of the majority of lowest attaining pupils is higher than that required for the lowest GCSE grades.

138. Pupils with special learning needs are well integrated within teaching groups and, in the limited cases where there is additional classroom support, it is effectively used to help a whole range of pupils, not only those with formally designated special educational needs. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual needs and in lessons they are skilful in ensuring that they are met in an unobtrusive manner. Consequently, they enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.

139. In almost all lessons the very good behaviour and positive attitude displayed by the great majority of pupils are essential factors in generating a purposeful and working atmosphere in which learning can take place. Most pupils are interested in their work and keen to do well. When given the opportunity to work in pairs they do so in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Pupils are confident and secure with their teachers and because of the quality of the relationships most willingly take part during lessons, when encouraged to do so. A feature of these exchanges is the due respect shown by pupils when one of their peers is either asking or answering questions. In isolated cases where these characteristics are less evident, it is because of the unacceptable behaviour of a tiny minority of pupils who disrupt the work of the majority. Generally there are no discernible differences between either the attainment or involvement of boys and girls.

140. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and has improved considerably since the previous report. In one third of lessons, teaching and learning are very good and in another third they are good. They are mainly satisfactory in the remainder. Teaching and learning are very good in the majority of Year 10 and 11 lessons. The marking of pupils' work varies from being thorough and diagnostic, with helpful and encouraging comments, to being insufficiently detailed. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils' work and behaviour. In the best lessons the teachers' vitality and enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to the pupils. A brisk and lively atmosphere is engendered by the use of a range of strategies that results in every minute of the lesson being fully utilised. Skilful question and answer techniques ensure that a wide range of pupils is actively engaged in developing ideas and learning. There is a good pace to the lessons because the teacher imposes challenging time limits for the completion of a variety of tasks that are well matched to the attainment level of the group. Pupils are consistently on task and confidently apply their prior learning to new situations. In less successful lessons there is a lack of variety in the strategies employed and the pace and delivery are pedestrian. Explanations are usually delivered with clarity, but there is insufficient dialogue with pupils during the lessons, and the teacher then has to repeat explanations on an individual basis. Consequently there is a loss of momentum and enthusiasm and this often results in drift and a lack of direction, particularly in the final stages of the lesson. In such lessons progress in these final stages relies largely upon pupils' self-motivation. The use of ICT to enrich learning is unsatisfactory. Although ICT is effectively used on occasions, for example, as a teaching aid in illustrating bipartite graphs and when higher attainers use graphical calculators, it is not used as a matter of routine to support and extend pupils' work in mathematics.

141. The leadership and management of the faculty are very good. There is a clear sense of educational direction that is reflected in the analysis of performance, planning and high levels of expectation. Improvements in standards, teaching and schemes of work since the previous report are very good. There is a positive team ethos and much is achieved through the quality of the relationships between teachers and their combined experience. However, there are some inconsistencies in provision. For example, teachers use a variety of grading systems to assess pupils' work and this can restrict the use of the data for comparison and development purposes. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place, but the monitoring of teaching is not being fully used to raise the quality of satisfactory lessons by sharing the many examples of good practice. As teachers increasingly apply the methods of the national numeracy strategy the scope for enhancing satisfactory lessons is correspondingly increasing.

Numeracy across the curriculum

142. The school has adopted a positive and pro-active approach to national and local numeracy initiatives. A whole school policy is now in place and includes guidelines for all teachers on good practice and methodology. Every teacher has been involved in a programme of training. A representative from each faculty is currently involved with a recently established working group for developing and utilising numeracy skills within all subjects. The impact of the national numeracy strategy on standards of attainment in mathematics lessons is already in evidence. Pupils' fluency with arithmetic and number work has improved. Most mathematics lessons in Years 7,8 and 9 reflect the strategies provided in the national framework. Although numeracy skills are not yet used or promoted in every subject, there are many subjects in which there are examples of them being effectively used to enhance learning. In geography they make a good contribution to learning. Map reading is enhanced by the application of pupils' measurement skills and their knowledge of coordinates is re-enforced when they work on grid references. Data handling skills are effectively used in constructing a range of statistical graphs that illuminate information. Pupils show good numeracy skills in science. They confidently calculate values when substituting in formulae and their algebraic skills enable them to manipulate formulae. They construct good quality graphs to represent the results of experiments. Measurement and estimation skills are competently used in design technology and, in graphics, pupils' knowledge of geometry constructions is effectively used in work on projections. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are average and make a positive contribution to their work across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards and results in Year 9.
- Good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.
- Assessment of pupils' capabilities in practical work.
- Standards of enquiry science.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision of ICT in science lessons.

143. The schools' results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average and better than at the time of the previous inspection. They were well above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils did relatively better in their science tests than in similar English tests. Results over the previous four years have improved at a rate faster than the national trend. Results in 2002 improved and represent good progress for pupils through Years 7 to 9.

144. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to take a wide variety of science courses. Overall, in 2001, examination results were below average, with those in dual award science, chemistry and physics significantly below average. Pupils do better in their mathematics examinations than in science. Results have been improving steadily over the last three years, including in 2002, and represent satisfactory achievement for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is room for further improvement.

145. Standards are above average in Year 9. Achievement is good and this is a direct result of the good teaching they experience in this age range. Standards in biology, chemistry and physics are above average. High attaining pupils in physics have a very good understanding of how the relationship between voltage, current and resistance affects the brightness of a bulb in a simple circuit. Average attaining pupils in biology can set up and develop a culture plate and identify the types of microbes that grow. They have a good grasp of how these microbes are responsible for spreading diseases. The majority of the lowest attaining pupils are improving their understanding of scientific

principles, such as methods of extracting metals from their ores. On entry to the school scientific enquiry skills are below average but steadily improve to above average in Year 9 due to good teaching of these skills.

146. Standards are also above average in Years 10 and 11 and better than those indicated by the 2001 GCSE results. However, achievement is only satisfactory because pupils' rate of progress slows in this age range due to teaching that is predominantly satisfactory. The highest attaining pupils have very good investigative skills. They can carry out experiments to see how the resistance of a filament lamp varies with voltage and interpret their results graphically. They are generally working at GCSE grades A*, A and B. Average attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the evolution of species. They can name factors, for example, changes in climate that lead to extinction of a species such as the sabre tooth tiger. They are generally working at grades B and C. The lowest attaining pupils are working at grades F and G. They are improving their understanding of science. For example, in biology, they know how food is absorbed into the body as it travels through the digestive system.

147. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. The presence of support assistants in some science classes improves these pupils' learning by keeping them more focused on the lessons' objectives. In Years 10 and 11 the Certificate of Achievement course, coupled with entry to GCSE science, helps maintain pupils' interest and motivation.

148. Pupil's attitudes to science are generally good. They are well behaved and sustain concentration well. However, some pupils in Year 11 are uncooperative and their behaviour needs constant monitoring to keep them on task. This results in slower progress than in groups whose personal development is better.

149. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7, 8 and 9. They are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Some very good teaching, producing very good learning, was observed during the inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms and explain key concepts clearly and simply. For example, the clear explanation of how to extract metals from ores resulted in a lower attaining group of pupils being able to successfully extract copper metal from malachite. As a result, these pupils made very good progress in their understanding of chemistry. Lessons are well planned, with clear aims ensuring good progress. Management of pupils' behaviour is usually good and this, combined with positive pupils' attitudes, results in good learning in most lessons. However, in Year 11, some classes are not as well behaved and their progress is slower. For example, in a higher attaining Year 11 class, studying DNA and its relation to genetics, behaviour and concentration were not as good as expected. Pupils were at times uncooperative and off task. Their behaviour was difficult to manage. As a result, they were underachieving in this particular section of the course.

150. Assessment of pupils' investigative and practical skills is good and this helps raise standards, particularly in GCSE. Teachers' management of time is a weakness across the age ranges. For example, in a Year 7 class some pupils finished analysing the results of a practical investigating Bunsen burner flames before the end of the period and were given a low level time filling exercise, designing a poster.

151. Literacy is well taught in science lessons. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud from texts and are given advice on how to write up experiments and coursework. Numeracy is well taught and this contributes to overall standards, especially in physics. Lack of computer resources results in ICT not being used sufficiently to support and extend pupils' learning in science. There are good instances of promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development in science, for example, through discussion of the pros and cons of genetic engineering, but they are not usually planned into the curriculum or outcomes measured.

152. The department is difficult to service and accommodation is at present unsatisfactory. However, the technicians work well to ensure that it functions efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The management and organisation of science is good. Above average standards are being maintained through Years 7 to 9. The department has good arrangements in place for implementing the Key

Stage 3 National Science Strategy, and these are helping to raise standards further in Years 7-9. Standards are also improving in Years 10 and 11. New modular GCSE courses are providing better short term targets and improving standards. Standards in enquiry science are good throughout the school. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, but GCSE results should be higher and there is insufficient use of ICT in science lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Results at GCSE improved in 2002.
- Lessons are well prepared.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Behaviour in some lessons.
- Too much drawing and painting in Years 7-9 are on too small a scale.
- There is not enough use of ICT.

153. The results of the teachers' National Curriculum assessments in 2001 were average. The standard of work seen in the school is also average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points, which are average when they join the school in Year 7. Pupils in Years 7-9 make steady gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of art and design. Their use of colour is bright and bold, and chalk pastel work is vigorous and lively. They make delicate wash studies of fruit and vegetables, which show an increasing ability to control the materials. Their three-dimensional work is strong, and a large group construction based on the work of Gaudi is bright, bold, and exciting. However, too much of their drawing and painting is on too small a scale, and their ability to work with a range of media is not fully developed as a result. In addition, there is not enough use of ICT to support and extend their work.

154. GCSE results in 2001 were below average. In 2002 they improved. This improvement has been maintained in the work seen in Years 10 and 11, which is now average. Textile work is strong, and pupils investigate a wide range of materials, including fabrics, threads, wire and metallic varnishes. They use these to investigate shape and colour, and produce exciting and richly textured pieces. Their work in three-dimensions is also strong, and pupils confidently work in clay, and in card and paper. As a result, they make bright and attractive mirrors, which are based on the study of a range of artists. However, their work from observation lacks excitement and variety. In addition, lower attaining pupils' use of paint is crude and laboured.

155. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory in all years. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, because the quality of teaching they receive is satisfactory, and because they can work directly with materials such as paint and collage, and make steady gains in their media handling skills.

156. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, there is a good match of materials and methods to the interest and attainment of pupils. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils made collages using fabric, paper and string. They also used sponges to create rich paint surfaces and sprayed inks to make interesting backgrounds. This active approach produced good levels of engagement with the materials. Good pace and good learning were the result. Lessons are also well planned and prepared, and this helps them get off to a good start. At times, however, there are weaknesses in managing pupils' behaviour, and the atmosphere becomes rather rowdy. As a result, pupils do not listen carefully enough to the teacher, and they do not try as hard as they should. This results in unsatisfactory learning.

157. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, and there has not been enough improvement in standards, which are still average, or in the quality of teaching and learning, which has remained much as before.

158. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory, an improvement since the previous inspection. However, this improvement is recent, and more time is needed for monitoring and review processes to have an impact on standards. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development, and a good range of gallery visits take place. These include visits to London and Venice. The art of other cultures is also frequently used to inform and initiate pupils' own artwork. For example, they draw from African masks, and make shadow puppets based on a study of Indonesian art. The accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory, and the teaching rooms are cramped and shabby. This means that there is not always enough space for pupils to spread their work out, and the impact of the displays is limited.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Years 7-9.
- 2001 GCSE results were above average in textiles and graphic products.
- Good practical work in all areas.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards of pupils' work in resistant materials.
- Greater monitoring to improve the consistency of standards between the elements of design technology.
- Improve the match of work to needs of pupils with different abilities.
- Increase technician support.

159. Standards of work in Year 9 are above the national average for both boys and girls. Girls do better than boys, and teacher assessments are an accurate reflection of standards at this stage. Given their varied starting points, pupils make good progress from Year 7-9. Practical work is usually good and the better design folders are neatly presented. Work is above average in Year 9 textiles, for example, the hat project produces good research work, including good use of graphs and charts. Standards are also above average in a Year 8 mechanisms project where pupils' drawing skills are above average, and in a fuse tester project in Year 7 where they present their work well with neat, clear drawing and writing skills. Where the work is below average, it is mainly due to poor presentational skills (including weak spelling), or insufficient detail in research.

160. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average overall, with individual specialisms achieving varied success. Results in textiles and graphic products were above the national average, whilst those in resistant materials were below. Child development results were well below the national average in 2001, but have improved in 2002. Food technology has also improved in 2002, as have the results in resistant materials (although still the weakest area).

161. Currently, standards of work in Year 11 are variable across the specialisms, and overall are average. Standards in food technology are high, whilst those in resistant materials are low but show improvement. Examples of above average work can be seen in all specialisms. A project looking at cultural and social issues in staple foods showed good research and analysis; investigation into different materials in industrial production projects and research into fabrics and yarns were above average in textiles. Over use of commercial material in research, insufficient depth in investigations and generally weaker presentational skills are characteristics of below average standards. Practical work is usually of a good standard as a result of the emphasis on developing these skills in all areas. Overall, pupils' attainment is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

162. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall and work together well. When support assistants are present, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils work well together and respond positively when suitably challenged. Attitudes are usually good. There are instances of inattention and distraction, and some unsatisfactory behaviour which disrupts progress in some lessons.

163. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better lessons, learning is good because teachers use their good subject knowledge to develop or expand ideas, make good use of time and resources, manage pupils well, and provide pupils with good feedback about their learning. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson with a low attaining group where pupils were developing practical skills and technical knowledge when cutting internal and external threads. In a Year 11 lesson, good use of resources, including ICT enhanced the quality of coursework in food technology. Assessment is used well in many lessons. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features, but can be too teacher directed, with insufficient planning for the effective use of time. On occasion, work is not well matched to the varying needs of pupils with different ability levels.

164. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good documentation, good planning and relevant schemes of work are in place. This is a large department and colleagues work closely together, supporting each other well and sharing a vision for development. The assessment policy is good and its practice supports improving standards. Record keeping is secure and target setting is in place, with National Curriculum levels used in assessing pupils' work. Generally pupils know how well they are doing in the subject and marking is usually informative. Homework is regularly set. Pupils' book or folder work across all areas of the department requires monitoring to ensure consistent standards between the various areas within design technology. Curriculum reviews occur on a regular basis and work is discussed in departments. Technician support is insufficient, and some of the accommodation is cramped, particularly in food technology.

165. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now a sharper focus on record keeping and marking across the department, better use of support materials in Years 10 and 11, and more regular setting of homework.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in Year 11.
- GCSE results were well above average in 2001 and a third gained A* and A grades.
- Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils achieve very well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.
- Planning to ensure specific improvement in geography, including subject targets.

166. The standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are above average and are reflected accurately in the teachers' assessments. In relation to pupils' standards in geography at the start of Year 7, the standards reached represent very good achievement. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of different places from a local to a world scale, extending their learning about global citizenship. Higher attainers produce power-point presentations of high quality on a variety of local settlements. In work on Kenya pupils understand other peoples' cultures in relation to different environments and economic conditions. Lower-attaining pupils achieve very well and reach average standards in their leaflets on tourism. All pupils make very good progress developing good skills of map-reading, photographic interpretation, and collecting and presenting data in fieldwork. For example, they draw good field sketches and land use maps of Tupton.

167. At this early stage in Year 11 standards are well above average in coursework and pupils are on course to reach well above standards overall. They are achieving very well in relation to their starting points. In 2001, the GCSE results were well above average and a very high proportion gained the highest A* and A grades. Boys and girls are obtaining higher results on average in geography than they are in their other subjects. Their results were significantly better than other pupils who take geography across the country. Boys did better than girls, opposite to the national trend. The GCSE results were slightly lower in 2002.

168. Higher attaining pupils produce coursework of a very high standard on Chesterfield. They successfully analyse land use patterns and relate them to different theories. Census data is used very effectively and accurately to produce maps and graphs to illustrate the relationship between housing ownership and unemployment. This work increases pupils' knowledge and understanding of local cultures and socio-economic patterns. The work of lower attainers is less accurate and 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.

169. Pupils with special educational needs whose literacy skills are weak make very good progress because the work is carefully matched to their needs. For example, in one lesson on tourism they were given larger and partially completed worksheets. These, together with individual help from the teacher enabled them to keep up with the pace of learning of the whole class.

170. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers use a variety of resources and methods that promote very good collaborative and independent work. These produce a high level of interest and enable lessons to proceed quickly. In Year 11, the files of a few boys are very untidy and disorganised.

171. The lessons are too long for many pupils in Years 7 and 8. Significant numbers of these pupils lose concentration towards the end of lessons, despite the very good control of teachers and the variety of methods used. The pace of learning inevitably slows. This was very clear in the afternoon, even in a very good lesson that developed map-reading skills well.

172. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school, and all teaching is at least good. 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 an excellent lesson in Year 11, pupils increased their knowledge and understanding of natural hazards at a rapid pace as they learned from each other when presenting their group work. They were encouraged to ask difficult questions and there was a focus on important words such as 'explain' and 'justify.' Very good teaching is well planned; uses a variety of different resources matched to pupils' needs and challenges them to make an intellectual effort in their learning. For example, in a lesson on the impact of the development of tourism in a World Heritage Site in Australia, pupils used different worksheets to make notes from a very good video. This was carefully managed into stages to provide time for questions and answers and to enable all pupils to keep up with the learning. Their immediate homework was to write the first draft of a letter to a councillor on the impact of tourism. The longer-term homework involved research to produce a travel guide. These homework demands indicate the high expectations that geography teachers have of their pupils. Occasionally, lesson summaries are too short to be effective.

173. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. The use of technical language is gradually developed and pupils use a range of writing styles including reports, letters and information leaflets. Pupils use a variety of graphs competently. The use of ICT in teaching is planned in the syllabus and is generally used well to support pupils' learning. However, the difficulty of access to computers means that not all pupils receive the same opportunities.

174. Leadership and management of the department are good. Assessment data is used well to track pupils' progress. Very good teaching is vigorously promoted in the department. There is little time to monitor teaching in lessons but, with their strong commitment to improve, teachers often meet immediately after lessons to analyse the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been very good. Standards are higher now, especially in Years 10 and 11, and pupils achieve very well throughout the school in response to very good teaching.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Significantly improved GCSE results in 2002.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Good attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching.
- Pace of learning in Years 7-9.
- Match of work to needs of the full range of pupils in classes.

175. In 2001, GCSE results were below average. The results of girls were higher than those of boys, reflecting the national picture. The boys did less well in history than in their other GCSE examinations. At the last inspection in 1996, results were similarly below average. However, most recent results for 2002 have improved significantly for both boys and girls, with a considerable increase in proportion of higher grades A*-C.

176. This improvement is reflected in the above average standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11, and follows successful work in improving teaching and learning styles, and the use of assessment to set targets for pupils' attainment. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their starting points. Pupils of all levels of attainment increase their knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding the building of the first factories. Field study and subsequent role-play activities added considerably to their understanding of this topic.

177. Standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are average, and generally reflect the teachers' assessments. Given pupils' standards in history when they join the school, this represents satisfactory achievement.

178. All pupils in Year 7 make satisfactory progress in developing their understanding of time lines, and are able to separate events accurately. Generally, their achievement is satisfactory, although the progress of lower attainers (including those with special educational needs) is slowed because tasks and materials are not well matched to their needs. This is also the case in Year 8 where the vocabulary used is often too difficult for the lower attainers. Higher attainers at this stage, however, are able to interpret evidence capably from a range of sources in establishing their understanding of different views on Henry VIII. Their work is above average and their achievement is good.

179. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Levels of interest are generally good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils work hard in response to a wide range of opportunities. Their written work is well presented in the main, although more attention is needed with spelling and construction in Years 7-9, and in ensuring that pupils in Years 10 and 11 complete work that they have missed. The length of lessons is also a concern, particularly for younger pupils who find difficulty in concentrating for the full period. As a result, the pace of learning in some lessons is slow.

180. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school, although stronger in Years 10 and 11 where they are good. Where teaching is good, a variety of teaching approaches are used, the pace is challenging, and pupils are actively engaged in their learning. This was illustrated well in a successful Year 10 lesson where pupils participated in a 'mock' trial to determine the positive and negative elements of Richard Arkwright's regime as an employer. As a result of the teacher's imaginative planning and the pupils' positive response to the challenging tasks, learning was very effective and standards were above average. Where teaching is less effective, and on occasion unsatisfactory, objectives are unclear, learning lacks focus and work is not well matched to pupils' needs. This was the case in a Year 9 lesson on the First World War, where a significant proportion of pupils failed to make expected progress because the work presented was too difficult for them to understand. Overall, basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily. Pupils use a range of writing styles, and extended writing is encouraged through the good use of writing frames together with graphs, diagrams, maps and timelines. Despite the limitations of computer provision in the school, ICT is used effectively in Years 7-9, for example, in a Year 9 project on the Holocaust and there is evidence of good use of the internet for research, especially in Years 10 and 11.

181. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been greater impact on standards in Years 10 and 11, and most recently GCSE results have improved significantly. Elsewhere, in Years 7-9 standards are more varied, and require improved monitoring to ensure consistency in teaching and learning. Overall, improvements since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning in Year 7.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

Areas for improvement

- To raise standards which are currently below average.
- Pupils' are not achieving as well as they could.
- To increase the number of computers to the national average.

182. Standards of work in Year 9 are below average. The school has insufficient computers to enable all pupils to have ICT lessons or to support their learning in other subjects. As a result of this poor provision, although the majority of pupils have acquired some basic skills, for example, in the use of word processing and desk top publishing, even the highest attaining pupils are not able to produce work at the expected standard. 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. Although pupils can enter information in a database they are unable to interrogate the information in a useful way. Given their average attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

183. Standards in Year 11 are below average overall. There is no GCSE course and pupils who do not take the alternative GNVQ course, approximately four pupils in every five, are underachieving. Pupils taking the GNVQ course have a reasonable fluency in basic operations, understand the structures of databases and spreadsheets, and are able to use powerpoint for presentations. However, design analysis skills are weak and pupils are unable to apply real world applications of ICT to solve problems. Even pupils taking the GNVQ course are not yet confident and autonomous users of ICT, and have not developed the independent learning skills expected of pupils of this age. In addition, they lack awareness of the social, economical, ethical and moral issues associated with the replacement of traditional working practices with new technology.

184. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are identified in lesson plans and teachers know the strategies to adopt to help them succeed. Occasionally they are allowed to rely too much on their higher attaining partners when sharing a computer, but the work they are given is generally within their capability and helps them to improve.

185. Over time, the teaching of ICT and the learning gains pupils make are unsatisfactory because the school is failing to teach pupils the National Curriculum programme of study, except in Year 7. In Year 7 lessons and in GNVQ key skills lessons, the quality of teaching and the learning it promotes are good. Teachers plan lessons carefully, ensuring that maximum use is made of the available time. Relationships with pupils are encouraging and supportive which gives pupils the confidence to ask questions and risk making mistakes. Pupils are managed effectively so that they settle down to work quickly and little time is wasted establishing good order in the classroom. New assessment procedures are being developed but present arrangements are unsatisfactory. The vast majority of pupils have little idea how well they are doing in relation to national standards. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are not accurate because too many non-specialist teachers are involved in awarding levels for which there is no moderated standard. Pupils are not encouraged to become independent learners and rely too much on teacher direction. They are not helped by the lack of self-help sheets though these are beginning to be developed for future use.

186. Pupils come to lessons willing to learn and do their best. They enjoy their work and behaviour is generally good. They co-operate with each other when sharing resources and use the mouse and keyboard responsibly. They listen to their teachers and endeavour to follow instructions.

187. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The National Curriculum is not being taught to all pupils, and improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Although teachers are committed to the subject they are not specialists in ICT. There are no external examinations, for example in GCSE, for the vast majority of pupils. The day-to-day management of

the subject is good and there are a number of initiatives, such as pupils' involvement in 'Young Net' - an Internet-based network bringing together pupils and teachers from different European countries - to suggest that when resources improve, standards will begin to rise. The lack of computers – the school requires approximately 140 additional computers to bring provision up to the national average – is hampering efforts to provide pupils with their entitlement to a worthwhile ICT experience. There is insufficient access outside lessons to what computers there are.

Information and communication skills across the curriculum.

188. The teaching of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory because there are insufficient computers in the school to enable subject teachers to use ICT in their lessons. Subjects have appropriate plans for developing ICT in their subject but these cannot be fulfilled without access to computers. No subject makes a significant contribution to developing and enhancing pupils' information technology capability. In science, art and design, history and geography, pupils occasionally use word processing skills to present their work and some classes have used the Internet for research. In design technology, pupils use computer-aided design and manufacture software. Little or no use is made of ICT in English, mathematics, music, modern foreign languages or religious education.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good, standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Assessment is good.
- The most recent GCSE results show further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards and achievement in Years 7-9.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Few pupils study a second foreign language in Years 10 and 11.
- Links with French, German and Spanish speaking countries.

189. The school offers a range of opportunities in modern languages. In Years 9 to 11 pupils study either French or German. In Years 7 and 8, under the new carousel arrangement, pupils choose to study French, German or Spanish. No pupils study two languages.

French

190. In 2001, GCSE results in French were just above average and marked a slight dip on the previous two years. Girls outperformed boys, in line with the trend nationally, though boys did better than boys nationally. In 2002, results improved and were the highest since the previous inspection.

191. Standards of work in Year 9 are average. Pupils generally make progress in each skill and build up their knowledge of grammar structures, including an early introduction to tenses. They make good progress in developing comprehension skills and can extract details from tapes and printed texts. In Year 9, most can write a short account of a holiday, for example, a postcard. Some higher attaining pupils progress to a higher level because they write more independently and at greater length and can refer to past and future events. However, in general, pupils do not pay enough attention to written accuracy. In speaking, most pupils respond to visual aids and simple questions with a phrase or sentence and can engage in a dialogue, although they rely on written support. Some pupils do not achieve as highly as they should, especially in speaking, because of their lack of effort and inappropriate behaviour. Pupils' achievement by Year 9 is just satisfactory overall.

192. Standards of work in Year 11 are just above average and most pupils achieve well. Pupils continue to make progress in developing comprehension skills and deal with longer and more detailed texts and tapes. Higher attaining pupils speak and write at more length and use a wider range of

language with increasing confidence. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs make more limited progress, particularly in speaking and writing, but given their prior attainment, achievement overall is satisfactory and they are on course to gain a GCSE pass.

193. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall in Years 10 and 11. However, they are no better than satisfactory in Years 7-9 where there is considerable variation. While many pupils settle down to work, are cooperative and generally behave well, some pupils persist in chattering instead of listening to the teacher and getting on with their work. Even conscientious pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration for the duration of the 70 minute lesson. In Year 9, a significant minority of average and lower attaining boys and girls behave inappropriately, waste time and disrupt the learning of other pupils in the class. Even when teachers use imaginative resources and plan interesting activities, some pupils prove difficult to motivate.

194. The quality of teaching and learning in French is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 10 and 11. During the week of the inspection, the proportion of good or better lessons seen was much lower than is often found and was concentrated in Years 10 and 11. There is a consistent approach to lesson planning and planning for progression over time is a strength. Activities and resources are well chosen to stimulate interest, encourage pupil involvement and increase their knowledge and understanding. Most teachers speak French in lessons and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop oral skills. A good example was a Year 10 lesson which moved at a brisk pace and in which pupils were fully focused and eager to learn. They made rapid gains in memorising new language and in oral confidence, so that by the end of the lesson they were able to express and defend their opinions forcefully in a class debate about school uniform. However, there is some inconsistency of practice and too much working in English in some lessons. There is some unsatisfactory teaching and learning, located mainly in Year 9, where disruptive behaviour is not well managed and pupils make too little progress. Even when class management is satisfactory, lapses in attention among some pupils, including higher attainers, are not always dealt with promptly or firmly enough, causing loss of time and a slowing in pupils' rate of learning. In Years 7-9 also, there is some inconsistent practice in the quality and frequency of marking.

German

195. In 2001, GCSE results were average and continued the steady improvement since the previous inspection. Girls and boys did as well in German as in their other subjects. In 2002, results improved slightly.

196. Standards of work in Year 9 are average, and are higher than the most recent teachers' statutory assessments, which the school agrees were too severe. Achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to pupils' starting points in Year 7. Pupils gradually build up their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary and develop each skill through regular practice. Most respond readily to simple questions with a sentence and take part in dialogues to talk about, for example, their school timetable and favourite subjects. Most write a simple description or holiday account fairly accurately and some can refer to past events. Pupils develop comprehension skills well, picking out details from tapes and printed texts in the course materials. Pupils with special educational needs progress at a similar rate to other pupils in the class, particularly when materials are suitably adapted.

197. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. Pupils build up their knowledge of grammar and manipulate the language more confidently. Higher attaining pupils develop their oral skills well and speak with increasing confidence on a variety of topics when presented with a good role model. Average and lower attaining pupils are more reticent and hesitant, especially when they have fewer opportunities to practise. In coursework, writing about topics such as work experience, higher attaining pupils display a good command of different tenses, they express personal opinions and accuracy is generally good. Average attaining pupils can, with support, write a factual account of a holiday, for example, and can refer to past and future events. Comprehension skills continue to develop well. Pupils pick out information from tapes and texts and higher attaining pupils cope with lengthier and more complex extracts. Achievement over time is good.

198. Attitudes towards German are good overall, though there is some variation. Some boys and

girls, including higher attaining pupils, are too ready to stray off task and chatter and others lose interest when they get too few opportunities to work things out for themselves. Sometimes teachers talk too much and do too much of the work for them. Most pupils come prepared to work and behaviour overall is good. Pupils generally work well in pairs and groups, and boys often participate more keenly in oral work than girls.

199. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The proportion of good or better lessons seen during the inspection was higher than in French, though the best teaching was once again in Years 10 and 11. As in French, planning of lessons and for progression over time is strong. Common features of lessons are the use of well-chosen resources and the good range of carefully sequenced activities. In the best lessons, relationships are good, teachers have very firm control, explanations are clear and pupils get good opportunities to practise and try out new learning in pairs and groups. The pace is brisk and pupils have to work fast in the tight time limits imposed. As a result, they learn quickly and effectively. However, in some lessons the pace is more steady and sometimes slackens off towards the end. As a result, pupils do not progress fast enough, particularly in speaking. As in French, there is some inconsistent marking practice in Years 7-9. Teachers need to make more regular use of National Curriculum levels so that they become confident in assigning accurate levels and pupils know more clearly what they must do to move on quickly.

Spanish

200. In Year 8, pupils are working at levels which are close to national expectations for their age, given the limited time they have studied the language. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in each skill. Teaching and learning in both lessons seen during the inspection was good. Management of pupils is firm and a good pace of learning is maintained. Lesson planning is thorough with a good variety of resources and carefully sequenced activities that ensure pupils build up their knowledge and confidence to use the language correctly. However, the scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals a need for greater consistency in marking practice. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall. Behaviour is good.

201. Leadership and management of modern languages are good. Monitoring of teaching and learning together with good assessment practice has led to a steady improvement in GCSE results and in rising standards in Years 10 and 11 since the previous inspection. However, monitoring needs to be more rigorous and the best practice that exists in Years 10 and 11 needs to be shared in order to raise the overall quality of teaching in Years 7-9 so that standards rise more quickly and pupils achieve more highly. The arrangement in Year 7 provides pupils with a good choice of first language. However, few pupils take up the opportunity to learn a second modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. Apart from the annual visit to Normandy, pupils have little opportunity to communicate with native speakers and develop their cultural awareness. The use of ICT to support and enhance pupils' learning is insufficient and more use should be made of new technology in setting up links with schools abroad.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and expertise.
- The quality of extra-curricular work and range of instrumental opportunities.
- Good relationships.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers for composition and performance.
- The use of assessment to set targets and fine-tune the work offered to pupils.
- Materials provided to help pupils of low attainment.
- Accommodation.

202. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average in music. By end of Year 9, pupils'

attainment reaches standards close to the national average. Progress is satisfactory.

203. GCSE results in 2001 were below average. The results had dipped uncharacteristically in relation to the previous year's results which were above average. However, the 2002 results show a significant improvement. The number of pupils taking GCSE music examinations is variable but slightly below average in relation to the size of the school.

204. Standards achieved by pupils by Year 9 are average overall. They are often a little above average in performing. Listening and composing are sometimes below average. In a Year 8 composition lesson pupils were able to work on basic chords and sing in 'rough and ready' parts. They co-operated well when working in small groups. Electronic keyboards are used appropriately, for example, in a Year 9 lesson where pupils added a variety of melodies to a repeated bass. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to use electronic keyboards and classroom instruments with competence, for both performance and for composition. The department places emphasis on technical terms and this helps to improve pupils' understanding and attainment in listening. Computer work is underused.

205. All pupils who express interest in the subject continue in Years 10 and 11, irrespective of previous musical attainment. At the end of Year 11 attainment is above average overall. It is often above average in performing and near average in appraising music. Pupils' aural work in Years 10 and 11 is helped by the emphasis that the department's teaching places on key words and technical terms. Where strong emphasis is placed on literacy skills, pupils improve their ability to use analytical and descriptive language and therefore increase their musical understanding. Continued emphasis is needed to help them develop a wide technical vocabulary with which to describe the music they hear. Pupils' compositions display competence in work derived mainly from classroom projects. Computers are underused in GCSE classes for performance linked to composition. Pupils have many opportunities to support composition with their own instrumental skills. In a Year 10 group, performances revealed clarinet and flute playing well above the average. As their instrumental skills and practical knowledge are often above average, progress is good for many pupils. At the end of Year 11 achievement in performing is, overall, better than in appraising and composing. Most pupils make good progress in building on their performing and composing skills. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

206. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory throughout the school. When work is designed especially to cater for pupils of differing abilities and those with special educational needs are given additional classroom support, progress is good. There is some work designed to help gifted and talented pupils but pupils with special educational needs do not always have work specifically designed for them in music lessons.

207. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' knowledge and expertise are strong. Teachers successfully build on pupils' previous attainment. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on composition, the improvement of musical skills was closely linked to the development of melodic fragments with some pupils using high levels of instrumental skills to produce very good minimalist compositions. In this lesson pupils displayed a secure understanding of minimalist techniques and were able to apply them to their music. Work is usually matched to pupils' abilities. In general, the work of students is routinely assessed and records of marks are kept. Care is taken to relate classroom tasks to previous learning; the best lessons often have a range of linked tasks. Related homework is set. This helps to consolidate pupils' learning and maintain their interest. Just occasionally some of the less able pupils find the lessons of 70 minutes too long and attention and behaviour begin to slip.

208. Teaching embodies thorough preparation, a range of teaching styles, and interesting work; this helps learning. Music teachers support special needs pupils and fully involve them in all activities. Secure teaching and planning ensure that many pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7-9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' behaviour in music lessons is usually at least satisfactory and often good. Attitudes are especially good in GCSE classes.

209. Instrumental teaching is good. The number of pupils taking lessons in school is near average in relation to the size of the school. About 120 pupils have instrumental lessons each week. The 11 visiting instrumental teachers make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and their work is

managed and carefully integrated into the work of the department. Pupils have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations and the department has a record of success up to, and beyond, Grade 8. Many pupils reach high standards of performance and some are involved in orchestras and other groups at the County level.

210. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department is guiding the development of many appropriate administrative processes. New schemes of work are suitable and the work offered to students meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are in place and use is made of pupil self-assessment. The department is concerned to improve the use of assessment in order to set targets for pupils and develop the work offered to them. There is good general analysis of GCSE results but the department does not as yet systematically analyse component results in detail. The department has mainly satisfactory equipment with suitable instrumental stocks. Computer resources however are very limited. Pianos are generally in a poor state and require refurbishment. Accommodation is poor and there is a lack of space to accommodate the visiting instrumental teachers.

211. Extra-curricular activity in music is open to all and there are good opportunities throughout the year for pupils to perform. Many committed pupils are involved across a variety of musical activities, including choirs, instrumental ensembles and other smaller groups.

212. Since the last report improvement has been satisfactory overall. There has been progress in a number of areas; including the use of musical notation, an improvement in the number of pupils taking GCSE music, and a modest improvement in musical resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment in GCSE are well above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Many pupils demonstrate a most positive attitude towards the subject.
- The subject is very well managed.
- Assessment procedures and practice are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical education in Years 7-9.
- Extend the use of fitness testing to provide evidence of progress across all activities.

213. GCSE results for 2001 were well above the national average. Boys' results were a little better than girls' and many pupils do better in physical education than in their other subjects. Over recent years there has been steady improvement until 2002 when results dipped, with the performance of a group of lower attaining boys being adversely affected by staffing difficulties at the beginning of the second year of the course. Attainment levels at the start of GCSE courses are broadly average, and from this base most pupils achieve well. In 2001, for example, almost one-third of all entrants gained A* or A grades, a much higher proportion than average. The standard of work seen indicates that current Year 11 pupils are working towards similar high levels of achievement. Much of the work is accurate, well detailed and well presented and most pupils demonstrate a good grasp of technical language.

214. In dance, pupils in GCSE classes typically begin the course from below average levels as indicated by their Year 9 assessment results. Their achievement in the 2001 examination is clearly good, though results were below the national average. Most pupils achieve their highest grade in dance and, in 2002 the results showed marked improvement.

215. Attainment on entry to the school is variable but generally below average in physical education. The range of pupils' capabilities in physical fitness, ball skills and coordination is quite wide. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils have reached standards above the expected National Curriculum level 5, in many activities. Overall standards of physical fitness are above average at this stage, though there is a need to extend the use of 'fitness testing' to provide pupils with an overall picture of their improving standards. This represents good progress over three years in most aspects of the subject. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principles of physical fitness are average at this stage and not so well developed as their skills in games, swimming and gymnastics. In contrast to the last report, progress in gymnastics is consistently good for both girls and boys. For example, in a Year 9 girls' lesson, the quality and control of balances and the linking of those balances in sequences improved during the lesson. A Year 7 boys' lesson showed a clear improvement in body control and tension after just three weeks of gymnastics. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well and in particular, gaining in self-confidence as a result of their success in physical education lessons. This encourages them to tackle more challenging activities, for example, in 'personal survival' tasks in swimming lessons, and improves their willingness and capability to work productively in groups.

216. Standards by Year 11 are above average overall. Boys do particularly well in soccer and in basketball. The pace of progress is not so marked as in the earlier years, but there is no decline in their energy and enthusiasm for the subject.

217. Throughout the school most pupils display attitudes that are positive and have a clear impact on standards both in lessons and in the popular and extensive programme of extra-curricular sport. Almost all behave well and have a clear understanding of what their teachers expect of them in terms of behaviour and performance. They are all eager to do well and this is clearly demonstrated through their levels of attendance, participation and good standards of personal kit.

218. Overall, teaching is good across the school. In most lessons there are very good features. All

teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to set clearly the aims for learning in lessons. This ensures that pupils know what to do in order to improve. The needs of the pupils are clearly understood by the teachers and this is clearly reflected in lesson plans with attention being given to modifications within activities to meet different needs. For example, in a swimming lesson where the emphasis of challenge for lower attaining boys was shifted from personal performance to teamwork, and thus the lower levels of some performers were not highlighted. All teachers work in an energetic, enthusiastic and engaging style that affects positively the way in which pupils learn. Relationships in most lessons both amongst the pupils and between pupils and their teachers are good and this feature clearly promotes learning.

219. Leadership and management in physical education are very good. Documentation is comprehensive, and is used well to ensure the smooth running of the daily activities of the department. Assessment procedures and practice are very well advanced. The department makes very good use of statistical data relating to performance targets and monitors closely the progress of groups of pupils, especially in examination classes.

220. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Standards have been raised in Years 7-9, GCSE results are consistently above average in physical education, and improving in dance. Teaching overall is consistently good and the commitment of pupils has been well sustained.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- Early emphasis on key skills.
- Good departmental planning.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results.
- More time for GCSE course.
- More opportunities for pupils to use textbooks in their research and for homework.
- Loss of concentration towards the end of some 70 minute lessons.

221. Pupils join Year 7 with average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments and the work seen show that standards are above average in religious education.

222. GCSE results were below average in 2001 for grades A*-C, and just above the average for A*-G. Pupils did less well in religious education than in their other GCSE subjects. Girls attained better than boys. This picture improved slightly in 2002, and follows a slightly rising trend over the last three years. In 2001 all the pupils taking the Entry Level examination passed. It is now school policy that every pupil must take either GCSE or Entry Level religious education. Although results were lower than many other subjects, nearly every pupil left school with a qualification in the subject.

223. Current standards of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average because the teaching is good. Pupils enjoy a varied curriculum, in line with the locally agreed syllabus. In Year 9, in addition, they begin to study units of the GCSE course for which they will be entered. The study of world religions is a particular strength. High achieving pupils have a good grasp of technical terms relating to world faiths, and a good understanding of their key beliefs and practices. Lower achieving pupils recognise symbols and can make simple connections between the similarities and differences in world religions. All pupils are able to compare and evaluate scientific and Biblical accounts of Creation and describe the special elements of Muslim, Hindu and Christian worship.

224. Current standards seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are also above average. Teaching is especially effective in providing very early guidance on examination techniques and developing important key skills for success but this is sometimes at the expense of increasing subject knowledge. A recent change of syllabus may have an impact here and it is already apparent in the

work seen in Year 10.

225. Pupils with special educational needs are identified within the department and good provision is made for them, with the result that they achieve well, in line with other pupils.

226. Pupils' attitudes in Years 7-9 are good. They respond well to lessons and listen to the teachers and to each other with respect. Work in the books of higher achieving pupils is careful and thorough, well presented and detailed. Lower achieving pupils have less tidy work and often leave tasks incomplete. In Years 10 and 11 there are also good responses, but some pupils can be rowdy and do not work hard enough. There is little difference in the standards achieved by girls and boys.

227. Teaching and learning are both good, maintaining the quality found at the last inspection. Good teaching is not yet leading to good results because religious education has only half the number of lessons which is allocated to other GCSE subjects and there is not enough time for the pupils to study the subject in sufficient depth. In addition, no A-level course is offered so pupils have less incentive to aim for a higher grade. A wide range of teaching strategies is used successfully to provide interesting, active and enjoyable lessons. Pupils are challenged with a variety of tasks such as creating a page for a website. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy skills. Pupils use technical terms well, broaden their vocabularies and improve their communication skills. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection many pupils were moved and inspired by listening to a recording of Martin Luther King, debated topics such as racism and abuse of the environment, and learned about the beliefs and practices of Islam by examining artefacts and talking with a practising Muslim. Opportunities to develop ICT skills are provided as often as possible, but are insufficient because of a lack of ICT facilities available within the school.

228. Good learning is evident in the concentration and enthusiasm observed in some lessons and the readiness with which pupils can discuss their work. Higher achieving pupils can evaluate different religious responses and have the ability to see both sides of an argument. Lower achieving pupils also evaluate but are less able to back up their opinions with good reasons. Progress slows, however, towards the end of some lessons. 70 minutes is too long for some pupils to maintain their concentration. They behave well but learning slows.

229. Leadership and management are good, and staff have clear knowledge of the department's strengths and the areas to improve. Non-specialist teachers are equally as effective as the specialists because of the support they receive. Resources are good, though there is a tendency to rely too much on photocopied material, rather than encouraging pupils to conduct their own research from textbooks. Pupils are taken on two annual visits to local churches and the Beth Shalom holocaust memorial museum. The department has responded fully to all points raised in the last inspection report. However, improvement since then has been just satisfactory, because GCSE results do not yet reflect the good teaching and learning.

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 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
CHEMISTRY	4	25	43	0	5	0.5	0.8
MATHEMATICS	4	100	62	75	15	3.5	1.5
PHYSICS	2	50	52	0	4	0.5	0.9
VOCATIONAL STUDIES	3	33	-	0	-	1.0	-

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
ART AND DESIGN	15	100	96	60	46	6.9	6.6
BIOLOGY	18	89	88	33	34	5.3	5.3
CHEMISTRY	14	93	90	43	43	6.0	5.9
DRAMA	7	100	99	57	38	7.1	6.6
ECONOMICS	15	100	89	40	36	6.0	5.5
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	15	93	91	40	30	5.7	5.3
ENGLISH LITERATURE	28	93	95	32	37	5.4	5.9
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	17	100	91	53	30	6.8	5.4
GENERAL STUDIES	10	80	85	20	30	4.2	4.9
GEOGRAPHY	12	100	92	83	38	8.3	5.7
HISTORY	32	91	88	44	35	5.6	5.5
MATHEMATICS	24	96	87	42	43	5.8	5.8
MUSIC	6	83	93	50	35	6.3	5.7
OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES	38	66	87	24	34	3.6	5.3
PHYSICS	10	70	88	50	40	5.2	5.7
SOCIOLOGY	16	100	86	38	35	6.3	5.3
SPORT STUDIES	9	100	92	22	25	5.6	5.1
VOCATIONAL STUDIES	14	100	92	0	26	1.0	4.4
BUSINESS (AVCE)	9	100	-	56	-	22	-
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (AVCE)	4	75	-	50	-	25	-
LEISURE AND TOURISM (AVCE)	2	50	-	50	-	0	-

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (INT)	4	100	-	0	-	0	-
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The main focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry but further mathematics and physics lessons were also sampled. One further mathematics lesson was observed and the students' enthusiasm and aptitude for the subject were reflected in the high standard of attainment. In the physics lesson students were improving their knowledge of optical physics and defects of vision as a result of good teaching.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are consistently above the national average.
- Teachers have a thorough command of the subject.
- Students have a mature and positive attitude to study.
- There are very good relationships between students and teachers

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that ICT is routinely used to enrich and support learning.
- Improve the provision of textbooks.
- Investigate ways to maximise retention rates in Year 12

230. The 2001 examination results were above the national average at A-level and well above at AS level. Except for a minor dip in 2000, when results were in line with the national average, A-level results have been consistently above the national average. Analysis of results indicates that most male and female students performed at least as well in mathematics as they did in other subjects. On the basis of their GCSE results, most of those who completed the courses achieved very well. The 2002 A-level results show further improvement with a substantial increase in the proportion of students attaining the highest grades. Half of the students attained a grade A and almost all achieved very well by significantly exceeding their predicted grades.

231. One third of the students who sat the 2002 AS examination attained either a grade A or B and most students achieved very well on the basis of their GCSE results. However, one in four students did not complete the AS course, having dropped out at an early stage after being unsuccessful in the first module examination. Most of these students experienced difficulty because a lack of fluency with algebraic manipulation impeded their capacity to cope with the work in pure mathematics.

232. Current standards of sixth form work observed during the inspection are above the national average. The majority of students in Year 13 are producing work that will result in the highest grades. About a third of students who completed the AS course chose not to continue - consequently those pursuing the course to A-level are mainly higher attaining students. The quality of their notes and exercises is generally very high and most are very well organised. There is little evidence of the routine use of ICT. Most students annotate their notes to suit their individual needs. Presentation is well structured and systematic and the quality, in all modules, is rigorous and thorough. Students' work is regularly assessed and marked. Marking is thorough and usually includes extensive correction notes and pointers for improvement. Year 12 students have recently embarked on the AS course and, though most are confidently coping with work at this level, the progress of a minority is impeded by a lack of proficiency with essential algebraic skills.

233. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Two particular strengths characterise all lessons, the thorough subject command of the teachers and the very good relationships that have been established between teachers and students, particularly in Year 13. The

combination of these two factors and the positive attitude to study of students ensure that lessons are conducted at an appropriately challenging pace. Teachers' command of subject enables them to formulate searching questions that ensure learning is with understanding and they use any incorrect student responses to skilfully isolate and correct misconceptions. They have the confidence to use imaginative methods that fully involve students in the exposition. For example, when students were required to analyse network problems in pairs and then make a presentation to the whole group, the level of rigour and articulation was very high. The teacher struck a very good balance between giving pointers and allowing students the freedom to formulate and test their own thinking. Consequently the students learned with enthusiasm and understanding.

234. Students have very positive views about the subject. In particular, they are appreciative of the approachability of teachers when extra help is required and the way their work is thoroughly assessed. However, they are concerned about the lack of textbooks and would like to have more experience in using ICT in their studies.

235. There is a very good match of teachers to the requirements of the various modules in the A-level mathematics courses and currently nine members of the faculty contribute to lessons at AS and A-level. They share a commitment to do the best for the students. Monitoring arrangements are good, particularly the detailed evaluation of performance across and within each of the modules. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and facilitates learning.
- Assessment, monitoring and target setting are good so that students are aware of their progress.
- Students are well motivated.

Areas for improvement

- Results in module eight.
- The number of higher grade passes.
- The departmental reference library is outdated.
- There are too few textbooks.

236. The GCSE A-level results in 2001 were above average, with boys outperforming the girls. These results were an improvement on the previous year, with more students gaining the higher grades although a greater number of students did not achieve a pass. The AS-level examination results in 2001 were average, in line with predicted grades, and most students achieved their targets. In 2002, there was a dip in the A-level results. Although these are subject to further scrutiny by the examination board, there are clear weaknesses in one particular module of the course.

237. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and these standards are achieved because of good teaching. In relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form students are achieving well. Their positive attitudes mean that the quality of learning is good, and students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. The achievement of male and female students is similar.

238. Students in Year 13 make good progress in lessons and are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. They are able to describe the stages of photosynthesis and its importance to plant life. They demonstrate competence in practical work, performing serial dilutions with care and accuracy. Other students in Year 13 analysed mock urine samples to 'diagnose' illnesses such as diabetes and jaundice. Students in Year 12 are able to explain the process of osmosis in living tissue and define relative terminology. These students are successfully building on work covered at GCSE level.

239. Teaching in biology is good overall, enabling students to learn well. Teachers show very good

subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts and promote the confidence of the students. They display an enthusiasm for the subject, which is passed on to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and include a variety of teaching and learning styles, including the use of ICT, to maintain students' interest. Reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other. The development of independent learning skills is fostered by mini research projects, following which students make presentations to their peers. Teachers' expectations are high and they question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding. There are pleasant working relationships between teachers and students during lessons so that students feel able to ask questions if they need to. Marking of students' written work is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance on areas for improvement, with good use of praise and encouragement. Assessment takes place through regular testing during and at the end of work modules, and targets are regularly reviewed so that students are always aware of their progress. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons, often comprising past examination questions. Regular fieldwork takes place and students attend annual revision conferences at a nearby university.

240. Students learn well and make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching, and also because they are mature and highly motivated. Many of them need to do well in biology because of their career aspirations, which further motivates them so that course completion rates are good. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They work co-operatively together in both theory and practical lessons and help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way.

241. The department is well led and managed. Improvement has been satisfactory, and the above average standards seen during the previous inspection have been maintained. There is a good team ethos within the department. Members of staff support each other and share information and expertise, meeting regularly to discuss departmental issues. There is a clear focus on direction and a commitment to the continued achievement of good examination results. Monitoring of staff takes place through informal discussions and regular meetings take place to review progress and monitor internal assessment procedures. Assessment and record keeping are good. There needs to be an increase in the number of higher grade passes. At present many students are only achieving lower grades and too many students are failing one particular module, although it is hoped that this problem will be rectified and staff are to receive training in this area. All staff are biology specialists enabling them to teach with confidence. Accommodation is satisfactory, and the displays around the department are informative and aid learning. Resources are good although there is a shortage of textbooks and the departmental library needs updating. The department receives good technical support from a full-time technician.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching.
- Above average results in 2001.
- Good assessment of students' investigative work.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of ICT in lessons.
- Development of students' independent learning skills.

242. A-level examination results in 2001 were above average but declined in 2002. Over the past four years results have fluctuated between above and below average, and during this time students have gained significantly lower grades than in their other examination subjects. AS results in 2001 were average but improved in 2002.

243. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. These results are achieved as the result of good teaching and very positive students' attitudes. These standards represent good achievement for students as they move through Years 12

and 13. Standards of work in Year 12 are average. Students are only a little way into their AS course but have made a good start in their study of the subject. For example, they have improved on their knowledge and understanding of molecular equations, gained in their GCSE course, for the combustion of organic compounds. They can competently apply the ideal gas equation to these types of reaction to calculate the quantities of products produced. Essential numeracy skills are well taught in this topic so that students' confidence grows and this ensures a good degree of success.

244. The standards of work of the Year 13 students observed during the inspection are above average. These standards are due to effective teaching methods that extend the students' knowledge and understanding of important chemical theories and concepts. For example, in one lesson observed, students built well on their understanding of organic chemistry. Careful explanation by the teacher of the mechanisms involved in the reactions enabled the students to be more able to predict what was likely to happen with other organic reactions. As a result, they achieved above average standards in organic chemistry.

245. Teaching was good in three of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the other. However, scrutiny of students' work confirms that teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of inorganic, physical and organic chemistry and teach the individual modules of work to a high standard. There are good relationships between teachers and students that improve learning. Students are very appreciative of the extra help they get outside the classroom. Lessons are well planned in relation to examination specifications. Teaching of practical skills is good. For example, basic analytical techniques, such as the use of pipettes and burettes, are methodically taught. As a result, students were able to accurately measure the rate of reaction between hydrogen peroxide and iodide ions in the laboratory and do well in their chemistry coursework. The main weakness in teaching is the lack of ICT in chemistry. There are far too few opportunities for students to use ICT to consolidate and extend their understanding of chemistry.

246. Across the age range students develop a mature attitude towards the subject. In Year 13, this can be seen in the quality of their written work and their improving practical and investigative skills. However, in Year 12, some students are reluctant to contribute to class discussions and this results in slower progress. For example, in a lesson about the periodic table the teacher found it hard to get the students to contribute their ideas. As a result, most of the input and conclusions came from the teacher. Students were passive in their learning and their independent learning skills were limited. Most students go on from Year 12 to complete their A2 course, and retention rates are good in both courses.

247. The curriculum is well organised, using a modular system that is appropriate to the students' capabilities, and results in them making good progress. Support material is of a high order and improves standards. Assessment, particularly of investigative work, is good and this contributes well to the above average standards seen.

248. Subject management is good. There is good monitoring of teaching and learning which is helping to raise standards. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory and standards have been maintained.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was inspected as a focus subject.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Assessment procedures and practice.
- Subject expertise of teachers.
- Good range of projects ensures above average practical work.

Areas for improvement

- Develop further the use of CAD/CAM.

249. Results in the 2001 A-level product design course were above the national average. All students were successful, and many gained the higher A-B grades. The 2001 AS results were well above the national average. However, in 2002, both the A2 and AS level results were not as high in the previous year. Retention rates are good, and the majority of students who start the AS course continue to A2 level, and achieve success at A-E grades.

250. Standards of current work in Year 12 and Year 13 are average overall. In Year 13, students are investigating a range of projects for their final piece of coursework. These include an interesting project researching a reclining garden chair including ergonomic and material considerations, and a well-researched project looking at function and construction methods in storage units. Other work shows imaginative solutions to design problems, including the use of ICT. The use of CAD/CAM is a weakness at this level. Students can discuss their work with good levels of understanding. Overall, given their starting points, students' achievement is satisfactory.

251. In Year 12, students are producing work of a average standard for this stage of the course. They have made good research notes looking at good and poor design outcomes such as the Millennium Dome, Humber Bridge and the APT train. Reasons for projects failing or being a success are examined including financial, technical or practical. Practical skills are being developed effectively by using short course tasks in a range of materials which build on skills learned in earlier courses.

252. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The range of expertise in staffing has increased, resulting in students broadening their learning experiences. In a Year 13 lesson students increased their understanding of course requirements by applying clear criteria in their project work supported by the use of exemplar material. Folder work is usually neatly presented with good depth of research and analytical skills. Teachers need to ensure that students' coursework targets are met and that revision techniques are fully developed.

253. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, including an increase in staff teaching the course bringing new experiences to the subject, revised monitoring procedures, and more regular feedback to students using assessment criteria.

BUSINESS

The focus was on AVCE business, but two lessons in economics were sampled. In 2001, A-level results in economics were above average and the most recent results show significant improvement. In the lessons seen, teaching was very good and enabled students to evaluate the more sophisticated versions of demand and supply.

Business education

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and the students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good, with very good assessment procedures.
- The students' collection of first and second-hand information is good.
- The students analyse and apply their good business knowledge well.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient sharing of good practice among teachers and planning for future provision.
- Teaching does not fully meet the needs of higher attainers.
- There are insufficient books and equipment.

254. Results in 2001 were above the national average. Nine advanced business students achieved full awards consisting of passes, merits and distinctions. The advanced business education results have been above the national average for the last four years and those for 2002 appear equally strong. The achievement of students with low GCSE results is very good.

255. The standards of work for the current Year 13 students are above average, and represent good achievement in view of their average attainment on entry to the sixth form. The Year 12 students, who have only just begun their course, are making good progress. The students' strengths are their good understanding of business organisations and terms used, their good collection of first and second-hand information, and their ability to analyse and apply this in discussion and coursework. This is illustrated well in Year 13 where use of first-hand evidence reveals how a large fast-food chain's structure, culture and management style all interrelate, and their impact and that of ICT on the business's overall performance. The weaknesses of lower-attaining students lie in their lack of detailed analysis and their more modest communication skills. Despite good business knowledge, good number skills and excellent financial documents, the work of some Year 13 students fails to show effective links between the marketing, production and financial elements of their business plan.

256. The students' attitudes and behaviour and their relationships with each other and the teachers are generally good, though a very small number of Year 12 male students, in a large class soon to be split into two smaller groups, display negative attitudes and need to be more fully engaged.

257. The students' learning is good overall. They have secure retention of previously taught topics, helped by good first-hand research and good completion of homework exercises designed to reinforce and extend their learning. Students give accurate, detailed answers in class using relevant business terms, deliver good, analytical oral reports of group discussions, and produce good written communication, though their spelling is occasionally careless. They work well in groups, for example, when identifying and assessing the risks posed by a business's competitors and explaining the constraints on meeting customers' needs. The students use computers efficiently to word process business reports, compile documents, provide graphs, charts, tables and questionnaires. Their number skills are generally good, for example, in calculating start-up and running costs and break-even point. Students know how well they are progressing and understand the targets they have been set.

258. Teaching is good overall. Teachers use their very good business experience and expertise to plan well-structured lessons with clear, shared learning objectives. They ask effective questions, provide encouragement, and praise good responses. A very demanding finance lesson, for example, firmly focused on the students' contributions and held their concentration and interest throughout. Assessment of the students' work and internal verification are very good. Teachers provide very good oral and written advice to students on how to raise standards. ICT skills, though, whilst used to present coursework, need to be more closely incorporated into the subject's teaching. More needs to be done to stretch the higher attainers.

259. The leadership and management of business education are very good. The monitoring of assessment and homework through regular work sampling is very good, as is the formal and

supportive monitoring of teaching through lesson observation. Professional development is good, and the induction of new teachers is particularly effective. The monitoring of students' progress is very good and the meticulous analysis of results informs target setting and subject planning. Teachers work informally as a team, and are committed to improving the subject's performance. However, insufficient formal subject meetings are held to share good practice and plan future provision including visits and outside speakers. Resources such as books and equipment need improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No advanced level examination subjects are offered by the school in this area

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on sport studies, but travel and tourism was also sampled. In travel and tourism, examination results in 2002 were most encouraging and many students achieved very well against relatively low GCSE average points scores. Teaching and learning are good and the attitude of most students is very positive.

Sport studies

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

Strengths

- Most students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are very well informed about their performance and progress through very effective assessment and monitoring procedures.
- The subject is very well managed.
- Students' attitudes toward the subject is most mature and very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all students are more fully and more often involved in discussions.

260. In 2001 examination results at A-level were above the national average. Many students achieved their highest grade in sport studies, and many of those had joined the sixth form with modest GCSE average points scores. This represents very good achievement and clear value added over two years. In 2002, the results matched those of 2001. In the AS level examinations in 2001, results were well above average, indicating again very good achievement from an average starting point. Similar results were obtained in 2002.

261. Almost all students who enrol for sport studies complete the two year course, the greater majority of them are male. Standards of work seen in Year 13 lessons and in work folders, including completed assignments, are above average. The work of higher attainers is well above average. Particularly impressive is the work from students in their 'personal exercise plans', in which well-developed knowledge and understanding of the principles of physical fitness and testing are combined with dedicated and energetic practical work. The analysis and evaluation produced is of a high standard.

262. The quality of teaching is very good. A particular strength is the teachers' knowledge, understanding and expertise in the subject; this enables them to pass on their knowledge to eager and hardworking students through accurate and thorough expositions of theoretical principles, which are very carefully selected to relate to students' own personal experiences in a range of sports. Teachers set clear and very well explained learning objectives at the start of each lesson. Students know what to do in order to be successful. Most are equally successful whether working alone or in groups, and many have a well developed capacity for independent, extended learning. The nature of much of the work is challenging. Teachers have high expectations of their students and probe and prompt for

example, during discussions, to ensure that students can argue strongly in support of their committed attitudes and values relating to substance abuse in modern sport. There are a few students who lack a little in the self-confidence to contribute to these discussions.

263. The department is very well managed and organised. The progress of students is regularly tracked in order to ensure that targets are being met and further targets can be set. Students value this feature of the assessment procedure very highly, and, as a result they understand the standards they are reaching, and what needs to be done to make further progress.

264. Since the last report standards have been raised and improvement is good. Students make at least good progress in response to teaching that is consistently very good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was inspected as a focus subject.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, which facilitates learning.
- Resources are good.
- Small group sizes enable students to work together and share ideas.
- Low attaining students achieve highly.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient time is allocated for formal staff meetings.
- Insufficient time is allocated for assessing.
- There is no dedicated budget for the course.
- Raise the achievement of higher attaining students.

265. The results for advanced health and social care were above average in 2001, and all achieved a pass with either a merit or distinction. This was an improvement on the results for 2000. In 2002, ten out of eleven students achieved a pass at AVCE level and all students achieved a pass at AS level. Many achieved very well in relation to their modest GCSE results, although some with higher GCSE results underachieved.

266. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students in both Years 12 and 13 are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Year 12 students working on historical changes in health and social care are able to discuss topics such as GP fundholding, primary and secondary care and primary care trusts. Although it is early in the course they have adapted well to its requirements. Students in Year 13 are able to debate sensitive issues such as IVF, surrogacy and 'designer babies' and extract relevant information from newspaper articles. These students have a good knowledge of the various stages of child development and can competently discuss the value of play in social and emotional development.

267. Teaching is good, enabling the students to learn well. Teachers have a wide experience and are well aware of the course requirements, so they are able to help and advise students on their coursework assignments. They encourage them to undertake personal research and make use of local facilities. There are strong links with local nurseries, hospitals and care homes where some students undertake work experience. Good use is made of visiting speakers such as a nursing lecturer and a representative from the social services. Students are encouraged to help each other and share ideas, which is facilitated by their small group sizes. Teachers encourage class discussions and take care to ensure that all students become involved and contribute to lessons. There is a friendly working relationship during lessons so that students are not afraid to express their own ideas or ask for help if they need it. Marking is thorough and adheres strictly to the criteria laid

down by the examination board for the internal assessment procedures. Each student is provided with an assessment feedback sheet for each unit of work, which clearly details areas for improvement. The nature of the course means that most of the students' written work consists of their research assignments. These are well presented and those awarded the higher grades show greater clarity and depth of thought. Students make full use of their ICT facilities in the presentation of their work.

268. Students learn well and are highly motivated. They are responsive in lessons and interested in the wide variety of topics covered. Most of them intend to follow a career in the health or care services and can appreciate the relevance of the work they cover in the course. They take a pride in their written work as shown by their coursework assignments which indicate that they explore a wide variety of avenues when undertaking their research work. They work co-operatively together, help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way.

269. The department is well led and there is a commitment to the continued achievement of above average results. Progress is monitored regularly and there is a good team ethos amongst the staff who are all experienced and well qualified. However, there is too little time allocated for formal staff meetings and none for internal verification procedures. There is no dedicated budget for the course which is currently financed from the home economics budget, and money is often raised for the course from the sale of home produced items. The accommodation is good although there is no dedicated teaching room at present. Resources are good, there is a wide range of textbooks and videos and students have access to computers which are specifically for their use, with positive impact on standards achieved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subjects were art and design and music. Drama and media studies were also sampled. In drama, results at A-level were above average in 2001, and they improved again in 2002. Two lessons were sampled. In one, strong and energetic teaching produced very good co-operation in the group work, and students made very good gains in their skills in working from imagination. This produced very good learning. The media studies course is in its first year, and students are only a little way into their studies. One lesson was sampled. This was well planned, and recorded news bulletins were effectively used to give students practical experience of analysing radio broadcasting. This produced good interest levels and a good pace, and good learning was the result.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Results in 2001 were above average at A-level and AS level.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Mixed media work in Year 12 is exciting and vigorous.

Areas for improvement

- Work in painting lacks a sense of excitement.
- The pace in lessons is slow.
- Accommodation.

270. In the A-level examination in 2001, results were above average. They were also above average in the AS examination in the same year. Results in both examinations fell in 2002. Students in the AS examination did not do as well as expected, because there were attendance problems with some students. Very small numbers take the subject in some years. Results vary from year to year, and reflect the variation in students' attainment when they start the course. Most complete the course, and retention is good.

271. Current Year 12 students have only just started their course. They are working at a standard that

might be expected from their GCSE grades and their achievement is satisfactory. They draw in charcoal with an increasing confidence and develop their ability to explore tone and form. Their work in mixed media is vigorous and exciting, and they produce large observation pieces based on the study of fruit and vegetables. These show an adventurous use of collage, wash and oil pastel techniques.

272. Standards in the work of current Year 13 students are average. Their sketchbooks are rich and lively, and are used very effectively for research, and for experimentation with materials. They develop their skills in three-dimensional work, using wire and scrap materials. Sculpture based on the study of birds is well made and interesting. Their use of colour is careful and considered, and they produce pleasing compositions, which show an ability to balance warm and cool colours. However, their larger-scale work lacks the vigour that is seen in their sketchbooks. In addition, their painting lacks excitement and a sense of adventure. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory.

273. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and they give good, focused individual advice. This is a strong feature of lessons, and teachers often discuss students' work and progress intently, and communicate a sense of genuine interest in each student's work. Relationships between students and teachers are good, students listen carefully, and the work develops individually. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher spent considerable amounts of time with each student, discussing their work and helping them to improve their skills and ideas. This produced good levels of engagement, and good learning on an individual basis. However, at times, there is a lack of a sense of urgency in lessons, students chat among themselves, and the pace slows. As a result, they do not try as hard as they could. This is a major reason why achievement is no better than satisfactory overall.

274. Assessment procedures are very good, and students are involved in the process of assessing and planning their own work. This means that they know what they need to do to succeed. Attitudes are good, and students appreciate the way that the course builds on and extends their skills from the GCSE course.

275. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory also. Results improved in 2001, and assessment procedures are now very good. In addition, recent Year 12 work is exciting and vigorous. The accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory, and students have no designated space where they can work outside their lesson times.

Music

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and expertise.
- Good working relationships between teachers and students.
- Standards in performance.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.
- Standards in composition.

276. A-level music results in 2001 were above average and represent good achievement in relation to candidates' attainment in GCSE music. At AS level in 2001 results were below average. However, for those students who continued to A-level in 2002, standards improved. Few students drop out; nearly all students who began the music courses completed them.

277. In Year 13 standards in performance are above average. Compositions display some variety but the use of structure and developmental aspects in composition varies. Some students' compositions display a developmental approach using extended musical ideas. Performance standards are often good with students performing suitable, often technically difficult, music with fluency. Standards in

aspects of extended writing are nearer average but are sometimes good. In written analysis, students go beyond the simple recording of factual information and give some explanation of the effect produced on the listener. In comparison with performing and composing, standards in aural analysis and appraisal are more variable with differences in understanding of the significant aspects of musical texts. Students' knowledge is secure, as in a Year 13 lesson on the Messiaen's "*Quatuor pour la fin de temps*" when students were able to relate the music to their knowledge of octatonic scales (a symmetrical scale of eight notes) and identify non-retrogradable rhythms. In the same lesson the teacher introduced a significant moment of spiritual reflection and held the students in awe by quoting from memory a long passage from the Book of Revelation related to the set work.

278. Instrumental skills are also good in Year 12, and are used well in supporting composition. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but have already responded well to the demands made of them.

279. Teaching and learning are good. Work is well-matched to students' abilities. Teaching usually embodies good preparation and secure knowledge. Students are helped to consolidate their technical vocabulary; teachers routinely re-enforce musical terms and language. In a Year 12 lesson on composition, the teacher took great care to ensure that a visiting Japanese student was able to spell and understand the technical terms used. This emphasis helps all students to apply appropriate language to the analysis of music. Teachers make sure that students have opportunities to develop most necessary musical skills. However, computer work is under-represented. Normally classroom question and answer sessions are wide-ranging and lively but just occasionally Year 12 students are content with one-word answers rather than developing ideas verbally. Sixth form teaching stresses the need to widen analytical thinking. Marking of students' work is consistent and comments usually helpful; students have a realistic view of their standards and welcome the new sense of structure recently brought to the course.

280. Visiting instrumental teachers make a valued contribution to the post-16 curriculum and their work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. Students have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations on a variety of instruments and have a good record of success.

281. Students' attitudes in music lessons in Year 13 are diligent. They respond to challenging work. Their response to the performance and compositional elements of the course is often enthusiastic, with appropriate levels of interest, endeavour and commitment. Overall sixth form students have an appropriate approach to learning, are hard working, and enjoy good working relationships with staff.

282. Leadership and management in the subject are good. At the time of the inspection staffing in the music department had undergone a period of transition. A new head of department had been appointed at the beginning of the term. As a result, the department has growing organisational systems with many administrative processes in development. The department has mainly adequate resources but poor ICT resources. Accommodation is poor but likely to improve in the near future. There are a number of extra-curricular activities in music and good involvement amongst sixth form music students. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The popularity of the subject is showing signs of improvement with a rise in the numbers taking the AS level option in 2001.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history, law and sociology. One lesson in geography and one of politics were sampled. In 2001, the results in geography were very high, and in the top five per cent of the country. They fell slightly in 2002. In the lesson seen, following a field study visit, very good teaching enabled the students to work very successfully in groups. They made rapid progress in their learning about erosion, transportation and deposition, and their part in shaping the landscape of coastlines. In 2001, results in politics were average. In the lesson observed the students explored the events leading to civil war in Ireland. Teaching was satisfactory.

History

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

Strengths

- Variety of teaching methods.
- Use of independent learning and self-assessment.
- Attention to examination technique.
- Good examples of the use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching and sharing good practice.
- Standards and results.
- Matching materials to students' needs.
- Understanding of basic historical terms.

283. At A-level in 2001 there was a big increase in the proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades but the results were average overall. In 2002, fewer students gained the higher grades; otherwise the results were similar to those of the previous year. At AS level the results in 2001 were average and there was a slight decline this year. Course completion rates are high.

284. The standards of the current Year 13 students' work are average and represent satisfactory achievement in relation to their AS results. Their written work is of variable quality. Higher attaining students produce independent work of a high standard on the Nazi Youth Policy. Their carefully researched essays, using ICT, show a good balance of narrative and analysis and they use quotations well. Other students sometimes fail to write in paragraphs and their standards are average. In coursework on the impact of changes in media and communications in the twentieth century their understanding of such basic terms as 'class,' 'Conservative' and 'National Insurance' is superficial.

285. At this early stage in Year 12 standards are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. More able students are beginning to understand basic historical concepts such as 'lobbying,' 'Protestantism,' 'Congress' and 'income tax' but most have not yet bridged the gap needed for higher levels of enquiry and analysis. Most use ICT competently to research material on the Anti-Saloon League and produce good presentations. Some use films to increase their knowledge and understanding of the United States in the 1920s. However, several students have low GCSE grades and are having difficulty settling to the demands, particularly the vocabulary, of advanced work.

286. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned, use a variety of methods and close attention is paid to examination technique. For example, in a lesson on Boom and Bust in the USA students worked well in groups to examine source materials, share their responses and compare them to model answers. This method of self-assessment is a good feature of the teaching as it creates effective learning situations. Homework is set regularly to extend classwork. Marking is generally good as it acknowledges achievement, identifies areas for development and relates to examination requirements. Occasionally marking is weak because it fails to correct inaccuracies and ignores poor spelling and grammar. Another weakness of the teaching is that the vocabulary of the source materials and texts is not always carefully matched to students' needs, especially at the start of the AS course. This impedes the pace and quality of learning. Teaching lacks a consistent approach. Some classes are given help and guidance on how to construct files

and essays and are advised on what to read to broaden their understanding. Others are not, though all students said that they were well supported and received help when they needed it. Given the increasing numbers taking history it is important that teachers identify which approaches and methods work best to enhance students' learning and to improve standards and results.

287. Year 13 students talk enthusiastically about their work in history. They are confident, willing to engage in discussion and are determined to improve their target grades. Some students have difficulty in maintaining their files of notes and this makes revision difficult.

288. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Results are carefully evaluated to identify strengths and areas for improvement. There is a strong commitment to improve standards and results by making more effective use of assessment information to track and maximize the progress of students. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Law

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

Strengths

- Teaching communicates high expectations to students and contains many good features such as teachers' legal knowledge.
- Students become independent in their research.
- Teachers give generously of their own time outside lessons to broaden and extend students' learning.
- Students work well as individuals and in small groups.
- Homework and classwork is appropriately challenging and interesting.
- Students are well prepared for external examinations.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results at GCE AS/A2 level are not as high as they could be for the higher grades.
- There are restricted opportunities to use ICT and budget provision is inadequate.
- Some students' written work is limited.
- Students do not evaluate their own work sufficiently.

289. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average for Year 13 and average for Year 12. The standards seen are better than past examination results might suggest is possible. These standards are achieved because following staff changes, the current teaching has many good features. Students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form is good. Students' positive attitudes also cause the quality of students' learning in law to be good. Students make very good progress as they move through the sixth form.

290. Results in A-level law have been well below average for other social studies subjects in recent years. In 2002 results were in line with other subjects. In 2001, while most students passed their examinations, there was a significant number of failures. The AS level results were, however, above average. In the most recent examinations, performance was better than in previous years for all grades. In work seen, students are maintaining these standards and building on their overall GCSE performance. Retention rates are good as the subject is popular.

291. Students learn and achieve well. This is the direct result of the keen teaching they receive. They have an effective understanding of the English legal system and are able to relate this to both civil and criminal law which they study. Students have a grasp of the contrasting roles and influence of solicitors and barristers. Their notebooks of appropriate cases and statutes reflect the thorough teaching they are receiving. Students have a positive view of the course, emphasising that it is challenging and well taught. The amount of self-evaluation students undertake is too limited. Research work is limited by the inadequate opportunities to use ICT. Computer terminals with Internet access, which would increase the scope of learning, are not available in the classroom. There are insufficient resources to support learning in terms of electronic media, books and journals.

292. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers have good legal knowledge. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, shared with students. Pace is good and the teachers use appropriate humour to illustrate many of the less exciting areas of Black Letter law. An effective use of legal argument introduced students to the analysis of legal thinking and a demonstration of problem solving. The teachers illustrate clearly the moral dimension of legal issues and students respond by putting forward mature views which they back up with evidence from their own research. In a Year 12 lesson, students considered how to apply legal principles to both new and hypothetical cases, identifying relevant facts and relevant law. The teaching is positive in encouraging and supporting students who contribute well, but there are some who are stronger orally and find extended writing troublesome. The preparation of essays and examination questions is well organised to support these students.

293. The enrichment in the subject is good. There are visits to courts where students meet lawyers and gain important legal insights. There are also visits to conferences and speakers join students in school. The teachers provide students effectively with activities that extend their legal knowledge. Leadership and management of law are good, and the factors which produced a poor 2001 A-level performance have been reversed. Schemes of work are well matched to the learning needs of students and teachers are sensitive to the range of needs and ensure equality of access to both genders. Most students are aware of their rates of progress in their knowledge, understanding and the application of their legal knowledge.

294. Improvement within the subject has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. Results are improving and they are predicted to improve further. This is occurring in a context where the attainment on entry has remained broadly average with the majority of students performing better than anticipated.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Examination results are above the national average.
- Enthusiastic teaching results in a strong learning ethos. Teachers organise and manage lessons well.
- Students' good attitudes support independent learning. Teachers help students to make progress through the use of constructive marking that shows students how to improve.
- Fieldwork enriches students' learning and develops their creative and investigative skills.

Areas for improvement

- Restricted resources, particularly text books, to support learners.
- The lower attaining students' skills in review and analysis of relevant information, together with the accurate use of specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

295. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are reached because the teaching is very good. The teachers make very varied use of both traditional and innovative forms of teaching, including methods of assessment, that are suited to the particular objectives of both AS and A2 courses. Students' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the sixth form is very good. The quality of teacher/student relationships is good and has a significant impact on the motivation of students who take their work seriously. Lessons are well planned and enriched, ensuring that students continue their interest in sociology.

296. Examination results in 2001 A-level were above average. Students gained an above average proportion of higher grades. The AS level examination results were also well above average, and the proportion of students gaining A or B grades was high. The most recent results demonstrate a slight reversal in all grades. Comparisons made with their GCSE grades show that students make very good progress over time. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students although there are more of the latter who choose this subject. Retention rates are good.

297. Work seen during the inspection is also average. When talking in class students are articulate

and well informed. Most make thoughtful contributions to discussions on society and show themselves able to think as they speak, responding to questions intelligently. Students show evidence in their notebooks of painstaking research and there is evidence of planning. They make some use of the Internet to extend their understanding of recent sociological writing. Essays are focused and answer the question set. Most written work is analytical and shows clearly that students have detailed knowledge of sociological studies. They have an ability to apply their knowledge and to solve problems that confront both the citizen and society. Lower attaining students slowly build up their critical skills, helped by a supportive teacher. Sociology students are expected to be good at both written and oral communication. The students observed are good verbally but a few find difficulty with the reading of complex primary materials. Students require more exercises to help their improvement, particularly, in analysing material and discriminating between the sociologically relevant and irrelevant.

298. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and students respond enthusiastically to their lessons. In a lesson on the use of questionnaires, the teacher showed how primary and secondary sources of data are correctly identified and diagnosed. Students were shown how to prepare appropriate solutions and combine facts to reach a conclusion. In another lesson, the teacher made the expectations of students apparent by involving them in the challenging task of analysing group discussions and presentations. Students are making good progress in speaking and responding to questions. They exchange their views with each other in an open manner, closely monitored by the teacher. Discussion and debate are lively and students show interest in each other's views. As a result, they are developing their listening skills effectively and are able to identify the main points and specific details of a discussion. A widening range of vocabulary, through skimming and scanning of sociological texts, is needed. Restricted resources limit students' access to these important texts.

299. Students' views are positive. They are informed about their progress and appreciate the fieldwork provided, particularly the opportunity to undertake surveys. The leadership and management of sociology are very good. Students' progress is carefully monitored and students are regularly informed about their progress through thorough marking linked to examination criteria. Oral feedback in lessons is helpful to students and gives them clear guidance on how to improve. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Students are actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of sociological information, including Internet access, the use of which is deepening learning both in A and AS options. However, resources such as textbooks are insufficient to support teaching and learning at this level.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject was English literature. In English language the A-level results in 2001 were above average. They improved significantly in 2002. One lesson was sampled in Year 12, in which teaching and learning were good, with students making an effective start on developing their knowledge of the vocabulary and concepts of language acquisition. There were no entries for A-level in modern foreign languages in 2001. Five students took A2 French in 2002 – all were successful. Currently there are no students studying a modern language in Year 12 or 13.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Results over time have improved and standards are well above average.
- Students are highly motivated and enjoy the course.
- Clear strengths in many aspects of teaching.
- Strong leadership of the subject and professional development.

Areas for improvement

- Further improvement in end of Year 13 examinations.

300. Judgements about results and standards need to bear in mind that each group tends to include a larger number of students with lower entry standards than is found in many schools. Results in the 2001 A-level examination were broadly average, an improvement on the below average results of 1999 and 2000. In 2002 there was a very small fall in the average grade achieved, but an increase in grades A-E. The 2001 AS results were average. In 2002 there was significant increase in the proportion at A-B and in the overall average grade. A particular strength was the 100 per cent success rate at A-E given the modest starting point of a significant minority.

301. In the current Year 13 standards are well above average and students are achieving very well overall. More than half achieved A-B in the 2002 AS examination and continue to work at this level. Few are working at a level that is below C – but this is also good achievement given their starting points. Students' work is typified by lengthy, well-constructed and argued assignments. The standards of accuracy are high. Essay work reveals significant progress in the development of a mature evaluative style and in the depth of analysis of texts. These strengths cumulate in course work of a very high standard, including excellent critical knowledge that teased out parallels between the main and sub-plots of 'King Lear'. Clear and strongly supported links were made with the bleakness of the play's settings, language and theme. Middle attaining students write engagingly and make general evaluative points effectively. They tend to leave some ideas unexplored, significantly the impact of language. The work of lower attainers is less evaluative. A piece on the trial scene in 'King Lear' relied too much on tracking the narrative of the scene.

302. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into the course but are achieving as expected. They confirm they find the step up from Year 11 challenging but during a lesson on the opening scene of 'The Winter's Tale' readily adapted to the degree of conceptual thinking required. Responding to finely judged prompts from the teacher, they successfully inferred the clues that prepare us for Leontes' emerging jealous resentment. The detail of their director's notes confirmed they are making good progress.

303. Teaching and learning are currently very good overall. The quality of feedback to the students is outstanding. The students regard this as one of the strengths of teaching, especially the specific nature of the feedback that crystallises what they need to do to improve. Students also stressed the helpfulness of their teachers' frequent references to each unit's assessment objectives. As a consequence, they are assured about the specific features of the required standards. The teachers have very high expectations, reflected in the very good assessment procedures. Each student's initial target based on overall GCSE performance is reviewed and revised in the light of progress. Year 13 students have further revised (and aspirational) targets based on their AS results.

304. High expectations are evident in the amount of independent learning required of students. Currently focusing on the skills of comparing texts, each gave a brief presentation of a text they have read. Their range of texts – 'Dubliners', 'As I Lay Dying' and 'Moby Dick' - was impressive and the teacher's informed response revealed a high standard of subject knowledge. Very good planning ensures the lessons take full advantage of the time available and the range of methods results in hard work and productive learning. Students started one lesson by continuing a short extract by D H Lawrence, aiming to emulate the stylistic and genre features of the original. They then evaluated other students' attempts. The resulting discussion identified examples of features such as impact of voice, tone, tense, narrative person and language. By the end of the lesson students had made very good

progress in securing a framework to support their comparisons of texts.

305. This positive picture of advances in the students' learning is shared by the students themselves. They refer to the progress they have made in researching articles, books and internet texts to support their progress. They perceive that they are developing skills for life beyond school, citing how they find themselves applying skills of critical deconstruction to the many texts and statements they encounter in other contexts. Course completion rates are very high: in excess of 90 per cent.

306. The subject benefits from very strong leadership and management. The degree of collaboration between the two principal teachers is a strength. They have taken the opportunity provided by the new courses to review schemes of work, assessment and teaching and learning. There is a systematic approach to reviewing provision supported by good professional development opportunities. After a period of results that have been below average or average, the challenge remains to ensure the well above average standards seen are realised in the end of course examinations.