

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WILMSLOW HIGH SCHOOL**

Holly Road, Wilmslow

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111443

Headteacher: Mr R Lyon

Reporting inspector: Mr J. Paddick  
10308

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249673

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Holly Road,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire

Postcode: SK9 1LZ

Telephone number: 01625 526191

Fax number: 01625 536858

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Levemore

Date of previous inspection: 14<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10308	John Paddick	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed
13762	Norman Shelley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30941	Keith Brammer	Team inspector	English	
2644	Melville MacLeod	Team inspector	Science Physics	
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Art	
11966	John Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32340	Peter McKay	Team inspector	Geography	
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	History	
27803	Joe Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Special educational needs English as an additional language	
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music	

19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
32167	Mark Sumner	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7994	Pamela Weston	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Physical education	
32229	Mary Comer	Team inspector	Business education	
22985	Jacqueline Sparkes	Team inspector	Biology	
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Chemistry	
18676	Roy Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
32113	Joy Byrom	Team inspector	Citizenship	
12897	Maurice Mealing	Team inspector	Sociology	
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Psychology	
2959	Brian Leek	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

The inspection contractor was:

North West Education Services  
Cheshire House  
164 Main Road  
Goostrey  
Cheshire  
CW4 8JP

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>14</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 <b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>17</b>
 <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>19</b>
 <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>21</b>
 <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>23</b>
 <b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>24</b>
 <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>26</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>28</b>
 <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>33</b>
 <b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>53</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wilmslow High School provides mixed comprehensive education for 1714 pupils in the age range 11 to 18. It is larger than average, catering for 1403 pupils in the 11 to 16 phase and 311 students in the sixth form. There are approximately equal numbers of boys and girls in the main school but more males than females in the sixth form. The school has increased in size by over 300 pupils since the previous inspection. It is pleasantly situated in an attractive and prosperous area but it takes a significant number of pupils from very challenging circumstances. There are fewer pupils than normal claiming free school meals. Most of the pupils are white. Only four per cent come from ethnic minority backgrounds; Indian and Pakistani are the most numerous. There are forty-three pupils with English as an additional language and ten at an early stage of its acquisition. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average overall. There are fewer pupils than average on the school's special educational needs register and less than usual with formal statements. The most common needs relate to moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. The school has a unit for the hearing impaired with a capacity of eight pupils. Currently there are two pupils on roll.

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

The school is very effective. GCSE and A-level results are well above average. Current standards in the school are also well above average. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and it has many very strong features. The climate for learning is good. Pupils respond to the school's high expectations of them and work hard. Leadership and management are excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Standards are well above average and achievement is good.
- GCSE and A-level results are well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school and to their studies.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent.

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

- Provision for religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) does not meet requirements.
- The quality of the satisfactory teaching can be improved further.
- The accommodation is too small for the number of pupils on roll.

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

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

The school was previously inspected in 1997. Since then improvement has been very good. There has been a culture change and the school is now much more popular. GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than they have nationally. A-level standards are well above average and have risen quickly too. Very good attention has been given to most of the key issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. Development planning is now excellent; teaching has improved considerably; the pastoral system has been completely restructured and is very effective; and all members of staff have job descriptions. From the previous key issues, only ICT remains to be tackled effectively.

### **STANDARDS**

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

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

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

The school's results in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were well above average overall. They were above average in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. The overall trend in results has been upwards as it has nationally. In 2002, the results were well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Current standards in Year 9 are above average overall and represent good achievement. Standards in English, mathematics and science are all well above average and reflect the National Test results between 1999 and 2002. Only in religious education and ICT are standards lower than they should be.

GCSE results have improved much more quickly between 1998 and 2002 than they have nationally. They were well above the average for all schools in 2001 and 2002, exceeded governors' challenging targets and represented good achievement. The 2002 results were very high compared to the average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Sixty-nine per cent of pupils achieved five or more results in the range A\*-C. Particularly good GCSE results were obtained in art, design and technology, French and geography. For the last two years, virtually all of the school's Year 11 pupils have been entered for GCSE and have gained at least five graded results. Normally, the school's GCSE results for girls are better than for boys, as is the case nationally, but in 2002, boys did better than girls. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average, reflect the well above average GCSE results, and represent good achievement.

Standards are rising quickly in the sixth form. In 2001, A level results were well above the national average and represented good achievement for both male and female students. In 2002, the school produced its best set of A level results since the inception of the sixth form. There were particularly strong results in English language, art, mathematics, physics and history. In both years female students did significantly better than males. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average and represent good achievement.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are good and they respond positively to the school's high expectations.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good whether pupils are in class, moving round the building, eating or socialising. Pupils are generally sensible, polite and conscious of the needs of others. However, exclusions are above average for the size of school.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Pupils become increasingly mature and socially adept as they move through the school. Relationships between pupils themselves and with adults are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is above average and is an important factor in the good progress that pupils make.

### 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 is good throughout the school. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects, plan lessons well, and expect high standards from the pupils. The climate for learning in the school is good. There is a sense of calm in almost all rooms because pupils are fully engaged by the variety of approaches that teachers use. Relationships in the classroom are very good. In response to this good teaching, the pupils make good progress with their learning. They understand new concepts quickly because teachers explain them well. There is plenty of opportunity for pupils to consolidate knowledge and practise skills through homework, which is used well. Teaching meets the needs of pupils well in most lessons but occasionally teachers do not plan sufficiently well for the whole ability range. ICT is generally not used sufficiently to promote learning. Teachers understand the requirements of GCSE, AS and A-level examinations well and ensure that pupils and sixth form students have every opportunity to be successful.

In Years 7 to 11, teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. It is very good in art and history in Years 7 to 11, and very good in design and technology and music in Years 10 and 11. In all other subjects in the main school, teaching is good, apart from ICT in Years 7 to 9 and citizenship in Years 7 to 11, where it is satisfactory. Although the teaching in religious education has many good features, it is too narrow in content and fails to cover fully the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. In ICT, the teaching is satisfactory but there is not enough of it to enable pupils to receive their National Curriculum entitlement. In the sixth form, teaching is good overall. It is at least good in all of the subjects inspected in detail, apart from sociology where it is satisfactory. Teaching is very good in English language, mathematics, physics, history, music and art.

Literacy is taught well as pupils move through the school. It supports learning in all subjects. Numerical skills are also generally developed well and support pupils' work in many subjects.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In most respects, the quality and range of learning opportunities is good. Provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent. However, requirements for the teaching of ICT and religious education are not fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and tackle GCSE successfully in Year 11.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils having English as an additional language make the same good progress as the other pupils in the school. They receive good support when they need it.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. For social and cultural development it is very good. This provision encompasses the whole of the life of the school and is responsible for the good attitudes that pupils display.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for pupils' welfare are very good. There is always support on hand for pupils who need help or guidance. Assessment procedures are good.

The school's partnership with parents is of good quality.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has a clear vision for the school's continuing development and communicates it very well to the staff. Management by the leadership team is excellent. It ensures that standards remain high, that all school procedures are followed properly, and that there is a consistency of good practice.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors play a very full role in shaping the direction of the school. They understand its many strengths and few weaknesses very well. Generally, they fulfil their responsibilities well. However, the school does not fully meet requirements for collective worship or for the provision of ICT and religious education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very good procedures for evaluating its performance. It is never complacent and constantly seeks to improve provision and standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all its resources very well. Available finance is spent very prudently and checked carefully. Savings are carefully planned and directed towards improving the facilities. The current accommodation is insufficient for the numbers of pupils on roll and there are some shortages of resources, particularly computers. Staffing is good. The school successfully practises the principles of best value through consultation and comparison in financial and educational matters.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What some parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching is good.</li> <li>• Teachers have high expectations of pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the school are good.</li> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• There is a good range of extra curricular activities.</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not enough homework</li> <li>• The school could work more closely with them.</li> <li>• There could be more information about pupils' progress</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully agree with the positive views expressed by parents. However, homework was found to be both sufficient to complement learning in the classroom and to enable pupils to exercise some independence in their study. The school provides good information about pupils' progress via school reports, interim discussions with pupils about their progress, parents' evenings, planners and occasional individual communications. The school goes to considerable lengths to engage the co-operation of parents. It does not always receive the good response that it deserves and occasionally does not satisfy some parents. It consults with them, takes their views into account and involves many in the work of the school.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has grown in popularity since the previous inspection because prospective students have recognised the quality of the provision. Numbers of students have risen by over 30 per cent since 1997. Currently, there are 311 students on roll, 173 male and 138 female, all following courses leading to AS and A-level. Most transfer from the main school following GCSE, but the numbers coming from other schools are increasing. Most students are white and there are more from advantaged backgrounds than in an average sixth form. The attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average, partly because the school does so well at GCSE and partly because entry requirements for some courses have been raised. The school expects applicants to have gained at least five GCSE passes at grade C or better.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very cost-effective and meets the needs of the students very well. Standards are rising quickly. A-level results are well above average, represent good achievement and exceed governors' targets. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are also well above average and students are doing well. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leadership and management are very good.

### Strengths

- Standards are well above average and students achieve well.
- A-level results are consistently well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good with many very good features.
- Students' attitudes towards their study are very good.
- The assessment procedures are very good and soon identify any underachievement.
- Management of the sixth form is very good.

### What could be improved

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning in many AS and A-level subjects.
- Accommodation available for students to socialise and study is inadequate.
- Library facilities and resources for AS and A-level private study need to be improved.
- The school does not provide the statutory course in religious education.

*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	<b>Very good.</b> The combination of teachers' high expectations and positive student attitudes results in standards that are consistently well above average. Students achieve very well.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching combined with their very positive attitudes to work.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good.

Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. The very good teaching motivates students very well. Achievement is very good.
Design & Technology (Product Design)	<b>Good.</b> Standards are usually well above average. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well.
Business Studies	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well.
ICT	<b>Good.</b> Results and standards are consistently above average. Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good.
Physical Education (Sports Studies)	<b>Good.</b> Standards and results are above average. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Students show a high level of interest. Standards are well above average, teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes are all very good.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Students are achieving very well. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated.
Sociology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Standards are above average and students are achieving well.
English Language	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Their attitudes are mature and positive. Teaching and learning are very good.
French	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.

The inspection team sampled all other subjects taught in the sixth form. Standards being achieved were generally well above average. The quality of teaching and learning was always good or better.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
How well students are guided and supported	Information and advice about the sixth form and courses available are very good. The induction process is very effective. Students are advised well about careers options and opportunities beyond school and are particularly well informed and prepared for higher education. Students' progress is very closely monitored and they are very clear about their coursework performance and progress toward their target examination results because of the quality of the feedback from their tutors.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are very good. The provision is very well organised and has a very clear sense of purpose and direction. Its quality is recognised by the students who are all known well by the managers and teachers. Equal opportunities are promoted very well. Managers constantly probe and question so that the quality of provision is always under review and being improved. The statutory course in religious education is not being provided.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The choice of courses meets their needs.</li> <li>• They receive good teaching, support and guidance.</li> <li>• Relationships in the sixth form are good.</li> <li>• There are good extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities.</li> <li>• They receive good advice and support regarding higher education.</li> <li>• They are treated as young adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social amenities are inadequate.</li> <li>• Facilities for private study are inadequate.</li> <li>• Access to computers is limited.</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully agree with the students' views. Students are very well supported academically and personally. The common room is inadequate for the number on roll and the school agrees that facilities are limited for private study and access to computers is limited. Building developments are planned to improve provision.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall standards of work are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. They are well above average in Year 13. Pupils and students achieve well throughout the school.

#### **Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9**

2. Currently, overall attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average. It is above average in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. Hence pupils' above average literacy and numerical skills on entry to the school provide them with a good platform for further progress. However, attainment on entry is average or below average in several other subjects. For example, it is below average in physical education and music.

3. In 2002, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. Compared with schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds, they were average in English, well above average in science and very high in mathematics. As was the case nationally, girls and boys did equally well in science and mathematics and girls did better than boys in English. Governors' targets were met in mathematics and science but not in English. The overall upward trend in results over the last four years is similar to that found nationally.

4. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that the standards of work are above average overall in Year 9 and represent good achievement. Between Years 7 and 9, particularly good gains have been made in English, mathematics, science, art, geography and history where standards are well above average. In Year 9, standards are above average in design and technology, modern foreign languages and music, and average in physical education. These standards represent good achievement because standards on entry to the school in these subjects were average or, in the case of music and physical education, below average. Only in ICT and religious education are standards below average and progress over three years unsatisfactory.

#### **Standards in Years 10 and 11**

5. The pupils' average point score in GCSE examinations in 2002 was well above the national average. It was very high compared with schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Compared with all schools, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades and five A\*-G grades was well above average. More pupils gained at least one graded GCSE result than was the case nationally. GCSE results have improved more quickly than the national rising trend over the last five years. Overall, girls have usually attained more highly than boys, as they have nationally, but in 2002, boys did better than girls by a significant margin. The targets set by governors were met for one or more A\*-G results and exceeded for five or more in the range A\*-C. GCSE results in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, were all well above average in 2002. Future targets are challenging but are soundly based on information obtained from the school's assessment procedures.

6. Overall standards of work in Year 11 are well above average and represent good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science and reflect the GCSE results of 2002. They are very high in design and technology and well above average in art, geography, history and music. Standards are above average in French, German, religious education and on the GCSE course in physical education. They are average in core physical education and on the GNVQ course in ICT. However, standards in ICT are below average in Year 11 for those pupils who are not following an examination course. Their achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory. A satisfactory start has been made in establishing citizenship as a new subject this year. There are no subjects in Years 10 and 11 showing any significant underachievement.

## **The school as a whole**

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school. This is largely due to the good quality of help that they receive from the team of dedicated staff, particularly the learning support assistants. Great emphasis is placed upon overcoming weaknesses in reading and writing, enabling almost all pupils to become genuine GCSE candidates by the time they reach Years 10 and 11. Examination results are impressive, given some pupils' relatively weak literacy skills on entry to the school. Pupils with hearing impairment make very good progress. They benefit from the very strong commitment that the school has to include them in all activities. They achieve very well, have positive attitudes to their work and make very good gains in their self-confidence.

8. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well overall. Most of them speak and write English with reasonable fluency and they progress at the same rate as other pupils. Screening procedures are good and once those at an early stage of acquisition of fluency are identified they receive good support.

9. Standards of literacy are well above average overall. Pupils' competences in speaking, listening, reading and writing are all well above average. These skills develop well as pupils move through the school and support their study and achievement in all subjects. As the pupils mature, most display a high level of confidence in speaking to adults and many enjoy making presentations. Many of the younger children are keen to read aloud and pupils of all ages are happy to perform speaking parts in drama.

10. Pupils' numerical skills are well above average. Most of the direct teaching takes place in mathematics but the transference of skills is clearly evident in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography. Pupils' strong numerical skills and good understanding of mathematical concepts support learning in all subjects. Pupils generally use these skills and their mathematical knowledge with confidence in the different contexts provided by the subjects of the curriculum.

11. Overall, pupils' ICT skills are below average. This is because they do not receive their full National Curriculum entitlement in the subject in Years 7 to 9. The skills that they do have are insufficiently developed in the other subjects of the curriculum because in several areas computers are rarely used. Several subjects do not provide pupils with even their basic entitlement to ICT as prescribed by the National Curriculum programmes of study. Hence, pupils' learning is not being enhanced sufficiently through the use of computers.

## **Sixth form**

12. Standards in the sixth form are well above average and rising because teaching is good and the school is actively comparing AS and A-level results with the national picture. The generally above average GCSE starting points in the various subjects are used very well to predict AS and A-level grades. Any underachievement and the reasons for it are identified quickly and effective procedures are put into place to eliminate it. Achievement in the sixth form is good overall.

13. In 2001, A-level results were well above average overall. Female students achieved better results overall than males and by a wider margin than that found nationally. Females outperformed males again in 2002. In 2001, the strongest A-level results were achieved in art, design and technology, mathematics, physics, psychology and theatre studies. The small groups in French, German and further mathematics also did particularly well. In all of these subjects the results were at least well above average. The A-level results of 2002 improved considerably compared to 2001 both in terms of the overall pass rate in the range A to E and the proportion of higher grades A and B. The strongest results were in English, art, chemistry, mathematics, further mathematics, history and physics.

14. AS-level results in 2001 and 2002 were similar. There was a greater proportion of higher grades A and B in 2002 but the pass rate in the range A to E declined slightly. At AS-level in 2002, over half the

students achieved the higher grades A and B, and all of them passed in the range A to E in English, French, German, art and ICT.

15. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average overall and students achieve well in relation to their starting points on entry to the sixth form. In the fifteen subjects inspected in detail, standards are well above average in English language, mathematics, physics, history, business studies, art and music. They are above average in all of the other subjects inspected in detail apart from sociology where they are average. Students use their good literacy and numerical skills well to support their studies at AS and A-level but in many subjects computers are not being utilised sufficiently.

16. Very few students drop out once they have settled into their sixth form courses. Around eighty per cent go on to further or higher education. Realistic targets are set for students, based on available information on their attainment prior to entry to the sixth form. Students themselves are very well involved in the process of monitoring the progress made towards meeting these targets.

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

17. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good overall. Their personal development is very good. Attendance and personal development have improved since the previous inspection but the number of exclusions is higher. The large majority of parents are pleased with the personal standards of the pupils.

18. Pupils are justified in being enthusiastic about school and enjoying their lessons. They are generally positive about their studies and want to do well. Most are conscientious and co-operate well with their teachers. Many particularly enjoy the various practical activities that are provided for them. Pupils were pleased with the arrangements for their transfer from primary schools and they think it is right that they are moved between teaching groups as a result of their performance. They appreciate the careers education and guidance they have received. Pupils are pleased with the way work is marked and the encouragement they are given. They are positive about going on to the sixth form. The 'activity days' provided as part of the personal and social education programme are enjoyed very much.

19. Almost all pupils behave well and conduct themselves in an orderly manner. The conduct of some is exemplary. However, a few see little value in education, are disruptive at times and make only minimal effort in some subjects. Many of these respond well to the alternative curriculum arrangements that are specially arranged for them. The number of exclusions is high compared to similar sized secondary schools, largely as a result of the effective action taken to eliminate unacceptable conduct. Incidents of bullying are few as a result of the very good relationships that prevail. Almost all pupils get on very well in all aspects of the life of the school. The way in which they work together contributes much to their achievement and enjoyment of school. Most can be trusted to work reliably without supervision for long periods.

20. Pupils with special educational needs develop good attitudes because of the support and encouragement that they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils generally co-operate with their teachers and get on well together. Behaviour in class is nearly always good. Referral room provision makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, assisting them to manage their behaviour more effectively, so that they are at less risk of exclusion, and helping them improve their attendance and raise their self-esteem. Across all years, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school.

21. Pupils make very good progress with their personal development throughout their time in school and reach a commendable level of maturity by the time they reach the end of Year 11. They develop their awareness and recognition of social and moral values very well and become sensitive to the needs of others. They develop appropriate attitudes to the experiences of life and respond extremely well when given responsibilities. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities and experiences in the nearer and wider community contributes much to their personal development.



22. Pupils' attendance is good; it is above the average for secondary schools. Punctuality is also good. Unauthorised absence is high because the school does not authorise absence for the purpose of family holidays during term time. A few instances of truancy continue to occur.

### **Sixth Form**

23. Students' attitudes, personal development and attendance are very good and they are very pleased with almost all of their experiences in the sixth form. They are very conscientious and have a strong sense of commitment to achieving their aspirations. They are co-operative with each other and the sixth form staff and conduct themselves in a most responsible manner. Very good relationships are evident throughout the sixth form and students are pleased to comply with the school's expectations of them. Most have well-developed personal management and learning skills and work well independently. Many continue to work into the evening after school because they are unable to access private study facilities and computers during the school day.

24. All students make a contribution to the life of the school mainly by being attached to a particular lower school form either as older friends to the pupils or as assistants to the form tutors. Many undertake some form of community service out of school or via the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Students' involvement in enrichment activities is high and they are very resourceful in raising funds for many causes. A large group of students will visit Brazil for a month in summer and they are initiating and organising sponsorships to pay their own costs. The trip will include outdoor pursuits and teaching English for a week in a village school.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

25. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. It is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased and the less than satisfactory teaching has almost disappeared. Of the 228 lessons observed, 78 per cent were good or better, 38 per cent were very good and six per cent were excellent. Teachers have consistently high expectations and use a wide range of teaching methods. They use information from assessment procedures effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to provide guidance on how pupils' work could be improved. Only four unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. They were in physical education, drama and religious education. In these four unsatisfactory lessons, there was a general lack of pace and direction that led to pupils being restless, interrupting and wasting time. The well focused, businesslike approach of the vast majority of the school's lessons was missing. Effectively, the pupils controlled the pace of learning because the teaching was not good enough to ensure that learning took place at an adequate rate.

26. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good or better in almost all subjects. In art and history they are very good. Here pupils learn very quickly and achieve high standards by the time they reach Year 9. Teaching is satisfactory in citizenship. In ICT, although teaching is satisfactory, it does not lead to adequate learning because there is not enough of it to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. In religious education, although teaching observed was good overall, it is clear that over time its focus is too narrow and it does not fully cover the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.

27. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching in Years 7 to 9 is greater than normally found in schools nationally. This quality of teaching occurs in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, geography, history, art, design and technology, religious education and drama. In an excellent drama lesson with Year 8, the teacher conducted proceedings at a brisk pace, and fully engaged the interest and co-operation of both boys and girls. The lesson was extremely well planned, containing a wide range of short activities, which enabled pupils to develop skills in listening, speaking and performing. The atmosphere created at times was electric and the pupils' performances gave the impression of elements of a professional production.

28. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is at least good in all subjects except citizenship where it is satisfactory. It is particularly well focussed on the requirements and demands of GCSE. It is very good in art, design and technology, history and music. This consistently good quality of teaching enables pupils to develop confidence, skills and understanding at a good rate in the subjects that they study. Almost a third of lessons are very good or excellent. In a very good history lesson with Year 10 on totalitarian dictatorship, there was a quick revision of how Hitler came to power, illustrated by pupils' ideas collected on the board. This was followed by rapid instruction and learning of key words such as censorship and propaganda. Pupils were then organised into pairs to produce key sentences on the various aspects of Nazi rule. The class was managed very well throughout, no time was wasted, humour was used to good effect and the lesson's objectives were ticked off in front of the pupils as they accomplished their tasks.

29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in most subjects. In Years 7 to 9 it is very good in history and satisfactory in religious education. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good in music and history. Where teaching is very good, teachers plan lessons with reference to pupils' individual education plans, devise materials that they can read and understand, and make effective use of any support that might be available. Basically satisfactory teaching tends to take insufficient regard of pupils' individual education plans and sets them the same work using the same worksheets and other materials as everyone else in the class. Learning support assistants are generally well used. Very good examples of effective support were seen in which teachers were involving learning support assistants in planning lessons and devising suitable learning materials, and where in the course of the lesson the teacher and the learning support assistant were team teaching. Good use is made of the learning support department's computerised independent learning system, which helps pupils improve their basic skills.

30. Teachers of the hearing impaired and class teachers have a very good understanding of individual pupils' learning needs, which they meet very effectively. Great care is taken by staff to ensure that work is well matched to individual needs and leads to incremental learning. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged, recognising strengths as well as weaknesses. Pupils are included within mainstream school provision with very well planned support.

31. Almost all aspects of teaching are good. Particularly impressive is the generally consistently good overall quality of teaching and learning in such a large school. Expectations are high and pupils are managed well so that there is an atmosphere of calm and industry throughout the school. Pupils learn quickly because they respond well to their teachers and make genuine efforts with their work in class and homework. Some parents consider that there is not enough homework. Inspectors do not agree with this because they find that it is set regularly and it enables pupils to consolidate the work done in class and study independently. Only in respect of the use of ICT is there a major weakness. In several subjects it remains an almost untapped resource for enhancing learning.

### **Sixth form**

32. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. In the fifteen subjects examined in detail during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in English language, mathematics, physics, history, music and art. It is good in all other subjects apart from sociology where it is satisfactory. Seventy-nine lessons were observed in the sixth form during the inspection. Of these, almost two fifths were very good or excellent. Approximately four fifths were good or better and the remainder at least satisfactory.

33. A very good mathematics lesson in Year 13 is typical of the standard of teaching in preparation for AS and A-level examinations. The teacher was revising differential equations and moving on to study methods of integration. The lesson was conducted at pace whilst the teacher ensured that the students were keeping abreast of increasingly complex examples. The skilful framing of questions checked learning and identified possible areas of weakness. Throughout the lesson, regular reference to key words and the type of questions expected on examination papers increased students' confidence. A particularly effective strategy involved students in generating their own questions for other groups to solve. This

consolidated learning and understanding particularly well. Overall the lesson contained exactly the right balance between consolidation and extension of knowledge and skills.

34. Teachers have very high expectations of their students and are not afraid to place challenging intellectual demands on them. They have very good subject knowledge and they use this to good effect to enthuse and inspire students. Inspectors support the view of students and teachers that relationships are never less than good and, overall, are very good. The atmosphere in all lessons is conducive to productive work and students attend them expecting to learn. Students know how well they are doing and what their target grades are because their teachers have very good procedures for assessing their work and keeping them informed. As in Years 7 to 11, the only major weakness is that ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning, and in the case of sixth form students, to prepare them for the demands of the next stage in their education.

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

35. The curriculum is generally well planned and has some very strong features. Overall provision is in most respects suitably broad, balanced and relevant, and provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. However, it does not fully meet requirements in terms of ICT and religious education.

36. The weekly teaching time is similar to that provided by most schools nationally and has improved since the time of the previous inspection. In Years 7 to 9, all curriculum requirements are met fully except for those relating to ICT and religious education. In Years 7 and 8, ICT is taught to pupils outside the normal school day but it does not cover all of the areas required by the National Curriculum. In religious education, the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus are not fully met. There are, however, some strong features. Drama is provided for all pupils and a second language is introduced in Year 9 for those who show a particular aptitude. Curriculum arrangements have the flexibility to allow departments to adopt the grouping arrangements for pupils, which they feel best suits the subject's learning needs.

37. A good range of optional subjects is provided in Years 10 and 11 in addition to the compulsory provision. All pupils take a GCSE short course in religious education. Pupils who wish to follow a more vocationally oriented route can choose GCSE business studies or engineering or a GNVQ course in ICT. An alternative work-related curriculum is provided for some pupils for whom the traditional academic curriculum would not be appropriate. However, pupils who do not study ICT as a subject option in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their National Curriculum entitlement.

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout the school in the majority of subjects. For example, in physical education, pupils have the opportunity to follow the additional accredited courses in Junior Sports Leadership, and English teachers use the library well in learning programmes. However, most subjects do not make sufficient use of ICT.

39. The school offers good provision in personal, health and social education (PHSE). In part, it is taught during two of the daily form periods. This is enhanced by the provision of three 'activity days', which concentrate on particular aspects such as conservation, health, careers or citizenship and include participation in trips out school. While the twenty-minute form period can be too limited to fully explore some issues, the arrangement is generally effective. The school also makes good use of the 'collapsed' timetable strategy by providing a week of creative activities for all pupils. The sex education programme taught within PHSE is supported well in religious education where the moral issues concerning sexual behaviour are dealt with effectively.

40. Careers education and guidance are good. Pupils are generally well advised about how to prepare curriculum vitae and how to apply for a job. They receive good information about the jobs market, the qualifications and training required and how to evaluate their personal suitability. There are suitable

opportunities for work experience, and a 'careers' day very usefully helps pupils to be aware of future opportunities.

41. The school's involvement with partner institutions is very good. Relationships with primary schools are constructive and facilitate the smooth and well-informed transfer of pupils. Links between subject teachers at primary and secondary level are very well developed.

42. One of the strongest features of the curriculum is the excellent provision for extra-curricular activities. The house system is the focus for a wide range of sporting, musical and social activities including holidays, in addition to extensive whole school provision in sport and the performing arts. There is also an extensive programme of revision and catch-up sessions, educational visits are provided in a good number of curriculum areas and pupils have access to ICT facilities before and after the normal school day. The wide-ranging provision gives credibility to the school's admirable intention to try to ensure that all pupils participate in some form of extra-curricular activity.

43. The vast majority of pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, have full access to the National Curriculum, and all statutory requirements are met. There is very good extra provision in the form of paired reading opportunities, the use of computers and withdrawal from some lessons for extra help with basic literacy skills. An excellent enrichment programme in Years 10 and 11, combining out of school leisure opportunities with support for coursework, helps motivate and encourage pupils, raising their confidence and self-esteem. There is good provision for pupils who attend the referral room through strategies to help bring about an improvement in their behaviour and attendance. A personal studies option in Years 10 and 11 helps to take the pressure off a demanding programme of GCSE subjects. However, the school does not have a 'catch up' programme for pupils in Years 7 to 9 not yet at National Curriculum Level 4 in English. This is a weakness.

44. Pupils who have particular gifts and talents are generally well catered for through the normal curriculum or extra-curricular provision. For example students are encouraged to apply for entry to Oxford and Cambridge universities, there are musical links with the Junior Hallé Orchestra, several pupils and students have achieved national distinction for their performance in public examinations, and individual girls and teams have achieved national success at trampolining. However, as yet, the school does not attempt to identify its 'gifted and talented' pupils at an early stage and provide a specific programme for them.

45. The school has worked hard to improve its curriculum provision through an ongoing series of reviews and there is a good understanding of what is needed to improve further. The strength of the provision has been recognised nationally through its success in obtaining the prestigious School Curriculum Award and Artsmark silver award in 2002.

### **Sixth form**

46. The school provides well for its sixth form students with a wide range of largely academic courses at AS and A-level. This matches the different needs and aptitudes of the students very well, and ensures that they can generally choose a combination of courses that will take them into their preferred area of higher education. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of general studies and enrichment activities but it does not meet requirements in respect of the provision of religious education for all students. Currently students not taking ICT as an AS or A-level do not have access to an ICT course which would extend their skills and help them with their work in other subjects.

47. The current review of the sixth form curriculum recognises that some pupils in Year 11 would prefer, and be more suited to, more vocationally oriented courses. Currently, these pupils are suitably directed towards providers of vocational education post sixteen. A small number of AVCE courses are planned for the next academic year.

48. The provision of enrichment activities for students is very good and their involvement is well monitored to ensure that they all benefit from the quality of the programme. In addition to sport, the programme includes careers, citizenship, and sex and drugs education together with other topics of practical value to these young people such as living away from home, team building, communication skills, managing finances, and safe driving. Students are also involved widely in work with younger children in the main school, which also helps to promote very good relationships and contributes well to students' personal development.

49. Relationships and co-operation with colleges of further and higher education are excellent. The school's involvement with a wide range of institutions and organisations such as industry and community groups, and arts and sports groups contribute much to the enrichment of pupils' and students' experiences, their achievements and their preparation for the next stage of their careers.

### ***Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development***

50. Provision for pupils' personal development through spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall, with some very good features. The personal development of pupils underpins the aims and aspirations of the entire school.

51. The provision for pupil's spiritual awareness is good. Morning assemblies are prepared well and give the pupils the opportunity to think about a variety of topical issues and celebrate the sense of community and shared achievement within the school. Guest speakers are occasionally invited from local churches, charity organisations and other bodies to share their ideas and reflections with the pupils. Some assemblies contribute to pupils' appreciation of the spiritual dimension to life but there is not always a time for personal reflection. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered in other areas of the curriculum such as religious education lessons, which consider the existence of God and difficult concepts such as innocence and suffering. In music, pupils experience the creative and expressive impulse, which runs through musical composition, and in art, the deep expression of human values and feelings.

52. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. They respond positively to high expectations about their attitudes and behaviour. They learn about right and wrong in the daily procedures of school life and have the opportunity to consider moral issues in a wide number of curriculum areas. For example, the current conflict in Iraq was discussed in many lessons during the inspection, giving pupils the opportunity to share their views. Respect for the work and effort of others is fostered in creative subjects. Issues surrounding the morality of capital punishment occur in English and responsible sexual behaviour in religious education lessons. The justice, or otherwise, of totalitarian regimes, the purpose of propaganda and the role of the United Nations are constant themes in history and citizenship lessons.

53. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils develop self-confidence in expressing their views and work co-operatively together in many lessons, sports, house events and dramatic and musical activities. Pupils learn to collaborate and support one another in a number of ways. In music, for example, many stay behind after school or come in at weekends to assist each other in recording their compositions. A recent 'musathon', involving parents, teachers and pupils, raised £6000. An understanding of how society functions is an integral part of many subjects within the curriculum such as citizenship, history and sociology. In the wider community, pupils are able to take part as responsible young adults in the work experience scheme, a very wide variety of charity fund-raising events and the world challenge group which is planning and organising a trip to Brazil.

54. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. Within the curriculum, and through a wide range of extra-curricular events, pupils are given many opportunities to understand and celebrate their own cultural traditions as well as those of others. The creative arts departments contribute fully to encouraging pupils' appreciation of music, and drama. The work of Aboriginal and African societies is studied in art along with the great European masters. The annual Creativity Festival provides a week of celebration of art, science, history, drama, dance, music and food. The modern foreign languages department ensures that pupils learn and understand about aspects of European culture; some Year 10

pupils do work experience in France. Much of the ethos of the school is about respect for oneself and others. However, more could be done to raise pupils' awareness of the cultural and religious diversity, which exists in modern Britain, and the experience of being a member of a faith community.

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

55. The general arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good. Provision has improved since the previous inspection. Parents are pleased with most aspects of care provided.

56. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are constructive and mutually respectful. The school's ethos and the way all members of staff treat pupils create an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel valued, supported and safe. Teachers go to considerable lengths to meet pupils' needs and to give them advice, support and encouragement. Child protection procedures are understood and followed. Health and safety arrangements are very well managed. First aid cover is adequate. Specialist education and health agencies provide a good service in terms of the school's requirements.

57. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are very good. Primary school links are excellent and by the time pupils enter the school in Year 7 a clear picture of each pupil's needs has been established. Planning takes full account of needs, including those of pupils with hearing impairment. Individual education plans are in place and are of good quality but they do not always feature sufficiently in lessons. Consequently, in some lessons there is insufficient focus on pupils' particular needs and what strategies should be adopted to help them improve. However, good use is made of a range of visiting specialists. Outside lessons, homework clubs give pupils easy access to extra support. Pupils who attend the referral room receive good support in managing their behaviour, improving their attendance and developing their social skills.

58. The monitoring and support for attendance is satisfactory overall with some good features. The manual system of registration is labour intensive and inhibits efficient and prompt analysis. Nevertheless, attendance is accurately recorded and the school, in conjunction with the educational welfare service, follows up vigorously those pupils whose attendance is low. The alternative curriculum for selected pupils and the referral facility has helped to maintain the good level of attendance. Detection of truancy relies on teacher vigilance mainly and, despite working with agencies and police, the school has not yet succeeded in eliminating it.

59. The monitoring and support for behaviour are good. Rules and expectations are clearly communicated to pupils and are reinforced when necessary. Teachers manage behaviour well in almost all lessons but do not always succeed in positively influencing the disaffected attitudes of a small minority. Strategies to support and monitor improvement are usually effective and often involve the co-operation of parents. The school has been justified in applying exclusions in the past because of the nature of the offences that were committed. The school ensures that pupils understand what constitutes anti-social attitudes and conduct. Pupils confirm that bullying is promptly and effectively dealt with and that they have the added facility of a sixth form peer-counselling group to refer to for help and guidance.

60. The procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good overall. Records are kept about pupils' key experiences, achievements and tutorial reviews but there is not a structured format to record aspects of all pupils' attitudes, application and personal management to facilitate focussed support. Opportunities to take responsibility and to use initiative are good. The extra-curricular programme for those pupils who opt for it is excellent.

## **Sixth Form**

61. The educational and personal support and guidance for students are very good. The very good arrangements for health and safety that are provided in the lower school apply equally in the sixth form. First aid cover is adequate. The student monitoring system is very good and all members of staff are sensitive to the personal needs of students and are reported by students to meet them very well. Very good relationships are evident all round. Students' attendance is well monitored at all times. Accessibility to tutors is very good. Students confirm that the frequent and constructive feedback that they receive from them about their coursework enables them to make the best possible progress towards their target examination results.

62. During Year 11 or, where applicable, prior to their transfer from another school, the school provides students with very good information and helpful guidance about the courses that are available and life in the sixth form. Induction is very effective and includes an introductory session and booklet about study skills. Careers information is very good and the quality of advice, guidance, support and general preparation for higher education is excellent.

### **Assessment**

63. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Comparisons with nationally standardised data enable the school to build up a clear picture of each pupil's attainment at the time of joining Year 7. This information is used effectively for setting general targets for Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. However, the target bands so determined do not take sufficient account of pupils' widely differing potential in the various GCSE examination subjects. Nevertheless, the school uses its database well to keep teachers informed of pupils' prior achievements and predicted attainment. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 generally know their GCSE target bands but in Years 7 to 9, knowledge of targets is often hazy.

64. Effective use is made of assessment data in tracking students' progress. A formal review and evaluation of progress is undertaken in October and February of each school year. In many subjects, the analysis of data is instrumental in introducing adjustments to schemes of work. Procedures and the use of assessment data are excellent in modern foreign languages and very good in English, mathematics, science and history. They are unsatisfactory in citizenship in Years 7 to 11 and in ICT and religious education in the lower school.

65. Overall, the monitoring of pupils' progress within subjects is good. Senior managers provide a clear direction in the use of assessment in raising student attainment. A strong feature is the overview of pupils' progress undertaken by heads of houses. They rigorously evaluate assembled data, identify instances of underachievement and take appropriate remedial action.

### **Sixth form**

66. Assessment procedures in the sixth form are very good. There are excellent procedures for setting individual student targets using extensive data based on performance at GCSE. Progress is then monitored rigorously and any underachievement is quickly identified and addressed. Use of assessment is at least good in all subjects except ICT and sociology where it is satisfactory; it is very good in English, biology, physics, design and technology, history, mathematics, music and sports science, and excellent in business education.

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

67. Parents express confidence in the school and hold it in high regard. The partnership between the school and parents is good. This is, in effect, an improvement on the previous inspection because parents' expectations are now higher as the school is becoming increasingly popular. Parents are right to be pleased with the standards of education and care that are provided. They regard it as a rapidly improving

school that is well led and are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching and the progress that their children make.

68. The school ensures that parents of prospective pupils are very well informed about what the school offers. The induction process is very well managed and parents have every opportunity to satisfy themselves about the school.

69. Some parents feel that they are not well enough informed about their children's progress but inspectors do not agree with this. The school does keep parents well informed about pupils' progress and the life and work of the school, although it has not yet developed a website. Annual school reports provide comprehensive information, and most targets for pupils' improvement are specific to the subjects that they study. Further information is available by reference to pupils' planners. Annual parents' evenings are well attended. Teachers discuss progress and targets with pupils on tutorial days and letters are sent home notifying parents about significant successes or underachievement. The school invites parents to meetings to discuss subject options and attendance is high. Parents of pupils who have special education needs are appropriately involved in the review process. A high quality newsletter is published each term and is supplemented by frequent letters and notes from the head teacher and others. A very good quality curricular information booklet for each year group is sent to parents at the start of each year. Parents are able to attend year group presentation evenings and heads of houses maintain necessary contacts with relevant families. The school seeks the views of parents in varying ways and takes them into account when considering developments.

70. Parents of pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, are kept well informed about their children's progress. A Year 7 'learning support evening' and 'settling in' evening establish good relationships from the outset. Parents are involved in annual reviews of targets in individual education plans but have little input between times.

71. Most parents give good support to the school's planner system that seeks to monitor homework. Parents are involved with aspects of the curriculum and the life of the school, for instance in business studies and law, extra-curricular activities, work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and sport. They give a great deal of support to musical and dramatic activities by turning out in large numbers to support them. The parents and teachers association is very active not only in raising funds for the school but supporting various events.

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

72. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. He has a clear vision and constantly seeks to improve the quality of the school's education programme and the standards achieved. Since he arrived just before the previous inspection, there has been a culture change and a rapid improvement in standards, organisation and pupils' attitudes. He receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher and the leadership team in ensuring that all of the school's systems function well. There is a characteristic cohesion about the school's management. It results in consistency of purpose and good morale amongst its staff. This is a school that has improved rapidly and rightly convinces its local community that it provides a good and still improving standard of education.

73. Governors give very strong support to the leadership team. They put a great deal of time and effort into the formulation of plans for the school's continuing development. They understand the school's many strengths and small number of areas for development very well, and set challenging academic targets which the school strives hard to exceed. However, statutory requirements are not met in respect of collective worship, religious education in Years 7 to 9 and the provision of pupils' National Curriculum entitlement in ICT.

74. The leadership team is instrumental in ensuring that a consistency of approach and high standards run through the school. They lead by example and have a high profile throughout the buildings and



grounds. The quality of these managers' work is often evidenced by their own performance in key roles, for example, in the delivery of moving assemblies, the very good programme for staff development, the management of the assessment programme, and the running of the sixth form. A very comprehensive staff handbook guides the day to day running of the school. Managers at all levels ensure that their teams follow these procedures properly.

75. Procedures for evaluating the school's academic standards are excellent. Managers constantly compare the pupils' progress and examination results with national figures and with those obtained by local schools. They know which subjects are performing well and which ones need to improve. Teaching and learning are monitored rigorously by the leadership team, and often without warning, in an effort to drive standards further upwards. A regular programme of formal subject and curriculum reviews ensures that the school continues to improve and that complacency is impossible. Review leads directly to development planning, which is of excellent quality.

76. Subjects are managed well overall in terms of general organisation and the following of the school's procedures and policies. Heads of subject are very successful in improving standards at GCSE and A-level. However, they could and should do more in terms of rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. Some of the higher performing subjects such as history, art and design and technology are managed very well but in religious education and ICT management needs to ensure that pupils' statutory entitlements are provided. The school's management of citizenship is unsatisfactory because there are no assessment procedures.

77. The leadership and management of the special educational needs department are very good. The interests of pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, as well as pupils with English as an additional language, are positively promoted and there is a shared sense of purpose both within the team of specialist staff and throughout the school. There are excellent links with primary schools.

78. There are sufficient suitably qualified teachers and classroom support assistants to meet the demands of the curriculum. Administration, technical and caretaker staffing is also sufficient. The accommodation, although insufficient for a school of this size, is managed well so that best use is made of all of the specialist areas. Further building plans agreed with the LEA will provide extra classrooms and more specialist facilities. The expansion has become necessary because of the school's constantly increasing popularity in the locality. Levels of resources for learning are unsatisfactory. This is because there are shortages of specialist equipment in science and insufficient computers in the school as a whole. The library is very well managed but it is too small for a school of this size.

79. The administration team is extremely well organised and efficient, and morale in the school offices and reprographics areas is good. Computerised systems help with the efficient flow of and attention to information. Financial planning, administration and control are excellent and all specific grants are used very effectively for their designated purposes. The principles of best value are applied very well.

80. Taking into account the standards achieved, the very good improvement, the quality of teaching and the balanced annual budget, the school currently provides very good value for money.

### **Sixth form**

81. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. All of the previously mentioned qualities in the school's management also apply to the sixth form. There is a constant search for even higher standards and results at AS and A-level. Very good assessment procedures quickly identify any underachievement by groups, subjects or individuals. When slippage is perceived effective remedial action follows swiftly. A particular strength is that all students are very well known to the staff and treated as individuals. However, requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not currently met. Financial management of the sixth form is very good; the principles of best value are rigorously applied. The sixth form is very cost-effective.

82. There is a good match of experienced and qualified teachers to meet the demands of the sixth form curriculum. Resources for students are generally good with specialist resources and facilities available where courses require them. However, sixth form areas for socialising, library work and private study are inadequate. There is not enough access to ICT for all of the students who need to use it during the school day. The new building plans are intended to improve these shortcomings.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve further the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Provide a course in religious education for Years 7 to 9 which fully meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus;

- Check the locally Agreed Syllabus carefully and incorporate all its requirements into the school's scheme of work for Years 7 to 9.

*(Paragraphs 4, 26, 35, 36, 73, 76)*

- (2) Ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement in respect of National Curriculum ICT in Years 7 to 11;

- Check the National Curriculum programmes of study for ICT carefully and arrange for all pupils in Years 7 to 11 to receive their entitlement
- Check the ICT components of all the programmes of study in the National Curriculum subjects and ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement
- Monitor schemes of work to ensure that they meet requirements
- Check the progress of all pupils in Years 7 to 11 in ICT to ensure that the provision is meeting their needs

*(Paragraphs 4, 6, 11, 26, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, 73, 76)*

- (3) Raise the quality of the satisfactory and very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching to the level of the general good quality in the school;

- Through the work of heads of subject, regularly and frequently monitor written work and the rate of learning in lessons
- Arrange for examples of the best practice to be shared through lesson

observation

*(Paragraphs 25, 26, 28, 29, 32, 57)*

- (4) Implement the current plans for increasing the size of the accommodation;

- Ensure that there are sufficient classrooms to enable the school to reduce the size of teaching groups in some subjects
- Ensure that there are sufficient specialist facilities to meet the demands of the curriculum
- Increase the size of the library facilities so that they meet the needs of a school of this size

*(Paragraphs 78, 82)*

### Sixth form

- (1) Raise the profile of ICT in the teaching of sixth form students;

- Check schemes of work in all sixth form subjects to ensure that ICT has a high enough profile

- Check the work of sixth form students to ensure that ICT is being used sufficiently to enhance learning and individual study

*(Paragraphs 15, 23, 34, 46, 82)*

- (2) Provide sufficient accommodation for sixth form students to socialise and study independently;

- Improve the quality of the library resources so that they properly support sixth form study in all of the AS and A-level courses which the school offers;

*(Paragraphs 23, 78, 82)*

- (3) Provide a course in religious education for all sixth form students

- Ensure that the course meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus

*(Paragraphs 46, 81)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	149
	Sixth form	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		77

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	12	46	53	34	4	0	0
Percentage	8.0	30.9	35.6	22.8	2.7	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	28	38	11	0	0	0
Percentage	2.5	35.5	48.1	13.9	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1403	311
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	110	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	93	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	43

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	59

### *Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	7.8

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	138	139	277

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	112	115
	Girls	110	117	108
	Total	200	229	223
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (72)	83 (79)	81 (79)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (47)	65 (67)	54 (57)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	99	117	119
	Girls	113	117	118
	Total	212	234	237
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (75)	85 (83)	86 (76)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (47)	67 (67)	56 (50)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	114	127	241

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	77	114	116
	Girls	89	115	121
	Total	166	229	237
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (67)	95 (96)	98 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

<b>GCSE results</b>	<b>GCSE point score</b>
---------------------	-------------------------

Average point score per pupil	School	51.8 (46.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	121	79.3
	National		N/A

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	59	62	121

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	272.2	289.4	281 (255.2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	*	*	*	*	*	*

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

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National		N/A

\* National averages for 2002 are not yet available for the purposes of comparison.

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	1
Indian	12
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1568
Mixed backgrounds	39
Any other minority ethnic group	22

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	69	2
Mixed backgrounds		
Other minority ethnic groups		

*This 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)	98.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	219

### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.8
---	------

### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	26.9
Key Stage 4	21.6
Sixth Form	17.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	4178368
Total expenditure	4141830
Expenditure per pupil	2499
Balance brought forward from previous year	106503
Balance carried forward to next year	36538

## ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
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	1714
Number of questionnaires returned	234

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34.6	56.8	6.8	0.9	0.9
My child is making good progress in school.	55.1	40.2	2.6	0.4	1.7
Behaviour in the school is good.	16.7	65.0	8.5	1.7	8.1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18.3	57.3	18.4	4.7	1.3
The teaching is good.	24.0	71.8	2.1	0	2.1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31.6	48.8	16.2	3.0	0.4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44.5	45.7	6.8	0	3.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68.4	29.5	1.3	0.4	0.4
The school works closely with parents.	20.9	55.1	18.4	2.6	3.0
The school is well led and managed.	49.2	44.0	2.1	0.9	3.8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37.6	54.2	5.6	0.9	1.7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41.4	49.1	4.3	0.9	4.3

## 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

- GCSE results are well above average.
- All students are entered for both English and English literature at GCSE.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Provide additional help for Year 7 pupils at National Curriculum level 3.

84. Standards attained by boys and girls in the national tests in Year 9 were well above average in 2000 and 2001: they were also well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. In 2002, results dipped. Standards were above the national average, but were only average compared with similar schools. However, the school has some evidence to show that these results might not be fully reliable. Over the past three years, boys' results have been above the average for their gender by a greater margin than have the girls', though girls still outperform boys, as they do nationally. Results in English were lower than in mathematics and science in comparison to national averages.

85. All pupils study English and English literature and the number entered for both examinations and achieving grades A\*-G is very high compared with national figures. Girls do better than boys. In 2002, GCSE results were well above average in both subjects. Since 2000, there has been a rise in the number of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in both subjects and, over the past two years, the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades of A\* and A has been twice the national figure.

86. Current standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above average. This represents good achievement. By the end of Year 9, standards in speaking and listening are well above average because there are frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their discussion skills in lessons. Pupils speak confidently, willingly volunteer to read aloud, and use talk effectively to explore and share ideas. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 regularly use talk to negotiate, make decisions and solve problems.

87. Reading is also well above average. Pupils keep reading records and write book reviews, and the department and the librarian are working hard to develop a reading-for-pleasure culture in the school. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have well developed comprehension skills. They are able to make inferences, deductions and predictions based on their reading of a wide range of fiction and other texts, and can read to find information. They can all use the Internet for research, but not always critically. In Year 11, most pupils can read confidently, though some of the least able tend to panic when they encounter pages of dense text: however, the department is aware of this and is introducing a support pack to help these pupils overcome examination nerves.

88. The standards of writing are well above average in all years because the department ensures that pupils use grammar and punctuation correctly, develop a wide vocabulary and have opportunities to write for a good range of purposes and readers. In Year 9, there are some excellent examinations of narrative techniques used in a popular class novel, *Stone Cold* whilst, by the end of Year 11, many pupils show a good awareness of audience in their work. The highest attaining pupils produce carefully considered and sensitive descriptions in their creative writing. Their analyses of media and literature texts are often perceptive and incisive: for example, they showed a very good understanding of the social, moral and ethical problems connected with euthanasia as presented in the play, *Whose Life is it Anyway*. Writing about the same text, the lower attaining pupils wrote descriptions and stories, and their opinions were unsupported by the writer's own words. However, many lower ability pupils are successfully able to

attempt comparisons of both media and literature texts because they have learned to apply the frameworks provided by their teachers.

89. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language make good progress because they have good quality, individual education plans which identify their individual needs and because teachers work closely with support staff to ensure they are met. Their achievement is good in all years and they are therefore able to enter both GCSE English and English literature. The school is not providing the extra classes and progress units, which are suggested in the National Literacy Strategy, to help those pupils in Year 7 who do not have identified special needs to move from National Curriculum level 3 to 4. This is a weakness. Nevertheless, at Easter, it will be offering booster classes to Year 9 pupils, prior to their National tests in English. The department does identify pupils in Years 7 to 9 whom it deems to be gifted and talented and provides writing workshops for them.

90. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a good quality, broad curriculum. Library staff give a high level of support to a *Readathon*, *World Book Day*, the Cheshire Schools' Library Quiz and regular English lessons in the library: such activities give a high profile to reading. There are also writing competitions, visits to the theatre and a public speaking competition. All Year 7 to 9 pupils have a weekly drama lesson and all in Years 10 and 11 study English, which includes media, as well as literature. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT to develop and enhance their learning, and they have frequent, well-planned opportunities in all years. For example, there is a particularly good module on travel writing in Year 9. The department also makes a significant contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, particularly through the study of literature, but some opportunities are missed because they are not planned. The very high standards of displays make the classrooms bright and welcoming, and pupils are able to take pride in seeing their work on the walls.

91. Teaching and learning are good overall. Three out of four lessons are at least good, and some of these are very good, but there are a few weaknesses. All marking is supportive and teachers give pupils good advice on how to improve, especially in Years 10 and 11. The introduction of target cards is making pupils more aware of what they need to do to improve and what they are capable of achieving in Years 7 to 9. Further strengths of teaching include high expectations, of both pupils' behaviour and attainment, and thorough lesson planning using interesting and relevant resources and activities. In a very good Year 11 lesson, pupils read an extract from a newspaper about the war in Iraq. Excellent questioning by the teacher helped the pupils to understand how the tone of the passage was created and to explain why the writer had used particular persuasive techniques. In the less successful lessons, teachers plan what they or pupils will do, instead of identifying the skills, knowledge or understanding pupils will acquire. In a few lessons, teachers have limited strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and are not always fully aware of the help required by individuals. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, in which pupils were studying Gillian Clarke's poem *Catrin*, there were few opportunities for them to explore, develop and share their own ideas, therefore the highest attaining pupils were not stretched sufficiently.

92. The management of English is very good. Teaching and marking are well monitored, and departmental communication is very good. Closer links with the feeder primary schools are being developed to ensure that pupils' transfer to Year 7 is as effective as possible and that the department builds on the work done in the NLS. New teachers feel well supported, departmental responsibilities are appropriately delegated and thorough, high quality, development planning is well linked to the school's priorities. Leadership is also very good. The head of this large department sets a strong example of hard-work, clear organisation, dedication and vision: he has maintained effective teamwork and improved standards and pupils' achievement in spite of some difficult staffing problems. Owing to this firm and determined leadership, there is a high performing team of specialists that is eager to improve its practice. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Overall standards are well above average: both teaching and pupils' achievement are good and the action taken to enhance the performance of boys is proving successful. The curriculum includes very good ICT provision and it is now broader and richer. A greater range of teaching styles is regularly employed and there is no unsatisfactory teaching.

### *Key skills across the curriculum – Literacy*

93. The provision for the development of pupils' literacy skills is good. The National Literacy Strategy has been generally well implemented and most subjects have an effective literacy policy. However, the school is not providing the progress units, designed to raise the attainment of those pupils whose performance in Year 6 National tests is below average, but are not on the special needs register, as recommended in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

94. Both boys and girls speak confidently and fluently because there are frequent opportunities for them to use talk to develop and extend their learning in groups and pairs in many lessons. Pupils of all abilities also readily volunteer to answer questions and to read aloud in class. There was some very good and well-researched work in a science lesson in which Year 11 pupils gave lively presentations on the possibility of life on other planets. In several subjects, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' work and to make constructive suggestions for improvement. Such evaluations are common in music, drama and geography, for example, but opportunities are missed in PE and art.

95. Most pupils read a good range of media texts to gain information but, in a few subjects, the reading opportunities seldom go beyond the textbooks used. In religious education, modern languages and history, pupils use both the school library and the Internet for personal research, and this work is often seen in their good quality writing. However, Internet research is not embedded in the work of all departments.

96. Standards of writing across the school are well above average. All but a few of the least able pupils are able to plan, draft and write well because many teachers are developing useful prompts and structured writing frames to help them with their extended writing. In some subjects, pupils are encouraged to write creatively, as well as to write notes and essays: for example, there is some very good work in history, especially in Year 9 when pupils show their knowledge of the Great War by writing letters from the trenches. Pupils also have opportunities in mathematics and science to present hypotheses and argument and to write evaluations.

97. The management and strategies for teaching literacy across the curriculum are good overall. However, because not all heads of subjects monitor its provision fully there are differences of practice and success both within and between departments. The school's marking policy, for example, is not applied consistently nor are pupils regularly shown how to improve the accuracy of their work. Because the literacy co-ordinator is in the English department, a few teachers see literacy as an English initiative and do not take sufficient responsibility for its teaching in their own subject. Dictionaries and thesauruses are rare in teaching rooms, except in English and languages; therefore, the good work done by departments to encourage pupils to use their subject's technical language is not well supported. Links with the primary feeder schools, which will give greater continuity to pupils' learning by identifying pupil's literacy targets on entry, are still being developed.

### **Drama**

98. The quality of provision for drama is very good. Boys and girls do equally well. Standards are well above average in Years 7 and 8, although pupils only have one lesson each week. They are average in Year 9. On the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average. In 2002, GCSE results were above average as they were in 2001.

99. Pupils are introduced to the subject's disciplines and techniques from Year 7 so, when they start their GCSE option course, they have a good understanding of drama requirements. By Year 10, they can already improvise and role play, and use freeze frames, thought tracking and hot seating to create characters and to explore situations and concepts. They also know how voice and body language, levels and the use of space contribute to effective performances. A particular strength is the way pupils co-operate with and support each other: they appreciate and evaluate their own and others' work using the

examination board's criteria. They respond readily to the teacher's direction, but are also able to make their own decisions and to use drama creatively. This was evident in a Year 7 class, which devised excellent tableaux to illustrate the lives of refugee children during the 1940's and what it is like to be an outsider.

100. The drama curriculum in all years is very good. Besides developing pupils' knowledge of dramatists, practitioners and stagecraft, there are regular, planned opportunities for the exploration of important social and moral issues, such as drug addiction, bullying and smoking. Frequent problem solving and decision-making activities are also part of most lessons. Additionally, some schemes of work are loosely linked to the English syllabus, the study of a Shakespeare text in Year 8, for example, but there is no link with the work done in Year 9 for the National tests. The department's contribution to citizenship is seen through pupils' collaborative working in lessons and regular, high quality school productions, through visits which give important experience of the professional theatre and the topics through which drama skills are taught. Excellent displays in the drama studio both celebrate and promote success.

101. Teaching overall is very good, and much is excellent but, occasionally, in Year 9, some is unsatisfactory because of poor pupil motivation and attitudes, and the teacher's limited range of strategies for dealing with these problems. Lesson planning is thorough and activities both challenging and rewarding. There is also appropriate support for any pupils with special educational needs. Teachers have impressive subject knowledge and often inspire pupils to try new ideas and techniques, and give them the confidence to experiment for themselves. Pupils are thoroughly involved in the assessment process, know how well they are doing and the action they need to take to improve further. In the excellent lessons, pupils enjoy learning, are very creative and work extremely well, both in groups and independently.

102. The leadership and management are good. Planning is excellent, schemes of work are thorough, and pupils' progress is well monitored. Members of the department work well together, share a common philosophy and are constantly seeking new ways to ensure that pupils' learning is enjoyable, purposeful, relevant and challenging, and that it equips them well for life within and outside school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is good overall with some very good and excellent aspects.
- Pupils' attitudes are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop ICT to enhance learning and meet statutory requirements.
- Improve the teaching of some lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that all pupils' work is marked properly.

103. Results of the national tests taken in Year 9 in 2002 were well above average compared to the country as a whole and high when compared with schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results have been well above average since 1999 and represent good achievement. GCSE results in 2002 were similar to those of 2001 and also well above average. They were well above average when compared with schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Again, there was no significant difference between boys and girls. Results were similar to those for science but better than in English in relation to national averages and represent good achievement. The department meets its challenging targets at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.

104. Boys and girls attain very similar standards in mathematics and achieve well. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 reflect achievements in examinations. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils work confidently with algebra and number. For example, they have mastered the drawing of quadratic graphs. Average pupils work well with concepts such as area and perimeter and can apply associated algebraic techniques. Lower attaining pupils can perform some basic calculations but often need help to complete them. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils are confident with the whole range of GCSE topics at a relatively advanced level. For example, they have successfully mastered the technique of completing the square in algebra. They have very good mental numerical skills. Average pupils are competent in written and mental number work and the algebra required in intermediate GCSE. The lowest attaining pupils struggle with numerical manipulation, but are still competent enough to achieve at least grade G at GCSE. Pupils make good progress overall because they are well taught and because they generally show a positive attitude towards their studies, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

105. Pupils who have English as an additional language achieve broadly in line with their peers. Special educational needs pupils make particularly good progress when classroom assistants support them.

106. Teaching is good overall, and at times very good or excellent when it enables students to develop knowledge and understanding rapidly. Lesson planning is good and mathematics teachers show a very good knowledge of their subject. Usually lessons are conducted at a brisk pace so that time is used fully. When ICT resources are used, they promote rapid learning. An example of this was seen when a Year 10 class investigated graphs of quadratic functions using a graphical software package. However, the full ICT requirements of the National Curriculum are not met. Many of the key aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy have been incorporated into the meticulously detailed scheme of work and this is helping improve standards further. Due weight is generally given to the learning of new and technical vocabulary, contributing to the school's literacy aims. Much of the marking is good, with the best practice including useful comments telling pupils clearly what they need to do to improve their work. However, not all teachers achieve this standard and as a result the department's thorough and agreed policy on marking is not consistently applied. The teaching of some of the lower attaining groups, whilst satisfactory overall, does not always fully engage all of the pupils for the whole of the lesson. Frequently, approaches used lead to pupils becoming restless and somewhat inattentive. However, relationships with students and high expectations in mathematics classrooms are key strengths of the department, because they result in the creation of a positive learning atmosphere in which pupils can thrive.

107. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good in Years 7 to 9. Work in exercise books is neat and accurate and pupils attempt their homework conscientiously. Pupils are attentive in class and are keen to answer oral questions. This enables them to make good progress. However, there is some unsatisfactory behaviour in some lower attaining groups, particularly during practical activities. Attitudes and behaviour in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Pupils are generally keen and interested and enjoy discussing their work, both with their teachers and with each other. Pupils of all levels of attainment in Year 11 have produced some very good GCSE coursework in statistics.

108. Management of mathematics is very good. The teachers form a cohesive team, developing their teaching and sharing good practice. High expectations are evident throughout the work of the department. Documentation and analysis are helpful and extensive. The head of department monitors teaching and learning to some extent but a more rigorous system of formal lesson observation and exercise book inspection would improve consistency of practice. The provision of resources, including ICT, is good. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress, with improved teaching in most areas and improved standards at GCSE.

#### *Key Skills: Numeracy across the curriculum*

109. The mathematics department has adopted some aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 particularly with a view to improving pupils' mental and written numerical skills. Where the strategy is used it is used well. Although the scheme of work covers suitable material for lower attaining pupils in Year 7, it does not necessarily ensure that they fully master addition, subtraction, multiplication

and division of number as intended in the suggested 'catch up' classes in the National Strategy. The department has recently led a school-wide numeracy audit over Years 7 to 9 in an attempt to rationalise the teaching of mathematical topics across the school. Currently, however, the contribution of other curriculum areas still requires full co-ordination but there is much good practice to build upon. For example, numerical calculations, the use of algebra and data handling techniques are all used with confidence in science. In geography, pupils are confident in applying their knowledge about graphs to work on climate and in design and technology precision of measurement is a strong feature in the making of products.

## Science

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- There are not enough laboratories.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently.

110. The results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average. They have improved since the last inspection and were well above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Results have improved over the past three years, particularly in terms of higher grades. Boys and girls performed equally well and school targets were exceeded. Results in 2002 were similar to those in mathematics but better than in English in comparison with national averages.

111. In 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C in GCSE double science was well above average and has shown steady improvement since the last inspection. Virtually all pupils achieved A\*-G grades which is similar to the national picture. Boys and girls performed similarly. Results in science were similar to those in mathematics but better than in English in relation to national averages.

112. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and represent good achievement. Boys and girls perform equally well. Standards in practical and investigative science are well above average. All pupils are competent in practical skills. Written work shows a high level of scientific knowledge and understanding, particularly among average and higher attaining pupils. Even the lowest attaining pupils are able to describe the basic photosynthesis process. They can explain what is happening in experiments and draw conclusions. They have a good grasp of chemical and physical change and understand acids, alkalis and pH well. Average attaining pupils can carry out experiments on pulse rate well and plot graphs of the results competently. Higher attaining pupils have a very good understanding of chemical equations and are particularly adept at evaluating their experiments, suggesting improvements that could be made and considering the accuracy of their results. The effects of the department's efforts to improve literacy are evident in the good quality of writing, which contains good descriptions and clear evaluations. Most pupils spell and understand scientific terminology well. Only the lowest attaining pupils have difficulty in producing good written records. The majority of pupils can apply mathematics well to their work in science.

113. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good. Boys and girls perform equally well and standards are well above average. This is due to the careful teaching and very good assessment systems. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of scientific formulae and can process results of experiments



efficiently. They also have a sound grasp of scientific concepts and processes. In studying materials, they understand compromise conditions, can apply them to chemical production processes and show a good ability to balance the chemical equations involved. In their study of physical processes, pupils show skills of evaluation and analysis of a high order in their ability to process and discuss research evidence investigating the possibility of life beyond the earth. Average attaining pupils carry out electrical calculations well and have a sound grasp of the more demanding topics such as electromagnetic induction and waves. The lowest attaining pupils are not able to carry out such high level tasks as evaluation and analysis of research evidence but have a good grasp of much scientific knowledge, for example, the behaviour of electrical charges.

114. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because they are taught well. The lessons are adapted well to cater for their needs. Lower attaining groups have fewer pupils and additional classroom assistants, enabling these pupils to receive more individual help.

115. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. Lessons are generally good or very good and always at least satisfactory. Teachers are confident in their knowledge and understanding. They give clear instructions and explanations and are very good at drawing out answers from pupils through questioning. In a lesson exploring radioactive emissions, the questioning directed pupils' attention to the demonstration and really forced them to think scientifically and logically about what they saw yet was well paced and succinct. There is adequate and suitable homework. Marking is good. Teaching is sensitive and helps pupils to consider moral and social questions associated with the issues involved, for example, in areas concerned with genes and nuclear physics. Practical work is carried out safely and well. In the better lessons learning objectives are shared with pupils. These lessons contain a good motivating introduction and conclude with an exploration of what the pupils have learned with a summary of how the objectives have been achieved. However, ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning in science and this is a major area for development. In the relatively few lessons which are satisfactory rather than good, the pace is too slow, the content is not taught in a motivating way, and the flow is sometimes interrupted by restless pupils. A wide range of extra-curricular activities such as CREST awards, science club, visits and field trips together with revision classes enhances learning well.

116. Attitudes are generally good. However, in a few instances in Years 7 to 9, a small number of pupils disturb the flow of the lesson and reduce the effectiveness of learning. However, always in Years 10 and 11 and generally in other years, pupils are attentive, do not waste time and persevere at the tasks set. They co-operate well with each other in discussion and practical work and have good relationships with their teachers.

117. The department is very well led. Clear directions for improvement have been established and developments are proceeding apace. The accommodation is well managed but there are too few laboratories. Some teaching groups are too large and this affects learning adversely. Resources and equipment are generally adequate but there is no strategy for replacement of larger items and no inventory, which would clarify needs and shortages. There is very good assessment and monitoring of pupils in a continuous drive to improve standards. However, the monitoring of lessons is insufficient to ensure the sharing of good practice. The department functions well on a day to day basis and the technical staff work well and efficiently to ensure its smooth running. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection except with regard to the use of ICT, which currently fails to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in science.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision for art and design is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- GCSE results are well above average.

- The quality of display around the school is excellent.
- There is very rich variety in pupils' work.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching groups are too large.

118. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations was well above average. Results were similar to those of 2001 and represented very good achievement. All pupils gained at least a grade D. Girls did better than boys. These results compare well with those of other subjects, particularly in terms of the number of higher grades gained, and exceeded the challenging targets set by the school.

119. Year 9 pupils attain well above average standards. Achievement is very good. Teachers' assessments show that the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum level 5 and above is well above average. Current standards confirm this. Pupils show very good skills in drawing from observation. They also show skill in composition using collage, and in designing, using printing blocks that they themselves have constructed. An above average understanding of the way in which the art of other cultures can be used as source material is evident in design work, and computers are used very effectively to provide historical information. Literacy skills are enhanced by the study of the subject's vocabulary and through the display of subject terms in studios. Drawing from observation makes demands on pupils' judgement of proportion and consequently makes a contribution to their mathematical development.

120. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and reflect GCSE results. Achievement is very good. Searching observation and well above average technique is evident in exploring and drawing the structure of natural forms, seeds and bulbs, for example. The use of subtle washes adds effectively to the quality of these drawings. However, although colour is often used boldly, where it is used in design, there is often a comparative lack of a full knowledge of the theory relating to it. Art history is incorporated in projects and is used to good effect to underpin creative work, some very good collage being produced from studies of artists, such as Matisse. This combines knowledge and technique in an effective way. Students can use computers as a means of manipulating and developing images as components of design.

121. Achievement is very good overall. The nature of projects in art and design allows pupils to pursue a wide range of creative interests and to develop their own individual ability to the fullest extent. This is seen in the work of pupils with special educational needs and those with special talent. In both cases, achievement is good. The overall achievement of boys and girls is not significantly different, but girls tend to produce a greater proportion of the very best work.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In Years 7 to 9, the planning of projects is imaginative and provides a wide range of creative opportunity. A strong feature of the teaching at this stage, and in Years 10 and 11, is the sensitive nature of individual help and encouragement. This enables tuition to be related to need with a very positive effect upon the progress of pupils at all levels of attainment. Assessment is thorough at both stages and is used to track progress, but National Curriculum levels are not used and shared widely enough with pupils. Very good use is made of homework, which is set in detail and related to ongoing work in studios. This accelerates pupils' progress significantly.

123. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They are attentive and sustain concentration well throughout lessons. In Years 7 to 9, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of the work are conspicuous features that promote very good learning. In Years 10 and 11, a mature attitude to research and self-direction is evident in lessons which, taken together with very good behaviour, leads to equally very good learning. However, a problem is the very large size of many groups, which affects the amount of attention that pupils receive from the teacher.

124. Leadership and management are very good. Relationships between staff, including the non-teaching technician, are excellent. One of the strongest features of the department is the quality of display around the school and in studios. This celebrates the achievement of students at all levels of attainment, enriching the school environment and providing an important learning resource. Work displayed also provides evidence of the contribution the department makes to spiritual and cultural development. The spiritual element in art and design is very clear and examples of work relating to other cultures are abundant. In the previous report, criticism was made of aspects of the teaching and of behaviour in some lessons. These features are no longer apparent and good progress has been made.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- There are well planned, successful citizenship units on 'activity days'
- History lessons contribute well to citizenship.
- There is some good teaching in tutorial sessions.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not used to monitor pupils' progress.
- Pupils do not keep any records of their studies in this subject.
- Contributions of other subjects to citizenship need to be fully identified and formalised into entitlements for the pupils.

125. At present there is insufficient evidence to judge standards or achievement at the end of Years 9 and 11. This is because citizenship is taught in tutorial sessions which are too short to assess standards and because no written work is retained. There was no observed difference in the performance of boys and girls in the tutorials observed. There is no additional provision for gifted and talented pupils or for pupils with special educational needs.

126. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in the tutorials is generally good, but the sessions are too short to promote consolidated learning. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups and the work is not always sufficiently matched to individual learning needs. Sessions are largely discussion based and pupils are not provided with exercise books or files for written work. Consequently, there is no record of pupils' work and teachers do not assess or monitor their progress. In addition to one twenty-minute tutorial a week of which citizenship is an element, pupils take part in three 'activity days' a year; these also contain units of citizenship. For example, the most recent 'activity day' contained units on disability awareness and on moral decision making for Year 9, a unit on fair trade for Year 10 and a debate on the countryside alliance versus the league against cruel sports in Year 11. The previous term the whole of Year 10 had acted as jurors in a very successful mock trial performed by sixth formers. These days are highly valued by the pupils and provide a good learning experience. The history department makes a significant contribution to the teaching of citizenship in Years 7 to 9. Here, a good lesson was observed on the use of propaganda in war, with useful references to the current conflict in Iraq.

127. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually good. In most of the tutorials, teachers have established a good rapport with their forms, and pupils respond with interest. Very occasionally, pupils are unwilling to co-operate, make little effort to respond and continue with their own conversations.

128. The school's leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory, because there are no procedures for assessing pupils' work or for monitoring their progress. The school has carried out a summary audit to find out what contribution other subjects make to the teaching of citizenship, but this does not indicate where or how these contributions are made. The department is currently working on a

more detailed audit so that contributions from other subjects can be formalised. At present, all the citizenship units of work are built into the scheme of work for personal, social and health education. These units are well planned and cover the main knowledge areas of the subject. They aim to contribute to the development of enquiry and communication skills, but success is limited by the shortness of the tutorial sessions. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which give pupils the opportunity to participate: school council, youth parliament, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, a wealth of charity work and opportunities to help in the local community. However, not all pupils take advantage of these and the school does not record the level of each pupil's participation in active citizenship.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE examination results are excellent.
- Standards in Year 11 are very high.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes.
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent.

### Areas for Improvement

- Thinking skills are not sufficiently developed in years 7 to 9.
- There is insufficient attention to electronics, control and the general use of ICT.

129. Overall GCSE results in 2002 were very high. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* to C was high and of those the proportion attaining grades A\* to B grades was especially high. Most pupils exceeded their target grades. Boys' and girls' results were similar whereas nationally girls do better than boys. Results in resistant materials and graphics products were higher than in food technology and textiles but they were all well above average. However, a much lower proportion of pupils studies design and technology than nationally.

130. Pupils start Year 7 with average standards in this subject and they achieve well to attain the above average standards of Year 9. Pupils' standards of making and presenting their design work are exceptionally high in all areas of the subject and there is very little work of a low standard. However, pupils' ability to take account of the needs of users and to select and modify ideas, materials and processes, whilst satisfactory, are not as well developed as their making skills. This has been recognised by the subject leadership and moves are in place to make improvements. Pupils' knowledge of materials and processes is mostly good but they have insufficient experience of the systems and control aspects of the subject. ICT is not used consistently because of lack of access to computers but when it is used it is used well.

131. Overall, the standards of work seen in Year 11 are very high. The standards of making and the presentation of design folders are again mostly of a very high standard. There is little work of a low standard and pupils with special educational needs often achieve very highly. Standards are very high in all areas and food technology, which has had recent staffing problems, is improving rapidly. Design research is very thorough but it is often approached in a routine manner and does not usually result in a design specification that is used to select and evaluate ideas. ICT is well used for presentation and for developing ideas in both graphics products and resistant materials but lack of facilities limits the extent of its use. Three-dimensional modelling is used effectively to test ideas. In food technology there are very good examples of modifying and evaluating recipes. Drawing standards in graphics products and in textiles are high but are more variable in resistant materials. A vocational GCSE course in engineering has been introduced this year and already the standards being achieved are high. Overall, pupils achieve very well during Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11.

132. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is characterised by very high expectations and individual guidance for pupils' design projects through discussion and thorough marking. Consequently those with low prior attainment succeed and higher attaining pupils produce work of an excellent standard. Lessons are well planned and organised and use a variety of methods to ensure a good pace of learning. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and consequently pupils respond well in discussions and to well-directed questions. In some lessons teachers do not give sufficient attention to the development of thinking skills hence some pupils do not learn how to make considered decisions about their design work. Teachers take opportunities to enhance pupils' use of language both through discussion and written work.

133. Pupils have very positive attitudes to all areas of the subject. They enjoy their work, mostly work hard and do well. The care that they take with their design folders has a significant effect on the examination results that they achieve. They respond well to questions and are keen to participate in discussions

134. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. There is a clear direction for development. Performance and examination results are thoroughly monitored and steps taken to improve. There is a shared culture of commitment to high standards by all teachers. This has led to very good improvement in standards and particularly GCSE results since the previous inspection. Improvement to the provision for ICT and systems and control are still needed but proposals for the necessary resources are under active consideration.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9

135. The 2002 GCSE results were similar to those of 2001, well above average especially in terms of grades A\*-C, and represented good achievement. The number of pupils achieving the highest grades of A\* and A was more than twice the national average. The department's efforts to raise the achievement of boys have been successful. Boys did slightly better than girls, and much better than both boys and girls nationally.

136. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of geographical knowledge and understanding and make good progress in Years 7 to 9. The 2002 teacher assessments in Year 9 were well above average. Inspection evidence confirms these standards. Pupils develop the skills of interpretation and presentation of information in writing, and through maps, diagrams and graphs. Pupils in Year 8 use carefully annotated diagrams to explain global warming; those in Year 9 write newspaper reports to explain the cause of earthquakes. They can draw on previous learning as, for example, where pupils in Year 7 use their knowledge of map symbols to identify the functions of rural settlements. Lower attaining pupils are helped by the use of short structured writing tasks to express their understanding. Those of average or higher attainment can write fluently with accurate use of geographical vocabulary. A Year 8 discussion of the feelings of Kosovan refugees in a lesson on migration showed that the pupils are able to respond well to sensitive issues.

137. The proportion of pupils studying the subject in Years 10 and 11 is above average and they continue to make good progress. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and represent good achievement. Pupils apply previously acquired knowledge and skills to a range of more complex case studies and issues. Year 10 pupils can identify and explain the location of different types of shopping centres, with those working at higher levels offering explanations of how shopping patterns have changed over time. Pupils in Year 11 use skills in interpreting maps and photographs to describe and explain the features of science and business parks. However, some pupils are not secure in their general knowledge of places other than those being studied. The use of enquiry skills and of ICT is now more evident. Pupils in Year 10, for instance, support their conclusions after comparing two local shopping centres with high quality maps, diagrams, graphs and digital photographs.

138. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. This is due to the individual support they receive and to the provision of specially prepared materials, particularly those that help to develop literacy.

139. Teaching is good overall and often very good. Teachers plan well-structured lessons with clear objectives and high expectations. They offer tasks that are varied and challenging, matched to the needs of most pupils, though there is a need to cater more for those able pupils who complete work quickly. Lessons take place at a very good pace. A particular strength is the very skilful questioning by teachers to develop and extend pupils' knowledge, very often by drawing on their own experience and knowledge of the local area. Homework is set regularly. All work is marked and graded for attainment and achievement, though there is a sometimes a lack of subject specific advice on improvement. A further strength is the attention teachers give to individual pupils. Literacy is developed through the use of short structured writing tasks, advice on extended writing and an emphasis on key words. Activities to develop numeracy, such as drawing and interpreting graphs, are features of many lessons. There is some teaching of a lower standard. Whilst it is satisfactory, it has weaknesses relating to pace and the amount of time pupils are engaged with rather undemanding tasks. On occasions pupils are passive for too long, and some lessons for lower attaining groups would benefit from a visual focus to illustrate or reinforce what is being taught. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 sometimes do not have enough opportunity for extended writing. The use of ICT is too limited, and is used largely for presentation.

140. Pupils respond very well to the quality of teaching. The numbers who subscribe to geographical magazines shows their positive attitude to the subject. They behave very well, work hard with sustained concentration and show interest in what they are doing. Pupils take care with the presentation of work and complete homework regularly. They listen very well and show a respect for the views and opinions of others.

141. Leadership and management are good. The department has good levels of resources but limited access to computers. An experienced and stable staff and the high standard of accommodation have a positive effect on learning. However, whilst improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, attention now needs to be given to the development of field studies in Years 7 to 9 and the use of ICT in all year groups.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- GCSE results are consistently well above average.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- ICT is used effectively.

### Areas for improvement

- Some classes are too large and this affects learning.

142. Standards of attainment, according to teacher assessments, are well above average in Year 9. The work seen during the inspection confirms this. Nearly half of the students in Year 11 took history at GCSE in 2002. The results were well above average in the range A\* to C and average in the range A\* to G. Boys and girls did equally well, both achieving well above average results. The results in 2002 were a little above the challenging targets that the school had set.

143. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and achievement is very good. In Year 7, pupils acquire a good foundation in the basic skills. By the end of Year 9 above average and average attaining pupils have developed many of the important higher skills in history. They are able to analyse and evaluate sources, define the differences between fact, opinion and judgement and back up their views with logical reasons. Their literacy skills are well developed through using a very good range of writing styles and they are able to compare and contrast ideas effectively. Lower attaining pupils also progress well but tend to leave answers undeveloped and take some issues at face value.

144. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also well above average and pupils achieve very well. Their work is detailed and structured, often illustrated with maps, charts and graphs. They have developed a very good approach to historical enquiry; are able to conduct case studies, for example, an analysis as to whether the battle of the Somme was a disaster or a success, and complete impressively mature pieces of extended writing. Lower attaining students still achieve clarity of argument but their answers are less well developed. These high standards are achieved as a result of a number of factors, including expert teaching, a good range of resources and positive responses from pupils.

145. Pupils with special educational needs and whose literacy skills are weak make very good progress in all years. Work provided for them is structured so that they are able to contribute to lessons and make significant progress. For example, in a Year 8 class using laptop computers, less able pupils were able to achieve as well as all the other pupils in investigating medieval castles. Learning support assistants, when they are present, give very good support for pupils with special educational needs.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and their enthusiasm for it is infectious. Tasks such as preparing a speech from a consul hoping to be elected to the Roman senate, recruitment posters seeking a new wife for Henry VIII and studies of the changing face of war clearly fire the imagination and research skills of students. Work is carefully planned, with all the resources to hand, so that little time is lost during lessons. Pupils are encouraged to find out for themselves and to develop thinking skills. The study of history makes a significant contribution to their personal development. A good learning environment is created and very good management skills are used to ensure that lessons proceed in an orderly manner even when class sizes are really too large and space is at a premium. Aims are shared with classes at the beginning of lessons and reviewed at the end to enable students to see the progress they have made and increase their understanding. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend learning. Marking is thorough and positive. However, some classes are too large and this affects the rate of learning.

147. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are very good in most classes and are a major contributory factor to their very good progress. The work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is superbly illustrated with pride and care. Homework is done well, often using ICT to good effect. In Years 10 and 11, many books are meticulous in presentation and indicate the high level of enthusiasm and commitment which pupils bring to their work. Students who are less focussed lose concentration, particularly at the end of morning lessons and thus progress slows down.

148. A strong team of dedicated historians is very well led and managed. Good teaching is vigorously promoted and the department keenly monitors its own performance. Assessment procedures are positive and effective and are used to identify possible underachievement by students and then to take remedial action. The history curriculum is enriched through a series of well-planned visits to castles, museums and other places of historical interest. The department has maintained the good standards noted at the time of the last inspection and has made good progress in several areas, including increased use of ICT and visits to historical sites.

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

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



#### Strengths

- Results in GNVQ Intermediate examinations in 2002 were above average.
- In Years 10 and 11, standards are above average on the examination course.
- There is good use of ICT in English, history and art.
- There is a good strategic plan to help move the subject forward.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards are too low, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils do not receive their National Curriculum entitlement in ICT.
- The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory.

149. GNVQ results in ICT in 2002 were above average for the Full Intermediate course. More than half of the pupils entered gained a merit or distinction. These results compare very favourably with the GCSE results of previous years. However, results in the Part 1 Intermediate GNVQ were well below average and more than half of the pupils entered failed to achieve a pass.

150. Current standards in Year 9 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is principally because the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. In Years 7 and 8, lessons take place after school and attendance is often poor. The scheme of work for ICT in Years 7 and 8 does not include key elements, such as the use of databases in handling information, or how computers can be used to control equipment. Year 9 pupils have no ICT lessons and few opportunities to use ICT in their other subjects. Nevertheless, skills in word processing, desktop publishing, and communicating information are average. Although higher attaining pupils can create spreadsheets and understand why they have an advantage over paper-based productions, they are not confident in using formulae. Pupils have underdeveloped skills in electronic communication, for example they have no experience in web page design. Their independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

151. Standards in Year 11 are average overall. For GNVQ pupils, standards are above average. The on-line GNVQ course is helping pupils become autonomous learners and their independent learning skills are good. Design skills are good. Data management skills are average. Pupils have good awareness of the social, economical, ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of new technologies. Achievement for this group of pupils is very good. However, approximately half of Year 11 pupils do not take the examination course. Standards for this group of pupils are below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory. They do not have sufficient opportunities to use ICT in their other subjects and are not being taught the National Curriculum for ICT.

152. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils, unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11 on the examination course and unsatisfactory if they are not on the examination course. Pupils who use the learning support department's independent learning system to improve their basic skills make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified in lesson plans and teachers make no special provision for them.

153. Where lessons are provided, teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, occasionally good or very good, and satisfactory overall. In the better lessons, a brisk pace ensures that learning time is used to the full, teaching methods help pupils grasp the point quickly, and the work set challenges and stretches pupils to the full. However, these features are infrequently seen. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are not encouraged to become independent learners and have to rely too much on their teachers for help. The teaching of examination classes in Years 10 and 11 is good. Marking is helpful in identifying areas for improvement and pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. In all lessons, relationships with pupils are encouraging and supportive and help motivate pupils to want to learn. Management of pupils is generally good and little time is wasted establishing control. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

154. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. However, in Years 7 and 8, some of the pupils who attend ICT lessons after normal school hours are unenthusiastic, and teachers find them difficult to motivate. Occasionally one or two pupils get bored and misbehave. Attendance at these lessons is unsatisfactory. In Year 10 and 11 examination groups, attitudes are good.

155. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Although there has been an improvement in some areas since the previous inspection, particularly in an expanded network and technician support, improvement overall has been unsatisfactory because curriculum provision for Year 7 to 9 pupils is still inadequate. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 does not adequately cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is no plan detailing exactly how all pupils will receive their ICT entitlement in all subjects or how the National Curriculum for ICT will be taught to all pupils between Years 7 and 11. Reports to parents for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and those not doing an ICT examination in Years 10 and 11 contain no information about the standards their children are achieving in ICT. The school has drawn up a detailed strategic development plan that is designed to lead to an improvement in the provision of ICT across the school.

*Key skills: the use of information and communication skills across the curriculum.*

156. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects are unsatisfactory. This is partly because the number of computers the school has is below the national average and partly because ICT work is not planned properly in all subjects. In science, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, religious education, geography, and music, computers are rarely used, especially in Years 7 to 9. Only in English, art, and history is this aspect of the curriculum well developed. In English, pupils' use of computers to present their work using word processing and desktop publishing skills, and use of the Internet for research is well established. In art, pupils use scanners to input painted designs and then modify their images. Digital cameras are also frequently used. In history, pupils regularly use the Internet for research and they use PowerPoint for presentations about historical characters or events.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Use of assessment is excellent.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
- Monitoring of teaching does not include sufficient sharing of best practice.

## French

157. French is currently taught to half the pupils in Years 7 to 9, to approximately 25 per cent of Year 10, and to a group of eleven high attaining girls in Year 11 who are taking it as a second foreign language. There are also second language groups in Years 9 and 10, in part outside the normal school day. The present Year 11 is the last year of the old system in which French and German were taught in alternate years to whole year groups.

158. GCSE results in 2002 were outstanding, coming within the top five percent of all schools nationally. Well over half the pupils gained grades in the A\*-B range, including almost half of one middle attaining group who were not expected to do nearly so well. French was the highest performing subject in the school, exceeding the school's targets even at this very high level. Boys' performance was in line with

that of girls, which means that they did very much better than boys do nationally. All pupils passed in the range A\*-G and the results overall represented very good achievement. Relatively few pupils took GCSE French in 2001 but results were equally good.

159. Current standards are above average in Year 9, which matches the previous year's teacher assessments. Pupils achieve well in speaking, listening, reading and writing in response to imaginative and challenging teaching. Most pronounce French well because they hear it spoken well in the classroom. Written skills are better than usually seen; relatively low attaining pupils as well as high can write about what they have been doing, demonstrating familiarity with the perfect tense. Their standards are average for their age. However, class size limits to a degree the range of strategies that can be employed, for example constraining possibilities of using ICT. Large class sizes have an effect on the progress of the lowest attaining pupils, including some with special needs, because they cannot always be given all the attention that they need. Standards in Year 11 are well above average in the exceptional situation of a class of eleven high attaining girls. They are achieving well. Year 10 is a normal cohort of three classes. Overall standards are above average, with higher grade GCSE targets for the average pupils. Few pupils have special educational needs; those who have make the same good progress as others. Attitudes are good throughout the school.

160. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some examples of very good teaching. Planning is good, and pupils' attention is usually engaged. All pupils have textbooks, which helps them learn better on their own. Teachers are very committed to providing extra lessons to pupils who need them. These pupils are identified by exceptionally focused use of assessment.

## **German**

161. In Years 7 to 9, half of the pupils study German as their first modern foreign language. In Year 11, just over half the pupils take German to GCSE as their first modern foreign language. Small groups take it as a second foreign language. Results at GCSE in 2001, the most recent comparable year, were well above average with two thirds of the pupils obtaining at least a grade C, which was close to the school's target. All students got at least a grade F. In years when German was the second foreign language, including 2002, all students gained a higher grade in the range A\* to C.

162. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. The top two groups in Year 9 are well ahead of their age group because of very good teaching. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, do not make such good progress because they are in classes that are too large. However, in Year 11, there is some very good teaching with such a group of ten pupils. Pupils achieve well throughout the school.

163. Teaching is good with examples of very good teaching by different teachers. Pupils develop their skills in speaking, reading, writing and listening well. Pronunciation is good and confidence and motivation are high. Some excellent display work contributes very well to learning. Learning is good overall. Pupils respond further by showing good attitudes to modern languages

164. Leadership and management are good. Good leadership has coped well with the change from all pupils studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. Since then, the department has been successful in attracting over half the pupils to chose a language. Part of the strategy for this has been to focus all extra-curricular effort on Year 8. Large numbers are taken on school visits to France or Germany as appropriate. This is only possible because of good organisation and shared commitment. The subject development plan of 1999 has been implemented well except for ICT. A more extensive monitoring of teaching and sharing of best practice would lead to further improvement. Since the previous inspection of 1997, improvement has been good. Particularly, there has been a very good rise in standards. However the use of ICT to support learning is still insufficiently developed, and Spanish has been lost from the curriculum.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above average by Year 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- There is excellent provision of extra-curricular activities

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not reflect on and evaluate their work in class.
- Teaching is not monitored sufficiently.
- There are not enough computers for pupils to use for composition.

165. In 2002, all pupils taking GCSE achieved a grade between A\* and C. These results maintain the excellent record of 100 per cent A\* to C which the department has achieved for several years. Several pupils achieved better than expected. There were too few pupils taking the examination to compare reliably with national averages or to compare boys with girls.

166. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils achieve well from a relatively low starting point when they come to the school. Their listening and appraising skills are good. Higher attaining pupils describe well the music they hear. They use descriptive words and a good range of musical vocabulary when explaining how variations are achieved. Some lower attaining pupils have difficulty finding the words to describe how chords are being played in pop song recordings. However, they and pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the school. Most pupils play chords on the keyboard and build up a 16 bar sequence for their pop song composition. Some of these are chosen randomly without thought for the musical sound and currently there are insufficient computers for pupils at this stage to enable them to hear and amend their work if they are not happy with it. Two talented pupils in Year 9 are taking the GCSE examination this year. Their compositions and performances are of very high quality. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils compose and perform to a very high standard. They achieve very well because their playing and singing is technically controlled and very expressive. Compositions for a special event inspired by occasions in their life are very well written using computers to notate.

167. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers know their subjects well and competently perform many roles beyond that of traditional teacher. They are accompanists, instructors, composers, performers, computer specialists and recording engineers with equal skill. Lessons are well planned allowing pupils to develop good skills and understanding in the subject. Pupils learn quickly in lessons because they are well supported individually. The teachers know the pupils well and all of them feel valued and included. With smaller groups and more time for each pupil, individual support is especially good in Years 10 and 11. Questions challenge pupils well and research homework is set to enhance the practical work they do in the classroom. This provides good opportunities for pupils to write using extended prose and the quality of these is in most cases good. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue their coursework for homework. Pupils are graded for standards and effort at the end of projects. These are not related to the National Curriculum levels of attainment yet and in Years 7 to 9 pupils are not regularly given the opportunity to reflect on the quality of what they have achieved in the lesson. This would help them know their strengths and plan how to improve. In Years 10 and 11, the assessment of pupils' work is very thorough, and is based on the examination criteria. Pupils have a very good grasp of what they are expected to achieve and where their weaknesses lie. There is some good target setting at this stage.

168. Pupils' attitudes to music are very good overall. In Years 7 to 9, they are good. Pupils behave well in class and enjoy music. Occasionally concentration flags a little but this is mainly when too long is spent on

one activity. In Years 10 and 11 and in all extra curricular activities, pupils show a high level of commitment and enjoyment. In fact it is difficult at times to distinguish where the curriculum stops and the extra-curricular activities start. All pupils at this level are energetically rehearsing and recording their own and their friends' performances and compositions for submission to the examination board. They spend time after school and at weekends in order to get this done. This commitment and drive and their love for music is spiritually enlivening and has a powerful effect on their learning at this level. Music is becoming a popular subject choice for GCSE.

169. Management of the department is very good. It is led with energy and drive, and very good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Standards are improving and are being maintained where they are already high. Teachers and pupils together with friends, visitors and parents raised money in a twelve-hour performance day. This and a very good variety of performing occasions provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop socially and culturally. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic. Although the department is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses, it would benefit from formal monitoring of teaching and learning in order to raise standards further, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities is of high quality.

### Areas for improvement

- Eliminate the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- Improve the understanding of full warm-up routines.
- Monitor teaching and learning more rigorously.

170. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, teacher assessments indicated average attainment levels. Current standards confirm their accuracy. GCSE results in 2002 were above average but not as good as in 2001, especially in terms of grades A\*-C.

171. Current standards in physical education Year 9 are average and represent good achievement because pupils' attainment in this subject on entry to the school is below average overall. By Year 9, pupils can analyse their own and the work of others and use this information to improve the quality of their performances. In a Year 9 football lesson, pupils readily identified the increased opportunities for the attack from observing a drill where defending players did not commit themselves to close marking. However, not all pupils demonstrate knowledge of the importance of preparing for physical activity with a full warm-up.

172. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average for students following GCSE course and average for those in core physical education lessons. Hence, standards are above average overall and represent good achievement from the beginning of Year 7. The examination groups show a good understanding of course concepts and can successfully construct training programmes that are specific to their chosen sport. Across both age groups, students with special educational needs make good progress and are integrated into lessons well.

173. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good. Basic skills are taught well. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson, pupils demonstrated a good range of imaginative movements in their performances using rhythm and different body shapes effectively to express the mood of their dance. However, in a lesson where learning was not satisfactory, pupils did not have the opportunity to improve on and develop their

existing level of skill through clear, progressive tasks. There are good opportunities for social and moral development through the problem solving tasks given to pupils in Year 7 outdoor education lessons. During one lesson, pupils answered carefully structured tasks that prepared them for leading one another on blindfold trails. Using verbal and non-verbal instructions, they learned how to be effective in their communications and to take responsibility for each other's safety.

174. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 11, students in core PE lessons apply maximum physical effort towards acquiring the skills for new activities. This was observed in a lesson where they worked enthusiastically to master the technique for a free kick in football, working co-operatively together in small and large groups. In GCSE groups, students have plenty of opportunity to link their theoretical knowledge to practice. In a Year 11 practical lesson, students consolidated their learning about aerobic exercise through experiencing then analysing the physical effects of low impact exercise.

175. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are enthusiastic about learning and in most lessons they know the standard of behaviour that is expected of them. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good working ethos in lessons and staff-student relationships are good-humoured and mutually respectful. The work files of the examination group are neat and well presented and there is evidence of good understanding through examples of extended writing.

176. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear educational direction for the work of the department. Staffing matches the demands of the curriculum but it is recognised that there is a need to recruit a dance specialist. Students are offered a very good programme of recreational and sporting extra-curricular activities. The establishment of a trampolining club has generated interest to the extent that the school has a very successful, competitive squad that reached finals recently at the national schools' championships. Individual students and teams have achieved a spread of county and national honours that are celebrated in high quality displays throughout the school and teaching areas. The curriculum offers a range of activities in excess of national recommendations, including a short course for GCSE PE and the Junior Sports Leadership Award. The accommodation and resources for physical education are very good and the school is a Centre of Excellence for cricket in Cheshire. There has been good progress since the last inspection but teaching and learning need to be monitored more rigorously.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Standards in Year 11 are above average.
- Teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus are not fully met.
- The quality of a small amount of teaching needs improvement.
- ICT is insufficiently used to enhance learning.

177. In recent years, GCSE results in the short course in religious studies have been below average. This has been partly due to changes in staffing, the use of non-specialists to teach the course and a relatively low time allocation. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below average but in the range A\*-G results were close to average.

178. Current standards in Year 9 are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus have not been fully incorporated into the new schemes of work. For example, most pupils in Year 9 use their knowledge and understanding well to

express opinions on a range of social and moral topics. Higher attaining pupils back these up well with well-selected evidence and can evaluate different viewpoints. However, the extent to which they can show an understanding of different religious perspectives from the major Christian denominations and other world faiths on these issues is more limited. Similarly, pupils have a good understanding of some of the key features of belief and practice from Christianity and the other major world faiths, which they study. They do not, however, have a sufficiently coherent view of what it means to be a member of one of these faith communities in Britain today.

179. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average with only a small proportion of pupils working below the standard represented by grade E at GCSE. Hence, achievement is good. Pupils in Year 10 are rapidly getting to grips with difficult concepts such as the classic proofs for the existence of God. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of Christian teaching on moral issues such as the Just War theory. Higher attainers support their views by selecting suitable quotations from biblical sources and church teaching on issues such as the provision of aid to the developing world. Average attaining pupils' knowledge and understanding is generally accurate but they do not develop their ideas at length. Lower attainers' knowledge and understanding is generally sound although lacking real precision, for example in not recognising Catholicism as a denomination within the general Christian community. Throughout the school, some pupils use ICT effectively to research information and present the results of their investigations. However, it is generally insufficiently used.

180. As for all other pupils, the progress made by pupils with special education needs is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. It is good when the learning activities are adapted to match their capabilities, when classroom assistants provide one-to-one support or, when, in some cases, they use lap top computers to assist their writing. However, in some lessons they struggle to keep up or lose concentration and motivation because tasks are too difficult.

181. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good. Teaching is generally challenging and interesting for the pupils. Some teaching is outstanding. However, it is clear that over time it is too narrow and does not provide pupils with their full entitlement from the locally Agreed Syllabus in Years 7 to 9. Hence, teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 on the GCSE short course but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Common features of good and better teaching include, the very good relationships, which teachers have with their pupils, and their use of specialist knowledge and understanding to provide clear explanations and to question pupils. Learning activities are both interesting and challenging for pupils of all capabilities and are supported by good learning resources. For example, excerpts from a filmed version of 'The Lion, Witch and Wardrobe' were used very effectively to enable Year 7 pupils to gain an understanding of religious symbolism. Lesson objectives are shared and pupils are able to assess the extent of their learning in concluding question and answer sessions. In some lessons, although pupils' overall progress is at least satisfactory, the learning activities are not well enough adapted for the lowest attainers and those with special educational needs. On the occasion where this coincided with some lack of challenge to the poor attitudes of a minority of pupils, then teaching and learning were unsatisfactory.

182. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour overall are good. There is some restlessness in a few lessons, but in the main, this is well managed by the teachers and pupils respond well to interesting and demanding learning activities. Boys and girls work well together. Pupils are generally sensitive to and tolerant of each other's ideas and beliefs so that in most lessons, there is a supportive atmosphere in which they all have the confidence to participate fully

183. Subject management is satisfactory overall. There are some considerable strengths and two critical areas of weakness. Effective leadership has created a very positive climate for learning and improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching has improved and standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen. Good progress has been made in adapting the schemes of work to ensure that pupils have a good range of opportunities to explore and reflect on their personal beliefs. However, the schemes of work are not sufficiently aligned to the requirements of the

locally Agreed Syllabus. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because they do not provide a sufficiently accurate picture of how well pupils are doing in terms of the different strands of the subject.



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

In the inspection, fifteen 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.

*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	38	82	*	39	*	35	*
Biology	36	89	*	42	*	38	*
Physics	43	98	*	74	*	50	*
Design & Technology (Home Economics)	3	100	*	67	*	50	*
Design & Technology (Product Design)	9	89	*	78	*	46	*
Business Studies	22	91	*	41	*	39	*
Information Technology	34	100	*	62	*	48	*
Physical Education (Sports Studies)	15	93	*	60	*	43	*
Art	12	100	*	75	*	52	*
Music	5	100	*	40	*	44	*
Drama & Theatre Studies	9	89	*	67	*	44	*
Media Studies	21	76	*	14	*	24	*
Geography	29	66	*	21	*	25	*
History	19	95	*	79	*	48	*
Government & Politics	9	100	*	44	*	39	*
Law	8	75	*	38	*	31	*
Sociology	34	74	*	9	*	22	*
Psychology	51	86	*	24	*	32	*
Philosophy	21	67	*	29	*	26	*
English Language	33	100	*	67	*	49	*
English Literature	27	96	*	44	*	42	*
French	3	100	*	67	*	47	*
German	7	100	*	57	*	47	*

*GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	31	97	*	74	*	99	*
Further Mathematics	6	100	*	83	*	113	*

Chemistry	16	94	*	56	*	86	*
Biology	18	100	*	39	*	73	*
Physics	26	96	*	50	*	83	*
Design & Technology (Home Economics)	4	75	*	25	*	65	*
Design & Technology (Product Design)	6	100	*	0	*	63	*
Business Studies	12	92	*	25	*	65	*
Information Technology	31	87	*	32	*	73	*
Physical Education (Sports Studies)	12	100	*	33	*	75	*
Art	15	100	*	80	*	101	*
Music	1	100	*	100	*	100	*
Drama & Theatre Studies	11	100	*	45	*	84	*
Geography	18	100	*	33	*	80	*
History	9	100	*	67	*	100	*
Government & Politics	2	100	*	50	*	70	*
Law	5	100	*	20	*	76	*
Sociology	16	94	*	44	*	76	*
Psychology	31	97	*	39	*	75	*
Philosophy	7	86	*	57	*	77	*
English Language	18	100	*	61	*	99	*
English Literature	17	100	*	47	*	87	*
French	4	100	*	0	*	70	*
German	2	100	*	50	*	100	*

\*Currently there are no national averages for 2002 for AS or A-level for comparison purposes.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

184. The focus of the inspection was on AS and A-level courses in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. Further mathematics was also sampled. In this subject, A-level results have been consistently well above average. Current standards are well above average, reflecting very good teaching and learning. Teachers and students display a mutual enthusiasm for the subject as they jointly pursue the rigorous development of ideas.

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students have a mature, studious and enthusiastic attitude to study.

#### Areas for improvement

- Increase the involvement of students during the development of ideas in some lessons.

- Use ICT more in enriching and supporting learning.

185. The 2001 A-level results were well above average and most students performed significantly better in mathematics than in their other subjects. Results have been consistently well above average, both in terms of the highest grades and overall pass rate. In 2002, results represented very good achievement; three quarters of students obtained a grade A or B, an improvement on the previous year, and all but one student achieved a pass grade. The average points score in 2002 increased and was the highest on record. There has been a steady rise in the number of females studying A-level mathematics and there is no difference between the results of male and female students. AS level results in 2001 and 2002 were similar to A-level, but because of the timing of the final module examination, no comparison with national averages is available. Retention rates are good and most students continue to take the subject to the end of the A-level course.

186. Standards of work in Year 13 are well above average and reflect previous examination results. Most students are achieving very well and are producing work consistent with the highest grades. There is no discernible difference in the work of male and female students. The quality of notes and exercises is generally very high and they are usually extremely well organised. Most students annotate their notes to suit their individual needs and their written solutions are well structured and systematic. The work of these students is rigorous and thorough and reflects their very good levels of understanding and the quality of the teaching. Their competence with pure mathematics enhances their understanding and progress in mechanics and statistics. Year 12 AS students are making very good progress, due in large part to the strength of their prior learning, particularly in their fluency with algebraic manipulation. A few lower attaining students sometimes fail to complete a sufficient volume of work to ensure that their learning is consolidated. They are speedily identified in the assessment process.

187. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have high expectations of their students and their detailed command of the subject ensures that they can confidently formulate questions and use strategies that illuminate understanding. In the best lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm for mathematics is infectious. Very good relationships combined with students' mature and positive attitudes result in lessons being conducted at a challenging pace. In less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, the teachers do not sufficiently engage the students during the exposition. Hence, they are not actively involved in developing and discussing ideas. Teachers' marking of students' work is thorough and usually includes extensive correction notes and pointers for improvement.

188. Students' views of the subject and the progress they feel they are making are very positive. The high numbers opting to study further mathematics to A-level is indicative of attitudes to the subject. They are particularly appreciative of the accessibility of teachers when they require extra help. In discussions students radiate an enthusiasm for the subject and a joy in studying it for its own sake. When discussing mathematical ideas they display good levels of articulation and demonstrate both knowledge and understanding.

189. The subject is very well managed and there is a clear sense of direction. Monitoring is good, particularly in relation to tracking students' progress, and there is a shared commitment to strive for constantly improving performance. However, the opportunity for sharing good practice via lesson observations is limited. At present, the ICT experience of students varies between different groups and its use is not systematically integrated into lesson plans. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with standards being sustained at levels consistently well above the average.

## Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is good.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.

- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Relationships between students and teachers have a positive impact on standards.
- Students develop their experimental skills well during the course.

Areas for improvement

- ICT could be used more frequently in chemistry lessons.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning could be more effective.

190. A-level chemistry results in 2001 were average but they improved considerably in 2002, particularly in relation to the number of higher grades. Over the past four years, results have varied somewhat depending on the nature of the cohort but students have generally achieved at least satisfactorily. Results in AS level chemistry were high in 2001 but declined slightly in 2002.

191. Current standards are above average in Years 12 and 13. These are achieved as the result of consistently good teaching and represent good achievement considering students' broadly average attainment for starting an A-level chemistry course. In Year 12, students are making good progress in their knowledge and understanding of chemical theories and concepts. For example, in inorganic chemistry they can relate the chemical properties of halogens to their increasing atomic radius. They can use this understanding to predict whether reactions will occur when particular halogens come into contact with halide salts. In Year 13, students continue to improve their knowledge and understanding of chemistry at a good rate. For example, in inorganic chemistry they can write balanced half-equations for redox reactions and combine them to give the complete ionic equation. Practical and investigative skills improve systematically across the age range because these aspects are regular features of the course. These skills contribute significantly to the above average standards the students achieve.

192. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry and their clear understanding of theories and concepts means that they explain them in a way that enables students to understand them thoroughly. For example, when students were investigating the percentage of iron in iron tablets they were given very good advice on the technical aspects of the titration and as a result their measurements were more accurate and their experimental skills improved. There are very good relationships between students and teachers and these help students to improve their confidence in the subject. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students were given the opportunity to contribute to a discussion on oxidation states and as a result they made very good progress in their understanding of oxidation-reduction chemistry. Marking of students' day to day work is regular and thorough. Students get many opportunities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of chemistry through homework and past examination papers. The accurate marking of this work gives them a very good picture of the standards they have achieved and how to improve them further. Mathematical aspects of the subject, for example calculating equilibrium constants for reversible reactions, are well taught. Students not studying A-level mathematics are given extra help with chemical calculations and this improves their progress. The main weakness in teaching is that only a limited range of teaching strategies are used and as a result students' learning is sometimes too passive. ICT is not used sufficiently in chemistry to support and extend students' knowledge in the subject or to improve presentation of lessons.

193. Across the age range all students display a very mature and positive attitude to their work. This is seen in the effective interactions in lessons between students and teachers and in the quality of the students' written work. Students have very positive views of their experience of chemistry; for example, they highly value the extra help and advice they get from their teachers after school and during holidays. It is rare for students not to complete their courses.

194. Management of the subject is good. Teachers have collaborated well together to produce schemes of work that effectively cover the examination criteria. Assessment procedures are very good and are very well used to measure students' attainment and track their performance. However there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning in the department that would serve to consolidate the sharing of good practice and improve standards. ICT provision needs to be more firmly embedded in the schemes of work.

195. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. This is clearly demonstrated by the increasing numbers of students taking A-level chemistry courses.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Students are well motivated.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- Teaching is not monitored sufficiently.
- Some basic resources need replacing.

196. A-level results in 2001 were average. The number of students achieving higher grade passes was below average, but the total number achieving a pass in the range A to E was slightly above average. The AS level results for 2001 were similar. There was a considerable improvement in the A-level results in 2002, when all students passed in the grade range A to E and a greater proportion gained the higher grades A and B. The AS level results in 2002 also showed a good improvement. Overall, the 2002 results represented satisfactory achievement.

197. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average, represent good achievement, and result from good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students. Students in Year 13 have a good understanding of genetics and can explain what is meant by sex-linked conditions such as colour blindness. Their practical skills are good. For example, they are competent in the preparation of microbiological slides from cultures using sterile techniques. Evidence from their folders indicates that they are able to handle data from ecological survey work well. Year 12 students can describe the structure and function of the heart and have a good knowledge of the fine structure of cells. They are building well on work covered at GCSE.

198. Teaching in biology is good overall and sometimes very good, enabling students to learn well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge enabling them to give clear explanations of facts. Their enthusiasm for their subject is transferred to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and include a variety of teaching and learning styles to maintain students' interest. Teachers make good use of ICT to deliver lessons but it is currently under-used by students. Aims are clearly shared with students at the beginning of lessons and reviews at the end of them help to consolidate learning. Some students have underachieved in the essay writing section of the course so teachers are now concentrating on this particular skill. An annual field-course for Year 13 students develops their knowledge and understanding in ecology.

199. Students learn well because of the good teaching that they receive and also because they are mature and highly motivated. They enjoy the subject and many wish to pursue the study of it further. Teachers provide them with suitable opportunities to develop their independent learning skills by researching topics for themselves. Expectations are high and teachers question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding. Students respond well and are keen to contribute to class discussions. There are pleasant working relationships between teachers and students so that students feel able to ask questions if they need to. Marking is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance to students on areas for improvement. Assessment takes place through regular testing during and at the end of units of work and a mock examination is set at the end of each module. It is rare for students not to complete their courses.

200. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a good team spirit and members of staff support each other and share information and expertise. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. A clear focus on direction is generating a commitment to the continued

improvement of examination results but the monitoring of lessons still needs to be strengthened. Assessment and record keeping are very good. Resources are barely sufficient as they are becoming depleted.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- A-level results are well above average.
- Current standards are well above average.
- Students have excellent attitudes and demonstrate great commitment to hard work.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Management and organisation are very good.

### Area for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.

201. A-level results in 2001 were well above average both in terms of the proportion gaining grades A and B and passing in the range A to E. In 2002 they were similar. In 2001, AS level results were very high compared to the national picture in all respects and showed a very significant further improvement in 2002. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results have shown significant improvement in the last few years. Almost all those entering the AS course and the second sixth form year leading to A level completed the courses. Achievement is very good overall.

202. Current standards are well above average in both Years 12 and 13 and represent very good achievement. Written work is very good with little being incomplete or missing. Practical work is good. Students grasp and learn concepts well and also show evidence of a thorough training in experimental method. They carry out investigations competently, for example in Year 12 finding a way to compare the loss of energy of different bouncing balls. They are well practised in evaluating how accurate and reliable their results might be. In Year 13, the building up of detailed knowledge is shown by very thorough written work which also shows a very good grasp of problem solving. Students show excellent understanding of physics concepts and their logical application to new situations. Their high order literacy skills shine through their written work. Their numerical skills are well developed and they are very good at using mathematics to solve physics problems.

203. Teaching is very good. This is the main reason for the very good learning and results. Its thoroughness and the commitment of the teaching staff generate a confidence and satisfaction in students, enabling them to approach their learning with assurance and dedication. Lessons are very well planned with clear educational objectives and a careful structure. Theory lessons are broken up into a variety of activities to aid concentration and learning and practical activities and demonstrations are included frequently to enable concepts to be securely grasped and cemented in students' minds. A lesson on the magnetic fields produced by electric currents did not just approach this theoretically but enabled pupils to experiment and so experience the effects. Thus learning was consolidated. Teachers are particularly good at questioning students and explaining complex topics clearly. They have a thorough, confident knowledge of their subject. They support students in practical lessons well. Although many students use ICT at home and elsewhere to aid their learning processes, its use, for example to sense the environment, as a research tool and to process results, is not built into the course or lessons sufficiently. Marking is thorough and regular. Assessment is very good so students are well aware of how well they are doing and how their performance compares with the standards expected in the examinations.

204. The response of students to the teaching is very good and they learn well. They work hard, are attentive, show interest and produce good quality work. They work very well together in a friendly, co-operative atmosphere. Relationships between students and with staff are very good. Teachers are

particularly good at providing a positive ethos in which good learning and academic results can be achieved and students appreciate this highly.

205. The subject is well led and well managed. Resources are generally sufficient but there is a shortage of ICT equipment and the high cost of large items of physics equipment means it is difficult to replace and add to these. This affects learning. The high standards and good provision noted in the previous inspection have been maintained and improved still further.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

206. The focus was on design and technology, but food technology was also sampled. In food technology, results in the home economics A-level examination in 2001 were below average but students' achievement was broadly satisfactory because several of them started the course with relatively modest GCSE results. Results in 2002 were similar. Two lessons were observed. In a Year 13 home economics lesson, the teacher made very good use of a range of teaching methods, including using video and the Internet, to ensure that students understood the strategies used in advertising. In a food technology lesson in Year 12, students were individually modifying recipes to test the functions of a range of ingredients with good individual support from the teacher. Samples of students' work show that standards are improving as a result of very thorough teaching.

### **Design and Technology**

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

#### Strengths

- Examination results are above average and students achieve well.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

#### Areas for improvement

- The provision for computer aided manufacture is inadequate.
- Design analysis and specifications are not used sufficiently as a basis for ideas and evaluation.

207. A level results in product design in 2001 were well above average, continuing the trend from the previous two years. In 2002, results were much lower. All students attained grades A to E but none attained grades A or B. Nevertheless students achieved as well as expected. The AS level results of this group of students were below average in 2001, but AS level results in 2002 were very much higher when the great majority of students attained grades A or B. There were no significant differences between the achievement of male and female students.

208. Standards are above average in both Years 12 and 13 and represent good achievement. All work is characterised by very high standards of presentation and high quality manufacturing and finishing of products. All students carry out thorough analyses of their design problems but particularly in the case of weaker students this can be more a matter of routine than directly related to the development of ideas. In Year 12, independent research is limited because students are working on very similar projects. Design specifications are sometimes too imprecise to be used as the basis for evaluating ideas and the final product. Most students produce a wide range of ideas and develop them well. Drawing standards vary from some excellent graphic design to development drawings that lack fluency. All students in both years make very good use of both scale and full size modelling to test ideas. The best students test ideas with individual clients. For example, a Year 13 student tested the anthropometrics of a trolley with the disabled person it is being designed for and a Year 12 student tested a model for a toy with children and as a result modified her design. Most students make good use of computer aided design software to help to visualise and modify their ideas but there is no use of computer aided manufacturing.



209. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Very thorough discussions with individual students help them to carry out successful design projects. These discussions focus appropriately on the students justifying their design decisions but are not ensuring that that pupils carry out sufficient independent research in Year 12. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to ensure that students are well prepared for the written examination papers and to provide them with good technical help with the production of their designs. Teachers have high expectations, give extra help outside lessons, and mark work thoroughly so students know how to improve.

210. Students have positive attitudes to the subject and have invariably chosen it because they enjoyed their GCSE course. They explain the development of their projects well, especially in Year 13. They work conscientiously but not always with a sense of urgency. They present their work with care. Student retention rates on AS and A-level courses are good.

211. Leadership and management are excellent. Overall, there has been very good improvement in standards since the previous inspection as a result of a clear vision for the development of the subject and good teaching. There has been a significant improvement in the use of ICT but a weakness in computer aided manufacturing remains. The provision of a small design space that is always available for students to work in encourages positive attitudes and is well used. Good technical support helps to further raise the quality of making.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies leading to AS and A-level qualifications are the only courses that the school offers in this curriculum area. These were the focus of the inspection.

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- The students' ICT skills are very good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The lower attaining students' language and analytical skills are insufficiently developed.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently.

212. Standards are rising quickly at AS and A-level. In 2001, the A-level results were well below average: although the great majority of candidates passed the examination, none achieved A or B grades. In 2002, the results improved considerably and a quarter of the candidates achieved A or B grades. Overall, achievement was broadly satisfactory. The AS level results of 2001 were well above average. A quarter of the candidates achieved A or B grades and all passed the examination. In 2002, the results were even better and more than two fifths of the candidates achieved grades A or B.

213. Standards in Year 12 are above average and in Year 13 they are well above average, representing good achievement. Higher attaining students often produce very good, well structured and well presented solutions to business problems such as ineffective marketing strategy and cash flow problems. These are widely researched and well analysed. However, lower attaining students approach case studies more superficially and fail to apply their knowledge sufficiently to actual business situations. Their written work is prone to errors in spelling and punctuation.

214. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Classroom management is firm and effective. Teachers have high expectations and set students ambitious but achievable targets, plan lessons well,

teach at a brisk pace, and reinforce and extend the students' learning with demanding homework, usually containing some element of research. This is regularly set and consistently and thoroughly marked and assessed, with very detailed oral and written comments to help students improve their performance and raise standards. Errors in literacy are highlighted. Teachers systematically praise and encourage students. Question and answer sessions are rigorous and precisely targeted to test understanding and retention and to allow continuous review of business knowledge. Teachers match materials and activities effectively to the students' needs, catering for all levels of ability, and illustrate topics with constant reference to modern business practice. Abundant opportunities are given for students to practise all the key skills and ICT is thoroughly incorporated into teaching and learning. The teachers have very good relationships with the students, who are mature and have very positive attitudes to the subject and so attendance and retention rates are both good. However, some able, but rather lazy boys in Year 12 need more suitably monitored independent learning opportunities.

215. Students learn quickly because they are taught well and generally have very good attitudes to their studies; this includes students with English as an additional language. They read round the subject and carry out good research. They concentrate for the whole of the lesson, and answer confidently and often at length, showing very good business knowledge and good retention of previous learning. ICT skills are very well developed and enable students to give business documents a professional finish. Their numerical skills are good, for example, in assessing a business's financial viability, or in representing graphically shifts in demand and supply. Their use of key business words is apposite and written work is clear, well organised, and, in the main, carefully edited.

216. The department is in the process of being restructured; therefore, leadership and management are shared among the business education teachers who are making admirable efforts to meet the school's targets. The subject curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations very well and initiatives such as Young Enterprise and the Proshare Competition foster active and independent learning. Though the formal monitoring of teaching and learning, homework and assessment is not yet in place, there is good practice in these areas. Monitoring would lead to sharing of good practice. Assessment is excellent. Very detailed and valuable information on the current and prior attainment of every student is used to set targets and the students know exactly what they must do to meet the high expectations their teachers have of them.

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

217. The only course provided by the school in this curriculum area is the AS and A-level course in information and communication technology. This course was inspected in detail as a focus subject.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results are consistently above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students find the course attractive and are opting to study it in increasing numbers.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Improve the pace in Year 12, particularly in relation to the production of coursework.
- Provide more opportunities for students to study the use of ICT in outside organisations.
- Improve the quality of marking to enable students to know how to improve their work.

218. A-level results in 2001 were above average, all candidates achieving at least a pass grade. In 2002, the overall results were similar to the previous year and represented broadly satisfactory

achievement from an above average base at GCSE. Although the pass rate in the range A to E was lower, the proportion of students gaining A or B grades was higher. A-level results have been consistently above average since 1999. AS level results in 2002 were very good. All 34 students passed and almost two thirds obtained A or B grades. Very few students who start the course fail to finish it. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students or those from different ethnic backgrounds in AS or A-level examinations although more males than females choose to study the subject.

219. Standards in Year 13 are above average with many students well on track to obtain the higher grades A and B. Effective teaching is enabling these students to continue the good progress they made in Year 12 and they are achieving well in relation to their AS and GCSE grades. Coursework, in particular, is of a high quality. Students analysed the current system used by an organisation well. They then evaluated possible solutions effectively before producing a detailed system specification designed for use by a third party. However, this work could have been further improved by a greater emphasis on end-user testing. Students' knowledge and understanding of how organisations use ICT is not as well developed. Not all the factors relating to a management information system are fully understood.

220. Year 12 standards are average. Students' achievement is satisfactory given their attainment on entry to the sixth form. However, their coursework shows generally insufficient refinement as they proceed through the stages of analysis, design, implementation, testing and evaluation. Many students are falling behind schedule and struggling to meet the deadline for completion. Students understand the distinction between knowledge, information and data but are less sure about the social impact of ICT in various types of organisation.

221. Students are enthusiastic and have positive attitudes. They arrive punctually and are prepared to work in their lessons, although in the two large classes in Year 12 they are easily distracted and not all make the progress of which they are capable. They have easy access to computers in non-taught time and make good use of this facility to extend and enhance their learning, using the internet well to research information and a good in-house revision program to help prepare for examinations.

222. Overall, teaching is good and this is the main reason why students do well. The teachers have good subject knowledge, lessons are well planned and students are provided with appropriate handouts and a relevant textbook to assist their learning outside the classroom. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their students who then have the confidence to ask questions, helping them to learn. When students are working individually on their coursework, teachers intervene effectively to keep them on task but they could do more to assist them to think more effectively. A significant number of students in Year 12 have difficulty in meeting their coursework time deadlines which, in effect, reduces the quality of their work. Teachers need to develop more effective strategies to combat this problem. The marking of students' work, although regular, does not always give clear pointers for further improvement.

223. The management of the subject is satisfactory. External data is well analysed and individual students are set appropriate targets. The number of students choosing to study ICT is increasing and almost all students who start either the AS or A-level course finish it. However, there is currently a lack of coherence between the vocational course followed by students in Years 10 and 11 and the A and AS level courses in the sixth form. The school is aware of this and plans are in hand to rectify the situation. Although there are many facilities in school to aid students' learning, there are insufficient opportunities for them to visit outside organisations where ICT is being used.

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

224. The focus of the inspection was the AS and A-level courses in physical education (sports studies), which are the only ones offered by the school in this curriculum area.

## Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education (sports studies) is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are consistently above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is no dedicated base where students can readily access resources.
- ICT is not being used sufficiently to enhance students' learning.

225. In 2001, A-level results were well above average. All students passed in the range A to E and better than average numbers gained the higher grades A and B. AS level results were broadly average. In 2002 A-level results were similar to those of the previous year but AS results improved considerably. Taken as a whole, the 2002 results represented broadly satisfactory achievement.

226. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average and represent good achievement. Students are able to appraise material from different sources and evaluate it in relation to course concepts. For example, in Year 12, students were able to identify and discuss the outcomes of media influence on sport through analysing the contents of different newspaper reports. Having matched the material to the corresponding roles of the media, some students went on to consider the finer points of argument concerning the classification of newspaper reporting as educative or informative. There are no differences between the progress of boys and girls.

227. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use a variety of teaching methods to promote learning. In an excellent Year 13 sports psychology lesson, material was presented through use of an overhead projector, video clips and printed handouts. Tasks were structured around the different stimuli and these provoked spontaneous discussion and a good level of social interaction between students. They successfully completed a worksheet to evaluate their learning and understanding of course concepts such as social loafing and the Ringlemann Effect. The learning arising from these exercises was reinforced through the synoptical analysis of video clips from the recent England rugby international match. From this students participated in much interesting discussion concerning, for example, the cause and effect of group cohesion and team success. Students were encouraged by the teacher to construct arguments to support their own points of view and also to develop their listening skills. However, it would be more beneficial to students in some lessons if they had the opportunity to validate their learning in a more structured way, such as through whole group presentation. This would better inform the teacher of their levels of understanding.

228. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very good. Several transferred to the school in the sixth form in order to follow the sports studies course, and together with the other students, who stayed at the school following GCSE, they provide a good level of support both for school and inter house teams. They are confident and well motivated and enjoy opportunities for discussion and debate. Students' work files are very well presented, showing good use of different teaching methods to enhance analytical skills. Marking is very effective in guiding students towards developing their answers and giving them a clear idea of their progress towards their target and final grade. Students starting AS and A-level courses almost invariably complete them.

229. Leadership and management are good. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the preparation for the school's bid for specialist sports college status, which has now been completed. The current priority for work in Year 13 is to focus on the synoptic element of the sports studies course in response to the lower marks gained for this module in last year's A-level examination. Teachers share a commitment to improving performance in this area and students'

work is regularly assessed and closely monitored. Whilst ICT is used to enhance teaching and learning, there is a need to develop this further to ensure that it is applied consistently across all teaching groups. This would be easier to facilitate if there was a dedicated teaching base for AS and A-level teaching, where students and staff could readily access relevant resources. Students have good opportunities to participate in sports activities of their choice, through their weekly PE programme.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer any courses in this curriculum area.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

230. The focus was on music and art but media studies and drama were sampled. In the two observed drama lessons, the quality of teaching was very good and students displayed very good independent learning skills. Results for A-level in drama in 2001 were well above average. Although still good, they declined a little in 2002. In media studies, a relatively new course for the school, one lesson was observed in Year 13. The quality of teaching was good and students talked articulately, showing perception and understanding in their analysis of adverts. In 2002, there were no students taking A-level but AS level results were lower than expected. No students took either examination in 2001.

### Art and design

Overall, provision for art and design is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Results in A-level examinations are well above average.
- Achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students have excellent attitudes.

#### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for sixth form students is unsatisfactory.

231. A-level results in 2001 were well above average both in terms of the overall pass rate in the range A to E and in respect of the higher grades A and B. Results at AS and A-level were similarly good in 2002 and represent very good achievement. They show no significant gender difference.

232. Current standards are well above average overall and reflect the recent results at AS and A-level. Few weaknesses are apparent and achievement is very good. Very good drawing is evident in all areas of work. However, in some instances, students demonstrate only a partial knowledge of the way in which colour can be employed to aid expression. Sometimes, ambition outstrips technique, for example in the drawing of foreshortened hands. An outstanding example of Year 12 work is provided by a project in which students make paper from a range of materials upon which they print designs from clay blocks also made by themselves. The results incorporate the knowledge and understanding of the nature of other cultures and are well above average in quality. Year 13 students display a firmly established individual direction. Drawing continues to develop and the high standards evident earlier are consolidated. Three-dimensional work shows imaginative constructional ideas in relation to the human figure, for example, and notebooks provide good evidence of purposeful research using a range of sources, including computers and digital cameras.

233. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good. A main strength is the teachers' subject expertise and versatility. A further strength is the very good quality of relationships between teachers and students, which underpins the excellent working atmosphere in lessons. The quality of learning echoes the commitment of the teaching and is further enhanced by excellent student attitudes. All teachers share a strong commitment to the success of the sixth form. The work at this level is very well and resourcefully managed in the face of some difficulties; the lack of a dedicated sixth form studio, for example, and storage difficulties for large-scale work.

234. AS and A-level courses in art and design are becoming more popular as results and standards are acknowledged to be very strong. There are now four viable groups in Years 12 and 13. Students' attitudes towards their work are excellent and they are enthusiastic about their course. Year 12 students find themselves involved in making increasingly independent choices concerning the direction of their work compared to their previous work at GCSE. Some feel ill at ease with this but they are resolute in the face of challenge. Student retention rates on art courses are good.

235. Leadership and management are very good. Since the previous inspection, well above average standards have been maintained. New areas of staff expertise have been introduced and resources for ICT have been improved.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- A-level results are improving.
- Current standards of performance and composition are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students think highly of the musical opportunities in the school.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently.

236. A-level results in 2001 were disappointing because two of the five students failed to achieve a pass grade. The other three students were successful in the range B to D. Results were better in 2002 with all students achieving B and C grades in AS and A-level examinations. However, numbers taking the examinations are small and therefore comparisons with national averages and between male and female students are not reliable.

237. Current standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13 and achievement is very good. Students are expected to achieve very well, particularly in composition and performance. Compositions imaginatively absorb the flavour and style of the music that inspired them. Students use computers for scoring their compositions and are confident users of sequencing and scoring software. Standards of playing and singing are impressively high, technically controlled and musically very expressive. Reports on their chosen area of study show promise. They are all word-processed and students use a variety of formatting techniques to present their work well. Reports completed by A-level students are suitably analytical and articulate. Points are closely referenced to specific moments in the scores using appropriate scanned quotations.

238. Students think highly of music. Their attitudes are excellent. Relationships are very strong springing from a shared and deeply felt love for the subject, which is also evident in their involvement in the extra-curricular activities and the music they compose for them. Their sincere enjoyment considerably and positively affects their learning. Students organise their rehearsal and recording times themselves, patiently overcoming problems of availability. They fully appreciate and benefit from extra support and time outside the timetabled hours which teachers work tirelessly to provide. They believe they have been well advised and guided from before they embarked on, and throughout, the course. Students invariably complete their courses. Many are going on to study music in some form after they leave the school.

239. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Teachers' expertise in music is very good and they fulfil a wide variety of roles very ably. As such they are excellent role models. Because of the individual nature of much of the work at this level they are in a very good position to support students very well. Lessons are therefore very well planned and organised and students and teachers are very well

prepared for them to make the most of the time available. On-going work on reports is thoroughly monitored, and marking is rigorous and challenging. It is discussed in detail in tutorial sessions and the teacher sets targets for improvement and re-drafting. Although students would benefit from setting targets for themselves, they do work very hard independently and productively for much of the lesson while teachers assist other students. Marking for composition and performance follows the exam-grading criteria, and again the teacher's coaching is rigorous and detailed. Where possible, compositions are recorded from a live performance, enabling students to learn from first hand experience whether their compositions are appropriately written. Teachers perform with and accompany students for these recordings also acting as sound engineers for them.

240. Leadership and management of the department are very good and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Numbers of students taking the examinations are increasing and standards are improving. Although teaching and learning are very good at this level and there is a great deal of informal discussion between the teachers, they would benefit from regular and frequent formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching to enhance it further. Opportunities to perform are wide and varied and lessons are available for most instruments. The sixth form students belong to a variety of extra-curricular activities, among them close harmony vocal groups, which inspire the students to compose music specifically for them, such as movements for a Requiem. Their personal development is considerably enhanced by the opportunities provided; the spiritual and emotional dimension through composing and performing music and excellent social and cultural provision through performing high quality music of all styles together.

## HUMANITIES

241. The focus of the inspection was on A and AS level courses in history, psychology and sociology, but teaching and learning were also sampled in government and politics, law, philosophy and geography. At A-level in government and politics in 2001, all three students passed in the grade range B to D. Two students were entered in 2002 and gained grades B and E. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were very good. A-level results in philosophy in 2001 were broadly average and improved in 2002. The quality of teaching and learning in philosophy was very good. Students quickly obtained a good understanding of difficult concepts. In law in 2001, A-level results were well below average but in 2002 there was a very considerable improvement. In the lesson observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good. The A-level geography results in 2001 were below average but there was a significant improvement in 2002. In the lesson observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- The learning atmosphere is very positive
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Some students would benefit from more practice in oral work.

242. Standards at A-level in 2001 were above average and represented broadly satisfactory achievement from students' above average GCSE results. All students passed in the range A-E and just over a third achieved the higher grades A and B. Results in the AS examination were in line with the national average both for A-E grades and the higher grades. Results in 2002 improved considerably. At



A-level, all the students passed with two thirds of them achieving the highest grades. Nearly all the AS students were successful with the majority of them achieving higher grades.

243. Standards are rising quickly as a result of the very good quality of teaching. In Year 13, they are well above average and represent very good achievement from the GCSE stage. The work in students' files shows that they take the initiative in its organisation and development. Their ability to balance the views of different historians before reaching their own judgement is evident at an early stage in the course. Large charts are used effectively to clarify complex topics. Some of the students' personal studies are outstanding. Their use of ICT is very good, both as a research tool and as a means of presenting work. Their numerical skills are satisfactory. Some of the students have well-developed communication skills and are able to present their views in a scholarly way. Debates on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chartist movement, English foreign policy during the Tudor period and the question of a mid-Tudor crisis were particularly impressive. However, some students are less confident orally and would benefit from more practice in class discussion.

244. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and sometimes excellent. Teachers have high expectations and set high standards. They use opportunities, whenever they arise, to make the subject relevant to the life and experience of the students and this becomes a highly motivating factor. Teachers provide a good balance between ensuring students have good subject knowledge and providing them with many opportunities for individual research. Regular examination practice is built into the course so that the students are very familiar with what is required of them. Students arrive punctually to lessons and are well prepared. They feel very well supported by their teachers and know that individual help is always available. They are under a healthy pressure to succeed. Student retention rates are high.

245. Subject leadership is very good and provides a clear direction for work and development. History is a popular option with students, who can choose between two historical periods for A-level study. Monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored with remedial action taken if necessary. Very good relationships between teachers and students underpin a strong commitment to succeed and continued improvement in the subject. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is satisfactory with some good features.
- In Year 13, coursework is well organised.

### Areas for improvement

- More guidance and monitoring of students' work and files are required.
- Marking needs to be improved.
- A greater range of teaching strategies is needed.

246. Results at A-level in 2001 were well below average. Proportions of students achieving the higher grades A and B and pass grades in the range A to E were well below average. Results improved very considerably in both categories in 2002. AS level results were close to the national average in 2001 but declined sharply in 2002. Few students fail to complete the courses but the results overall represent only barely satisfactory achievement.

247. Current standards in Year 13 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Files are suitably presented and include much material based on class work. Reasonable progress has been made with written work including short descriptions and analysis of theories in religion, research methods and crime and deviance. Students with good coursework provide analytical accounts of different research methods

and indicate that they have read widely around the topics. Poorer contributions provide short descriptive accounts but offer little analysis. Students in Year 12 make satisfactory progress with many reaching average standards. Written work shows they have begun to appreciate the importance of different theoretical approaches and interpretations to the study of the mass media, education and gender. However, a number have difficulty in writing more comprehensive answers.

248. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Lessons have clear objectives. The pace is good and variations are introduced as part of a regular pattern. Lesson plans highlight learning outcomes and relevant key skills. Schemes of work are being revised so that material can be covered in ways that are more relevant to students. In one class, students in Year 12 considered the ways in which newspapers had covered one day of the Iraq war. Students were given a specific task to prepare a presentation based on the analysis of the coverage using different perspectives and then to contribute their views on the reasons for the selection of pictures and articles. The teacher handled this sensitive subject with considerable skill in keeping the discussions on target. Students worked hard on the task and gave clear descriptive accounts from the newspapers. This was in preparation for more detailed accounts in subsequent lesson. However, teaching strategies tend to follow a pattern that includes an exposition from the teacher and then group or individual tasks and presentations. This does not always build on the students' level of interest or reinforce already existing knowledge. ICT is used infrequently and its potential for enhancing learning in this subject remains virtually untapped.

249. Written work covers a variety of tasks and includes short answers to specific questions and extended essays. Marking is carried out particularly when this relates to a test or coursework submission. At these times the comments are extensive and give advice on ways on how the submission can be improved. Apart from this, marking is often unsatisfactory and does not provide enough pointers to the students to enable them to improve their work. Year 13 files suggest that higher attaining students can review a wide range of evidence and explain and provide answers that are well organised. Many students make progress in their essay writing skills over the year.

250. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to specific tasks. They support each other and there is a good rapport with their teachers. Most students starting AS and A-level courses complete them. The content of the subject contributes to the development of core skills, citizenship and social, moral and cultural understanding. However, such contributions are not always made explicit.

251. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There has been a rapid change of staff over the past few years and many new teachers have had to become familiar with the courses. An analysis of past results has led to a revision of the course structure. The development plan and the annual review of examination results clearly highlight the areas for improvement including a necessary increase in the monitoring of the progress of individual students. Resources and accommodation are adequate for the current number of students but the library would benefit from a wider selection of sociological books. This department would benefit from a period of stability that would enable teachers to extend their knowledge and confidence in the subject.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Students have good attitudes to their studies.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- There are not enough guided opportunities to practise typical examination questions.

252. A-level results in 2001 were well above average in terms of the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B and in the pass range A to E. There was a decline in 2002 both in the proportion of higher grades and the overall pass rate. AS level results in 2001 were above average for passes in the range A to E but below average for higher grades. AS level results in 2002 were similar to those of 2001. Female students generally perform significantly better than males. Overall, the results in psychology represented good achievement in 2001 and broadly satisfactory achievement in 2002.

253. Current standards in psychology are above average overall and result from the good teaching that the students receive. Teachers constantly test students on key points to ensure the essentials are grasped. Students' knowledge of psychology causes the quality of their learning to be good. As a result students' achievements overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, are good. Retention rates on the courses are also good.

254. Standards in Year 12 are above average. For example, students gain a critical understanding of 'obedience' and 'conformity'. They understand Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies and particularly the ethical issues raised by their published work. Higher attaining students can write well and produce elaborate descriptions of a study or a theory. Average attaining students occasionally run out of ideas but they are well supported to think of correct explanations of the key approaches to psychology. Male and female students can collect data in two ways: empirically and rationally. Both genders perform equally well in class. Students in Year 12 fully understand that human development is a dynamic process, which is motivated or driven by certain forces. The ethical issues involved in behaviour modification are well appreciated and students are able to evaluate the use of selective rewards and sanctions.

255. Standards in Year 13 are average. Students apply a scientific process to learning about human behaviour. They can construct a theory to account for a set of related facts and they can then progress to generating expectations from the theory. Male and female students are equally competent to collect data to test expectations. Females are better at spelling, punctuation and grammar. All students can write about cognitive psychology and analyse and evaluate a range of psychology theories and studies. The high attaining students communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology in a clear and effective manner. For example, they know that the physiological approach stresses the importance of evolution in behaviour and that this approach does not assume that an individual necessarily understands the purpose or function of their behaviour.

256. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers show an appropriate interest in the core areas of cognitive, social developmental, individual differences and physiological psychology. Lessons are planned effectively to develop an understanding of psychology as a scientific study of behaviour and experience. Students are well advised that psychology seeks to collect objective and verifiable facts about behaviour and that it constructs empirically based theories. Teachers are good at helping students to understand the logic and importance of the concepts of the subject. Students increase their understanding of psychology by discussing their writing or research with their teacher and fellow students. The strength of teaching is in the informed commentary and thorough analysis of relevant psychological studies and methods but more could be done to guide the students through typical examination questions.

257. Leadership and management are good. The support and environment that is provided enable students to feel confident, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities in the sixth form. Over time, good improvement has been made to aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. However, there is no base room for the teaching of psychology, which detracts from the quality of experience enjoyed by students. It is taught in a variety of unsuitable rooms without access to ICT facilities.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

258. The main focus was on the AS and A-level courses in English language. English literature was also sampled. A-level results in English literature were average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Lessons were observed in Years 12 and 13 and students' written work was scrutinised. Teaching is very good and standards are improving. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students examined a fictitious letter and, in pairs, had to counter the writer's argument by referring to the examinations' assessment objectives. Thus they consolidated their knowledge of the objectives, became aware that these provided a structured approach for the analysis of synoptic texts, and improved their critical skills. The lesson was challenging and the learning enjoyable.

## English language

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students have positive and enthusiastic attitudes.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for development.

259. Results at AS and A-level have risen over the past two years. They were well above average in 2001, having been well below the previous year. There was a further improvement last year. Standards at AS were also well above average in 2001. The AS results for 2002 indicate that the improving trend at A-level will continue. These standards represent very good achievement, particularly by female students.

260. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average. Most students show a very good grasp of linguistic concepts and terminology. Their investigations are thorough and perceptive and are well presented. They are well aware of the importance of reading texts carefully to determine their audience and purpose before beginning their analyses; and there is excellent evidence of their individual research using the library and the Internet. Information gained from these sources is evaluated before being used, and carefully chosen quotations always support written argument. Students make good use of linguistic frameworks in their analyses, and they express their interpretations confidently, independently and fluently. In their written commentaries, all students can carefully explain and evaluate their own writing, using the appropriate linguistic terms, thus showing both their understanding of the genre they are studying and their editing skills. Although some of the lower attaining students do not have a secure knowledge of the subjunctive mood and passive voice, and awareness of how they influence our interpretations of texts, they tackle the creative writing section confidently and competently. The quality of discussion in lessons is very high because students are encouraged to explain and justify their arguments and to challenge each other.

261. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and examination experience; therefore, students receive very good advice on how to prepare for examinations and how to organise their pre-release materials and coursework. Students' learning is helped considerably by their enthusiasm for the subject, and their very good relationships with their teachers and each other. This means that there is always a strong and purposeful work ethos in the classroom. Very good marking by teachers also helps students' learning. Comments on students' work are always positive, clearly indicate how well they are performing against expectations and give very useful advice on how to improve. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that all students are fully aware of the assessment objectives and that they know exactly what they have to do to achieve the higher grades. In a very good

Year 13 lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, and his frequent use of both his own and students' experience of very young children, enabled the class to identify the early stages of language acquisition and to relate them to the work of theorists and practitioners. In a less successful Year 13 lesson, the students were asked to 'translate', rather than paraphrase, an 18th century advertising bill. As a result, what could have been an exciting lesson, in which they discovered how the language reflected the social attitudes and values of the time, lost its impetus, and effectiveness, because students became concerned with trying to find a modern equivalent for each individual word.

262. The management of the subject is very good. Teaching and marking are monitored and the four teachers work well together. They constantly review teaching methods, develop and share resources and set challenging targets for both students and themselves. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards have improved to well above average. The regular use of ICT has become an integral part of the course and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Most students embarking upon AS and A-level studies complete them.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

263. French was the focus subject, but two lessons of German were also sampled. In Year 12, German is students' second foreign language. Standards are average, and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Year 13, German is students' first foreign language. Standards are above average, and teaching and learning are good. A-level results in 2001 and 2002 were very good. All of the students entered gained grades in the range A to C.

#### **French**

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

##### **Strengths**

- Good teaching leads to good gains in students' subject knowledge.
- Work experience in France reinforces students' oral skills.

##### **Areas for improvement**

- Students do not use ICT sufficiently.

264. Only two students took A-level in 2001, resulting in grades A and C. The three students on the AS course that year had grades A, B and D. Such results although from a small sample can be seen to be above average. However in 2002 in the new examination there was a decline: the two best performing candidates achieving a grade B, and the others D and E. The school has challenged these outcomes and remains unconvinced that students who achieved A and B in their speaking test at AS level could be properly graded E and U in the equivalent test a year later. Hence, the students did not do as well as expected according to predictions based on their GCSE scores. At AS level in 2002, students had scores ranging from A to D.

265. Year 13 students are doing French as their second foreign language. Standards overall are above average. Students have a wide vocabulary and good oral skills because they regularly hear French spoken in the classroom and also have the advantage of small group sessions with a French assistant of considerable experience. Their speaking skills are already strong enough to cope with discussion of current international issues. Work experience in France has contributed to the good progress that they have made since AS level. Their achievement is good, bearing in mind that they only started the subject in Year 9 rather than Year 7.

266. Year 12 students are now eight in number, a reduction of two since the start of the year. They are taking French as their first foreign language, and all are well qualified at GCSE. Their present standards are above average overall, but range from a potential A grade at AS level to around grade E.

The attendance of two students has been unsatisfactory, leading to inconsistent progress and the risk of some underachievement. Nevertheless overall achievement in the group is good. Vocabulary is already wider than that of most students of their age. For example, they coped well with the legal issues facing a French café owner on whose premises a killer driver had bought his drink.

267. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Both of the teachers have good language skills and can create a good climate for learning in the classroom. Their expectations are high, and generally students respond to them well. There is, however, little possibility of setting them to work on the Internet, which could provide further challenging material. At present the only computer in the department is the departmental office machine, which students have sometimes had to use. Learning is good and could be very good if students had better resources to enable them to work independently.

268. Students demonstrate good attitudes to the work, to the teachers and to each other. At best there is real sense of enjoyment in learning which includes those with the inconsistent attendance record. Six of the eight Year 12 students will be taking part in work experience in France, which is expected to improve their speaking skills. This group quite properly includes some students whose objective is a one-year course to AS level to diversify their studies.

269. This department is managed well. It has maintained high standards with rising student numbers. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.