

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHTON PARK SCHOOL

Bristol

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 109278

Headteacher: Mr C Gardner

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 3 to 7 March 2003

Inspection number: 249698

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Blackmoors Lane
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Bristol

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R White

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

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18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
23080	Robert Isaac	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology Business studies	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ashton Park School is a large, mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. It has 1173 students, including 198 in the sixth form. The school is expanding, and is over-subscribed. Just over nine tenths of students are white, and just under a tenth have a broad range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few students have English as an additional language, but very few are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, and a significant number of these students have behavioural difficulties. Students have a wide range of backgrounds. Their overall social and economic circumstances are below average, but the number from more favourable backgrounds is rising. A small number of students have been excluded from other schools and have poor attendance records. At the time of the inspection, the school was fully staffed except for information and communication technology (ICT). Students taking GCSE in 2002 had joined the school with well below average standards in their work. Standards in the present Year 7 are below average, particularly in literacy. The school is involved in a wide range of initiatives to raise standards, including the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 and Excellence in Cities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ashton Park School is providing satisfactory education, and has good features in many aspects of its work. GCSE results are low, but represent satisfactory achievement from students' starting points. Test results have been rising at an above-average rate in Year 9. Teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory, with good features, and higher-attaining students do well. However, some students' learning is held back by their poor attitudes, and the improvement in standards in Year 9 has yet to be carried through to GCSE. Good leadership and management have seen the school through its expansion, and contribute to the consistency of teaching and to the involvement of all students in the school's work. The sixth form has been set up very successfully. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide strong leadership and direction.
- There is much good teaching, and a third is very good or excellent.
- The school takes good care of students, and involves all of them in its work.
- Exceptional provision for religious education leads to well above average standards.
- There is a very good range of opportunities for learning and study outside lessons.
- Information for parents and co-operation with them are very good.
- The sixth form meets the needs of students and the community very well.

What could be improved

- Although standards are rising in Year 9, GCSE results are still well below average.
- In some lessons, teachers do not match work closely enough to students' learning needs.
- Some management systems need to be made more effective.
- Weaknesses in the curriculum and timetable are holding back progress in some subjects.
- Most students behave well, but there is some poor behaviour in and out of lessons.
- Some students do not have good habits of work and study.

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 last inspected in April 1997. It is now much larger, has developed a substantial sixth form, and has recruited large numbers of staff. GCSE results are similar to those at the time of the last inspection, but standards have risen at an above average rate in Year 9. The quality of teaching has improved, though in some subjects this has been too recent to show in examination results. The school has extended its provision to involve all students in its work, but there has been some deterioration in behaviour in lessons and around the school. The successful establishment of the sixth form has led to improved relationships with other schools and the community. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory in the main school, and the sixth form has been very successfully established.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E
A-levels/AS-levels	-	E	n/a	

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

Since the last inspection, GCSE results have stayed in line with national trends, and represent satisfactory achievement for the students taking the examination. Higher-attaining students reach the standard they should, with a good number of A* grades in English literature and science. Results are well above average in religious education and above average in art and design. The overall standard of work during the inspection was similar to these results, but there were improvements in some subjects. There are no national comparative data for 2002 A-level results. They showed some improvement from those in 2001, with a high pass rate in most subjects. They represent satisfactory achievement. Sixth form work during the inspection showed evidence of further improvement, particularly in vocational work.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are below average, but have been improving at an above average rate. They represent good achievement from the attainment of these students when they joined the school, particularly in mathematics. Standards in most other

subjects are below average, but there are well above average standards in religious education and above average standards in art and design.

The school did not meet its GCSE targets in 2002, chiefly because of very low results in some GCSE short courses that have now been discontinued. It has set a suitably demanding target to build on the improved Year 9 results for 2004. Most work during the inspection showed better learning and achievement among higher-attaining students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. The achievements of students with learning difficulties are satisfactory, but standards and progress among many average and lower-attaining students are held back by weak literacy skills and, particularly among older students, by lack of consistent effort and application. The achievement of all students depends on a strong lead from their teachers. Overall, it is satisfactory across the school.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most students enjoy school and are willing to work, but a minority have poor attitudes that prevent them from learning properly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most behaviour is good, and rises to very good to excellent in response to the school's best teaching. A minority of students do not behave as they should in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Teachers foster good relationships with all students, including those with difficulties outside school. The personal development and responsibility shown by higher-attaining students is often excellent.
Attendance	Below average, chiefly because of a minority of students who have very poor attendance records. There is significant lateness in the morning.

Most students develop a strong sense of social responsibility and understanding of major world issues. There is very good contact with Maji Safi School in Kenya. Weak working habits often hold back achievement among average and lower-attaining students. The prefect system is very effective.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in mathematics is good throughout the school. Work in mathematics lessons is well matched to students' needs, and there is satisfactory provision for number work in other lessons. Teaching in English is good in Years 7 to 9, where it is increasingly meeting the wide range of students' needs, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where it is more effective for higher-attaining than for lower-attaining students. The teaching of literacy skills across the school is satisfactory, but not consistent between subjects. Science teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9. There is good practical and experimental work, but work is not always pitched at the right level for students in Year 7. Science teaching in Years 10 and 11 is

satisfactory. It ensures good learning for higher-attaining students, but is less effective for lower-attaining students, particularly in their coursework.

Teaching in almost all lessons in the main school ranges in quality from excellent to satisfactory. The excellent and very good teaching is very clearly adapted to students' learning needs, and often enables all to make outstanding progress, even in subjects that lower-attaining students find difficult. There is much very good teaching in art and design. The sustained excellence of teaching in religious education leads to exceptional engagement and progress. Teaching in most lessons across the school is good, but good teaching was more consistently seen in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, where learning is also held back by some students' poor work habits. Teaching was unsatisfactory only in very few lessons, mostly because work was not matched to students' needs, but sometimes also because classes were not managed effectively. Sixth form teaching meets most students' needs very well, especially on vocational courses. Some needs more adjustment to enable lower-attaining students to learn effectively, but its overall quality is good.

Teachers in most lessons meet the very wide range of students' learning needs well. However, some teaching does not focus clearly enough on weaknesses in basic skills, particularly in literacy. Overall, teaching meets the needs of all students to a satisfactory standard, but has strengths that put it in a very good position to improve further.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All subjects are included, but there are some weaknesses in the timetable. The range of activities outside lessons is very good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Students' needs are identified well, and there is good specialist teaching, but some elements of provision lack consistency.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of students with English as an additional language work hard and are making good progress in English and their work across the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school promotes moral and social development through good systems for students to take responsibility and contribute to the school and to the wider community. They have good introductions to a wide range of cultures. Opportunities for spiritual development are good overall, with exceptionally strong provision for religious education.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. The school takes good care of students' welfare and provides good guidance on personal development and progress.

The school has very good links with parents, who think highly of its work. Students' annual reports are well written, personal and informative, and newsletters are very good. Most parents support the school, but a minority do not provide enough support for homework by checking and signing students' planners. The new subject of citizenship has been introduced very effectively, and there is very good provision for work experience. Assemblies are of high quality, but there is no daily act of collective worship, and not all sixth form students receive religious education. Learning support for Year 7 students and the system of mentoring, funded by Excellence in Cities, are very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Very good leadership generates a strong sense of purpose and teamwork. Management systems have good features, but some need to be made more effective. Subjects and care are managed well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors are fully involved in the direction of the school, and are committed to high standards and equal opportunities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. All available data systems are used well to compare the school's results with those of other schools, and to plan for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school manages its finances very effectively to pursue its educational priorities for the benefit of the students.

The school has adequate accommodation, staff and learning resources, including library provision.

Leadership and management are based on principles of teamwork, shared purpose and fairness to all students and staff. The personal leadership of the headteacher is a particular strength, and much appreciated by parents and staff. Suitable management systems have been set up for all areas of the school's work, including new initiatives, but some of these need clearer targets and evaluation systems if they are to meet all of the school's diverse needs. The school evaluates its work carefully, consults parents and students, and applies the principles of best value well in its purchases. The establishment and development of the sixth form have been managed very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are expected to work hard, and they make good progress. The school is led and managed well. The school is approachable. Children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework. Information for parents. Co-operation with parents. Behaviour, including bad language.

Most parents think the school is doing well, and the proportion of positive replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire was well above average. Inspectors agree with most of the positive points, but found that some students could be making better progress and showing greater maturity. Inspectors found that homework was satisfactory overall, though some students do not complete it. They found some poor behaviour and a small amount of bad language when students are unsupervised, though the school does not tolerate it. They found that the quality of information for parents, particularly in annual reports, was very good, and that the school did all in its power to co-operate with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form was founded in 1999. It is of average size, and is expanding rapidly. There are 198 students, with an even balance of male and female students. Well over three fifths of the school's students join the sixth form, and it is attracting significant and growing numbers from other schools. There is a wide range of subjects at AS and A-level, with some intermediate and advanced vocational courses (AVCE). Most students are white. A small proportion have minority ethnic backgrounds, but none has English as an additional language. A small number are entitled to free school meals, and a few have special educational needs. Students joining the sixth form have reached a wide range of standards at GCSE. Overall, they have reached lower standards than in most sixth forms.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides good education and is opening up opportunities for a wider range of students than in most schools. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good or excellent in over a third of lessons. There is at present no clear trend in A-level results, although standards are below average in most subjects. However, this represents good overall achievement in view of students' GCSE results, and a high proportion of students complete their courses. The sixth form is led and managed very well. Courses are carefully selected and developed, and the school is playing a leading role in improving sixth form provision in the community. Overall, the sixth form is meeting the need of students very well. Funding is carefully controlled, and the sixth form provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Leadership, management and development of the sixth form are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good.
- The range of courses meets the needs of the students and the local community well.
- The sixth form is developing a very good partnership with other local schools.
- The sixth form is growing, and is broadening opportunities for students.
- Students receive very good guidance and support, and are encouraged to aim high.

What could be improved

- There are some missed opportunities to develop students' ideas and use of formal language.
- A small minority of students do not attend regularly or complete coursework properly.
- Students with low GCSE grades need more provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

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	Good. There is a high pass rate, with some high grades. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good.
Chemistry	Good. Good teaching engages students, who work hard. Standards are below average, but there is a high pass rate and good achievement.
Business studies.	Good. Students work hard in and out of lessons in response to good teaching. Standards are broadly average.
Information and communication technology	Good. Generally good teaching leads to a high pass rate, mostly at lower grades, and students with special educational needs do very well.
Leisure and tourism	Very Good. Good to very good teaching leads to high standards and good achievement. Leadership and management are very good.
Physical education	Good. Good teaching and students' hard work leads to a high A-level pass rate and good achievement.
Art and design	Very good. Imaginative and effective teaching, with committed work from students in and out of lessons, lead to good examination results.
History	Good. Teaching meets students' needs well. 2002 results were affected by staffing difficulties, but the department is now developing well.
English literature	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory, but not yet fully adapted to the needs of students with weak literacy skills. Results are below average.
French	Good. Teaching is good, students work hard, and the pass rate is good, though at lower grades. Numbers taking French are very low.

The overall quality of other work seen in the sixth form was similar to that in subjects inspected. There was very good teaching and learning in drama and in vocational courses, and generally good teaching and learning in other lessons. Weak literacy skills limit many students' achievements in subjects that make heavy demands on writing, and some do not understand the need to attend all lessons and complete written work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students receive well-considered support, advice and guidance on their work and progress, careers and higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The sixth form meets the needs of higher-attaining students well, and is expanding opportunities for lower-attaining students, chiefly through very successful vocational courses. There is close and effective co-operation with other local schools and the Learning and Skills Council, and funding is carefully managed. Teaching and standards are monitored closely in relation to the results of other schools and students' GCSE results. There is very effective additional provision to promote equal opportunities.

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"> • Courses meet their needs well, and teachers provide much extra support. • There is a good working atmosphere, and good computing facilities. • There are good additional opportunities through the enrichment programme. • Students receive good advice and guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teaching does not allow enough participation from students. • Some facilities for private study are cramped.

The vast majority of students expressed positive views of the sixth form when completing the school's questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors. Inspectors agree with students' positive comments, and also on the aspects students feel could be improved.

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 students' achievements

1. Although standards reached by students joining the school have been rising in recent years, they are still below average, and there are areas of well below average standards. For example, only a little over a third of boys starting Year 7 in 2002 had reached the nationally expected standard in writing, and a significant proportion of boys and girls had low, and sometimes very low, standards in reading for their age. The standards reached by students taking GCSE in 2002, and in the current Year 11, were well below average when they joined the school. In the light of this, recent GCSE results represent the standards that could reasonably be expected of the students. They are similar to results at the time of the last inspection, when the school was much smaller.
2. There are strengths in the results of individual subjects. Results in the short course in religious education were well above average in 2002 as a result of an exceptionally high standard of teaching. Art results were also a little above average in 2002. Higher-attaining students generally achieve well, and their hard work, combined with effective teaching, enables them to reach A and A* grades in their strongest subjects – there was, for example, an above average proportion of A* grades in English Literature. The achievement of average and lower-attaining students is significantly weaker, often because of poor literacy skills. These students' attitudes and working habits also limit the standards they reach, sometimes despite good teaching. Science coursework, for example, is often poorly presented and sometimes not completed. 2002 results were affected by staffing difficulties, particularly in English, geography and ICT. There were no significant differences between these GCSE results and the standard of work seen during the inspection.
3. National tests in 2002 in Year 9 were below average, but showed good overall achievement in relation to students' starting points. These standards have been improving at an above average rate in English, mathematics and science. Achievement in relation to students' previous standards is particularly good in mathematics, and was reflected in good to very good learning and progress in mathematics classes during the inspection. Standards in most other subjects during the inspection were below average overall, but they are well above average in religious education and above average in art and design.
4. Overall, standards in numeracy are below average. However, the good provision in mathematics lessons, with well-planned number work in science, geography, design and technology and some history lessons, results in good progress from this low starting point. Students' ICT skills are beginning to recover, but are still lower than they should be because of continuing staffing difficulties, too little teaching time, and too few opportunities to apply ICT skills in other subjects. Standards and achievement in literacy are good for higher-attaining students. However, despite considerable efforts on the part of the school, including taking part in the pilot stage of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, low literacy standards remain the most serious obstacle to raising standards at GCSE.
5. Students with special educational needs are achieving satisfactory overall standards in relation to their learning difficulties. They often make good progress in English and mathematics lessons, but a significant proportion of older students still have difficulties

with basic skills. The small number of students with English as an additional language achieve well, and most other students with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similar standards to other students in their classes. Gifted and talented students reach the high standards of which they are capable by the time they take GCSE. While the gap between the standards reached by boys and girls is narrower than in most schools, there are particular weaknesses in the GCSE coursework of lower-attaining boys.

Sixth form

6. National comparative figures for 2002 AS and A-level results were not available at the time of the inspection. The school's analysis shows a high completion rate in most courses, and a high pass rate, though often at lower grades. Results in intermediate and advanced vocational courses, however, show good improvement from students' starting points. Overall, available examination results indicate satisfactory achievement. The standard of work seen during the inspection was lower than in most sixth forms, but represented good overall achievement from the students, who began with lower overall GCSE results than in most schools. Standards during the inspection were well above average in art and design and drama, and above average in leisure and tourism and French, though teaching groups in French are very small. Standards were below average in English and chemistry, and broadly average in other courses fully inspected.
7. Work seen during the inspection showed no significant differences in the standards reached by male and female students. Higher-attaining and most average students achieve well in the sixth form because of good teaching and their own consistent work, in lessons and in their coursework. Lower-attaining students achieve well in vocational courses, but some reach lower standards than they should in AS and A-level courses because they do not attend all of their lessons and do not complete coursework to a good standard. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory overall progress in the sixth form, and very good progress in ICT.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Students' attitudes and behaviour are, on balance, satisfactory, but they range from excellent to very poor. Most enjoy school, are enthusiastic and interested, and involve themselves in lessons and additional activities. Older, higher-attaining students have excellent attitudes and accept real responsibility within the school. A large number, for example, act as prefects, and senior prefects organise and manage the others. The prefects help supervise the school at lunch and break-times, and have made an important contribution to improving behaviour on buses. Students usually respond well to a strong lead from their teachers, but a substantial number of older students do not engage in lessons properly, and their unwillingness to work as they should is a serious obstacle to learning. In some cases, such as one ICT class in Year 7, these poor attitudes have been partly caused by a high turnover of teachers. Older students, however, told inspectors that they were a habit that had built up over time, and inspection evidence showed that some students did not work properly even when the teaching was good. Most lower-attaining students make less use of the school's extensive additional learning opportunities, including study support. The school has systems to minimise the effect of poor attitudes on other students' learning, but the problem has not been eliminated. Most students behave well, and behaviour in response to the school's best teaching is excellent. However, a significant number do not behave properly in lessons and around the school. In some cases, poor behaviour results from inconsistent use of the school's behaviour code, and in others, from work that does not enable all students to learn effectively. In some instances, students' behaviour causes distress to teachers. Most students behave well around the school

and are polite and courteous, for example, holding doors open for each other and adults. However, a minority behaved badly outside lessons and a few were heard using bad language. This confirmed the concerns of some parents at the pre-inspection meeting about swearing outside lessons. The school does not tolerate such language if teachers hear it.

9. There is some bullying. Most is name-calling, and it is occasionally more serious. However, most students do not see this as a major problem. They report it if they see it, and say that the school deals with it if it happens. However, this evidence supports the concerns of some parents about bullying.
10. The school uses exclusion only when there is no alternative, and deals with serious misbehaviour by working with students in a withdrawal room. Some students continue to misbehave seriously even under these conditions. There are very few permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions is about average.
11. Teachers succeed in fostering good relationships throughout the school despite the difficulties outlined above. They spend time getting to know students and provide much personal encouragement, including extensive additional teaching outside lessons. Students grow in confidence and maturity as they move through the school. For example, many students evaluate their work thoughtfully and accurately in their annual reports. Students are interested in the world, and show initiative in raising money for charity and to finance expeditions, for example to Maji Safi school in Kenya. They take a particularly strong interest in ethical, moral and spiritual issues discussed in religious education and in the most effective citizenship lessons. There are good relationships among students from all ethnic groups.
12. Attendance is below average, chiefly because of the very poor attendance of a small minority of students, some of whom have transferred to the school at a late stage in their education. Attendance during the year of the inspection was showing some improvement. There is lateness to tutorials at the start of the school day, caused partly, by problems with buses. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory.

Sixth form

13. Students' enjoy their work, and most feel they are getting a good deal from the school. Most students make the most of additional opportunities for learning and community service on Wednesday afternoons. These include providing support to lower-attaining students in the main school, and some of this work showed exceptional patience. They take part in sports skilfully and show good sportsmanship.
14. Most students use their study area well and many take justified pride in the quality of their coursework folders. Higher-attaining students and those on vocational courses have particularly good attitudes. On the other hand, some students, often those with lower GCSE grades, do not work as they should outside lessons, and do not complete all of their coursework. This seriously harms their chances of success.
15. Attendance is satisfactory in Year 13, but unsatisfactory in Year 12. The main reason is that a minority of students do not understand the importance of regular attendance and work. There is some lateness to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Many students join the school with weak reading and writing skills, and a significant minority have serious behavioural difficulties. In addition, some students' attitudes to work have been harmed by a high turnover of staff in some subjects – in ICT, one Year 7 class had been taught by three temporary supply teachers in 6 months. These factors make teaching more difficult than in most schools. Most teachers meet this challenge well, particularly in Years 7 to 9, where most teaching is good and over two fifths of lessons are very good or excellent. Teaching is also satisfactory or better in the vast majority of lessons in Years 10 and 11, though the proportion of outstanding teaching is lower. Across the school, much of the best teaching takes place in subjects that lower-attaining students find particularly difficult, such as modern languages, and the quality of teaching in religious education is exceptional. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in teaching in some subjects in Years 10 and 11 are still preventing the school from extending the pattern of rising standards in Year 9 tests to GCSE results.
17. Teaching in mathematics is good throughout the school, and very good in some lessons. Work is consistently well planned to meet the needs of all students and lessons are carried out at a brisk pace. This leads to good learning, positive attitudes and rising standards. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall. There is good teaching of number skills in some subjects, such as geography, but it is not consistently planned across the school. The overall quality of teaching in English is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The recently appointed head of faculty has identified strengths and weaknesses in students' skills very clearly. English lessons are well planned, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and contain a very good range of learning activities. The teaching of basic skills in English lessons and in additional lessons for students with the weakest literacy skills is generally good. However, learning in some lessons in Years 10 and 11 is limited by work that is not matched closely enough to students' needs, and by lapses in behaviour. The teaching of literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory overall, but ranges in quality from excellent, in religious education, to unsatisfactory in some areas of coursework, particularly for lower-attaining students. In history, teachers contribute well to literacy skills by selecting a focal point for developing reading or writing in each lesson.
18. Teaching in science follows a similar pattern to that in English. It is good, overall, in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Higher-attaining students learn particularly well as they approach GCSE, but work is not matched closely enough to the needs of lower-attaining students, particularly in their written work, and teachers do not always insist that coursework is properly completed. Most ICT teaching is good, and some is outstanding. However, staffing remains difficult in this subject, and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching identified by both the school and the inspection team remains significant. Management is taking active steps to improve the situation. There is good teaching of ICT skills in a minority of other subjects, and the school has identified the need to extend it. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is exceptional. Almost every lesson is excellent, combining relevance, challenge, and outstanding use of resources. Standards in the GCSE short course are well above average as a result, and all students behave well and work hard.
19. Teaching in art and design is good throughout the school, and often very good in individual lessons. It leads to good progress from all students and to above average standards at GCSE, where wide-ranging and imaginative coursework are particular strengths. In modern languages, good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching has led to very good improvement since the last inspection, including good provision for lower-attaining students. Teaching in physical education is also of good to very good quality throughout the school and in activities outside lessons. Recent improvements have resulted in good teaching in music, though it is stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10

and 11, where a minority of students do not give the teacher a fair chance. Teaching in design and technology is good overall throughout the school, with much very good teaching. Good teaching in history is based on high levels of knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, and imaginative use of resources to stimulate thinking and the imagination. Teaching in geography is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in individual lessons, but a rather restricted range of teaching styles. Teaching in citizenship is good, but ranges in individual lessons from excellent, with stimulating demanding topics very well presented, to unsatisfactory, in a small number of lessons that treat similar topics, but without enough challenge.

20. Overall, teaching meets the needs of all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, gifted and talented students and those with English as an additional language, to a similar standard. Excellent teaching is a particular strength, as it provides an example for planning that can help improve teaching in other subjects to meet the wide range of learning needs in each class. In an excellent French lesson for lower-attaining students, for example, the teacher used small whiteboards to enable all students to take part in a writing task, and engaged their help in ensuring that everyone understood a lesson conducted in French by asking them to take turns as interpreters. This lesson used a simple but humorous system of assessment to keep students informed of their progress, and excellent management from the moment students prepared to enter the classroom ensured a very high standard of behaviour. Other excellent lessons showed similar qualities.
21. Satisfactory lessons have clear learning goals, but the level of challenge in the work is not matched closely enough to the needs of the class, particularly in the design of tasks for students, and some students are allowed to work too slowly. A lack of urgency in some students' work is particularly apparent in Years 10 and 11, almost always among average and lower-attaining students, and sometimes leads to wide ranges in the quality of learning within subjects, especially in citizenship. In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, learning tasks are not matched to students' needs, time is not managed well, the pace of some work is too slow, and teachers tolerate minor misbehaviour, such as calling out.
22. Since the last inspection, the proportion of good teaching has increased, and outstanding teaching is now making a significant contribution to learning and achievement. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been halved, and it is now only significant in ICT. Overall, the school has made satisfactory improvements in its teaching, and good improvements in some subjects. Its monitoring systems put it in a good position to improve teaching further.

Sixth form

23. Sixth form teaching was good or better in three-quarters of lessons, and this consistency is a key factor in promoting good learning. Teachers know their subjects and the requirements of examinations well, and plan interesting courses that build well on what students have learned at GCSE. Lessons are carried out at a good pace, relationships are very good, and students often take pride in their work, for example in well-presented folders in mathematics. In almost all subjects, teachers provide additional teaching encouragement to students to work hard outside lessons. Very good teaching has additional strengths, including highly imaginative coursework in art and design, and exceptionally careful planning in leisure and tourism. In a minority of sixth form lessons, the benefit of good features in the teaching is lost because planning does not involve students directly enough, and work in class is not integrated closely enough with coursework. This makes it more difficult for lower-attaining students to build up the good work habits that are needed for A-level success. Additional teaching for key skills in ICT is good, and number work is satisfactory, but teaching has not yet been fully adapted to meet the needs of students with weak literacy skills, either in English or in other subjects that depend heavily on writing.

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

Learning opportunities

24. Overall, the range of learning opportunities is satisfactory. It has some significant strengths, but also some weaknesses that are holding back learning and progress. The curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9, and a mixture of vocational and GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. Health education, including sex education and education on the dangers of misusing drugs, are dealt with effectively in a variety of lessons, including personal, social and health education, religious education and citizenship. Provision for careers education and work experience are very good, both for students thinking of staying into the sixth form and those seeking employment. Opportunities for work experience have improved and are now wide-ranging and very well organised, with additional work experience for students who are not learning effectively in some of their lessons. The school has very good relationships with primary schools, and a good working relationship with the community, including the police and local businesses, which co-operate extensively with work experience placements. Opportunities for learning outside lessons are very good. They include extensive study support, particularly in ICT and for students preparing for examinations, and a wide range of opportunities in music, drama and sports.
25. On the other hand, provision for ICT has been limited by the need to rely on temporary supply teachers for some classes, and only just meets legal requirements. This confirmed the concerns of some parents, who said their children were not receiving enough ICT lessons. Provision for religious education, where the school enjoys excellent staffing and exceptional teaching, is, by contrast, much more generous than in most schools. However, it leads to half rather than full passes at GCSE for most students. The timetable has additional weaknesses in organisation for some subjects – several Year 11 classes, for example, have two double lessons in science on the same day. GCSE results have also suffered from the organisation of subjects into half-courses, which has left a significant number of students with four and a half passes at A* to C. The school has addressed this for the coming academic year by combining a half-course in religious education with its well thought out provision for citizenship. The

GCSE programme includes some double award courses that put heavy demands on writing for lower-attaining students. The school has plans to increase the range of vocational courses for the next academic year.

26. The school helped pilot the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, but it has not been able to build on this to develop a consistent approach to numeracy and, more particularly, to literacy. Effective provision for literacy has not yet been clearly established in each subject, and the impact of good teaching is diminished because students have too few opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills. The organisation of provision for writing, for example, does not provide a consistent and effective range of learning opportunities for the substantial number of students who have significant weaknesses in this area.
27. Over the course of their school career, the curriculum provides equally well for all groups of students. The school promotes respect and understanding of all students, and students with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at least as well as others, and sometimes better. Students with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage, receive good specialist teaching and effective support from teaching assistants. Work in some subjects, such as modern languages, is very well adapted to their needs, but in some other subjects, including science, work is not matched closely enough to their needs, and some is left unfinished. Provision for students with behavioural difficulties ranges from excellent, in the learning support unit, to unsatisfactory in some lessons for older students. Higher-attaining students, including those who are gifted and talented, achieve well by the time they take GCSE, but are not always fully extended in Years 7 to 9, particularly in mixed-ability classes in science.

Sixth form

28. The sixth form curriculum is meeting the needs of its students well and is attracting growing numbers of students from other local schools. A good range of academic and vocational courses provides suitable opportunities for higher-attaining students, while opening up opportunities for sixth form education to those with lower GCSE results. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, and very good in ICT. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for developing students' key learning and study skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, but the design of some courses and some lesson planning need to be further developed to integrate coursework more closely with work in class, particularly for students with lower GCSE results. A very effective programme of additional activities for students on Wednesday afternoons allows students to combine their own sporting and recreational interests with opportunities for service to the school community, for example by working with younger students with learning and behavioural difficulties.

Personal development

29. Provision for spiritual development is good, and has some outstanding features. These include an excellent booklet on spiritual and moral education, which includes a scheme of work aligned to the Bristol Agreed Syllabus for religious education, a statement of values, faculty policies and methods of promoting these aspects of personal development. Assemblies are of a very high standard and often combine opportunities for spiritual, moral social and cultural development, for example through consideration of the impact of Aids on children in Kenya. Students, however, have only one assembly per week, and there is no daily act of collective worship. An outstanding assembly challenged pupils to consider how the world began and compared and contrasted the scientific theory of evolution with the Biblical account of creation. In English, pupils

explore and reflect on their own and others' inner life in drama and poetry. There are excellent opportunities for reflection in many religious education lessons, for example when considering values and beliefs and asking questions about the meaning and purpose of life. A positive ethos pervades the school and the displays in many areas are spiritually uplifting.

30. Provision for moral education is good. Teachers and other adults in the school give a strong lead in encouraging good relationships and in distinguishing right from wrong behaviour. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect, and care and consideration are shown to others. Opportunities within the curriculum, in particular in art and design, citizenship, religious education, history and English are fully used to explore moral issues, such as slavery, euthanasia, hunting and the impact of drug development and pricing on the treatment of illness in poor countries. Physical education teachers help students develop honesty, integrity and a sense of fair play, even when facing defeat.
31. Social education is good, with some very good features. The school fosters a sense of community before students join through its very good contacts with primary schools and newsletters and through a very good personal dimension to its procedures for new students joining the sixth form. The school works hard on the social education of students with behavioural difficulties. However, this poses a great challenge in relation to the students with the most difficult lives outside school, and indifferent and sometimes anti-social behaviour has not been eliminated. A wide range of social issues is discussed in citizenship, religious education, English and assemblies, often in a context that promotes a considered, moral response. There are good opportunities for students to co-operate in lessons, for example in carrying out experiments in science and in drama. Opportunities for students to accept responsibility are developed well, with an active school council and a prefect system that involves large numbers of students. Activities outside lessons promote social development, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own work and to co-operate with others.
32. Provision to develop students' understanding of their own and other cultures is good. Students gain a very good awareness of the multi-cultural nature of local society through religious education when they visit temples, cathedrals and other places of worship. The cultural dimension of religious art is particularly well explored. Parents give talks to students about different cultures. Large-scale productions are organised by drama and art teachers, and a performing arts company brings Shakespeare plays to Year 9. There is very good provision in history, with visits to places of interest such as the Axbridge coal mine and the Imperial War museum as well as a room in school with historical objects from both world wars. A wide range of music from different cultures includes African, South American and Asian drumming. In art and design, students are encouraged to study the work of artists from Europe and around the world. Visits are made to art galleries in London as well as to local areas of interest. Trips abroad are organised by the geography and modern languages departments. The study of different countries and the ways of life of their peoples contributes to raising cultural knowledge and awareness, and there is a particularly strong dimension to this work through letters from and visits to Maji Safi school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

33. The school has good procedures in place to ensure students' welfare. Child protection policies and procedures are in line with those of the local authority, introduced to staff joining the school and carried out conscientiously. There are good arrangements to support students in public care, and the school has an appropriate relationship with social services. Procedures for health and safety, including the arrangements for dealing with sickness and injury, their recording and the administration of medicines are good and efficiently carried out by suitably trained staff. Arrangements to protect students from harmful material on the internet are satisfactory, and the school is seeking to develop them further.
34. Although attendance is below average, the school has good procedures to monitor and improve it. Recording of attendance is efficient, absences are meticulously followed up and appropriate rewards and sanctions are in place for good and poor attendance, as well as for lateness. The school receives appropriate support from the education welfare service. The school makes suitable arrangements for students with very poor attendance records, including extended work experience, individual curricular arrangements, mentoring and counselling. The school regularly checks attendance in lessons during the day. These procedures are leading to improvements in the pattern of attendance.
35. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, are good. The behaviour policy and code of conduct are generally effective, but the procedures are not always followed, and this results in unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons. The school has good procedures in place for recording, monitoring and investigating bullying and taking appropriate action. The procedures show that staff and parents, as well as students, are prepared to report incidents so that the school can take appropriate action. This is a particularly good feature and is much appreciated by some parents. Additional support for students with behavioural difficulties is satisfactory overall, with outstanding work in the learning support unit for students in Year 7.
36. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and for monitoring and supporting their personal development are good. A strong pastoral team of form tutors and heads of year know the students well because they stay with the same groups as they move through the school. Tutors have very well organised personal interviews with students to review progress towards their targets. The best tutorials make a good contribution to learning, but some have little or no educational content, and students' planners are frequently not filled in.
37. Two mentors, funded by Excellence in Cities, provide very effective support and guidance for selected students whose attendance is poor or who are unsettled in their work. This has led to significant improvements in attendance from many of these students, and to improved attitudes that have been noted by their teachers and parents. Mentoring is monitored and evaluated well in terms of its effects. Some students who are not targeted for the scheme ask mentors for targets on a voluntary basis. This work is recorded consistently, and progress towards targets monitored. It is an excellent feature. Several students, including one who had joined the sixth form following mentoring, were generous in their praise of mentors' thoughtful and personal support.
38. The school has satisfactory procedures to assess and track students' progress in their work, and some aspects of this provision are good. Effective testing, for example,

yields a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in students' reading and spelling in Year 7. Across the school, teachers make satisfactory use of information from assessment procedures to pitch work at the right level for students. This is excellent in religious education, and good in mathematics. Annual reports give very good guidance on ways students can improve their work. There is, however, too little assessment in ICT. The school has recently refined its use of National Curriculum levels in grading students' work, but teachers in most subjects do not make full use of this to plan work that gives all students a good balance of challenge and support. The assessment of special educational needs is satisfactory. Statements of special educational needs are up to date, but some targets in students' individual education plans are not phrased clearly enough to provide an effective focal point for teaching.

Sixth form

Assessment

39. There are good arrangements to assess standards among students joining the sixth form. They are set challenging targets at an early stage in their course, and these are reviewed each term. Most subjects have good arrangements to assess students' work and to use information from the assessment in planning. However, the literacy skills of lower-attaining students are not assessed closely enough to enable teachers to tackle them in lessons, and sometimes gaps in coursework are allowed to continue for too long before action is taken. Analysis of students' work shows good practical use of assessment in marking, with very good assessment in vocational courses. Most students told inspectors that they were getting good feedback on their progress, and inspectors agree with this.

Advice, support and guidance

40. There are clear and effective arrangements for guiding students who are thinking of joining the sixth form, and students in Year 11 have a clear sense of what they want to do and why. As a result, very nearly all students are enrolled on suitable and demanding courses, although one or two students during the inspection had been entered for courses for which they have very limited chances of success. A strong team of tutors provides effective guidance and support. If a student does not wish to involve a tutor, he or she can go to any member of staff for advice, and sometimes parents take part in discussions. The school keeps good records of students' progress in the sixth form. Although attendance is, overall, below average, its monitoring is satisfactory and absence is followed up.
41. Guidance on career opportunities and on entry to higher education is very good, and adapted well to the needs of students. Effective tutorials help students prepare university and job applications, and students have good opportunities to practise interview techniques. Students and their parents receive good information on the financial implications of higher education, and there are very good links with universities, including visits. The school encourages all students to reach the highest possible standard, and its newsletters convey this message effectively to students, parents and other schools.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The parents' views of the school, expressed at a well-attended meeting with the registered inspector and in pre-inspection questionnaires, are very positive, and the proportion of favourable responses to almost all categories of the questionnaire is

higher than in most schools. Most parents think that the school is well led and managed, and many have particular praise for the hard work and leadership of the headteacher. Very nearly all of the parents at the meeting had received personal letters from the headteacher commending their child's work. The proportion of parents expressing concern about aspects of the school's work was relatively small, but their views on the behaviour and bad language of some students, and the consistency of homework, were borne out by inspection evidence. The school has developed its relationship with parents well since the last inspection.

43. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. There is an attractive, well laid out prospectus, and the governors' annual report is clear and detailed. Attractive and informative newsletters keep parents and partner schools well informed, and promote high standards and achievement. Students' annual reports are also of very high overall quality, with clear information on standards and progress and very good personal comments on each student's work. The school is very approachable and goes out of its way to involve parents, who particularly appreciate the headteacher's Tuesday afternoon telephone surgery. The school has extended its information for parents of sixth form students thinking about going to university. A website for parents is in the early stages of development.
44. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school, including their contribution to learning, is satisfactory. The small but active Parent Teacher Association raises a small amount of money each year, and the school has formed a Year 7 parents' support network, whose meetings are usually well attended, particularly for homework. Many parents of older students, however, do not sign students' planners each week, and this makes it more difficult for the school to promote consistency in homework. Parents of students with special educational needs are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of their children's learning, and are invited to regular celebrations of their children's achievements.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. A very strong lead, particularly from the headteacher, has given the school a clear sense of direction, summed up in its aim of 'achieving beyond expectation'. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have gained the confidence of parents and the community, and set up a successful sixth form. The headteacher and senior staff have improved teaching through very good performance management procedures, that keep them in close touch with strengths and weaknesses and allow them to develop teachers' talents. Their emphasis on ensuring the quality of teaching, including careful selection of new teachers and middle managers, has led to improved learning and rising standards in Years 7 to 9. Arrangements for the induction and professional development of new teachers meet individual needs well. Overall, the leadership of the school creates a strong sense of teamwork and a feeling that staff are valued.
46. The overall quality of middle management is good. Recently appointed subject leaders, notably in English, have assessed and analysed the issues facing their departments clearly, though plans in place to deal with them are in the early stages of development. Where management is longer established, for example in art and design, students profit from this stability and reach good standards. The quality of management and leadership in religious education is excellent. Arrangements for the care and welfare of students are also well managed overall, with good attention to individual needs, though tutorial work is not monitored closely enough. The introduction of mentoring for students has been managed very well.

47. The school development plan covers all major issues. However, the school has identified the need for clearer targets and criteria for success in its development planning, and is focusing on consolidating and developing work on the wide range of initiatives it has undertaken, rather than starting new ones. At present, there are suitable management arrangements for each initiative, but there is some inconsistency in the ways in which they are carried through into work in subjects. This is a particular difficulty in literacy, where the school is finding that nationally produced materials do not always meet the needs of its students, particularly those with the weakest literacy skills. External reviews of work in each subject have brought some long-term improvements, notably in science teaching, but are not always followed up closely enough in later reviews. The management of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has improved provision for the lowest-attaining students, but some weaknesses in timetable and organisation have hindered efforts to improve GCSE results. Arrangements for the management of students with behavioural difficulties have been very successful in the learning support unit for those in Year 7. They are satisfactory for older students.
48. Other aspects of management have been very successful. Funding is closely managed, with a good balance kept between the main school and the sixth form. The school has developed its facilities well, and in line with its educational priorities, so that there has been a great improvement in ICT facilities since the last inspection, and good improvement to the buildings. Governors are more involved with the strategic direction of the school than at the time of the last inspection. They promote equal opportunities for all students effectively, and have suitable policies for race equality and inclusion, and for special educational needs. They apply the principles of best value well in evaluating the effectiveness of each aspect of provision, in consulting parents and students, and in making purchases. Examination results in each subject are analysed closely, and the governors are fully involved in setting realistic and demanding targets.
49. The school has recently strengthened its staffing by recruiting several experienced teachers and subject leaders, although it still has to rely on temporary supply teachers for a significant amount of teaching in ICT. Overall, staffing is satisfactory. The school has developed its building effectively since the last inspection, within limits imposed by the conservation of a neighbouring listed building. Overall accommodation is satisfactory, though it offers too little shelter for students in wet weather and there is very limited access for people with disabilities. Library provision is satisfactory, with strengths in religious education and citizenship, but too few books in foreign languages. Resources for learning are also satisfactory overall, and have significant strengths in individual subjects. There are excellent resources for religious education and citizenship, very good resources in art and design and good resources for modern languages and ICT. Very imaginative resources in history recreate the atmosphere of the world wars in the classroom. All of the good and better resources have been built up carefully by teachers, and make a significant contribution to learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

50. Very good leadership and management are making an outstanding contribution to growth and development. Courses are developed carefully to meet students' needs, and the school is making a significant contribution to the re-organisation of sixth form provision in the district, with good partnership arrangements with other secondary schools. Teaching, examination results and all aspects of the sixth form's work are carefully monitored, and there is a very good range of additional support for students.

Resources

51. The sixth form is well staffed with experienced teachers. Resources for learning and library provision are adequate to support learning, with good ICT facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. The headteacher and governors have established a pattern of rising standards in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. In order to carry this through to Years 10 and 11, and to ensure consistency in good work across the school, they need to pay particularly attention to the following points. The school already has plans to introduce clearer targets and success criteria in development planning and management systems.

(1) Improve GCSE results, by:

- developing a more consistent approach to reading and writing in Years 7 to 9, so that more students start GCSE courses with the skills they need to succeed;
- improving support for coursework, and ensuring that all students complete it. (Paragraphs 4, 5, 16, 17, 25, 26, 56, 60, 67, 89)

(2) Improve the match of work in lessons to students' learning needs, by:

- making systematic use of information from assessment when planning lessons;
- ensuring that learning aims are carried through into the tasks students are given;
- making specific provision for literacy skills in lesson planning wherever appropriate. (Paragraphs 4, 17, 21, 27, 38, 56, 67, 71, 88, 93, 103, 105)

(3) Make management systems more consistent, by:

- backing up external reviews with annual internal reviews for each subject;
- carrying through the existing plans to improve target setting and assessment in each subject;
- improving the co-ordination of provision for literacy across subjects. (Paragraphs 26, 47, 56)

- (4) Improve the range of learning opportunities and the timetable, by:
- ensuring that students have enough teaching time to learn effectively in each subject;
 - avoiding concentrations of lessons in the same subject on the same day;
 - improving the range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.
(Paragraphs 19, 25, 95, 104)
- (5) Improve arrangements to deal with poor behaviour, by:
- establishing clearer guidelines for dealing with the behaviour of students who are withdrawn from lessons;
 - monitoring less serious misbehaviour in lessons and around the school, and taking action to improve it;
 - monitoring the use of the behaviour policy by teachers.
(Paragraphs 8, 10, 19, 64, 107, 127)
- (6) Establish more effective patterns in students' work and study, by:
- cutting down the amount of incomplete class work and homework;
 - extending arrangements for study support for lower-attaining students;
 - improving students' use of planners, and guidance on their importance.
(Paragraphs 5, 54, 58, 62, 66, 68, 106)

Sixth form

- (1) Make more systematic provision to develop students' ideas and thinking, by:
- identifying topics for discussion clearly, and helping students prepare for it through reading and research;
 - improving the balance of lessons where students spend much time listening to the teacher;
 - assessing students' skills in using spoken language, and setting targets for improvement.
(Paragraphs 7, 23, 39, 139, 148, 152, 162, 167)
- (2) Improve the consistency of students' attendance and work, by:
- ensuring that work done in lessons is closely integrated with coursework;
 - improving guidance on work organisation, particularly for lower-attaining students;
 - detecting and dealing with gaps in attendance and coursework at the earliest possible stage in courses.
(Paragraphs 7, 14, 23, 28, 160)

- (3) Improve provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT, by:
- identifying students' strengths and weaknesses clearly and setting targets for improvement;
 - planning specifically for literacy and numeracy skills in all appropriate lessons;
 - ensuring that all students complete work, and take action on points raised in marking.
- (Paragraphs 23, 28, 39, 133, 157, 163, 167, 169)

Additional items to be included in the governors' action plan

- (1) Continue to refine and develop arrangements to promote good attendance.
(Paragraphs 12, 15)
- (2) Provide a daily act of collective worship, and religious education for all sixth form students.
(Summary)
- (3) Improve arrangements for students to shelter in wet weather.
(Paragraph 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	129
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	10	30	43	40	6	0	0
Percentage	8	23	33	31	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	18	24	9	1	0	0
Percentage	4	33	44	17	2	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 about two percentage points.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	975	198
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	193	13

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35	7
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	133	8

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	16

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30

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

25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.8
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	100	97	197

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	65	58
	Girls	58	60	57
	Total	101	125	115
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (37)	63 (51)	58 (51)
	National	66 (64)	45 (43)	33 (34)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (11)	34 (28)	17 (18)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	18	48	49
	Girls	30	56	53
	Total	48	104	102
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	25 (52)	54 (59)	53 (55)
	National	67 (65)	70 (69)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (22)	22 (33)	16 (19)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	111	114	225

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	96	106
	Girls	39	98	105
	Total	65	194	211
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	29 (27)	86 (82)	94 (93)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	31.4 (29.2)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13), 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	13	13	26
	Average point score per candidate	10.8	11.9	11.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1086	63	2
4	0	0
12	0	0
18	4	0
2	1	0
3	0	0
24	0	0
4	0	0
7	1	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
5	2	0
3	1	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	649

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.9
Sixth form	10.4

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	3,503,001
Total expenditure	3,517,765
Expenditure per student	3,051
Balance brought forward from previous year	166,137
Balance carried forward to next year	151,373

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.8
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	1173
Number of questionnaires returned	357

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	53	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	59	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	60	9	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	55	20	3	2
The teaching is good.	30	61	3	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	47	17	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	53	10	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	56	39	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	52	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	44	8	1	10

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching, learning and progress are good overall in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a broad and balanced curriculum that includes drama and ICT.
- Provision for personal development is good.
- The department is led and managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Planning to raise standards does not yet have clearly defined aims and targets.
- Provision for literacy is not yet fully adapted to the needs of all students.
- The timetable and grouping of students do not always promote effective learning.

53. Standards among students joining the school are below average. Only a little over a third of boys joining Year 7 in 2002 had reached the nationally expected standard in writing, and the school's standardised tests show significant weaknesses in reading among both boys and girls. Standards in work during the inspection, and in the 2002 national tests in Year 9, were below average, particularly amongst the boys, but represent good overall progress from students' starting points. Results in GCSE English Language were well below average in 2002, but showed some improvement from those of 2001. The smaller number of students entered for English Literature reached above average standards. GCSE results in English language have fallen slightly over the past four years. This reflects significant staffing difficulties in the subject, which had been largely resolved by the time of the inspection. Nevertheless, overall standards in all English skills are significantly below average in Year 11.
54. Across the school, most higher-attaining students are learning well and making good progress. The small number of students with English as an additional language are also achieving well. Most average-attaining students make satisfactory progress across the range of skills in the National Curriculum. Students with special educational needs make good progress in special classes and in lessons where work is closely matched to their needs, but many lower-attaining students who do not have special educational needs are not making the progress they should.
55. In Years 7 to 9, many students do not listen attentively to their teachers, and their responses to questions are brief and fragmentary. Listening skills improve by year 11, and students are more confident but they do not always respond appropriately to questions or contribute to discussions in class. Most teachers accept informal spoken contributions from students, and do not always insist that they make their meaning clear. Although teachers provide sufficient opportunities for discussion in lessons, they do not develop extended and structured responses in formal English sufficiently well.
56. Most students are fluent readers by the end of Year 11, but only higher-attaining students read confidently and with expression. Many students find it difficult to deal with the meaning of texts beyond a basic level, and this holds back standards in GCSE English courses and in many other subjects which depend heavily on literacy skills. A small but significant number of boys are still working on very basic reading skills in Year

9. Standards of writing show a similar pattern to those in reading, and the gap between higher-attaining and lower-attaining students widens throughout Years 7 to 11. However, handwriting and general presentation are satisfactory, with most girls achieving higher standards than most boys. Literacy skills are developed very well in some subjects, notably religious education and history, but much reading and writing across the school reflects similar weaknesses to those in English lessons. The contribution of work in other subjects to literacy skills is similar to that in most schools, but needs to be made more consistent.
57. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to excellent. It is good overall in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Most teachers in Years 7 to 9 use the lesson structures of the National Literacy Strategy and provide appropriate and interesting activities to motivate students. Lessons are planned well from a unit-based scheme of work which provides sequences of lessons that allow students to build on their existing skills. In a Year 8 class, for example, students prepared to read the play 'Our Day Out' in their next lesson by improvising scenes demonstrating good and bad teachers. In most lessons, relationships are good and students have positive attitudes to learning. Outstanding teaching during the inspection included a lesson which made excellent use of ICT to teach basic skills, and a lesson for lower-attaining students on using pronouns in persuasive writing. Much, though not all, of the teaching provided for students with special educational needs supports units of work covered in the students' class, adapted to meet their needs. Most teachers mark students' work carefully and constructively.
58. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, time is not always well managed, and sometimes students are not clear about changing learning goals over a series of lessons. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that students complete their work, and some, particularly in Years 10 and 11, do not challenge students sufficiently. Although relationships in class are generally good, a lack of insistence by some teachers on standards of work and behaviour leads to disruption, usually by boys, that affects standards. Most teachers set suitable homework, but there are some gaps.
59. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has analysed strengths and weaknesses in standards well, revised schemes of work, and established priorities for improvement. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with good provision for ICT and for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the timetable leads some English groups to be formed on the basis of standards in other subjects, and this does not promote effective learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, and include good use of standardised tests, but information from assessment is not used consistently enough to plan work to meet all students' needs. The English department contributes to the school's work in improving literacy, but this has not yet resulted in an approach that meets students' needs effectively in all subjects. English teaching is closely monitored, and teachers are developing an effective range of interactive teaching styles. The department is well organised, and in a good position to contribute to raising standards in English and in literacy in other subjects.

Drama

60. Provision for drama was sampled. Teaching and learning are good in the GCSE course, and lead to broadly average standards at GCSE, with some outstanding coursework from higher-attaining students. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but is held up by students' weak literacy skills, and by the difficulties some find in working as a team. The curriculum is not fully adapted to meet these needs. Standards in Year 9 are significantly below average. Drama makes a good contribution to students' personal development through the selection of themes based on family relationships, and through opportunities for performance management.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and this results in effective learning.
- Students are interested in their work and want to do well.
- The department is well led and all staff are committed to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Some lower-attaining students still have difficulties with basic number work.
- There is unsatisfactory behaviour from some lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11.
- ICT is under-used in lessons.

61. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, but students are learning well, and achievement is good in view of the standards they had reached when joining the school. In 2002 national tests in Year 9, students achieved very good results in relation to their starting points in Year 7. There is no difference between the standards reached by boys and girls. Students with learning difficulties, and those who are gifted and talented, make good overall progress. These standards and achievements represent satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
62. By Year 9, higher-attaining students have well-developed number and measurement skills and handle data well. They solve simultaneous and quadratic equations and understand and use positive and negative indices. They collect and analyse data which they represent by graphs and charts. For example, in a top Year 9 class, students represented data by means of a pie chart, calculating the angles from the given frequency distribution. These students reach and sometimes exceed the standard expected nationally. Most students in middle sets have sound basic numeracy skills. They understand place value and use decimals and fractions. Measurement and data-handling skills are generally sound, although some students have difficulty in calculating percentages. For example, in a middle Year 9 set only the highest-attaining students could calculate 15 per cent of £140. Many lower-attaining students, however, still make errors in simple arithmetic and are unsure of their tables.
63. Most students in Year 11 use number and measurement confidently. They understand decimals and percentages, which they use widely. They have sound graphical and data-handling skills, and develop their own strategies to solve problems. For example, in a middle set, students used trial and error methods to solve challenging problems involving purchases. In lower sets, students still have difficulty with basic numeracy although most have some basic skills. They draw graphs and bar charts, find areas of

simple shapes and use calculators accurately. In top sets, many students reach high standards. They use the sine and cosine rule in trigonometry and use algebraic methods to solve problems. For example, when given the cost of two different combinations of two items, they formed their own simultaneous equations to find the number of each item. They conduct investigations, selecting their own methods, and analysing and justifying their results. Most can generalise their conclusions using mathematical terms.

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and very good in some individual lessons. Lessons begin with a lively practice of number skills that helps students to settle down quickly and improves their ability to calculate mentally. Teachers understand the problems encountered by students with learning difficulties and make good arrangements to ensure that they are fully included in lessons. At best, this results in very good teaching, and a strong sense of achievement among the students. Teachers use students' previous learning to introduce new topics. For example, in a Year 10 lesson students used their knowledge of negative numbers to calculate the co-ordinates for linear graphs. They were then able to complete tables and hence construct the associated graphs. This resulted in good learning and progress by all students. In other lessons, the appropriate use of resources assists learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson lower-attaining students used newspapers and glue to make an area of one square metre. By collaborating in small groups they used these to measure the area of the corridor outside. They enjoyed this activity which helped them to understand the concept of area and relate their results to the given area. In most lessons, students have positive attitudes, but there is some unsatisfactory behaviour from lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11. Good marking enables students to correct errors and move on to new work. Homework is used effectively by most teachers.
65. The department is well led and effectively managed. Teachers are committed to raising standards and there is a very strong sense of teamwork. There is good monitoring and support for teachers. Very good setting arrangements assist learning and ensure that support is given where it is most needed. Assessment arrangements are good and assist teachers to monitor learning and set targets. ICT is under-used in lessons, but there are good books and resources for all classes.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 show good progress from students' starting points.
- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- High-attaining students work hard and do well at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- Work in some lessons is not matched closely enough to students' learning needs.
- Some average and lower-attaining students are not making the most of their abilities.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are affected by weak timetabling.

66. In 2002, results in national tests in Year 9 and at GCSE were below average, but they have been steadily improving over the past few years. Girls' and boys' results are similar. The overall quality of work seen during the inspection was also below average, but standards in Year 9 represent good achievement from the well below average

standards reached by most of these students when they joined the school. Standards in Year 11 show good achievement from higher-attaining students, especially at A and A* grades, but very limited achievement from many lower-attaining students, who are not working to their full capacity, particularly in their coursework. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory long-term progress. Overall, achievement in science is satisfactory. While there is more work to do to improve provision, this represents good progress since the previous inspection report, which noted significant weaknesses in several aspects of provision, including teaching, homework, and students' willingness to listen to the teacher.

67. Students in Years 7 to 9 learn to use scientific vocabulary well, but their overall progress is hampered by poor literacy skills. The department is addressing this issue by promoting co-operation between science teachers and literacy specialists. However, this work has had a limited impact as it has not led to a clear and effective pattern of organisation for literacy in the subject. By Year 9, students have a satisfactory understanding of biology and physics topics. Some areas of chemistry, for example the reactivity series, are not so well understood. Practical work is good in most lessons; students understand the concept of a fair test and analyse results well. In some Year 7 mixed-ability science classes, progress is hampered because teachers do not plan for the different needs of students.
68. By Year 11, higher-attaining students' good grasp of key facts and concepts enables them to score high marks in GCSE modular tests. These students' coursework is also very good because they explain the theory behind their practical investigation clearly, and analyse and evaluate results in depth. However, the coursework of average and lower-attaining students does not do this in sufficient detail, and often reflects a lack of care – some, for example, is incomplete. These students understand the basic concepts of most topics, but their knowledge is not detailed enough to gain high marks in modular tests. Overall standards are adversely affected by timetabling the double lessons of some classes consecutively during one day. By the end of 200 minutes students find concentration difficult. The marking of work in some sets is unsatisfactory because unfinished and wrong work is ticked correct.
69. Numeracy is positively promoted, for example where teachers ensure that students measure accurately and when students translate research results into graphs. Several teachers are promoting students' ICT skills too, for example, through internet research. However not all students benefit because ICT is not explicit in schemes of work.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In nearly half the lessons, teaching is good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This was seen in a very good lesson on genetic engineering. The teacher had in-depth knowledge of the biological, moral and social aspects of the topic, enabling students to quickly gain confidence to discuss this emotive subject. Homework is set regularly and reinforces class work effectively. Teachers manage students well; students behave well and poor behaviour is rare. This allows students to work hard in lessons. In the best lessons, students are well motivated because work is made really interesting and time and resources are used very well. In a very good Year 11 lesson, students were treated to ten highly entertaining experiments to reinforce and extend their understanding of static electricity: all were captivated by the presentation and made very good progress. However, most teachers' plans do not make sufficient use of data showing what level students have reached and what they can already do, so that some work is too easy. There are very good relationships between teachers and students. In a minority of lessons, planning does not provide students with sufficient challenges and

does not take enough account of what they already know, understand and can do. When this happens, too little is learned by some or all of the students in the class.

71. The head of department leads and manages the subject well. Although standards could be improved further, they are rising, and there are realistic plans for further improvement. Assessment of students' work is well established and teachers make good use of marks to highlight individual students' under-performance and take appropriate action. Teachers do not take advantage of assessment data to review the success of different teaching and learning styles. Technicians provide sterling support for teachers and students.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is good, and some is very good.
- Schemes of work are carefully planned to take account of the learning needs of all students.
- Students produce imaginative work.
- Behaviour and attitudes are good.
- Marking and assessment are rigorous and consistent across the department.

Areas for improvement

- There is very little provision for ICT.
- Year 9 teacher assessments need to be included in GCSE databases.

72. GCSE results were above average in 2002. They have improved significantly since the last inspection and are amongst the highest in the school, with a good proportion of A* and A grades. Girls performed better than boys. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average, but represent good achievement in relation to students' skills when they join the school. Students with learning difficulties make good progress. One group of lower-attaining students in Year 10 were inspired by a project making clay robots. The teacher gave a practical demonstration and encouraged the students to talk about the techniques they were using while they built their robots. Students with particular gifts and talents have excellent learning opportunities, and schemes of work have been re-written to include extension tasks for them. There has been outstanding improvement since the last inspection.

73. By the end of Year 9, students work creatively using a wide variety of materials. In Year 7, all students learn about colour, tone, texture and pattern and refer to the work of Escher, Picasso and the Surrealists. Extension work for higher-attaining students includes very good analysis of the use of colour in adverts. Year 8 work includes very good displays of landscape drawings that had been developed into paintings. Students include their own research, using the internet and the library to extend their knowledge and understanding of artists' work. In a Year 9 lesson, students were finishing excellent clay portraits, adding texture and detail to enhance a distorted image, and could explain the progression from a previous project on surrealism. Homework extends the work covered in class, and students evaluate their work thoughtfully. Work is marked regularly, and assessment sheets are included in sketchbooks with effort and attainment marks and positive, encouraging comments to help the students to improve. Students have a positive attitude to art. Although there is some misbehaviour, teachers' good classroom management allows all students to make progress.

74. Students are making very good progress by Year 11. They produce lively, colourful work, using a wide range of media including paint, print and clay. They are encouraged to work on a large scale and often paint onto canvases. There is good evidence of methodical teaching developing students' individual skills. A very good range of work was on display in the classrooms and around the school, including painting and drawing, clay heads and large mixed media pieces.
75. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Lessons are well structured and interesting, and all students are given encouragement and individual guidance. In one very good lesson, the teacher took the class through a series of short exercises introducing them to more advanced colour techniques, developing their drawing skills and explaining how to achieve different effects. The lesson was very well structured and by the end all students had produced a very good study of a flower from direct observation, using all the techniques learnt during the lesson. Key words and specialist language are used in all lessons and students are encouraged to describe work they see and evaluate each project. ICT is used well for research, and sometimes for image manipulation.
76. The department is very well managed and organised. The art rooms provide inspiration for the students and the resources are well organised. Departmental policies and schemes of work are helping to raise standards. The database is used well to track students' progress in Years 10 and 11 and set targets, but it does not include teachers' assessments for Year 9. Reporting and assessment are very thorough, identifying action points for students and setting them achievable targets. The department is regularly involved in school productions, particularly in making scenery and lighting, and has made good links with the primary schools through this. GCSE students visit the Bristol Docks to draw, paint and take photographs for their coursework. There are very good displays of art work around the school and in the local community, and there is a regular double page spread produced by the art department in the school magazine.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, and much is very good.
- Standards and progress are closely monitored.
- The leadership of the department and commitment of teachers are good.

Areas for improvement

- Some GCSE courses do not provide a good balance of practical and written work.
- A minority of older students are not fully committed to their work.
- There is too little use of ICT.

77. The most recent test and examination results, and the standard of work seen during the inspection, are below average in Years 9 and 11. This represents satisfactory overall achievement from the standards reached by students joining the school, which have been significantly below average until very recently. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are integrated well in lessons and make progress as well as other students. Students with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress as a result of extra help from teachers and learning assistants.
78. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in learning and achievement between groups of students in Years 10 and 11. Girls do better than boys, chiefly because they take more care over their work. Higher-attaining students are also learning better than lower-attaining students, because the extensive written content of the GCSE course is better suited to their needs.
79. The quality of teaching is good overall, and often very good in individual lessons. All teachers have good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They give good explanations of topics and demonstrations. Teachers involve students well by asking them questions in lessons. They help students with practical work effectively, especially those with learning difficulties. Key words are emphasised satisfactorily and quantities and dimensions used routinely. There are good procedures for assessing and recording students' progress, and teachers are beginning to use National Curriculum levels in assessments. Most teachers are confident and relaxed and as a result students' attitudes and behaviour are good and sometimes very good. Homework is regularly set and marked. In a small number of lessons, teachers allow students to pay too little attention to their work. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' work needs to be more emphasised. The department has plans to extend the use of ICT, but at present it is used too little.
80. Learning is good in most lessons, and sometimes very good. Students learn to design and make a good range of products using wood, plastic, metal, textile and food materials in Years 7 to 9. They learn to use simple mechanisms, electronics and structures well. Students need more opportunities to learn the principles of control. Grouping students into set helps all to progress more successfully. Students learn by undertaking a range of assignments, in which they work from a design brief to a finished product, often very well. In a Year 8 lesson, students made attractive biscuits, for a charity to sell. They had researched and designed them in earlier lessons. In a very good textile lesson in the same year, students in the fourth set were seen making

imaginatively designed glove puppets using different fabrics and decorative stitches; a boy was making a puppet based on the figure of a West Indian with great enjoyment in this lesson. Students also learn about materials and processes very well. In a Year 9 lesson, students in a middle set were seen learning about single, batch and flow production very well.

81. In a very good lesson in Year 11, students in a high-ability set were seen completing the manufacture of their individually designed product – a toy box with arched lid, stationery box, stack for CDs or a play-station and DVD holder – with enthusiasm and enjoyment. The quality of these products was high. Students learn how to maximise their grades in the GCSE examinations well. In a good textile technology lesson in Year 11, students were seen learning to answer the Examination Board's preparation sheet based on the theme of insects. In a class of lower-attaining students, however, the task of moving from preparing a dish, to designing an industrial process for its manufacture, was too difficult for many students, and too little learning resulted.
82. The department is well led, and all teachers share a commitment to improvement. However, double award GCSE courses place heavy demands on the abstract thinking and writing skills of lower-attaining students. This leads to satisfactory rather than good learning. Changes since the last inspection are satisfactory. Standards have improved over the past three years and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained. The department is very well placed to improve its work further.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Geography makes a good contribution to personal development.
- Teachers make good use of fieldwork.
- Numeracy skills are developed well.
- There is clear leadership, and commitment to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be improved further, particularly in written work.
- Assessment is not linked closely enough to the National Curriculum.
- Teaching is not matched closely enough to students' learning needs.
- There has been significant absence in some classes.

83. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show below average standards but are unreliable because procedures to determine the levels are not secure. GCSE results in 2002 were affected by staffing difficulties, but were well below average, and much lower than in similar schools. Standards in Years 9 and 11 during the inspection were below average. However, the department has now recovered from its staffing difficulties, and is showing satisfactory improvement from the last inspection.
84. Students in Year 9 during the inspection were reaching below average standards in their work on farming in the United Kingdom and in sustainable development, based on the study of Brazil. They understand key facts and principles, but weak literacy and speaking skills make it difficult for many to understand and communicate geographical ideas. Nevertheless, good teaching enables many to reach nationally expected standards, and students are interested in the subject. Achievement is good in view of students' well below average starting points.

85. Standards in Year 11 are below average, and represent satisfactory improvement from standards at the end of Year 9. Students consolidate map skills and produce a mainly satisfactory standard of course work. In Year 11, higher-attaining students use good skills in investigating, collecting and processing data to make links between theory and practice in tourism. Where teaching is good, students are encouraged to produce high quality, accurate representations of cartographic, graphical and written work using a variety of sources including ICT. However, some less effective teaching does not do enough to develop average and lower-attaining students' skills in explaining their findings.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and has some good features. Teachers are confident specialists and use a scheme of work that helps students develop their geographical thinking systematically. They form good relationships with students, and make good use of fieldwork. Teaching assistants provide effective support for students with special educational needs, ensuring that they understand the work, but leaving them suitably challenged. However, many lessons are focused too much on the teacher, and use a limited range of resources. This limits students' opportunities to investigate issues in groups and to develop independence in learning. Some lessons are rushed, and not enough time is given to careful questioning and assessment, so that students do not have time to consolidate their understanding. Students enjoy geography, but some do not take enough care over their written work.
87. Geography makes a good contribution to numeracy skills through charts and graphs linked to climate, birth rates, population, local services and farming changes. Provision for literacy is satisfactory, with good emphasis on specialist vocabulary, although more could be done to help students improve their writing. There is too little use of ICT. The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual, moral and cultural development: environmental issues are discussed and there is a useful contribution to local studies.
88. The head of department provides clear direction to the subject, and teachers are committed to improvement. However, he has too little time to monitor and evaluate teaching. Arrangements to assess and track progress need further development.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in history is good.
- By the end of Year 9, students have made good progress.
- There is a varied and stimulating series of visits to historic sites and museums in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE examination results are very low.
- Small numbers of students choose the full GCSE history course.
- There are insufficient opportunities to use and develop ICT skills.

89. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, and results in the GCSE half-course have been consistently very low. Many students taking the half-course had little choice of subject. As a result, they lack motivation and there is a high rate of absence. This course does not meet students' needs, and is not continuing after this year. The small number of students who choose the full GCSE course obtain better grades, though

results are still below average. Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and on the full GCSE course. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make similarly good progress. Since the last inspection, good teaching, good provision for students with special educational needs, and the varied programme of visits have all been maintained, but the weak examination results mean that overall improvement is only satisfactory.

90. Students in Year 9 understand the importance of chronology. They understand the German plans for an advance to Paris on the outbreak of the First World War, and how trench warfare resulted. They can link this to historical sources, though only the higher-attaining students develop detailed answers. When they write directly – for example, about the slave trade or the life of a Crusader – they show good understanding and knowledge of the topics. This represents good progress from the weak reading and writing skills these students had when they joined the school. The lowest-attaining students struggle to understand and recall accurately, but they manage to understand the main events of August 1914.
91. Year 11 students during the inspection showed sound knowledge of the topics they had studied. They knew, for example, the main reasons why the United States withdrew from Vietnam. High-attaining students try to evaluate the reliability and/or bias of historical sources, and then to link that analysis to their own knowledge. Almost all students can attempt formal essays, though low-attaining students write descriptively with little explanation. The work of students on the half course shows a similar range of attainment, but lower overall standards.
92. The quality of teaching is good, and it is very good in some lessons. Teachers know their subject well and convey their enthusiasm to students, usually by questioning. They are particularly concerned to raise the standards of reading and writing. They try to ensure that every lesson includes opportunities for reading, for learning and using technical words such as tithes, and supporting ideas with evidence. Individual students of either high or low attainment often have materials modified to meet their needs. The homework booklets for lower sets in Years 8 and 9 are excellent: attractively presented and with a variety of tasks. In very good lessons, planning ensures that discussion and the ensuing notes lead automatically to a structured essay. Homework is set regularly and it is marked well. Students are given clear guidance on how to improve. There are too few opportunities to use ICT in lessons, though some use is made of websites to extend understanding of, for example, trench warfare in Year 9.
93. The department benefits from a specialist and hardworking staff and good management. The problems of the unsuitable examination courses have been overcome, and the number of students studying history in Year 10 has increased. Teachers use information about students' achievements in national and other tests effectively to track progress in Years 10 and 11, but their assessments at the end of Year 9 need to be more thoroughly moderated. The very strong programme of activities and visits, which include castle building competitions in Year 7, visits to Axbridge and the Imperial War Museum, is not at the moment continued into Years 10 and 11. The collection of First and Second World War artefacts in a classroom, including an Air Raid shelter, and the quality of displays in all classrooms establish a strong ethos for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising at GCSE and in Year 9.
- Most teaching is good, and some is very good.
- Leadership and management, including technical management, are good.
- The computer network is operationally robust and up-to-date.
- There are many additional learning opportunities for all students.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning in a minority of lessons are unsatisfactory.
- Too few teachers use ICT often enough in other subjects.
- Some students do not have enough teaching time in the subject.
- There are too few systems in place to assess and track progress.

94. The school is working hard to ensure satisfactory provision in ICT despite problems in staffing which have led to a shortage of curriculum time and the need to rely on temporary teachers for some classes. Although standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, GCSE results have improved steadily since the last inspection, and standards during the inspection represent satisfactory achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but those who are more able make satisfactory progress. Girls tend to do better than boys, partly because they often have better attitudes to work. Very extensive opportunities for learning outside lessons, with clubs operating before and after school as well as at lunchtime, are making an essential contribution to learning and standards.
95. Pupils in Year 8 were not taught ICT last year, and standards in Year 9 are below average as a result. Year 9 pupils who take two languages have below-average standards because they are only taught ICT once a fortnight. Most pupils improve their literacy and numeracy skills through word-processing and using spreadsheets. Most can format text with a range of fonts with different sizes and colours and arrange it in columns, and can use formulae in spreadsheets, for example to calculate the profit to be made on sales. They can grab images, text and data from internet websites to paste and use in multimedia, publishing or spreadsheets. Pupils are relatively inexperienced in web design.
96. About half of Year 11 pupils understand how to set up a spreadsheet with columns of income and expenditure which are calculated using the *auto sum* facility. Higher-attaining pupils use a good range of sophisticated hardware and software, including editing equipment to refine video, music and speech recordings. They have scanned in images and then used or amended them. The interim results were average in quality. In some classes, poor work habits of up to half of the students are a major cause of low standards.
97. The great majority of teaching is good, but it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory, and the unsatisfactory teaching is a significant brake on progress. Teaching and learning are effective in the lessons of permanent qualified teachers because they know their material very well and communicate their aims clearly. They prepare work and resources carefully, explain concepts well and maintain a good pace throughout. Teachers often use data projectors well to add impact to presentations. The lack of continuity caused by the need to rely on temporary teachers to cover for sickness has harmed learning. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the management of the class is weak, learning aims are not clear and questions are not used effectively to develop students' knowledge and understanding

98. The highly qualified head of department provides very effective leadership and management, both within and beyond the department. Standards and teaching are monitored effectively, and a good series of courses has been run for teachers in other subjects. The overall quality of the curriculum is good, but there are few facilities to use electronic mail. The department has begun to analyse standards and progress, including those of different groups of students, but there are no clear systems in place to assess students' work and to guide them on what they need to improve. This is a particular weakness on transfer from primary schools and in Years 7 to 9. The computer network has been improved significantly in the last year and is managed well by the network manager and technician. Resources are good within the subject, but some teachers in other departments do not have enough access to computers, and some accommodation is rather cramped. Students told inspectors how much they appreciated their teachers' additional teaching outside lessons.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students often reach national average standards.
- There is a clear pattern of rising standards and improvement.
- Teaching is good and often very good. Pupils learn and achieve well as a result.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards languages.
- The subject is very well led, and there is strong teamwork in the department.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little time for higher-attaining students to learn two languages effectively.
- Planning in Years 7 to 9 does not make enough use of National Curriculum levels.
- The use of ICT is limited.

99. GCSE Results in 2002 were broadly average overall. In French they were in line with the national average and in German slightly below. However, pupils did better in languages than in most other subjects. This represents good achievement, given the well below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school in language-based subjects. Results in 2002 were considerably better than in the previous three years, when they were consistently well below average in French. In German, only one small group of higher-attaining students took GCSE, achieving well above average results. The 2002 results coincided with a well-considered change to a new modular examination course, and good focused teaching of this course. In all years, pupils with English as an additional language make similar progress to others in their class. The subject has made very good improvement since the last inspection.
100. Standards of work seen in Year 9 reflect the general picture of good achievement. Although standards at this point are slightly below the national average, pupils do well to reach these standards. In 2000 and 2001, teachers' assessed standards at the end of Year 9 as being well above the national average but, to judge by the performance of these pupils in the current Years 10 and 11, this was too generous. In the current Year 9, higher-attaining students, including the gifted and talented, have met and already use accurately the past tense in accounts of their holidays and weekends. They are making very good progress in mastering the future tense. Their skills in speaking and listening have developed well and they show good recall of vocabulary. Average students write with less accuracy and detail, but they are already becoming familiar with tenses in their writing and speaking. Lower-attaining students, including those with special educational

needs, make good progress in the smaller classes created for them; because of good – and sometimes outstanding – teaching they listen carefully and participate well in speaking activities. Most of these pupils, under the teachers' guidance, pay very good attention to presentation and accurate copy writing in the tasks required of them. Overall, work in modern languages makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy, but pupils are not required to correct or redraft homework or class work, once teachers have marked it. Opportunities for improving standards are, in consequence, missed.

101. Standards in Year 11 work are average. Pupils continue to achieve well to reach these standards, due, in part to the very appropriate syllabus, but also to good and often very good teaching. Pupils maintain interest in their progress because they have regular feedback on their performance. Higher-attaining students, including the gifted and talented, are challenged in their writing coursework assignments. They often embellish their work with phrases and structures they have learnt in class, and the best work shows flair and imagination. They understand the language well in listening and reading activities, but some, apart from the most confident, are rather hesitant in speaking the foreign language. Average students have very good support from their teachers in coursework, and generally participate well in all activities. Lower-attaining students make good efforts in their coursework, but many still have difficulty in recalling words they have met previously. Many also lack confidence in individual conversation with the teacher, but they participate better when working in pairs and practising speaking in the whole class.
102. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well. A significant proportion of lessons are very good and the best teaching is excellent. Teachers address the needs of pupils very well and make sure the approaches they adopt and the activities they choose are appropriate for them. Teachers have a good knowledge of the languages they teach and are very conscious of the need to use them well to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills effectively. Teachers make effective use of ICT in parts of their work, but this could usefully be extended.
103. Teachers plan very well, and cover a good range of activities and skills in each lesson. Starter activities are often highly successful and set a positive and purposeful mood at the beginning of the lesson. Sessions at the ends of lessons are mostly, although not always, managed effectively without rush, so that pupils can reflect on what they have covered. Teachers expect pupils to do well in lessons and behave themselves. Most do so, listening well and concentrating right to the end of the lesson. In some of the lessons seen, however, a very small number of pupils lost concentration and occasionally acted immaturely. Because, overall, teachers manage pupils effectively, pupils participate well in intensive language practice and language-guessing games. They show real interest in, for example, class surveys in German of favourite food and drinks. Even older pupils in Years 10 and 11 enjoy the challenge of getting spellings right on mini white boards, or building up their sentences systematically from the simple to the complex, by expressing opinions and giving reasons for them. However, some teachers do not focus enough on making pupils aware of their progress through the National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. Improvement in this respect would heighten further pupils' understanding of their progress and help to ensure consistency of marking between teachers.
104. The department is very well led and managed. The teachers work together very well and share good practice continuously. As a pilot school for the national strategy in teaching and learning languages, the department has enjoyed the stimulus of much recent in-service training and advice, but the allocation of time for some higher-attaining students is below the nationally recommended level, and this restricts their opportunities

to learn two languages to an good standard. The response to the school's targets for improving results is excellent. The rich programme of visits to both France and Germany is regularly over-subscribed.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Enthusiastic participation in musical activity beyond lessons is increasing.
- Music is well led and managed, with high expectations for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Written work needs to be valued more in all years, to support learning.
- Some students, particularly older students, have poor attitudes to work.
- There is inadequate sound insulation between rooms.

105. While current provision for music is good, standards are still affected by staffing problems prior to the arrival of the present head of department in September 2002. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, but current standards in Year 9 are better than those indicated by teachers' assessments in 2002. Girls do better than boys, though both are represented at higher levels. GCSE results have fallen over the last three years, and were well below average in 2002. Year 11 work during the inspection was also significantly below average, but students were reaching higher standards in Year 10. Overall, current achievement for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is good, though it has yet to be consolidated into improved examination results. Improving standards are partly the result of improved staffing, good teaching and activities outside lessons, and the continued support of senior management.

106. Students in Year 9 respond quickly and enthusiastically to identify moods associated with film music clichés they hear. They can decipher notation on keyboards, most using given note names for this, and volunteer to play melodies with some fingered chords. Many students in Year 8 can improvise tunes while playing a bass riff or chord sequence, either alone or in pairs. Some in Year 7 show too little self-control and unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. While this slows the progress of all, most understand the use of chromatic notes and can play at least the first phrase of a tune using these at the end of a fifty-minute lesson. Individual students in Year 11 produce well-written commentaries on their compositions and performances. Higher-attaining students are supported well by vocal and instrumental tuition, but some students' low levels of concentration limit progress and attainment. One cause of this is poor sound insulation between rooms.

107. Teaching is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 lessons, teaching materials show high expectations, with individual support offered to students who need it. Worksheets are thought provoking and provide achievable steps towards the completed task. Higher-attaining students are encouraged to make faster progress, and in some lessons potentially disruptive students are sometimes successfully engaged in learning. Teaching of GCSE classes is satisfactory. It tries to boost the confidence of students in their developing knowledge and understanding of how music works. Teachers enable students to use computers for composition and to record performances. Some boys in

Year 11, however, are disenchanted with the course and distract others, slowing progress. Across the school, there is relatively little written work to reinforce learning from practical activities and to provide students with a record of their learning and progress. Even more use should be made of setting tasks to be done between lessons – including thinking and observation – to anticipate and enable the next stage of learning. Attention to individual students is sometimes at the expense of ensuring that the rest of the class is working properly. Teachers sometimes do not expect enough accuracy from students in notation and in fingering when using keyboards.

108. Leadership and management of music are good. The newly appointed head of music has worked very hard to produce new schemes of good quality and to generate new activities outside lessons. Assessment and reporting of progress are now good. Students in most classes know what they are achieving and how to improve, though more use needs to be made of targets in GCSE courses. The school is researching alternatives to its present GCSE course to improve relevance, and plans to give students more opportunity to choose music in Year 10. Senior managers care about music and try to enable its successful development. This now needs more time for the curriculum leader, continued stable staffing, improvements to accommodation and the employment of specialists to develop, for example, brass and samba bands. Given these conditions, potential for improvement is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes better in individual lessons.
- Students are very positive in their approach to physical education.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The quality and range of activities outside lessons is very good.

Areas for development

- There is no clear strategy in place to raise standards at GCSE.
- The faculty does not have a permanent base for teaching theory.
- There are not enough books in the library to support examination work.

109. Standards are broadly average in Year 9 and Year 11. Standards among GCSE students in Year 11 are below average overall. However, the school's recent achievement of specialist status as a sports college has brought new impetus to its work, and teaching and learning are good across the school. Most students show good levels of enthusiasm and commitment. They work hard in lessons and are always correctly dressed. Students with special educational needs are involved consistently well in all lessons, and several are enrolled on the GCSE course. Gifted and talented students have good opportunities to reach high standards. For example, a group of girls in Year 9 are taking the GCSE short course this year. A significant number of students achieve county, regional or national honours in athletics, football, netball and rugby. Two students are working with Kinesis dance group.

110. Standards when students first arrive at the school are below average, but they quickly begin to make good progress. They are encouraged to develop good learning habits from the start. For example, boys in one Year 7 class worked extremely well in a gymnastics lesson, producing good sequences to show balance. Year 7 girls are progressing equally well in hockey. At lunchtime and after school, students of all ages

achieve well in football, rugby, basketball, hockey, netball, athletics, including cross-country, trampolining and dance.

111. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to excellent. In most lessons, teaching and learning are at least good and they are sometimes very good. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly. As a result of good class management, students know exactly what is required of them and they work willingly with their teachers in order to improve. This good response by students to the expectations of their teachers contributes to learning. Levels of participation are high throughout the school. In some of the most successful lessons, students comment on their own work and that of others but this does not always happen. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory. They are being revised so that they will include a more systematic approach to tracking students' long-term progress.
112. Teachers provide a very good range of additional opportunities for students outside normal lessons. Throughout the year, the faculty organises clubs in 17 different activities. Students of all ages compete against other schools in 12 different sports. Teams are consistently successful. For example, the Under-15 football team reached the national final of this year's Sports Colleges Cup. Students told inspectors how much they appreciated teachers' additional work for them in these activities.
113. Staffing for the new sports college was not fully in place at the time of the inspection, and the head of faculty has been appointed recently. She has not yet had time to introduce strategies to raise standards among GCSE students. However, provision for physical education is well managed. Documentation is clear and precise, and ICT is used increasingly to support learning. However, indoor accommodation is barely adequate and the school is awaiting the outcome of a bid for a sports hall. The library has only a limited stock of books for examination work. There is no permanent base for teaching theory, making delivery of this part of the course more difficult.
114. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. A system of early assessment enables teachers to gain an accurate picture of the students' ability when they join the school. The commitment shown by older girls is much better than during the last inspection. Accredited courses such as the Junior Sports Leaders Award, first aid and netball coaching are now offered in Years 10 and 11. The faculty has its own learning support assistant who is making a good contribution to the progress of individual students. Very good links with local primary schools are being established. GCSE dance will be introduced in September.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is excellent, and at best inspirational.
- GCSE short course results are well above average.
- Students of all abilities make rapid progress.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- There is stunning use of new technology and outstanding teamwork.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Links with primary schools are underdeveloped.

115. Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11. This represents first rate achievement. GCSE A*-C passes have almost doubled in two years, and 17 students gained A* grades in 2002. There are no significant differences in standards reached by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make excellent progress because of the support given to them by teachers, the differentiated tasks and additional support in some lessons. Gifted and talented students are challenged effectively in their work and achieve highly. Overall, students do better in religious education than their other subjects because of the exceptionally high quality of teaching and the productive use of individual targets.
116. Year 9 students have very good knowledge and understanding of many of the key features of Christianity and other world religions. They draw successfully on their own community backgrounds. Students can explore links between religion and everyday life and understand ways in which religious beliefs can influence attitudes and values. They use specialist terms confidently and correctly, and know how to make an interesting and informative presentation. For example, students used photographs, excellent self-made videos and Powerpoint presentations to show their research on places of worship.
117. In Years 10 and 11, students are gaining a deep understanding of Christianity and a growing appreciation of religious and moral issues. In a Year 10 class, lower-attaining students showed respect for differing views on euthanasia and could articulate clearly their own responses to this moral issue. Year 11 students know there are different kinds of fertility treatment, that there are different implications ethically and practically, and understand the decisions people face when making choices about fertility.
118. Teaching and learning are excellent, and many inspiring lessons were seen during the inspection. There is a direct link between this excellent teaching and students' impressive learning and progress. Lesson planning is very thorough and teachers use a wide range of stimulating resources to ensure that all students are fully engaged. Teachers set clear learning targets, and maintain a good pace in all lessons. They are very secure in their subject knowledge, use appropriate encouragement and praise and challenge students to achieve the highest possible standards. All work is well matched to students' needs and homework is always set, with relevant tasks that extend class work. Marking is regular, thorough and helpful. Teaching methods ensure that all students are fully engaged and involved, and imaginative class management, including the use of music, creates excellent relationships between students and teachers. Attitudes and behaviour are usually exemplary.

119. The positive learning atmosphere within the department reflects and contributes to the overall aims and values of the school. Students know that each one of them is valued and consequently they, in turn, value their achievements. Religious education makes a distinctive and significant contribution to citizenship and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are clear opportunities for reflection on attitudes and values, inspiration, aspiration and motivation. An appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures is a prominent feature of many lessons.
120. The strong emphasis placed on the promotion of literacy enables all students, but particularly lower-attaining students, to improve their work, especially in understanding essential religious terminology. Both teachers and students' make excellent use of ICT in lessons, with extensive use of multimedia presentations. One exceptional lesson was based on a beautiful and inspiring presentation on the part art plays in the worship and spiritual life of Christians. Year 8 students, who had researched places of worship, presented their findings to their classmates in a variety of creative ways including the use of new technology. For example, one group had designed their own website about a local church.
121. Leadership and management are excellent. The team of three experienced, well-organised and supportive teachers have a shared vision of how the subject should be taught and how standards can be improved still further. They share good practice and new ideas and this, subsequently, benefits all students. The new accommodation is excellent and offers a pleasant, stimulating learning environment, which is enhanced by colourful displays of students' work in classrooms and corridor. Assessment procedures are well established and moderated. The monitoring of students' progress is excellent, with mapping from Year 7 onwards, concluding with very thorough analysis of GCSE results. All students benefit from their individual learning targets, including use of levels, together with predicted GCSE grades, which are effectively monitored and reviewed. This is an important factor in raising students' achievements. Excellent attention to examination techniques from Year 10 onwards assists students to perform well in their Year 11 GCSE examination. Students evaluate each other's work from Year 8 onwards, and show a high level of maturity and accuracy when doing this.
122. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent and includes many new initiatives to raise motivation and attainment such as the introduction of the full GCSE course, better provision for gifted and talented and special educational needs students; attention to thinking skills and more visits and visitors. This is a first class department which is highly valued within the school and beyond. It is a beacon of excellence.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Provision for citizenship is well organised across the school.
- Teaching is good overall, and sometimes excellent.
- The leadership of the school is committed to the subject's success.
- Resources are very good, and there is excellent accommodation.

Weaknesses

- Some lessons lack pace and challenge.

123. The introduction of citizenship is building well on the school's strengths in care, religious education, careers guidance and personal, social and health education. The school is keen to develop the subject, and has provided good teaching time, excellent accommodation and very good resources. As a result, all strands of the curriculum are covered well. The limited evidence of standards available at the time of the inspection indicated that standards are similar to those in most schools, and that students have good levels of commitment to the subject.

124. Provision for students' participation and responsibility is good. For example, the school's strong sporting base gives many opportunities for those with a range of talents to contribute; the school council is active and students from all years played their part in helping to frame the school's code of conduct. All have opportunities to help others through charity and community service work; for example, sixth-form students are attached to Year 8 students to help them manage their behaviour. Year 11 students run a weekly waste-paper re-cycling collection scheme which collects in special boxes made by Year 7 students from the Learning Support Unit. There is a very effective contribution to citizenship in many subjects, notably religious education, geography and history, which lays good foundations in areas such as global citizenship, economic sustainability and rights and responsibilities. Older students produce imaginative work before they go on work experience, for example through an audit of the health and safety requirements of their proposed workplace.

125. Teaching ranges in quality from excellent to unsatisfactory. Including the contribution of lessons in subjects other than citizenship, it is good overall. Excellent lessons are based on topical subjects that strongly interest students, followed through into well-planned activities that build up their knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad range of issues. A lesson on landmines, for example, involved explaining terms such as personnel and empathy. Where the teaching is satisfactory, planning is good, but students are less well engaged, and are sometimes allowed to work at too slow a pace. The single unsatisfactory lesson seen offered too little challenge in activities for students. The subject makes a strong contribution to students' personal development, for example through considering personal choices and questions of right and wrong.

126. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared purpose among all senior staff managing the introduction of citizenship. There are good arrangements to assess standards and progress, and resources for learning are very good. Very good systems are in place to co-ordinate the subject with what is done both in primary schools and in the sixth form. For example, work in the GCSE course is a preparation for some vocational courses. Standards are also helped by the clear links made by citizenship

with the relevant National Curriculum attainment targets in other subjects. The subject enjoys newly built accommodation, and is set to improve further.

BUSINESS STUDIES

127. Provision for business studies was sampled. It is satisfactory overall, with good features in teachers' knowledge and understanding, in management and in the standards reached by boys. The standards of students opting for business studies are in line with national average levels, and this is reflected in broadly average results at GCSE. Teaching is satisfactory overall with good features, including effective questioning. However, some boys' learning suffers at times from unsatisfactory behaviour, and girls are sometimes not involved actively enough in lessons. Teachers set consistent homework, which is well marked, and assess progress well. Business studies makes a good contribution to literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Examination results have risen in recent years.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. This was the first year of A-level entry for the school. National comparative data are not yet available for 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	62	0	15	2.0	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	6	100	96	50	46	6.7	6.6
Communication Studies	5	100	93	20	31	5.2	5.5
Computer Studies	5	40	86	0	23	0.8	4.6
English Literature	13	92	95	8	37	4.5	5.9
Design and Technology (Full)	4	50	91	0	30	2.0	5.4
History	3	100	88	33	35	4.7	5.5
Sociology	1	0	86	0	35	0	5.3
Sports/PE Studies	5	100	92	0	25	3.6	5.1

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	12	36	64.0	36	17.0	0	1.0
Leisure and tourism	13	100	65.1	85	18.4	15	0.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics and chemistry were inspected at AS and A-level.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement is good and standards are rising.
- Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good.
- Students are highly motivated and work diligently.
- There is a good choice of courses with provision for further mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant weaknesses, but more use could be made of ICT.

128. A-level mathematics was introduced successfully into the school in 1999 and has steadily grown in strength. Early A-level results were satisfactory, and in 2002 all three candidates were successful with one student obtaining a B grade. The subject is growing in popularity and there are now 12 students in Year 12. Male and female students make similar progress.

129. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is average, and better than that indicated by last year's examination results. Most Year 12 students have a good grasp of algebra and trigonometry, which they use confidently when introduced to a new topic. For example, in statistics they could manipulate heavy algebra to find regression lines. This accelerated their progress and enhanced their understanding. In Year 13, all students are highly motivated and work diligently in all courses. In pure mathematics they solve differential equations and use parameters in co-ordinate geometry; in statistics they test hypotheses using the binomial distributions at the five per cent level; and in mechanics they resolve forces, take moments and use Newton's second law to solve problems. In all these modules, students are attaining at least average standards and their progress and achievement are good. A particular strength is the logical way students organise and present their work. This helps them to prepare for examinations.

130. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Lessons are planned at the right level. Teachers have a clear understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. By discussing appropriate examples, teachers help students to understand the principles and methods used to solve problems. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students were helped to see how the introduction of parameters into algebraic equations simplified the calculation of area. This enabled them to solve similar problems. In another lesson on the binomial distribution, students learned to conduct a significance test at the five per cent level when evaluating the results of an experiment. This resulted in all students making very good progress. Learning is enhanced by students' very positive attitudes. They work diligently in lessons and many continue to work well at home. Higher-attaining students persevere well with difficult questions and this improves their understanding. Others often collaborate and help each other to overcome problems. Homework is set and marked regularly.

131. The subject is well managed. Teachers work well together and there is a positive ethos for learning. There are good assessment arrangements which assist teachers to set appropriate targets. There are good books and resources to support learning.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Achievement in chemistry is good.
- Students are well prepared for examinations.
- Students enjoy chemistry and work hard in and out of lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities for independent learning and the use of ICT.
- In some lessons, teachers need to make more demands on students' thinking.

132. Chemistry is taught at AS and A-level, and almost all students complete their courses successfully. Examination results are below national average levels, but represent good overall achievement from the standards reached at GCSE.

133. Higher-attaining students show no areas of weakness but the occasional basic error lowers their marks in tests. Average and lower-attaining students understand concepts and chemical principles but lose marks because they find calculations and formula work difficult. Students' understanding of 'Chains and Rings' is below that of other areas of the course; many have difficulty in expanding a given monomer into a polymer. Practical work, on the other hand, is of a high standard. For example, students can accurately make up a range of concentrations of a thiosulphate, and accurately measure their rate of reaction with hydrochloric acid using a colorimeter. Most students' folders are well sequenced and have key concepts highlighted, making revision easy. Folders do not show enough research from a variety of books and from the internet to develop students' independent learning skills, and a few folders are untidy. ICT is not sufficiently used to support learning. Work in Year 13 shows good progress over AS standards because students confidently use their growing chemistry knowledge and understanding to good effect in lessons and in tests. Standards are raised by good examination preparation.

134. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' are very well qualified, ensuring that students learn at an appropriate depth. They prepare lessons well and make good use of time and resources. Teachers give good individual help, ensuring that all students work at an appropriate level. Students are very well challenged and motivated by this well-focused, enthusiastic and demanding teaching. For example, they were asked to carefully revise the chemistry of the reaction they were going to use to measure the amount of iron in an iron supplement tablet. This ensured that they thoroughly understood what they were going to do. In an effective practical lesson, students completed a good range of titration measurements, enabling them to accurately calculate the concentration of an unknown lithium solution. In some theory lessons, students are not given sufficient responsibility for their work and rely too much on the teacher for answers. When students encounter a problem, they need more time to read and reflect on their ideas. Often the teacher is too ready to give an answer. In these lessons students are less confident in their learning.

135. Students enjoy chemistry even though they find the subject difficult. They work hard in and out of lessons. They appreciate the good help they get from their teachers. For example, after a test they find the teacher's general comments to the class about how they can improve very useful. They also feel that they get very good individual help with their work. They enjoy the teaching because it is thorough and interesting. They feel they are well prepared for examinations. They would like more time to study chemistry because they find that work is often rushed.
136. Management of chemistry is good; teaching is well led, standards are rising and students achieve well. There are clear, realistic, plans for further improvement. Assessment is good and is used well to plan lessons. For example, teachers analyse test results carefully and give more lesson time to revising areas of work that students find difficult. Chemistry is now well established in the sixth form.

BUSINESS

137. Business studies was inspected at AS and A-level.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching, learning and progress are good.
- Students work hard in lessons, case studies and coursework.
- Procedures for assessing and recording standards and progress are good.

Areas for improvement

- Some female students could achieve more.

138. Standards at entry to Year 12 are higher than in most subjects, and broadly in line with the national average. The A-level in business studies is a new course, and there are no examination results. Standards in AS examinations in 2002, showed a pass rate similar to that in most schools, mostly at lower grades. This represents satisfactory achievement from the students' GCSE scores. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with extra support from teachers. Students from ethnic minority groups make the same progress as other students, are often enthusiastic and make good contributions in lessons. Individual assignments and coursework enable gifted and talented students to make good progress.
139. The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers have good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They introduce lessons and use course materials effectively. Teachers hold informative discussions with students. They ask well focused questions and encourage students to prepare ideas for discussion at the beginning of lessons. Teachers' expectations are generally high, but some female students could be achieving more. Teachers control students well in lessons. Occasionally, students listen to teachers talking for too long without making notes. Teachers are confident, and their relationships with students very good. Students are interested in their work and as a result their attitudes and behaviour are good. Procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment are good and students are aware of their progress. Homework is set regularly and always marked and commented upon. ICT skills are used effectively.

140. The overall quality of learning is good. Students learn about accounting, external influences, finance, marketing, operations management, people and business strategy. In addition, they undertake good coursework and case studies. In a Year 12 lesson, students undertook critical examination of job advertisements in groups to evaluate issues such as monetary motivation and job satisfaction. In another lesson in the same year, students were seen learning effectively about quality control and considering British Standards, durability and materials. Students were seen learning about inflation and considering various inflation indices and trends effectively in a Year 13 lesson. The standard of some of the case studies and coursework is very good.
141. The department is well led by an experienced teacher who is supported well by another specialist. They have a shared commitment to improve the subject and the capacity to succeed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

142. The AS and A-level course was inspected, and the key skills course in ICT was sampled.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

Strengths

- Much of the work is in line with national average standards.
- Teaching and learning are good in most lessons.
- Students are well motivated and work hard.
- Leadership is good and the computer network is managed well.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is scattered, and there is no access to computers in some lessons.

143. The AS and A-level course in ICT is now well established, and supported by effective key skills provision for other students. In 2002, the first year for which students were entered, all five students completed the AS course successfully, with grade E. The overall standard of work during the inspection was a little better than this, and was of broadly average standard overall. Achievement is satisfactory through Years 12 and 13 in view of students' GCSE results, and students with special educational needs do very well. Students have created some complex Visual Basic coding, spreadsheets, and a range of relational databases. They develop sound understanding of the computer systems used in industry, and use commercial presentation software well to compile multimedia presentations. They have a good knowledge of systems analysis but have not yet learned how to use electronic mail to good effect.
144. Teaching and learning are good. There is a good partnership in learning between teachers and students. Teachers are knowledgeable, and students respect this and want to learn more because the subject matter is made relevant to them. Teachers plan lessons carefully to include a broad range of work, and make skilled use of questions to stimulate interest and develop thinking. Students use their ICT skills well in a range of other subjects, for example in business studies, where it is a vital element of the course. Teachers ensure that students improve their literacy well through their

accumulation of a good technical vocabulary. Teachers' assessment of work in lessons is good and students are encouraged to think for themselves.

145. Good leadership has been a key factor in setting up the course and ensuring successful learning. Curriculum planning is good, and standards and students' presentation are well monitored. Computer resources are good, and network management ensures that the facilities are up-to-date and well-maintained. Students sometimes have to share facilities with students taking other courses, however, and some classes are taught in rooms that have no computers.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected at AS and A-level. Leisure and tourism was inspected at intermediate and AVCE levels, which included some units shared with the AVCE course in leisure and recreation.

Leisure and tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards in all courses were well above the national averages in 2002.
- The students experience a high proportion of good and very good teaching.
- Learning benefits from very good relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers could use students' ideas more consistently as a basis for encouraging them to express themselves clearly and to support points with evidence.
- Group work tends to be too unstructured to generate high levels of discussion.

146. Standards in all three courses are above average, and there was a high rate of success in examinations in 2002. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. In the most recent grades for the three courses, standards were well above average. A very high proportion of the grades were in the merit or distinction categories. Almost all students completed their courses. The reason for the high retention rate is that the students experience the courses as eminently relevant to the next step in their education and to their intended careers. The courses tend to attract male and female students in equal measure. Students with special needs make good progress in relation to their earlier attainment and are supported very well in achieving to the best of their capabilities.

147. In lessons and in coursework, students reach above-average standards. They reveal a good rate of progress in the sophistication with which they tackle the different course requirements. Teachers know the subjects very well, value the courses, and accept only students' very best efforts. Coursework is well organised, and helps students apply and develop their reading and writing skills well. Most students use ICT well to support their learning. They show an adequate understanding of relevant aspects of numeracy in gathering data and in representing the results of their analysis.

148. Teaching is good overall, with much that is very good. Teachers form a strong working relationship with students, who feel free to seek help when they need it. Teachers are very good at raising students' expectations and giving them the will to exceed the grades expected based on GCSE results. They are generous in the time they spend

with individual students in helping them to develop their work or in accelerating the work of those who fall behind. The students do not feel they are working for the teachers but for themselves, as they see the point and purpose in their lives of the courses they follow. They are diligent in gathering information and reporting on their visits to real settings. Work on customer satisfaction, for example, showed that they had used visits to work places well, and related what they experienced clearly to the underpinning theory. They use their time well in independent study, for instance when recording, refining and improving role-play exercises as part of their course work. On the other hand, teachers do not always challenge students to support points they make with evidence, or to weigh up the pros and cons of issues rather than simply describing them.

149. Leadership and management are very good. The high standards reached are clearly traceable to the clarity of vision and belief of the course leader and her colleagues in the significance of the courses for the students. These courses are supported by teachers who know their subject well. All have had some experience of relevant work contexts and this shows in the way they help students to use their work experience effectively. Assessment is continuous and accurate. There has been a very high rate of agreement between the teachers' grades and those of the external moderators. Good use is made of local businesses and other resources to extend students' experience.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students are well motivated and work hard.
- Students are successful at A level.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities to develop independent learning skills.
- The plan to offer a range of accredited courses needs to be put into action.
- There is no permanent base for teaching AS and A level.

150. In the examination groups, there are currently four students in Year 13 and six students in Year 12. Although these classes are very small, all students have gained pass grades since the course was introduced in 1999. A-level results were well below national average levels in 2001, but the school's analysis shows good progress from students' results at GCSE. Most of the students achieve better results in physical education than in their other subjects.

151. Overall, standards in Year 13 are average. Students' folders show good coverage of the syllabus and indicate that students have a sound understanding of aspects such as physiology, training and preparation for exercise and the qualities of leadership. Under guidance from the teacher their course work is progressing well. In one lesson observed, individual students made interesting presentations on comparative studies. They recognise the importance that historical, geographical and educational factors have on the development of sport and physical education in different countries.

152. Students in Year 12, who appear less confident than those in Year 13, have made satisfactory progress since they started the course. They are attentive, and most concentrate well. They understand socio-economic influences on the development of

sport in society. Some students speak confidently, but others are more reluctant to speak out when asked to offer opinions. The overall standard of practical work is satisfactory, with two students achieving above average standards.

153. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Expectations are high and lessons are structured effectively. Planning is thorough, lesson objectives are made clear and the teacher's subject expertise is good. The most effective lessons involve good use of questions to engage the students' attention and interest. Teachers use different approaches to develop knowledge and understanding. For example, the Year 13 students used a multimedia package effectively to make presentations. Students value the support that they receive from their teachers, and say that they are clear about their own progress and what they need to do to improve. They are very positive in their approach to the subject. However, although most work hard, they have not all developed the ability to work independently without help and guidance.
154. The AS and A-level courses have been introduced since the last inspection. The head of faculty, appointed at the start of this academic year, is managing the subject well. She is currently responsible for delivering almost all areas of the syllabus. This will ease when the recently appointed director of sport takes up his post. There are plans to develop a more effective system for monitoring the progress of individual students throughout the course. There is no specific resource room that can be used as a permanent base for teaching examination work. The numbers opting for the subject remain small but could increase in the longer term as a result of Sports College status. Most students have an opportunity to take part in physical activity through the enrichment programme. For example, during the inspection two sixth form football teams played against visiting sides, whilst two other groups used facilities off site for health-related activities. It is planned to introduce accredited courses such as the Community Sports Leaders Award in the next academic year.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

155. Although art and design was not a focus subject for the inspection, it was sampled in detail. Drama and media studies were also sampled at AS and A-level. The overall quality of provision in drama is very good. Two of the three students taking AS examinations in 2002 achieved A grades, and the standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average, with excellent understanding of levels of meaning in difficult plays. Teaching is very good, and at times excellent, with excellent opportunities for learning outside lessons. Provision in media studies is good. This is a popular course, with 18 students in Year 12. Standards are broadly average in Year 13, but below average in Year 12, where some students find analysis difficult because they have limited background knowledge and literacy skills.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- There is good achievement in AS and A-level examinations.
- The quality of teaching is very good, and at times excellent.
- Students produce imaginative and individual work.
- There is good studio space, and students use it well.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little use of ICT.

156. AS and A-level courses have been introduced since the last inspection and already numbers have increased significantly. A-level results were at national average levels in 2001, and grades showed improvement in 2002. Students during the inspection were making good progress and a variety of work was being completed, including experimental and large-scale work in painting, mixed media and ceramics. There was evidence of research and investigation, ideas and experiments with different media and techniques in sketchbooks leading to clear ideas about final outcomes. There were some very good study sheets on display looking at the work of Ewen Hendersen, which included experiments using batik combined with sand and other media. This was then developed into exciting ceramic work. Students have a very positive attitude to art and enjoy the opportunity to work in their own sixth-form studio during study periods. They spend much extra time in the department knowing that help and expertise is always at hand.

157. Teaching is very good and often excellent. Students are set challenging work to which they respond with enthusiasm. Projects are carefully planned to use the expertise of all members of the department and include clear aims and objectives, together with well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for completion. The students benefit from a broad and varied experience, know what is expected of them and how to achieve high grades. They work at a good pace. Teachers encourage independent learning where appropriate, for example with personal investigations and studies, where students are actively encouraged to pursue an individual topic, often based on first hand research. One student was able to have a lively and enthusiastic discussion about a visit to an exhibition of Paul Klee's work in Germany and his ambition to see Frank Lloyd Wright's work. The teachers work closely with the students on an individual basis to help them plan and research their personal studies, encouraging them to develop an individual approach. Students work well on their own and in groups and learn well from each other. Teachers encourage a high level of individual and unusual presentation skills, but do not make sufficient use of ICT.

158. Students' work is thoroughly marked and monitored. One sketchbook had a comment on every page offering constructive advice and lots of encouragement and praise. Students receive regular feedback on their work and very thorough assessment sheets are filled in with clear targets. Students are given the confidence to experiment and achieve their potential. Students speak highly of the teaching and support given by their teachers and also appreciate the sixth form studio which gives them a sense of ownership. It is also a place where they can leave out their work in progress safely and store their coursework.

159. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Courses are well managed and communication between teachers is good. Students benefit from enthusiastic and

highly committed teachers who work well together. Good links have been forged with the local art foundation course and a number of students progress to this course. Visits to art galleries, integrated into the course, have contributed significantly to the quality of students' personal studies.

HUMANITIES

160. History was inspected fully, and the new course in law was sampled. Standards, teaching and learning in law were similar to those in history, although some individual students were not completing their work properly and had missed some lessons.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, and pays close attention to students' literacy skills.
- Students work hard and achieve well.

Area for improvement

- Students need to improve their skills in analysis and in reading difficult texts.

161. Standards in Year 13 are average, but recent examination results have been affected by staffing difficulties, and A-level results in 2002 were below average. Results in AS-level examinations were similar. However, almost all students passed, and students achieve the results to be expected from their performance at GCSE. A high proportion of students complete their courses.
162. Teaching and learning are good. In Year 12 lessons, higher-attaining students are developing the skill of linking historical knowledge with the sources from which it is derived. Higher-attaining students develop detailed and complex responses, for example when considering why Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. In Year 13, students are deepening their understanding of possible interpretations of events such as the extent to which the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 was inevitable. Average students show a solid knowledge of events but are less confident in analysis. Teachers give students very good help in structuring their writing to make best use of their historical knowledge. In Year 12, the work of the highest-attaining students already shows a very analytical approach, but some lower-attaining students describe what they have studied rather than analysing it critically.
163. The key skill of communication is developed well in written work, discussion and group assessment. ICT is effectively incorporated into the programmes of study, primarily for research. In both year groups, students are learning to use technical language well, although some have problems with reading long and difficult texts. Students participate well because teachers carefully plan this for every lesson. Questioning focuses classroom discussion very well. Students' progress is carefully tracked and they are fully informed about examination criteria. Students are enthusiastic about history and appreciate the generous support of the teachers.
164. Management is good and the department is developing rapidly and effectively. Teachers have begun a programme of visits to sixth form conferences and university summer schools, and this has begun to supplement lessons and raise aspirations.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

165. English and French were inspected at AS and A-level.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Students enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes.
- Students read well and take detailed notes.
- Teachers know the subject well, and engage students in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Some students depend too heavily on the teacher and do not think enough for themselves.
- Students do not prepare lessons thoroughly enough, and some have weak writing skills.
- Assessment and monitoring are not systematic enough.

166. A-level standards in 2001 were below average, but represent satisfactory achievement from students' GCSE results; 2002 results were similar. While there are few high grades, there has been a high pass rate in recent examinations except for AS examinations in Year 12 in 2002, where a quarter of students did not pass.

167. Standards in students' work during the inspection were well below average, but showed satisfactory progress from GCSE. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Students read poems and play scripts well, and standards of reading are sufficient to support advanced level study. Higher-attaining students are confident and articulate but other students lack sufficient confidence in their own judgements, and often have writing skills that are barely adequate for advanced work. In most essays, students list relevant points and use appropriate quotations but find difficulty constructing a coherent and cogent argument. This weakness limits their chances of reaching high standards. Note-making is better, however. In Year 13, students have detailed notes on 'The Canterbury Tales' and 'The Handmaid's Tale' and in Year 12 on 'Othello'. Students use information and computer technology very well for research into the background of the plays and novels being studied.

168. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' good subject knowledge, the positive relationships they create and their thorough planning provide lessons which students find challenging and interesting. In a Year 13 lesson, students consolidated and extended their knowledge and understanding of poetic terms through a quiz, before using many of those terms in an exploration of three poems. In a Year 12 lesson, there was effective exploration of the ways in which Tennessee Williams creates mood in his writing. Students enjoy lessons and have positive attitudes towards learning. However, they rely too heavily on the teacher, and do not prepare for lessons thoroughly enough.

169. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The courses are well organised and there are sufficient resources. They are currently managed on a temporary basis. There is good additional support for students. The department has yet to fully develop assessment and monitoring procedures to support teaching and learning systematically. Students, taking English literature, benefit from key skills support in ICT, but some need more support with their writing skills.

French

Overall, the quality of provision for French is **good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well and make good progress in lessons.
- Teaching is very good and students learn very effectively.
- Students have very positive attitudes and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Numbers taking French are low.
- No arrangements exist this year for trips or exchanges to France.

170. The first year of A-level results in French was 2002; the two students gained D grades. These results were very much in line with predictions based on their GCSE grades.

171. Standards are above average in Year 12. Students have moved on very successfully from their GCSE work and show good knowledge and understanding of the more advanced grammar and vocabulary they have met. They have absorbed new words and structures systematically and can already re-use them to express their own ideas and opinions well. In one lesson, students read about food charities for the homeless and unemployed, and with careful prompting and drawing out of key words by the teacher, they made good progress in reaching an understanding of contemporary social problems. Then, by means of well-structured exercises, students went on to revise and extend their knowledge of the subjunctive tense that they had met in the passage.

172. Standards in Year 13 are slightly above average. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE grades. In the lessons seen, they were making good progress as a result of effective teaching that demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In one lesson, students drew well on their existing knowledge of vocabulary to participate effectively in a challenging language game. They completed sentences that began with conversational 'openers' drawn at random from a pack of well-prepared cards by the teacher. This they did successfully, and sometimes imaginatively, and had fun. Students went on to make presentations of subjects of their choice, responding very well to questions and requests for information from other students. In doing so, they used many of the structures they had remembered from the cards. In a follow-up lesson with another teacher, students revised and extended the range of these expressions in a debate on industrial animal testing for research. Teachers here demonstrated very effective collaboration in developing students' speaking skills.

173. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very effectively as a result. Much progress is made in each lesson, because of the rich variety of activities, closely based on the principle of extending in each lesson students' knowledge of vocabulary, structure and grammar. The main features of the teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and the use of interesting materials based on modern French society. Teachers have very good subject knowledge in their questioning techniques and explanations, and speak French consistently. Students respond confidently to this excellent input and participate willingly in every activity. They come very well prepared to lessons, often having worked hard to complete challenging preparatory assignments. Students support and help each other in pair work and listen to one another maturely. They have additional opportunities to develop their speaking skills with a very supportive French language assistant.

174. The students' writing includes well-constructed grammar work, close studies of reading texts, and longer essays in which they express their own ideas on a wide range of themes. These essays are carefully marked, but students are not required to correct or re-draft the original. Students work well independently and extend their research and reading skills consistently. They keep a log of the extra work they do in listening to tapes, but not of their additional reading.
175. The sixth form work is very well led and managed. A new scheme of work reflects the subject requirements well and identifies a range of approaches to encourage successful learning. Teachers have done much preparation for the new course, and their practice is enabling students to bridge the gap successfully between Year 11 and sixth form work in languages. Students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and have very positive attitudes to the subject as a result. Areas for improvement include the relatively low numbers of students taking French, and the development of opportunities for study visits or work experience in France.