

INSPECTION REPORT

OLDFIELD SCHOOL

Bath

LEA area: Bath and North East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109333

Headteacher: Mrs K Sparling

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 31 March to 4 April 2003

Inspection number: 249701

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: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18
Gender of pupils: Girls, 11 to 16, mixed sixth form.

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr J Pryke

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

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17932	John Bald	Registered inspector		The school's results and students' achievements How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
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30553	Richard Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10244	Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)	
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Science	
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13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business studies	
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20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History Special educational needs	
27662	Liz Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
15732	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History (sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oldfield School is a comprehensive school for girls aged 11 to 16, with a mixed sixth form. The school is of average size, with 924 pupils, including 118 in the sixth form. Most pupils are white. A small proportion have minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number have English as an additional language but do not require extra help with English. Pupils have a wide range of backgrounds, but overall their social and economic circumstances are favourable. Half of the pupils in the main school are there as a result of their parents' choice, and these pupils often have a long journey to school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average; most have difficulties with literacy. Overall, the standards reached by pupils joining the school are above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Very good teaching enables pupils to reach high standards in GCSE examinations. There is good provision for pupils' personal development, and they have many opportunities to develop their talents and pursue their interests outside lessons. Leadership and management are very good, with a particularly clear focus on improving teaching and raising standards. The main school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils reach well above average standards at GCSE and in their work outside lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, and outstanding in history.
- Very effective leadership and management promote good teaching and high standards.
- The school takes very good care of pupils and their personal development.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well, work hard, and form good relationships.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities for learning outside lessons.

What could be improved

- Some pupils misbehave if they do not have a strong and clear lead from their teacher.
- There are weaknesses in teaching in religious education, and in a small number of science lessons.
- The school's inconvenient site restricts the scope of its work, and leads to wasted time when pupils move between buildings.

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 January 1997. It was found to be a good school, with good relationships and above average standards. The quality of teaching was satisfactory, with good features. Since that time, GCSE results have improved at an above-average rate, so that they are now well above average, with a good proportion of A and A* grades. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs have also improved greatly. The amount of very good and excellent teaching has grown dramatically, and very little is now unsatisfactory. Leadership and management have improved significantly at senior level, in the management of subjects and in the care of pupils. There has been very good improvement in provision for information and communication technology (ICT), though more is needed. The school has made every effort to improve its accommodation, but this remains barely adequate. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good, and the school is in a very good position to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

GCSE results were well above average at the time of the last inspection, and have shown an above-average trend of improvement. Overall results in 2002 national tests in Year 9 were well above average, and particularly strong in mathematics and science. These results have improved at a broadly average rate since the last inspection. There are no full comparative figures for 2002 sixth form examination results. Available evidence shows improvement in several subjects since the last inspection, including English and physical education, but there were some weaknesses in Advanced Subsidiary (AS) results in 2002. There are suitable targets for improving examination and test results, and GCSE targets were exceeded in 2002. The school received an achievement award for these results.

The standard of work seen during the inspection was close to that shown in tests and examinations, though there were variations in some subjects. Standards in Year 11 work are well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. They are well above average in history, geography and physical education, and above average in most other subjects. Standards in English are well above average in Year 9, particularly in pupils' knowledge and understanding of literature. Standards in other subjects in Year 9, including mathematics and science, are above average overall, and well above average in history. Standards in citizenship are broadly average throughout the school, and standards in religious education are below average, but improving. Standards in literacy and number work are good overall, but many pupils still have weak spelling. Improvements in ICT since the last inspection have led to above-average standards throughout the school.

Standards in sixth form work during the inspection were above average, and sometimes better, in most subjects, and broadly average in the remainder. Higher-attaining students do particularly well by Year 13, but some students achieve less than they should in Year 12. Overall, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Throughout the school, gifted and talented pupils make good overall progress, with strengths in sport and music, though some could achieve more in science. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and there are some examples of very good progress in lessons. Most pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds do very well by Year 11. Overall, achievement in the main school is very good in relation to pupils' starting points.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils work hard, in and out of lessons, and enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. There is misbehaviour in some lessons, and some litter in the grounds.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers, develop a sense of responsibility, and readily make friends.
Attendance	Average in the main school, partly due to holidays taken in term-time.

Pupils of all ethnic groups work happily together and make friends. A small minority do not have positive attitudes to school, and show disrespect to teachers. Many pupils are highly committed to sports, music and other activities outside lessons. Pupils complete homework conscientiously.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Throughout the school, teachers know their subjects very well and plan lessons carefully. They use a broad range of learning resources and activities to help pupils explore ideas in an interesting and relevant context. Almost all manage classes very well and engage pupils, making them think and giving them confidence in their abilities. A significant amount of teaching, in the main school and in the sixth form, is excellent. Across the school, teachers set regular homework, mark work regularly and give good feedback to pupils. There is much outstanding teaching in activities outside lessons.

Teaching in English is very good throughout the school, with particularly imaginative teaching of a broad range of literature. Teaching in mathematics is very good in Years 7 to 9, and good, with very good features, in Years 10 and 11. Science teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. There are examples of excellent teaching in all three subjects, but there is too little challenge to higher-attaining pupils in some science lessons. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well across the school, and sometimes very well. There is, though, too little teaching of spelling.

The amount of unsatisfactory teaching is low, but pupils' work showed that there had been very poor teaching in religious education. The school is taking very effective steps to improve this. Teaching assistants ensure that all pupils take a full part in lessons, and teaching is well adapted to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Gifted and talented pupils often benefit greatly from the school's best teaching, and from work outside lessons, though sometimes they are not stretched enough. Throughout the main school, most pupils' learning benefits from their concentration and hard work, but that of a small minority suffers from negative attitudes and behaviour. Sixth form students work well in lessons, but not always in their time outside lessons. Some of the benefits of very good teaching are lost because teaching time in some courses is too low. Overall, the school's teaching meets the needs of all pupils and students well, in the sixth form, and very well, in the main school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a good range of subjects and other learning opportunities, with a wide range of additional activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Skilled specialist teaching is backed up by good support in lessons. There is very effective co-operation with other agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils have good English skills, and do not need additional support. They learn very well in response to the school's teaching.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with very good provision for moral development. Social development is good, and pupils develop good understanding of their own and other cultures. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory overall, and very good in some lessons.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well for pupils' well-being and personal development. Assessment of pupils' progress and guidance on their work are good.

The school has an effective working partnership with parents, who provide good support for their children's learning. Careers advice, guidance and work experience are very good. Annual curriculum events and other conferences enhance learning. The school has Artsmark Gold, and Sportsmark with distinction. There is no daily act of collective worship. The school takes particularly good care of pupils who need additional support.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and the leadership team provide clear direction for the school, and have put in place very effective management systems. There is a clear focus on raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors are very well organised and know the school well. They are fully involved in policy making and direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All data and information are analysed carefully and used as a basis for action to improve teaching and raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good in the main school, but some sixth form classes run with very small numbers of students.

The school has a sufficient number of specialist teachers and they are well qualified. Resources for learning are adequate overall, and often good in individual subjects. The library has adequate collections of books, and is very well used, with a particularly high rate of borrowing. As at the time of the last inspection, the school site is only just adequate, and causes considerable inconvenience and loss of teaching time when pupils have to move between buildings. There is poor access for people with disabilities. The school works hard to improve its site, and improved facilities have had a positive effective on teaching in design and technology and ICT. Further refurbishment is planned for this summer.

Very clear analysis of the school's performance and of strengths and weaknesses in teaching put the headteacher and her senior colleagues in a very good position to plan for

future development. The leadership team is well organised, and its members have a very good understanding of their areas of responsibility. Most subjects are very well managed, and the school is taking action to improve the remainder. The headteacher and governors apply the principles of providing, as well as obtaining, best value very effectively in the main school, even when they are faced with difficult choices.

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 achieve their best. • There is an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • Children make good progress. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation with parents. • Homework. • Information for parents.

A large majority of parents expressed positive views, and inspectors agree with them. Concerns were expressed by fewer parents. Inspectors found that the overall quality of homework was good, and that the school provided good information for parents, particularly in annual reports and parents' meetings. Inspectors found that the school investigated parents' concerns, though it could not always do what they wanted it to.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 118 students in the sixth form. Over four-fifths are female. A few have minority ethnic backgrounds, but none has English as an additional language. Numbers are slightly lower than last year, but the sixth form has grown since the last inspection. Under a third of students from the main school join the sixth form. Just under a quarter of students, often from other schools, are part of a programme for elite athletes. There are at present no arrangements to share provision with other schools and colleges. The sixth form offers a wide range of AS and A-level courses, with some vocational courses. Students join with a broad range of GCSE results, and a few have special educational needs. Overall, they have reached broadly average standards on joining the sixth form. There is no entry requirement, but five GCSE passes at grade C or above are expected for AS courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Teaching and learning in sixth form lessons are very good overall, and students often reach high standards by Year 13. Some courses, however, have very low numbers and significantly reduced teaching time. This limits the benefits to some students of the strengths in the teaching, and most do not have enough guidance on using their time effectively outside lessons. Provision for students in the elite athletes' programme does not fully meet their needs. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses in day-to-day management, including the monitoring of attendance. Overall, provision and cost-effectiveness in the sixth form are satisfactory.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in most AS and A-level subjects.
- Teaching and learning in lessons are very good overall, and sometimes excellent.
- Provision for history is excellent.
- There is good guidance on higher education, and very good careers guidance.
- Most students have positive attitudes and work hard in lessons.

What could be improved

- There is too little time for some courses, and ICT courses are not organised effectively.
- A significant minority of students do not study consistently outside lessons.
- Some students in the elite athletes' programme are not working as they should.
- There are pockets of poor attendance, and attendance is not monitored effectively.

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	Satisfactory. Effective teaching enables students to reach average standards in Year 13, but lower-attaining students struggle in Year 12.
Biology	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good, and students work hard. There is good independent work in Year 13.
Business studies	Good. Well informed and effective teaching leads to average standards and good achievement in Year 13. The course is well designed.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Unsatisfactory. Weak organisation and guidance to students, with some poor attendance, fragments learning in Year 12. Effective teaching of a very small class leads to average standards in Year 13.
Physical education	Very good. A well planned course, very effective teaching and students' hard work lead to high standards despite difficult working conditions.
Art and design	Very good. Imaginative and challenging teaching enables students to reach high standards in a very well designed and managed course.
Geography	Good. Good, and sometimes very good, teaching leads to above average standards. Students could achieve more in independent work.
History	Excellent. Teaching is excellent, and is backed by detailed guidance on work outside lessons. Standards are above average and rising, and represent excellent progress from students' GCSE results.
English	Very good. Standards are well above average, courses are well organised and managed. Teaching is very good, and often excellent.

Standards, teaching and learning in other subjects during the inspection had similar qualities. Teaching was almost always good or better, and very good in media studies. In Year 12, standards in French suffered from low teaching time and inadequate work outside lessons, and there were similar problems in music, despite additional support from the teacher.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Teachers give students much good guidance on work in their subjects, though this does not always extend to the use of time outside lessons. Some students, particularly in the elite athletes' programme, are not given effective guidance on their choice of courses. Very good careers guidance takes detailed account of individual needs.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. The school monitors teaching, and takes action to improve it. There is a broad range of courses, satisfactory provision for equal opportunities, and the budget is balanced. However, the policy of running courses on reduced teaching time is not always effective, and there has been too little planning for the additional free time this creates. The head of the sixth form has major responsibilities within the school that leave very limited time for management. The school intends to re-organise sixth form management from September.

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">• Teachers know their subjects very well.• Teachers are accessible, and willing to help and support students.• Courses meet students' needs well.• Students are treated as responsible adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on courses and careers.• Activities outside lessons.• Information on their progress.• Students need more responsibility.• The state of the common room.

There was much division in students' views of the sixth form. Inspectors agreed with their positive views on teaching and on the range of courses. They found that, on the whole, students were treated as responsible young adults, and that careers guidance was very effective over the course of students' sixth form career. Inspection evidence bore out the other concerns expressed by students in part, though not across the whole of the sixth form. For example, not all students have opportunities to take part in recreational sport. Inspectors share students' views on the state of the common room.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards among pupils joining the school are above average overall. Pupils reach above-average standards in national tests in Year 6, and these standards have shown recent improvement, so that they were well above average in science in 2002. Pupils joining Year 7 also have good skills in aspects of their work that are not included in the tests, such as practical work in science and skills in spoken English. The school's carefully focused teaching and management, and pupils' good attitudes and hard work, enable them to build very effectively on this base, so that results are well above average in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE. The Year 9 results are better than those achieved in most similar schools, and GCSE results are much better. Overall, the achievements of pupils in Year 11 represent very good achievement from their starting points. The school received an achievement award for its 2002 results.
2. In Year 9, there were some differences between the standard of work seen during the inspection and the most recent national test results. In English, 2002 test results were above average, but pupils' work during the inspection was better. It showed a very wide range of understanding of modern and historical literature, focused and very well organised writing, and reach high standards in speaking and listening. In science, 2002 test results were well above average, but pupils' work during the inspection was slightly weaker, particularly at the highest levels, where higher-attaining pupils were sometimes under-achieving in lessons. In mathematics, well above average standards in tests were fully reflected in the standards reached by all groups of pupils during the inspection. Standards in other subjects in Year 9 are above average overall. Standards are well above average in history as a result of very careful development of pupils' thinking skills.
3. In Year 11, the quality of work seen during the inspection was well above average in English, mathematics, history, geography and physical education. This represents very good improvement from the standards these pupils had reached in Year 9. Standards in religious education are below average throughout the school, because of weaknesses in teaching and management. The school is addressing these energetically, and there was evidence of significant improvement during the inspection. Pupils taking a voluntary GCSE short course were reaching above-average standards, and there were good standards in roughly half of the classes across the school as a result of recent improvements in teaching. Standards in citizenship have been affected by the absence of the co-ordinator, but good work in some other subjects, notably geography, history and some religious education lessons, is resulting in broadly average standards. Standards in all other subjects, including science and ICT, are above average in Year 11, though the achievements of higher-attaining pupils in science remain satisfactory rather than good.
4. Pupils with special educational needs make good and sometimes very good progress, with particularly effective support given to hearing impaired pupils to enable them to communicate and to understand what is happening in lessons. The achievement of a small minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties is held back by their poor attitudes. However, the overall achievements of pupils with special educational needs have shown very good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, are well

represented among the higher-attaining groups, and their overall achievement is very good.

5. Gifted and talented pupils make good overall progress in relation to their particular skills and aptitudes. They do particularly well in sports, drama and music, are encouraged to explore literature in very good depth in English, and develop very effective analytical skills in history and – in response to the best teaching – in geography. Standards in literacy and numeracy are above average throughout the school. There is particularly good progress by lower-attaining pupils in number work. Pupils read and write fluently and well, but have some weaknesses in spelling. They have very good speaking and listening skills.
6. Although GCSE results were well above average at the time of the last inspection, they have continued to improve at an above-average rate because of management's close focus on standards and on improving the quality of teaching. The school sets suitable targets for raising standards further, and GCSE results in 2002 exceeded its targets by a comfortable margin. The school is also on track to exceed its current targets. On the other hand, some targets set by subjects, both for individual pupils and for national tests in Year 9, could be more specific, in terms both of basic skills and of the needs of the highest-attaining pupils. Overall, achievement by the time pupils move on from the main school is very good, and reflects a significant improvement in the quality of education since the last inspection.

Sixth form

7. A-level results in 2001 were broadly average. While full national comparative figures for 2002 are not available, the overall pattern of results was still broadly average, but showed improvements in several subjects, including English, biology, physical education and history. Results at AS level in 2002 had strengths in some subjects, including English and business studies, but also significant weaknesses, particularly in mathematics and psychology, but also in French.
8. The overall standard of work seen in subjects fully inspected was above average, and well above average in English, physical education and art and design. These subjects also figured strongly in 2002 A-level results. Students were reaching average standards in mathematics and ICT in Year 13, but standards in these subjects were below average in Year 12. Overall, the proportion of students completing their courses is satisfactory, and good in Year 13. In Year 12, most students complete their courses, but there was a high drop-out rate in mathematics in 2001-2, and in ICT in 2002-3.
9. Higher-attaining students achieve well in almost all subjects, and very well in response to the best teaching. These students' achievement benefits from their conscientious work outside lessons. The achievements of other students, both in their subjects and in the key learning skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, are satisfactory. They do very well in history, partly because of structured guidance on reading outside lessons, and also in art and design. In other subjects, weaknesses in students' work outside lessons sometimes limit their achievement, even when teaching in lessons is strong. There were examples of this during the inspection in work sampled in music and French. In ICT, achievement is unsatisfactory because courses are not organised effectively, so that students do not always receive the teaching they need. Students in the elite athletes' programme achieve well in vocational courses. Elsewhere, they are sometimes placed on courses that do not meet their academic needs or take full account of the demands of their training.

10. At the time of the last inspection, standards in the sixth form were well above average. However, more students now join with lower GCSE results, and the overall standard among new students is broadly average. Overall, standards reached in the sixth form represent satisfactory achievement from students' standards at GCSE.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. On the whole, pupils have good attitudes to school. They enjoy coming to school, and involve themselves enthusiastically in their lessons and other activities. A high proportion take part in sports, music and dramatic performances outside lessons, often reaching very high standards in areas of particular interest to them. All pupils respond well to the very strong lead they receive from their teachers in most lessons. Pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in lessons and all other social activities. Like other pupils, they readily make friends. Pupils mostly behave very well around the school, and are polite and courteous. They understand that their actions have an impact on other people, and show respect for other pupils' values and beliefs.
12. On the other hand, some classes are inclined to misbehave if teachers do not manage them firmly, or if the pupils do not have full commitment to a subject. A small minority of pupils do not fully engage themselves in their work and are disrespectful to teachers. Some pupils drop litter and leave classrooms in an untidy condition. A very small minority smoke in the toilets, despite strong action from the school when this is detected. This causes some discomfort to other pupils.
13. Bullying is uncommon. Pupils say that it usually takes the form of name calling. Pupils report such behaviour, and say the school usually handles it well. There is no evidence of other forms of oppressive behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions is about average. There are very few permanent exclusions. The school uses exclusion for proper reasons, and provides effective additional support to pupils and parents where there is a risk of permanent exclusion.
14. Pupils take increasing responsibility as they move up through the school. They learn to take responsibility for their own work. For example, pupils said that in Year 10 schoolwork 'counts for something'. There are two school councils, one each for upper and lower school. Pupils told inspectors that the councils were sometimes dominated by the teacher in charge, but that they have been nevertheless been responsible for some changes. For example, pupils can now wear trousers, and no longer have to wear ties. Pupils take part in events such as public speaking competitions against other schools, and a group of pupils received an award for winning one during the inspection. An Oldfield pupil received the mayor of Bath's 'Young Citizen of the Year' award last summer for work with the St John's Ambulance and for helping other pupils at the school. Pupils throughout the school raise considerable sums of money for home and third world charities.
15. Teachers and pupils form and foster good relationships across the school. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from teachers, who often give up time during lunch and after school to help pupils having difficulty with their schoolwork as well as with any other problems. The good relationships extend to other members of staff; for example, pupils very much appreciate the support they receive from the welfare assistant. Relationships between pupils are also good. They work well in pairs and groups, and many parents told inspectors that their children formed strong friendships.
16. Attendance is broadly average. At the last inspection it was above the average; the decline is partly caused by holidays taken during the term time, in spite of parents being

discouraged from doing this. The level of lateness in the morning is similar to that in most schools, but some pupils are late for lessons because of the distance between classrooms. One lesson is deemed to start at the same time that another finishes, and this causes significant loss of teaching time.

Sixth form

17. Overall, attitudes and behaviour among sixth form students are good. The highest-attaining students have excellent attitudes and work hard outside lessons. They form very strong relationships with their tutors, based on mutual respect and commitment to high standards. Other students work well in their lessons and form good relationships with teachers, often sustained by teachers' good sense of humour. In a minority of lessons, however, some students following the elite athletes' programme are not fully committed to subjects they have not chosen, particularly in ICT. Students have an above-average amount of time outside lessons. A minority use this well to extend their learning, but many do not work consistently enough outside lessons, whether in reading, research or other aspects of coursework.
18. Most sixth form students behave very well, and there was no misbehaviour in sixth form lessons during the inspection. However, misbehaviour by some students in the elite athletes' programme has resulted in fixed-term exclusions. Some of these students' behaviour in the sixth form common room has made it difficult for the head of sixth form to ensure responsible behaviour in the sixth form as a whole. They were discourteous to the head of sixth form during the inspection, and took down a rota a tutor had put up for keeping the common room tidy. Common rooms during the inspection were very untidy, and work surfaces in the kitchen were not kept clean.
19. Sixth form students give good support to younger students in the classroom, in assemblies and on school trips. Some take on extra responsibility; for example, they have elections each year for the position of head of school and deputies. Most set younger students a good example of mature and responsible behaviour and good relationships.
20. While most sixth form students attend all of their lessons, attendance overall is unsatisfactory. Attendance in lessons during the inspection was below 90 per cent, and a small minority of students had poor attendance records in some of their subjects. Even after allowance is made for the sporting commitments of students in the elite athletes group, the attendance of a significant minority of these students is unsatisfactory. Although students are expected to show an attendance level of 90 per cent, in some tutor groups only a minority do so.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The improvements in standards and the quality of education since the last inspection have been founded on the high quality of teaching. It is now very good overall throughout the main school, with a significant proportion of excellent teaching in several subjects. At the time of the last inspection, one in ten lessons had very good features. In the present inspection, teaching in significantly over half of all lessons was very good overall, and almost nine-tenths of teaching in the main school was good or better. Teaching was excellent in just over a tenth of lessons. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been very significantly reduced and is lower than in most schools. There has been a particularly good improvement in the level of challenge and interest in the teaching across the school.

22. The high overall quality of teaching is based on teachers' outstanding professional knowledge of their subjects, effective long-term planning to ensure that pupils develop their skills consistently, and very effective use of time in lessons, so that activities are not rushed. Teachers enter into a learning partnership with pupils, often using questions and discussion to communicate their interest in their subject and to invite pupils to share it. They set and mark homework regularly, and make good use of assessment. Resources are carefully selected, and often developed by teachers themselves for specific purposes. Across the school, literacy and numeracy skills are taught well, with particular strengths in the use of data in geography, and in the development of analytical writing skills in history. There are, however, some weaknesses in the teaching of spelling. Regular feedback, from marking and in discussion, keeps pupils in touch with how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. This helps pupils to develop confidence in their judgement, and encourages them to aim for high standards.
23. Excellent teaching has a high concentration of outstanding features, with particularly careful planning to ensure that learning aims are carried through into all of the work set for pupils. In a Year 9 history lesson, for example, everything the teacher said and did was calculated to enable pupils to evaluate a range of evidence and bring it together, using a very clear framework, to write analytical essays that prepared them for high grades at GCSE. Excellent teaching in English often makes imaginative use of visual as well as literary resources to enable pupils to explore and analyse themes and ideas at a high level. There were further examples of excellent teaching during the inspection in drama, food technology, physical education, religious education, geography, ICT, science for higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, mathematics for lower-attaining pupils in Year 8, and German.
24. Teachers in most subjects contribute well to personal development and citizenship – for example, through a detailed discussion of China's 'one child' policy in Year 10 geography. They make effective use of targets, though in some subjects these could be made more specific. ICT is used very well in some subjects, particularly in design and technology for computer-aided design. In others, it is held back by limited facilities, which the school is working to improve. There has, nevertheless, been a great improvement in the quality of teaching and provision for this subject since the last inspection, and this is much appreciated by parents. Where teaching is satisfactory, work is broadly appropriate for the class, but is not matched closely enough to what pupils most need to learn. Some of this teaching could be more demanding of higher-attaining pupils, and, in some lessons, the scope of the work is limited by the skills of teachers working outside their main subject. During the inspection, unsatisfactory teaching in some science lessons was caused by a lack of challenge to higher-attaining pupils, with additional weaknesses in management and organisation. Analysis of pupils' work over the year showed evidence of very poor teaching in some religious education lessons. Action by the school was leading to improvement in this during the inspection. Most pupils' learning benefits from their attentive attitudes in lessons and conscientious work. A small minority of older pupils, however, do not work as they should in some lessons and pupils sometimes do not co-operate fully with temporary teachers.
25. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good specialist teaching and from effective support from teaching assistants, who work very well with class teachers to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons. Gifted and talented pupils are well taught over their school career. While there are some inconsistencies in science, these pupils benefit particularly from the features in the school's best teaching, and from the high quality of sporting and musical activities outside lessons. Teachers in almost all subjects work very effectively as a team, and share ideas. During the inspection, for

example, two English teachers were observed after school, fine-tuning a demanding lesson on Victorian literature for pupils in Year 8 on the basis of an earlier lesson that had been judged excellent.

Sixth form

26. Teaching in sixth form lessons has very similar qualities to that in the main school. It is very good overall, and there is a similar proportion of excellent teaching. Where the teaching is excellent, it is particularly closely matched to students' needs, and is followed up by very careful advice and guidance to students on their work outside lessons. There was a significant proportion of excellent teaching during the inspection in English and art and design, and the overall quality of teaching was excellent in history. Teachers make good overall provision for the development of students' key skills in lessons. In several subjects, however, the effects of teaching on students' learning are diminished by a lack of teaching time, and by inconsistency in students' learning outside lessons. In French, for example, where students have only three hours' teaching per week, very good learning in a lesson based chiefly on speaking and listening was not matched by the range and quality of written work in students' folders. While there was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection, teaching in a small minority of lessons, mostly in ICT, but occasionally in other subjects, did not have the challenge and interest present in most sixth form teaching.

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

27. Learning opportunities have been extended since the last inspection. They are now good, with some very good features. All National Curriculum subjects are provided, and literacy and number skills are taught effectively across subjects, though there could be more attention to spelling. There is good provision for drama in Years 7 to 9, and pupils are successfully introduced to two foreign languages. There is a good range of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11, including popular and successful courses in business studies, child development, dance, media studies and sociology. A very effective additional option enables pupils with some weaknesses in their work to receive extra coaching in subjects they select themselves. In ICT, pupils have a good choice between a GCSE, GNVQ intermediate or RSA competence-based awards. There is good additional vocational provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not have positive attitudes to academic work.
28. In music, religious education and citizenship, however, the quality of learning opportunities is restricted by weaknesses in management, particularly in longer-term planning. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex education and education against the misuse of drugs, is satisfactory. It is sometimes very good, for example, in work considering the values attached to different occupations, but topics in some other lessons do not engage pupils' interest. Work in most subjects makes good use of the time available, and all subjects have an adequate allocation of time. However, the curriculum in physical education is restricted by the limited facilities of the site, and a significant amount of teaching time is lost by movement between buildings. Annual curriculum events, involving a broad range of artistic, practical and creative work, add very good breadth and variety to learning.
29. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs well, through support in lessons and specialised teaching. Provision for equal opportunities for all pupils is good overall. Pupils, for example, develop good skills and confidence in all areas of design and technology, including handling power tools, and all benefit from

ability grouping in mathematics. In science, however, higher-attaining pupils are sometimes under-extended, a weakness that was present at the time of the last inspection. Overall, however, gifted and talented pupils have good opportunities during their time in the main school to reach high standards, both in lessons and in other learning activities. The range and balance of the curriculum provides very well for pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds, who are well represented among higher-attaining groups.

30. A comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities is provided both at lunch-time and after school. In keeping with its sports college status, the school provides very good opportunities for pupils to participate in athletics, the gym club, fencing, football, judo, rugby, netball, rowing, tennis and trampolining. There are many opportunities for pupils to reach high standards in music and dance. This provision has helped the school to earn Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark with distinction. There are further good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through French, Italian and homework clubs.
31. The school offers very good opportunities for careers and vocational education. The new co-ordinator has an extensive syllabus in place, which also involves work experience opportunities for Year 10 pupils. Most of the pupils liaise very well with Trident for placements, and some find their own. The school has particularly effective relationships with Connexions. There are very good links with the local sporting community, and local businesses contribute generously to the work experience programme. The school has satisfactory relationships with other schools. Pupils and sixth form students provide good sports leadership, but relationships with primary schools are otherwise limited because pupils come from an unusually broad area. The school is involved in a new initiative to co-ordinate work in ICT.

Sixth form

32. The school provides a broad range of AS and A-level courses, despite the low numbers of students taking some subjects. As a result, teaching groups are often very small, and some courses in Year 13 have only two students. This range of courses is maintained by reducing teaching time. Most courses have teaching time that is broadly in line with national guidance, but in some very small groups teaching time is well below average – in Year 12 French, for example, students have only three hours of teaching per week. In some courses, particularly in Year 13, hard work by students outside lessons, in conjunction with teaching of high quality, enables this arrangement to work effectively. In others, particularly in Year 12, students do not have enough time to practise new skills and consolidate knowledge. The timetable for mathematics is weak, with six hours of lessons in one week and three in the next. At the time of the inspection, the curriculum for ICT offered too many overlapping courses, and teaching time was not organised effectively. The school has, however, good plans to improve this provision from September.
33. There are good intermediate vocational courses in ICT, leisure and tourism and leisure and recreation. Students also undertake an interesting course in complementary studies, which includes a good range of learning skills in Year 12 and careers and how to apply for a university place in Year 13. The history curriculum provides a very effective series of planned activities for students to complete outside lessons. Most other subjects, however, do not provide enough structured guidance to students on the use of their above-average amount of free time. Students in the elite athletes' programme are given some additional guidance, but are sometimes allocated to courses they have not chosen and to which they are not suited. The programme of

additional activities for sixth form students includes good opportunities for them to help younger students, work which is much appreciated by teachers. However, inspectors agreed with students who felt that activities outside lessons could usefully be extended, for example, to ensure that all have opportunities for recreational sport. There is at present very little co-operation between the school and other sixth form providers, though more is planned following the introduction of new funding arrangements from September 2003. The range of courses meets the needs of most students. With the strengths in teaching, the curriculum enables students, overall, to reach appropriate standards in their courses.

Personal development

34. Overall, provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Work in several subjects, and particularly in English, music and art and design, encourages pupils to consider non-material questions. In music, for example, pupils have good opportunities to reflect on themes such as first love and death in battle, and to consider the importance of mood. There are increasing opportunities for reflection in many RE lessons, for example when considering values and beliefs and asking questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Displays around the school, such as the inspirational displays in science and music, with the attractive school grounds, add to the spiritual development of the whole school community. Assemblies during the inspection provided some good opportunities for reflection, for example, on conscientious objection, but these were not consistent. There is no daily act of collective worship, and spiritual development still suffers from the effects of longer-term weaknesses in RE provision. There is good provision for spiritual development for sixth form students through conferences, but little on a day-to-day basis.
35. Provision for moral development is very good. Teachers and other adults give a strong lead in encouraging good relationships and in distinguishing right from wrong behaviour. The principles of the school behaviour policy are based on respect for self, others and the environment. There is a distinct sense of moral responsibility. Physical education teachers help pupils develop honesty and integrity when facing defeat and instil a sense of fair play. In subjects such as science and geography, pupils discuss how they can influence man's environment; in history, religious education, English and drama, pupils assess and explore moral issues. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme develops pupils' capabilities to reach decisions on important and difficult issues which they will encounter, both while at school and in adult life. Pupils are very active in fund-raising for a large number of charities such as Unicef, Breast Cancer Care, the NSPCC and Harvest for the Hungry.
36. There is good provision for social development in and out of school. Social issues are well addressed in the PSHE programme, including those relating to citizenship, politics and parenting. Responsibility is encouraged through opportunities to become a school council representative or act as receptionist or librarian. Extra-curricular activities, including team fixtures and theatrical and musical productions, help pupils to work together in large groups. Pupils have good scope to interact in lessons through the use of group work, especially in drama, history, geography, PE and modern languages. Social skills are further developed in annual events, such as the curriculum week, healthy lifestyles day, residential trips and religious education and citizenship conferences. Sixth formers take a strong part in supporting younger pupils both in and out of the classroom, particularly in sports. There is good social harmony in the school. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language are fully involved in all aspects of the work of the school. There is particularly good support for pupils with difficulties in social development.

37. Provision to develop pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures is good. There is a strong emphasis on the richness and diversity of other cultures in religious education, where learning about beliefs and practice is enhanced by visits to local churches and a mosque in Bristol. Christian and Muslim festivals are celebrated in school. Cultural awareness is enhanced by teaching in science, music, art, geography, history and dance. Theatre trips, to London, Cardiff, Bristol and Bath, are offered together with trips to museums and art galleries. There are residential visits to Germany and France, with European work experience for some Year 12 pupils. Since the last inspection, the range of texts from other cultures used in English has been extended and is now very good. There is a link with Mtengwane Senior School, South Africa, a Japanese club, and a UN conference (Bath). Pupils develop a good understanding of the range of cultures in modern British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school has maintained the high quality of its personal support and guidance for pupils since the last inspection. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good, and there are personal support plans for pupils who are in care. The school has good relationships with social services, despite having to deal with several different local authorities. Procedures for health and safety are well organised and effective, and first aid is available on all parts of the site. A small number of health and safety issues were identified and drawn to the attention of the school. These were all related to the age of the accommodation, were known to the school and were in the school development plan. The school has investigated the concerns of some parents that pupils' having to carry their bags with them all day is a potential threat to health and safety. The view of the inspection team is that this is inconvenient, but not a threat to health and safety. Inspectors found that healthy eating was encouraged by the provision of fruit at lunchtime, but agreed with the small number of parents who were concerned that there was no hot food available for pupils during the school day.
39. There are good procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance in the main school. Attendance is recorded efficiently, and unexplained absence is meticulously followed up. Good attendance is promoted well through awards for good attendance and sanctions for poor attendance and lateness. The school is well supported through the education welfare service, and makes good arrangements for pupils with poor attendance records through work-related learning and mentoring.
40. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and for dealing with oppressive behaviour. These result in generally good behaviour and attitudes across the school, particularly when there is very good teaching and management of pupils. However, pupils in several lessons during the inspection misbehaved when they were not given a strong enough lead from their teacher. Some teachers are not using the procedures consistently enough when dealing with minor misbehaviour.
41. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. A strong pastoral team of heads of year and form tutors know the pupils well because they stay with the same groups from Year 7 until they move on at Year 11. The team receives excellent support from the heads of upper and lower school. The head of upper school has outstanding knowledge of her pupils at her fingertips. The best tutorial periods are used well to re-inforce guidance to pupils and to consult them, for example about the design of planners. There is, however, much inconsistency in the quality of tutorials, both in the main school and in the sixth form, and too many do not

make an effective contribution either to learning or to personal development. There are very good arrangements for tutors to interview individual pupils at least twice a year. Teachers take great care to include all pupils in the school's work, and there were particularly effective steps during the inspection to involve pupils with hearing impairment in normal lessons. The school makes very good use of support from mentors, the school nurse, Connexions, the education welfare and social services, as well as that provided by the local authority's behaviour support service.

42. Overall, the school has good arrangements to assess and track pupils' progress. There are very good features in some subjects, including science, and assessment is excellent in history. There is, however, too little assessment in music, and no arrangements are yet in place to assess standards in citizenship. In some other subjects, including mathematics, assessment is thorough, but is not linked closely enough to the provisions of the National Curriculum. Across the school, teachers use information from formal and informal assessment well to plan programmes of work that meet pupils' needs. There are some outstanding examples of this in English for higher-attaining pupils, and in mathematics. On the other hand, assessment in English does not always focus closely enough on weaknesses in basic skills, and the good information generated in science is not used in all lessons to ensure sufficient challenge to higher-attaining pupils. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is well organised and effective, with good arrangements to involve all teachers, parents, pupils and external agencies such as the hearing impaired service. Targets in individual education plans are clearly expressed and are used effectively by teachers.

Sixth form

Assessment

43. The school has good arrangements to assess students' work and progress. They are very good in art and design and history, particularly in the assessment of individual strengths and weaknesses, which are very effectively fed back to students. Assessment in English benefits from particularly close marking of students' written work. Assessment in mathematics is satisfactory, but does not always give students the detail they need to improve their work. Teachers in all courses make good use of assessment to pitch work at a suitable level for students. Assessment is not, however, used rigorously enough to ensure that all students are allocated to suitable courses in Year 12, particularly in ICT.

Advice, support and guidance

44. The overall quality of advice, support and guidance for sixth form students is satisfactory. It has good features, particularly in advice on higher education and careers, where the main school's very good relationship with Connexions continues. Higher-attaining students also benefit greatly from personal guidance based on teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and of university work, which are often outstanding. On the other hand, a significant proportion of students need more guidance and support in using their time outside lessons effectively. Students are given target grades for all subjects, based on their GCSE results. They do not receive these, however, until the spring term, so that they cannot be used for guidance at the beginning of the course. Tutorial periods do not make a consistently effective contribution to guidance.
45. The school did not have an attendance figure for the sixth form for the latest reporting year. Registers are kept, but they are not always properly completed. Data on attendance is not analysed closely enough to enable the school to detect trends in attendance, or to take effective action when attendance is poor. Monitoring and recording of attendance are, therefore, unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents have a positive view of the school. They are particularly impressed with the way that the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best, and with the range of extra-curricular activities, some of which enable pupils to compete at national and international levels. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting told inspectors that the school had improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in ICT, and that they were, on the whole, happy with the standards their children were reaching.
47. However, parents act as critical friends of the school. While the proportion expressing concerns about aspects of its provision was small, their points were often strongly expressed. A significant number were concerned about the amount of homework, about being kept informed about how their child was getting on and that the school did not work closely with parents. These concerns were not borne out by inspection evidence.
48. The school provides very good information for parents. The prospectus is attractively presented and contains all of the information required by law, as does the clear and detailed governors' annual report. The school issues regular and very informative

newsletters. Pupils' annual reports are of a very high quality. They give helpful information on academic and social progress, and clear targets for future development. There are two very informative interim reports in the autumn and spring terms. At least 85 per cent of parents attend the regular parents' evenings, and the school makes contact with those parents not able to attend. There is a major consultation with parents in November, when the school closes in the afternoon so that parents can meet tutors. Parents are brought in early when problems arise, and the school works closely with them to help them provide guidance and support at home.

49. Parents have a good impact on the work of the school and they make a good contribution to their child's learning at school and at home. The Oldfield School Association is very active and raises considerable funds for resources. Parents also respond to requests for help at parents' evenings. Most parents sign pupils' contact books regularly, and some write comments and requests in them. Many also involve themselves with pupils' homework, although some pupils said that, by the time they have reached Year 11, the work was beyond their parents; 'They would help if they could,' was one comment.
50. Most sixth form students have a positive view of the school. In discussions with inspectors, most said that they appreciated the quality of teaching and guidance they received and that they enjoyed the sixth form. However, a minority of students, mostly in the elite athletes' programme, said that courses and guidance did not always meet their needs, and that there was too little accommodation, particularly for changing. Inspectors found that the mentoring system for elite athletes was not fully effective, partly because students did not use it, and that some students had been allocated to ICT courses for which they were not qualified.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher, her senior colleagues and the governors give a strong lead to the school, backed by very efficient management systems. This, with the high quality of teaching across the school, has been the main factor in the improvements achieved since the last inspection. Well-established and effective arrangements for performance management keep the headteacher and the leadership team in close touch with strengths and weaknesses among the staff. Strengths in teaching are recognised and encouraged, and action is taken to deal with weaknesses. The leadership team has a clear vision for improving the school further. Its meetings during the inspection included an excellent presentation from an assistant headteacher on further developments in ICT. The school makes full use of all available data to assess its performance management and set targets.
52. The management of subjects has shown very good improvement. The last inspection team found that not all heads of subject and faculty had 'the skills and vision necessary to provide secure guidance' to other teachers. In the present inspection, almost all subjects were well managed, with very good or excellent management in English, history, design and technology, art and design and modern foreign languages. Remaining weaknesses in subject management, in music and religious education, are being tackled. The work of subjects and faculties is reviewed annually, with full participation of the governors, as recommended in the last report. The organisation of most departments and faculties is very effective, although some faculties contain a mixture of subjects that have too little in common to allow the faculty to operate as a cohesive unit. The very effective management of the care of pupils had been maintained since the last inspection and developed, for example, through the new arrangements to support pupils in care.

53. The school development plan is well organised, comprehensive and carefully costed. It addresses all of the main issues facing the school and is an effective vehicle for further improvement. Financial planning and control are detailed and effective. Specific grants are used for their allotted purposes. Elsewhere, however, the headteacher, bursar and governors are often faced with difficult choices, particularly in developing accommodation. They allocate funds effectively on educational and best value principles, even when the constraints of the site make it impossible to do all that they would wish. It has been particularly difficult to find space for new ICT provision.
54. The governing body is well organised, well informed and effective. It and the headteacher are committed to providing the best possible opportunities for all pupils, including additional support for those whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion. All policies, including the new policy for race equality, are practical and effective, with good procedures for evaluation and review. These policies contribute to the excellent racial harmony within the school.
55. The school has an adequate number of teachers. There have, however, been some recent interruptions to teaching caused by serious illness. Teachers in the main school and in the sixth form are well qualified, and many have high levels of professional skill, both in teaching and management. Teaching assistants have good experience and skills for their work. Overall, resources for learning are adequate, and they are used well. Teachers have developed good specialised collections of resources in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Their imaginative use of resources makes an important contribution to learning by sustaining interest and variety in pupils' work – for example, by comparing the treatment of a theme in a poem with its representation in contemporary painting. However, there are not enough resources for music, and several subjects still do not have enough access to ICT. While library funding is just adequate, careful selection of books and very good organisation ensure that it is very well used – over 2,500 books were out on loan at the time of the inspection. ICT suites are of good quality and are well used. They represent very good improvement from the 'woefully inadequate' provision seen during the last inspection.
56. The school occupies a difficult site, in a green belt. It has two main buildings, five minutes' walk apart, and a large number of temporary classrooms. The pressure to develop accommodation to meet new demands on the curriculum, particularly in ICT, has placed it under significant additional pressure. Although the school is a sports college, it has no sports hall. Accommodation is inadequate for music and for food technology, and the drama room is too small. There is very little space to install new facilities, and there are too few lockers for pupils to store their belongings in during the day. There is very little access for people with disabilities, and no kitchen to prepare hot food. However, the new building has good disability access, and there are plans to improve this further. The last inspection found that the school's site was 'reaching the point where accommodation will be insufficient'. Since then, the school has worked hard to develop the site. Improvements include a very good new science block, new computer suites, and refurbished accommodation for design and technology. The school is about to build four new classrooms on its main site and to refurbish the food technology room. This will release a larger classroom for drama. There is, overall, sufficient accommodation to enable the school to carry out its work. However, accommodation continues to cause inconvenience and some discomfort to pupils and teachers, and the time taken in moving around the site – for which no allowance is made in the timetable – reduces teaching and learning time by a significant amount in some subjects.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

57. The low numbers of students choosing to stay on to the sixth form pose considerable difficulties for management. The school has a policy of allowing courses to run with very small groups, and on reduced teaching time. In some subjects, usually in Year 13, good work outside lessons has enabled this system to work effectively, so that students obtain satisfactory and sometimes good results. It is much less effective in Year 12, and the system of combining classes taking different courses in ICT does not lead to satisfactory learning.
58. The sixth form receives an appropriate share of the school budget. The head of the sixth form has major additional responsibilities within the school, and her assistant at the time of the inspection had been on long-term sick leave for two terms. Overall, management of the sixth form is enabling students to reach the standards they should be reaching. For example, the headteacher has taken effective action to ensure the continuity of teaching in psychology following an interruption in staffing. As a result, sixth form provision is enabling students, overall, to reach the standards they should be reaching. Nevertheless, strengths only narrowly outweigh weaknesses. In particular, some aspects of the elite athletics' programme have not been organised effectively, and some students have not been provided with a suitable programme of courses. The school recognises the need to encourage more students to choose the sixth form, and is to re-allocate management from September to a member of the leadership team who has fewer additional responsibilities. It has also begun discussions with a view to increasing co-operation with other schools on providing courses which attract small numbers of students. Changes in funding, including the ending of the elite athletes' programme after this year, make these matters of urgency.

Resources

59. Overall, resources for learning are adequate. Teachers have developed good resources for learning in most sixth form subjects, and adequate resources for the remainder. As in the main school, effective use of resources is an important strength in lessons. In history, very effective guidance on the use of resources for personal study, particularly for reading, is reflected in the quality of students' coursework, but this is not consistent across subjects. Library resources are adequate overall, but they could be used more systematically to promote learning outside lessons. Students have good access to computers in their common rooms, but few use them effectively. The printer does not always work and students are sometimes slow to report this so that it can be repaired. There is too little access to computers in many teaching rooms.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to build on the very good improvements they have made since the last inspection, the headteacher and governors should pay particular attention to the following points. The school is to re-organise the management of the sixth form from September, and is taking effective steps to improve management in music and religious education. It has plans for a significant further extension of its IT facilities and is addressing some aspects of the third point for the main school in its development planning.

- (1) Improve the behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils, by:
 - monitoring minor misbehaviour more closely, and taking consistent action to reduce it;
 - improving further the consistency of the management of pupils;
 - taking more effective preventative measures against litter.
(Paragraphs 12, 79, 131)

- (2) Improve teaching in religious education, and in the minority of science lessons where it is weak, by:
 - extending and building on the recent improvements in teaching in religious education;
 - ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are consistently challenged in science.
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 28, 75-6, 79-80, 84, 95, 100, 105, 115, 123-9)

- (3) Take further steps to improve accommodation, by:
 - continuing to improve accommodation that is barely adequate for its purpose;
 - carrying out its plans to refurbish the food technology room;
 - ensuring that all pupils have access to clean and hygienic toilets.
(Paragraphs 12, 28, 86, 159, 165)

Sixth form

- (1) Take action to reduce the number of very small groups, and to raise teaching time, by:
 - improving co-operation with other schools where subjects attract very small numbers;
 - ensuring that all students have sufficient teaching time in each subject;
 - carrying out its plans to re-organise provision for ICT.
(Paragraphs 7, 24, 26, 32, 57, 149-152, 176)

- (2) Improve students' use of their time outside lessons, by:
- extending its provision to help students to plan their use of time more effectively;
 - establishing clearer programmes of private study and monitoring students' use of them;
 - ensuring that students use the common room and other facilities responsibly. (Paragraphs 9, 26, 33, 157, 170)
- (3) Improve learning in the elite athletes' programme, by:
- planning a suitable and realistic programme of work for each student;
 - identifying and dealing with gaps in learning and attendance at an early stage;
 - taking earlier and more consistent action against the minority of students who do not accept the standards of the school community. (Paragraphs 8, 17-18, 50, 58)
- (4) Improve attendance and arrangements to monitor it, by:
- identifying and tackling gaps in attendance at an early stage in students' courses;
 - ensuring that all registers are properly marked;
 - monitoring and analysing attendance to the same standard as in the main school. (Paragraphs 20, 45, 137, 149, 155)

Additional issues to be included in the governors' action plan.

- (1) Improve arrangements for assessment in music and citizenship in the main school, and in mathematics in the sixth form. (Paragraphs 42, 134, 137)
- (2) Reduce the amount of teaching time lost by movement around the building. (Paragraphs 16, 28)
- (3) Improve the quality of guidance in tutorial periods in the main school and the sixth form. (Paragraphs 41, 44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	138
	Sixth form	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	15	64	40	17	2	0	0
Percentage	11	46	29	12	1	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	13	12	8	0	0	0
Percentage	11	35	32	22	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [] – [] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	806	118
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	44	0

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	71	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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53

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	165	165

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	130	138	134
	Total	130	138	134
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (78)	84 (78)	81 (77)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (41)	59 (54)	45 (41)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	139	148	124
	Total	139	148	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (73)	90 (78)	75 (61)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (37)	62 (51)	45 (37)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	n/a	156	156

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	108	152	153
	Total	108	152	153
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (74)	97 (99)	98 (100)
	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 pupil	School	49.6 (51.7)
	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 (Comparative national data is not available for 2002).

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	52	52
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	15.2	15.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

Ethnic background of pupils

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 pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
618	16	2
4	0	0
5	0	0
16	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
8	0	0
6	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
10	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
248	7	7

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	382

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	25.3
Key Stage 3	22.2
Sixth form	8.5

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	2, 552,407
Total expenditure	2,691, 454
Expenditure per pupil	2,818
Balance brought forward from previous year	280,759
Balance carried forward to next year	141,712

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out	924
Number of questionnaires returned	284

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	52	8	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	50	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	52	8	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	58	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	33	58	3	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	51	12	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	45	5	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	32	2	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	17	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	35	46	6	7	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	53	5	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	33	5	2	3

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- High standards have been maintained in GCSE examinations.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good, and much is excellent.
- Pupils' positive attitudes enhance their learning.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Too little attention is paid to the teaching of spelling.
- Assessment does not focus closely enough on strengths and weaknesses in pupils' basic skills.

61. Standards among pupils joining the school are above average. Results in the 2002 national tests in Year 9 were above average, and represent satisfactory progress from Year 6. The standards of work and progress observed during the inspection were better, particularly in the development of speaking and listening skills and reading. These reflect the emphasis throughout Years 7 to 9 on independent learning. Results in GCSE English language and literature examinations were well above average in 2002 and pupils achieved a similar percentage of high grades in media studies. Above-average standards have been maintained in English language, and well above average standards in English literature over the past four years. Overall, standards of work and progress in Year 11 are well above average. Across the school, most pupils, especially higher-attaining pupils, are learning well and making very good progress. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language also make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress, but there is not always sufficient support for them in lessons.
62. Speaking and listening skills are significantly better than in most schools by the end of Years 9 and 11. There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop these skills through group work and class discussion in most lessons. Pupils are clear, confident speakers, using a wide and appropriate vocabulary. In Year 9, pupils listen attentively and contribute fluently. By Year 11, they substantiate their points of view cogently and coherently. Their skills are enhanced by opportunities to participate in public speaking competitions.
63. Standards are equally good in reading. Most lessons begin with time for reading and, by the end of Year 11, most pupils read fluently and expressively. Pupils of all abilities take advantage of the wide range of fiction available in the school library – the rate of borrowing is exceptionally high. Year 9 pupils, for example, read widely and discuss critically their preferences across many different types of fiction. A focus in lessons on exploring text in depth contributes significantly to the above-average levels of reading comprehension and literary appreciation.
64. The quality of writing is above average in all year groups. In Years 7 to 9, higher-attaining pupils' writing is varied, fluent and interesting. Their extended writing is well

constructed and well presented. In Years 10 and 11, pupils construct well-argued essays based on a good knowledge and understanding of the examination texts. There is imaginative and sensitive writing in all year groups. Lower-attaining pupils in all year groups are limited by weaker basic writing skills. Most pupils write fluently and present their work neatly. Writing skills are enhanced by good opportunities for independent research, by the provision of regular homework to consolidate and extend class learning and by teachers' constructive marking. For most pupils in all year groups, spelling is not up to the same standard as other aspects of their work.

65. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to excellent. It is very good overall. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and combine good lesson planning with appropriate and challenging learning objectives and positive class relationships, enabling pupils to explore ideas in secure learning environments. There is some outstanding teaching. In Year 10, for example, pupils learned to understand a poem by first exploring a painting and then comparing the symbolism of the poem with the painting, and, in Year 8, they learned to understand the language and appreciate the emotions of Lady Macbeth by writing their own stage directions. Pupils in Year 10 developed very clear understanding of the Edwardian class system, described in the play 'An Inspector Calls', by analysing a clip of a dinner scene from the film 'Titanic'. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate strategies to support the learning of all pupils, and sequence lessons carefully to enable pupils to build on their previous knowledge and understanding. The National Literacy Strategy is used well in some lessons in Years 7 and 8. Most pupils behave well and work well together in groups. Their positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. Work in other subjects makes a good contribution to literacy skills, with outstanding teaching of writing in history.
66. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum has been carefully adjusted to meet the changing requirements of the National Curriculum, resources for learning have been developed well and new teaching styles have been introduced. Citizenship and ICT have been effectively integrated into the curriculum. Provision for higher-attaining pupils has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have been supported through these changes by appropriate in-service training and the regular monitoring of teaching. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through the content of the curriculum and through interactive teaching. Effective assessment and recording procedures have been developed to track pupils' progress and set general targets, but these do not focus closely enough on basic skills, and contribute to the relatively weak provision for spelling. Overall, the department has made good improvements to its work since the last inspection, and is very well placed to improve further.

Drama

67. Provision for drama was sampled. Standards are above average throughout the school, and there is particularly good GCSE coursework from higher-attaining pupils. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is very good overall. The excellent teaching was challenging and very carefully planned. It promoted a thoughtful and evaluative approach among the pupils. Satisfactory teaching would be improved by clearer explanation of learning goals and the purpose of activities.
68. Leadership and management are very good, and there are very good opportunities for learning outside lessons and for performance. Accommodation is very cramped, and unsuitable for full classes. The school has plans to allocate a larger room to the subject from September.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Pupils reach very high standards in Year 9 national tests.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are above average.
- Good teaching successfully develops pupils' understanding.
- Homework plays an integral part in helping pupils learn rapidly.

Areas for development

- Assessment does not make enough use of National Curriculum levels.
- More ambitious targets should be set for the highest grades at GCSE.
- Some work could be more interesting, and some marking could give better guidance.

69. Pupils make very good progress from the above-average standards they have reached in their primary schools, and results in Year 9 national tests are consistently well above average. Although there has been a slight drop in standards from a peak in 2000, pupils are still nearly one year ahead of the nationally expected standards by the end of Year 9. Annually, over 60 per cent of pupils achieve A* to C in GCSE examinations compared with a little under half nationally. Virtually all pupils achieve a pass grade, although the number reaching the highest grades could be improved further.
70. Work seen during the inspection confirms that these standards in mathematics are being sustained. Setting arrangements are used effectively to match work to pupils' needs and establish good progress from the outset. Development of appropriate numeracy skills is emphasised. Calculators are used efficiently for percentages and to help solve problems; pupils enjoy exploring some of the more complex functions. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils can manipulate and use formulae; they understand cumulative frequency and can apply the laws of probability to compound events. All pupils have developed the ability to carry out investigations involving three-dimensional work and data collection with interpretation.
71. The school has adopted a modular scheme of GCSE assessment to enable more pupils to flourish. By Year 11, higher-attaining pupils' work bears witness to this with evidence of competency in the more exacting topics. These include proofs using vector geometry and application of the sine and cosine rules to solve problems. Examination preparation for the pupils aiming at lower GCSE grades, including those with special educational needs, is equally effective: they have acquired very good attitudes to study and use their immaculately maintained exercise books maturely as a resource. They have a good understanding of number properties and can calculate compound areas. They interpret diagrams to work out angles and understand basic geometrical transformations.
72. Teaching is very effective, resulting in good and sometimes excellent learning. Teachers plan lessons well, developing and extending pupils' knowledge in appropriate stages in class and through homework. A wide variety of resources and activities is used to maintain concentration and enthusiasm. In an excellent lesson, a matching game, referring to models and considering the division of a pepperoni pizza, enthused lower-attaining Year 8 pupils; they developed understanding of fractions and decimals through structured questions leading to problems to be attempted for homework. Other Year 8 pupils, however, have completed excessively long sets of repetitive questions,

which do not extend their understanding. Year 11 pupils, preparing for GCSE higher level, were observed engaged in well-structured revision of graphs; sharpening their mental agility before tackling a comprehensive range of testing questions. Pupils misinterpreting an equation were quick to realise their error and learn from it.

73. Pupils are given a wide range of mathematical experiences. Independent study skills are fostered, enabling them to carry out investigations and undertake statistical analysis competently. Where ICT is used, it contributes well to learning. Year 11 pupils were observed very effectively consolidating understanding of transformations, and younger pupils display survey results using appropriate software. Number work is developed very well in mathematics lessons, with good and sometimes outstanding support from other subjects, particularly history and geography. Use of appropriate mathematical terminology is emphasised by teachers and used well in turn by pupils; they have good literacy skills, which facilitate correct interpretation of mathematics text. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those with English as an additional language, participate fully in lessons and learn very well. Pupils have positive attitudes and are confident; they enjoy much of their work and on occasions spontaneously express delight in mathematical discovery.
74. The mathematics department is well managed. The team of teachers works collaboratively. They make best use of the suite of cramped rooms by maintaining stimulating displays that are used very well in lessons. Very good use is made of up-to-date resources, including recently purchased graphical calculators. Assessment, however, is not related closely enough to national standards, and targets, both for individual pupils and for the school's GCSE results, are not demanding enough. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made, particularly in teaching. These have led to the very high standards in Year 9 national tests, and to improved achievement among all groups of pupils. The team of teachers under the leadership of the recently appointed head of department has the enthusiasm and capacity to maintain the momentum towards similar levels of attainment in GCSE examinations.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and are better than those in most similar schools.
- Teaching is good in most lessons, and the best is excellent.
- There is a good range of activities in lessons and pupils work well together.
- Assessment procedures are detailed and make good use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough in some lessons.
- Schemes of work and lesson plans do not consider the needs of all pupils.
- Too few pupils choose to study science beyond GCSE level.

75. Pupils join the school with above-average standards, and almost always reach well above average standards in Year 9 national tests, both nationally and in comparison with similar schools. During the inspection, the standard of pupils' work was above average. GCSE results are above average, and the standard of work seen in Year 11 during the inspection was similar. Most pupils were achieving well in science, but the highest-attaining pupils in Years 9 and 11 could have achieved more in some lessons had they been more rigorously challenged. Overall, there has been good improvement

in standards since the last inspection, due largely to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching in most lessons.

76. In Years 7 to 9, pupils gain confidence and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across a broad range of National Curriculum topics. Lessons are based on practical work and pupils respond well, working co-operatively and sensibly, and handling equipment confidently and safely. In one Year 7 class, groups of pupils investigated red cabbage, which led them to an understanding of the use of chemical indicators and acids and alkalis. Year 8 pupils investigated how the rate of cooling results in the formation of small or large crystals and they worked enthusiastically in groups to classify rocks in the school grounds. Another group proudly identified rock samples and took measurements to calculate their density. These skills represent good overall achievement by Year 9. In a significant minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, however, achievement is lower than it should be because work is not pitched at a level that enables pupils to build effectively on the above-average knowledge, skills and understanding with which they start.
77. Year 11 work during the inspection showed that pupils are progressing at a suitable pace through the modules and are well prepared for their examinations. They can design and perform experiments with minimal help. Their work in class and for coursework shows that they can plan, predict, collect and analyse data, draw conclusions and evaluate their findings. In a Year 10 investigation of forces in catapults, the pupils produced and presented data in tables and graphs, and wrote detailed accounts exhibiting their scientific thought processes. They showed their understanding of experimental controls and variables and their ability to work collaboratively when they planned experiments to calculate and compare water loss from leaves in different environments. A group of lower-attaining pupils showed very good understanding when comparing the reactivity of metals and were able to explain why certain pairs of metals generated a higher voltage of electricity than others. The work of all pupils is complete and well presented.
78. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have secure subject knowledge. They mark pupils' books and tests regularly, writing comments of encouragement and guidance. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They are enthusiastic, good humoured and kindly. They plan carefully, understand and plan for the needs of different groups of pupils, and adjust their teaching accordingly. Teachers in these lessons reward good effort and conduct through praise. In response, pupils' behaviour is very good and they are keen to learn. The teachers set clear learning objectives and frequently refer back to them to check pupils' understanding. Pupils who experience the greatest difficulties are supported well in separate classes and make good progress. Patient and skilled teaching assistants support selected pupils or classes. Excellent teaching in Year 10 during the inspection enabled pupils to apply advanced scientific knowledge and practical skills to solving complex problems related to the transfer of energy.
79. In the minority of lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory, and in some where it is just satisfactory, planning does not take enough account of what pupils already know, understand and can do, so that there is too little challenge. This confirmed the concerns which some parents expressed before the inspection. In a small number of lessons, learning is also held back by weak management and organisation. ICT is used well. One laboratory has an interactive whiteboard which was used effectively to display data as pupils were collecting it. In another lesson pupils used laptop computers to

practise calculations. Much coursework is word-processed and some data-logging and graphs are also computer-generated.

80. Management is good overall. The development plan focuses on the continued improvement of standards. Detailed and well organised assessment procedures track pupils' progress well, with good use of the National Curriculum level descriptions. Work on the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 has begun, and revised schemes of work have been drafted. These, however, do not use the National Curriculum levels, lack clear learning goals, and do not address the full range of abilities and learning needs within each year group. The department knows that too few pupils choose to study science beyond GCSE and that the subject needs to be made more appealing. Taster AS-level lessons have been offered to prospective sixth form pupils. Pupils' personal development is enriched as they learn about the work of famous scientists, and about new developments in science and their effects on our lives. However, the department also needs to consider other factors which will make science more enjoyable such as greater challenge, more investigation work, field trips, museum visits, competitions, and rewards for successes and efforts in lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good.
- Teachers have high expectations, and set challenging tasks.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes, working hard and creatively.
- The use of assessment helps pupils improve.
- The department is very well managed.

Weaknesses

- ICT is under-used in most classes.
- Teaching is weaker in Year 7 classes taught by non-specialists.

81. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. GCSE results in 2002 were below average for the first time in recent years, but predicted GCSE grades for this year and pupils' work during the inspection indicate a significant improvement. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good overall progress, although the challenge to gifted and talented pupils could be made more consistent. The school has maintained the good standard of its work in the subject since the last inspection, and has improved assessment procedures.
82. In Year 7, four out of six classes are taught by non-specialists, sometimes, in non-specialist rooms. This makes it difficult for teachers to use a full range of resources and limits pupils' perception of the possibilities of the subject, although teaching remains satisfactory and is sometimes better. There is a strong emphasis on the successful development of observational drawing and the effective use of colour using paint and pastel. Pupils learn to apply these skills in an interesting and challenging variety of tasks. The disciplined and carefully structured approach to observational plant drawing in Year 9 is a very good example. Work in Years 8 and 9 is increasingly based on research and experimentation. Regular homework supports the development of classwork, and pupils develop good understanding of the work and style of famous artists.

83. By Year 11, pupils use observational drawing techniques effectively in a variety of contexts. Skills in the use of water-colour, acrylic paint and oil pastel, as well as some ambitious work in clay, are also well developed, resulting in some very imaginative and well finished outcomes. Processes of research and experimentation with media are increasingly well developed throughout Years 10 and 11. Sketchbooks are often very well presented, and include very good analysis as well as experiments with techniques. Pupils have a broad knowledge of artists from a wide range of cultures, and adapt their techniques well in their own work. Throughout Years 10 and 11, pupils are encouraged and expected to develop effective skills as independent learners, and to pursue individual responses to a common theme. This is a strength of the department. This was very well illustrated in a Year 10 class where pupils gave individual presentations of their work in response to the theme of shrines. The highly imaginative and very well built clay constructions by pupils in Year 11, inspired by the work of Gaudi, provided another very good example.
84. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is sometimes very good, and on occasion excellent. Teachers are well organised and generally have high expectations of their pupils in terms of behaviour, pace and progress. On a few occasions in Years 7 to 9, pace and levels of expectation were not sufficiently demanding. Planning is good, often very good. There are examples of good and very good teaching, in differing year groups. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that pupils think hard about the development of their work and that they explore different forms of expression thoroughly. This has been achieved, despite a period of long-term absence, through illness, of one of the art specialists. There is, however, too little use of ICT across the department. Opportunities for reflection are well planned in some lessons, but this is not consistent across the department. Pupils develop strong interests in the subject, and their enthusiasm sustains learning well.
85. The department is very well led by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist who sets and maintains very high standards. Planning is thorough and effectively includes aspects of literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Good procedures for assessment are now well established and used effectively to inform pupils of their standards and ways of improving their work. There are good opportunities for learning outside lessons. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school, and helped it achieve the Artsmark Gold award.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good across all areas of the subject.
- Standards are well above average in Year 9 and at GCSE.
- There is a very good GCSE course in child development.
- The broad and rich curriculum provides very good learning opportunities.
- Pupils behave well and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources for food technology are inadequate.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 need more information on their standards and learning.
- Analysis of standards and examination results could be more detailed.

86. GCSE results have been consistently above average since the last inspection, and have sometimes been exceptionally high, as in 2001, when 85 per cent of pupils passed with grades A* to C. Teachers' assessments and work during the inspection confirmed the overall high standards in the subject. The good literacy and numeracy skills of most pupils help develop high standards in design briefs, specifications and the evaluation of finished products. Many projects involve the use of ICT, giving pupils good understanding of this important area of the subject. Both designing and making skills are above average; many individual designs for products show originality and flair. Pupils with special needs, and those with English as an additional language, enjoy learning about the subject and make good progress, through practical work and creative activities. Overall, the subject has shown good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in standards and teaching. There has been some good refurbishment of rooms, but accommodation for food technology remains inadequate, and basic standards of hygiene are only met through an exceptional effort by the teachers. The room is to be refurbished by September 2003.
87. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop an awareness of the properties of a wide range of materials, and use hand and power tools effectively and safely. For example, Year 7 pupils design and make an acrylic photo frame. Their design ideas are imaginative and well considered for their purpose. Measuring, cutting, and shaping skills are good, and their work is very carefully assembled and finished. Year 8 pupils design and make desserts for a new style café. During the inspection, they produced imaginative recipes of their own, and worked at a brisk pace. The standard of food preparation and cooking is well above that expected for Year 8. Decorative clocks, based around small electronic components, are thoughtfully designed by Year 9 pupils. Many use abstract shapes and harmonising colours to produce high quality products. All are able to measure and cut the shapes accurately from sheet materials, to form attractive well balanced designs. They use computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment effectively to make some of the components including clock hands and numerals.
88. Practical work is well integrated with theory in Years 10 and 11. For instance, pupils in Year 10 textiles learned about methods of pattern production and pattern cutting; they use recycled fabrics to design and make attractive casual bags. All produced accurate patterns and good design plans, showing their method clearly. Year 11 pupils evaluate computer-aided design, showing a very good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using computers to aid drawing. During the inspection, they completed a revision paper in exceptionally fast time, showing above-average

knowledge of isometric drawing and the ability to plot computer co-ordinates quickly and accurately. In child development lessons, Year 11 pupils developed good understanding of the importance of immunisation and vaccination. They understood how vaccinations make the blood produce antibodies which fight infection, and gave informed comment in lively debate about the pros. and cons. of having the MMR vaccination. Overall, presentation and use of literacy, numeracy, and information communication technology are above average in all areas of the subject.

89. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, and the best is excellent. The specialist teachers have very good knowledge of their subject areas and of the National Curriculum, examination requirements and assessment criteria. They communicate well, through clear introductions and demonstrations, and aims and objectives that set realistic yet challenging targets. Teachers have high expectations, and tasks are appropriately open-ended to cater for all pupils' needs. There is extension work for higher-attaining pupils. All lessons are well planned, prepared, and delivered, and schemes of work are well considered to make best use of time, materials and available equipment. Problem-solving activities, investigations, and lively question and answer sessions promote very good learning. Health and safety factors are extremely well addressed in all areas. Very good relationships and attitudes contribute much to progress and learning. A minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 is taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject; learning in these lessons is satisfactory, but does not benefit from the high levels of subject knowledge of the specialist staff.
90. Very good leadership and management are leading to rising standards, a broad range of learning opportunities, and good arrangements to assess and track progress. These could usefully be extended to include more information for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and more detailed analysis of examination results. Teaching and learning are monitored well, and the department makes a good contribution to teacher training. Development plans are appropriate, but could be improved by clearer priorities, target dates and more detail. There is very limited technical support for work in food and textiles, and some staff do not yet have safety certificates. The department has developed a good collection of resources for learning.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good, and sometimes excellent.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' work are very effective.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils do not take enough care over their written work.
- There is too little use of ICT.
- Much time is lost when pupils move between lessons.

91. Standards are well above average in Year 9 and in Year 11; pupils often reach very high grades at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the subject and all pupils make very good progress over time. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained and extended its very good work in Years 10 and 11, and has made very good improvements in the challenge and rigour offered to pupils in Years 7 to 9.

92. By Year 11, pupils have wide knowledge of the subject. They evaluate information and give reasoned explanations, for example, of possible connections between human activities and global warming. Pupils use information well to investigate conflicts of interest concerning the sustainable development of the rain forest. Although lower-attaining pupils give some extended explanations in discussion, these are not always found in their written work. Pupils use a range of fieldwork techniques and combine these with other skills including ICT, producing good and often very good GCSE coursework. The care applied to the drawing of maps and diagrams, and the quality of presentation skills, are impressive.
93. By Year 9, pupils develop good mapping skills; most use atlases and other maps confidently to locate places and physical features. Their written work shows increasing confidence in analysing graphs and statistical tables, in evaluating information and in arriving at considered conclusions, for example about population change over time. Most pupils show an increasing awareness of the inequalities of life in different parts of the world. Most pupils write well, and those with literacy difficulties manage to provide simple but usually accurate answers. However, these pupils' lack of confidence results in a slow pace in some lessons, and some unfinished work. Pupils work well together sharing ideas and opinions. They make good use of opportunities to work independently. A minority of pupils, however, do not take enough care with their work in class and at home.
94. The quality of teaching in lessons ranges from satisfactory to excellent. It is very good overall. Teachers think carefully about outcomes, activities are carefully planned to build up and test a range of skills, consolidate learning and to challenge pupils to do more. This extends higher-attaining pupils but it does not always help lower-attaining pupils, especially when modified resources are not provided. Class management is very good and expectations are high. Teachers' explanations are very clear and questioning checks understanding. The positive learning environment created by teachers makes pupils confident in asking and answering questions. Touches of humour and 'fun' starter activities lighten the mood and make learning a pleasurable experience. Where the teaching is excellent, this light touch is accompanied by clear and rigorous analysis of evidence – for example, on death rates. Teachers mark work rigorously and their comments on work are both supportive and informative. Themes selected for detailed study make a very good contribution to citizenship.
95. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is committed to the advancement of the subject and to raising standards still further: involving teachers in curriculum planning acknowledges and makes good use of individual skills and expertise. Assessment procedures are very good. Assessments are linked to modules of study and involve a variety of tasks including poetry and prose so pupils enjoy what they are doing and do it well. This also contributes very effectively to literacy skills. Tests are carefully constructed to ensure that all pupils can demonstrate their achievements, and they are very well involved in evaluating their own work. There has been some improvement in the use of ICT since the last inspection, but it is still not making the contribution to learning that it could. During the inspection, much teaching time was lost while teachers waited for pupils to arrive from the main school. This is not the fault of the geography department and the problem will be solved by the school's new building programme. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral and social development and to citizenship.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11.
Higher-attaining pupils often achieve A* at GCSE.
Teaching is very good, and often excellent.
Pupils develop good analytical skills, and write very well.
Leadership and management are excellent.

Areas for improvement

The pace and challenge of a small minority of lessons could be improved.

96. There are many excellent features in history. It is an important strength of the school, and the quality of teaching is much appreciated by pupils. Standards throughout are well above average and progress is very good. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning, the provision for higher-attaining pupils, the use of ICT, and assessment in years 7 to 9, have all improved substantially. Overall improvement has been very good.
97. Pupils in Year 9 have a good depth of knowledge. They understand the importance of chronology. They are accustomed to considering sources as evidence and most are able to comment on their reliability and usefulness as well as to select information from them. There are very good examples of research leading to detailed and organised extended writing. Higher-attaining pupils are aware of the wider historical context and so, when writing about life in the trenches in the First World War, may consider poetry, photographs and family memories as well as more conventional sources. Pupils with special educational needs make similar very good progress. Written work is always well presented and shows much effort and pride. Throughout the department, teachers' careful attention to the development of reading and writing makes a strong contribution to literacy skills. Where appropriate, rigorous statistical analysis enables them to apply numeracy skills effectively.
98. By Year 11, pupils have very good factual knowledge of their topics. Their evaluative and analytical skills are sufficiently good for them to apply their knowledge effectively. For example, they consider the development of medicine from prehistory to the present day, and link various medical advances to factors such as war, religion and politics before making a final evaluation. Their writing skills are well developed and used effectively in their coursework; for example, in very well written comparisons of Dyrham Park with Hampton Court. They show very good understanding of the development of architectural features and their reflection of other historical themes.
99. The quality of teaching is very good, and was excellent in almost half of the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers have excellent understanding of the subject and of examination requirements. Through questioning, they encourage pupils to begin thinking critically in Year 7. Links with other subjects are exploited and so, in Year 8, the idea of classification, familiar from science, is introduced into the topic on indigenous peoples of North America. The need for research and then independent decision is constantly emphasised. Lessons are enlivened by simple but effective methods and imaginative use of resources, such as string graphs to show the development of medicine, or large pieces of paper torn up to represent land given to Norman barons.
100. In all lessons, teachers make sure that key words are understood, and use good prompts to help pupils bring a wide range of evidence together to construct a historical argument. One excellent lesson in Year 9 enabled pupils to use their own judgement, in the context of the teacher's framework, to analyse Hitler's political tactics and compare

them with those of other dictators. Pupils use ICT frequently in word processing but also more extensively for research. Homework is regularly set, always relevant to the lesson and fully explained. Marking is excellent because comments always encourage and explain how to improve. In a small minority of lessons, taught by teachers whose main subject is not history, pace and challenge are less marked than usual, and time is less well managed. Pupils make a key contribution to learning through their interest, concentration and co-operation.

101. Leadership, management and teamwork are outstanding. Teachers place constant emphasis on challenging pupils to reach higher standards. Their method of target setting, linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, has led to significant improvements in this area, and, where appropriate, lessons are planned with the highest GCSE grades in mind. There is a good programme of visits and revision classes that motivate pupils and consolidate learning. The department makes a very good contribution to citizenship by helping pupils to relate themes in political history to current issues and events.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average, particularly in the GCSE course.
- Quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good.
- Procedures for assessing and monitoring standards and progress are good.
- The department is led and managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils need more learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11. The school has good plans to address this issue.
- ICT is under-used to promote learning in some subjects.

102. Standards among pupils joining the school are broadly average overall. By Year 9, good teaching results in above-average standards, and eight out of ten pupils reach the standard expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with extra help from teachers. Those with minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils, and sometimes do better. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. About half of the pupils opt to take the subject in Years 10 and 11, an increase on the previous two years. GCSE results vary from year to year. In 2001, the results were well above average. They fell in 2002, but work seen during the inspection was once again above average. Three out of ten pupils opt to take the GNVQ at intermediate level, a course which has not yet been finally examined. All pupils have opportunities to develop and apply their ICT skills in other subjects. Most of this work is good, but there are some weaknesses, particularly in geography and music, caused mainly by limited access to computers. The overall pattern of work in the subject shows good achievement, and very good improvement from the inadequate provision at the time of the last inspection.

103. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and sometimes very good. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They involve pupils in learning by asking them questions as lessons progress and provide good help and guidance to individual pupils in practical lessons. Management of pupils and relationships are good. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and respond well in

lessons. They learn a good range of ICT skills including the use of word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and the Internet. In two good lessons in Year 7, pupils were seen learning to publish a leaflet or magazine about their favourite subject for new pupils to the school. In Years 8 and 9, pupils developed good skills in designing and using spreadsheets, analysing data and designing questionnaires to collect specific evidence.

104. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and Year 11 is good, and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their highly developed knowledge of the subject to provide good technical information, and make very effective use of discussion in lessons. Teachers are particularly good at giving helpful feedback to pupils on how they may improve coursework. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils completing their coursework on databases received excellent individual explanation and guidance. In a similar lesson in the same year, pupils worked very well on their coursework as a part of the vocational course. In a very good mathematics lesson in Year 11, pupils were seen learning to use co-ordinates to create a geometric shape and to transform and rotate it electronically. They also learnt to produce graphs electronically for first and second order equations effectively. In a small minority of lessons, pupils work diligently and make satisfactory progress, but spend too much time consolidating existing skills rather than learning new ones.
105. The management provided by the head of department is effective and he is well supported by his colleagues. Assessment procedures have recently been improved, and give pupils very clear information on their achievements. At present, learning opportunities for some pupils who do not take ICT as a subject are only just adequate. The school is to make ICT a compulsory subject in Years 10 and 11 from September 2003. During the inspection, the head of department made a lucid and well-argued presentation to the school leadership team on the further development of resources and provision for the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average by Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good across the school, with all pupils involved.
- Pupils often make rapid progress in their second languages.
- Spoken and written work are closely and effectively integrated in planning.
- There is good use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- The number of pupils taking two languages at GCSE is small, though rising.

106. GCSE results in 2002 were above average in French and broadly average in German. The proportion of pupils taking German was around double that found nationally. In both languages there is a general upward trend in performance since 1998. This was confirmed by the standard of work seen during the inspection, which was above average in Year 11 in both languages. Standards in Year 9 are above average in pupils' first and second languages. Most pupils in Years 8 and 9 study a second language for one hour per week. They make very good progress and achieve high standards in the time available. There are no significant differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils, and planning enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Overall, achievement is good and has shown good improvement since the last inspection, with very good improvement in Year 9.

107. In a Year 7 German lesson, most pupils could talk about leisure-time activities, express opinions, and ask and answer questions. Most used correct verb endings and had good pronunciation. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 have good speaking and listening skills. They expect to hear French and German used for instructions and simple explanations. They ask for and give directions and show that they can easily compose conversations from given prompts. They are confident with a wide range of prepositions and are good at distinguishing between vowel sounds. Most have good pronunciation. The lowest-attaining pupils can use the vocabulary they have learned in short sentences and phrases, and acquire sound listening comprehension skills. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 show good understanding of grammar – for example, using the perfect and imperfect tenses accurately in a letter giving an account of a holiday. The weakest writers in Year 9 can communicate through short written sentences, but find grammar difficult and usually confine their writing to the present tense. Throughout Years 7 to 9, teachers in French and German use well-structured guidance and planning to enable pupils to use complete sentences.

108. Overall, pupils in Year 11 have good knowledge and understanding of the spoken and written languages they study. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 have a wide range of vocabulary and good grammatical understanding in French and German, with quick and accurate control over tenses. Those who make mistakes often correct themselves. When expressing opinions they use a wide range of positive and negative comments and give reasons. The lowest-attaining pupils in Year 11 are confident speakers within their limited range of vocabulary and structures. In a practice lesson for the imminent GCSE French oral examination, most could tackle the role play task and answer a number of set questions. They made basic pronunciation errors but succeeded in communicating. Their writing is still restricted to simple sentences, but is well practised.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the department. Lessons are well planned with a range of varied learning activities which successfully teach and consolidate new vocabulary and structures. Pupils develop good listening skills from the outset because teachers always use French or German for instructions and simpler explanations. In all lessons, teaching is rigorous, and teachers use a lively mix of class question and answer, whole class repetition and pair work. Pupils are given many opportunities to speak, and speaking and written work are particularly well integrated in planning. The very brisk pace of lessons ensures that the time is used most effectively, particularly in second language lessons, where pupils reach a good standard in a relatively short time. The routine use of class repetition ensures good pronunciation in both languages. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' capabilities, and pitch work well to engage the lowest-attaining pupils, while challenging those with a particular aptitude for the subject. Teachers continually check pupils' understanding of previous work in lessons, and this helps them to build on it successfully. Classroom management is very good. Teachers deal firmly with the small number of pupils who are not always attentive, and constantly ensure that the whole class is fully engaged in the task. Their emphasis on clarity, communication and accuracy makes a good contribution to literacy skills.
110. The faculty is very effectively led and managed. Teaching is monitored well, and initiatives to improve teaching and learning have led to very good improvements in quality since the last inspection. Most pupils study two languages in Years 7 to 9, and are able to do so in Years 10 and 11. While the number choosing to do this remains small, it is rising. Learning opportunities are enhanced by opportunities to visit France and Germany in Years 8 and 9. There are good systems to assess standards and progress, and these are used well to set targets for learning. ICT is used well to support learning in French and German. Pupils have access to the Internet and regularly use interactive websites to further their knowledge and understanding.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Staff and pupils are committed and enthusiastic.
- There are extensive opportunities for pupils to learn outside lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The benefits to pupils of the good teaching they receive are diminished by weak planning for development and for the GCSE course.
- There are too few resources for learning, particularly in ICT.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

111. Standards are above average at GCSE and at the end of Year 9. Pupils join the school with broadly average knowledge and understanding of the subject, and achievement throughout the school is good. Pupils with special needs and those with particular talents make good progress. They are enthusiastic in music lessons and attitudes are very good. There are very good relationships throughout the department, and pupils show high levels of responsibility.
112. Pupils in Year 11 during the inspection were reaching above average standards, particularly in composing and performing. Listening skills are less well developed, and a

minority of pupils struggle to define elements of musical style. By the end of Year 9, many pupils can compose, perform and notate their own chords and harmonies. All pupils can perform a reggae chord pattern rhythmically and can distinguish basic elements of reggae style. A small minority have yet to develop competent keyboard technique.

113. The quality of teaching is consistently good, with very good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, manage their pupils very well and provide them with very effective tutorial support. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are given many opportunities to explore their creativity and knowledge over sustained periods of time. In a particularly good lesson on drumming in Year 7, tasks were progressively more difficult as pupils built up rhythmic patterns and questioning in the review session encouraged pupils to refine their responses. Pupils made good progress and extended their understanding. There were similar qualities in all lessons seen during the inspection. A broad range of skills is taught, with good emphasis on literacy and vocabulary skills.
114. Day-to-day management is good. Teachers work closely together and set a very good example to pupils through their commitment to the subject. There are, however, weaknesses in the longer-term management of the subject. These include significant weaknesses in development planning and in the curriculum for GCSE courses that limit the benefits to pupils of the strengths in the department's teaching. The school's planning procedures are not used effectively in the department.
115. Teachers maintain good provision despite serious problems with accommodation and resources that lead to some lack of balance in the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The requirement to teach music through ICT in the National Curriculum and at GCSE level is not met. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on music, moods and themes make a good contribution to their personal development, and there are good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and emphasise social responsibility in class. The school choir, folk band and concert band achieve high standards, and performances are given regularly. A high proportion of pupils take instrumental lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are consistently good, and frequently very good.
- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Pupils are very positive in their approach to physical education.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The quality and range of activities outside lessons are very good.

Areas for development

- Marking could do more to identify weaknesses and help pupils improve.
- The range of the department's work is constrained by the school's limited facilities.

116. Standards are above average in Year 9 and in Year 11, where standards among pupils taking GCSE are well above average. The percentage of pupils who study for GCSE is much higher than in most schools. All other pupils in Year 11 take the Entry Level Certificate. Standards are good, with a significant number of pupils on course for merits or distinctions. All pupils show impressive levels of enthusiasm and commitment even in bad weather. They work hard in lessons and are always correctly dressed. Pupils with special educational needs are involved consistently well in all lessons, and several are enrolled on the GCSE course. Gifted and talented pupils have good opportunities to reach high standards. A significant number of pupils achieve county, regional or national honours in gymnastics, fencing, athletics, orienteering, tennis, netball, swimming, golf, cross-country running and rowing. By the time pupils reach Year 11, their overall achievement is very good.
117. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' early assessment shows that standards when pupils first arrive at the school are below average. They make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils demonstrated good basic agility on apparatus. In Year 8, pupils can produce imaginative work in dance showing fluency, expression and control. In Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of defensive play in netball. Achievement is also good for those pupils in Year 11 who are following the Entry Level certificate. Pupils on the GCSE course are achieving very well. Some of their personal exercise programmes are of good standard.
118. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and is often very good. In one lesson, it was excellent. Teachers relate well to the pupils and plan lessons very thoroughly. As a result of very good class management, pupils know exactly what is required of them. They work willingly with their teachers and with each other in order to improve. Teachers' expectations are high and the very good response from all pupils contributes to the progress that they make. In some of the most successful lessons pupils are encouraged to comment on their own work and that of others. They do so very constructively. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to organise their own warm-up activities and to take on the roles of coaches or officials. Teachers link theory and practice very effectively. Written work is corrected regularly but marking does not always suggest ways in which pupils can improve. In response to the good teaching that pupils receive, levels of participation in physical education and sports are very high throughout the school. Attitudes and behaviour are always very good or excellent.
119. Teachers provide a very good range of additional opportunities for pupils outside normal lessons. As well as games, these include gymnastics, dance, judo, fencing,

trampolining, rowing and competitions between tutor groups. The activities seen during the inspection were well supported, particularly by younger pupils. Specialist coaches are employed to help pupils to extend their skills in a number of sports. Pupils in Years 7 and 9 are given the opportunity to experience outdoor and adventurous activities through residential courses. Recent team successes include the Under-14 netball team, who won the National Sports College Final, and the Under-16 gymnastics team, who won the South West Floor and Vault competition. Parents expressed strong appreciation of teachers' commitment to these activities and of the additional work they undertake.

120. The head of department has been in post for just one term. She is working well with the director of sport. Provision for physical education continues to be managed very efficiently. The staff are experienced, committed and very enthusiastic. Documentation is clear and precise. ICT, including video and digital cameras, is used increasingly to support learning.
121. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The most significant development is the very successful introduction of the GCSE course. A system of early assessment enables teachers to gain an accurate picture of the pupils' skills when they join the school, and grouping of pupils in sets in Years 8 and 9 contributes to high standards. The curriculum has been broadened by the inclusion of judo. All entry level pupils in Year 10 take the Junior Sports Leaders Award. Opportunities for professional development have increased as a result of Sports College status. The two physical education classrooms make it easier for staff to teach theory, but a shortage of suitable large indoor areas limits the range of practical activities that can be offered. The technician and sports secretary support the work of teachers very effectively. Good links have been established with all local primary schools. These have resulted in an audit of physical education provision in those schools that should in time lead to higher standards.

Dance

122. Provision for dance was sampled. Pupils make very good progress in dance in Years 7 to 9, and reach above-average standards in the GCSE course. Very good teaching results in learning of high quality. Pupils enjoy what they are doing and they work very hard. Dance makes a very good contribution to the creative aims of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning during the inspection were often very good.
- The effective teaching makes a very good contribution to personal development.
- Pupils are interested in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Analysis of pupils' work shows evidence of very poor teaching in half of the classes.
- Leadership and management in the subject are poor.
- Long-term development planning is poor.

123. There is great and unacceptable variation in standards, learning and the quality of teaching between classes. In half the classes, very good and sometimes excellent teaching has brought a rapid recent improvement so that, overall, standards in these

classes are above average. In the other classes, analysis of work shows that very little has been completed, hardly any is marked and too few demands have been made of pupils. The quality of work in these classes is very poor, progress is slow and pupils do not reach the levels expected of them. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Action by the headteacher and the contribution of the newly-appointed teacher has resulted in a recent improvement of provision in half of the classes. In lessons during inspection, pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress because of the support given to them by the teacher, tasks matched to their needs and imaginative learning resources. Gifted and talented pupils were challenged effectively in their work.

124. By the end of Year 9, most pupils know the origins and basic teachings of the main world faiths, and rather more about Jesus. They are developing an understanding of the reasons for poverty and reflect on what they can do to change inequalities in the world. In one lesson, pupils gasped with surprise at the poor living conditions seen on slides and one pupil proudly showed a chocolate bar, purchased from Tradefair, which was her personal response to this issue. In some classes, however, ineffective teaching has left pupils with a superficial level of knowledge and understanding.
125. Pupils in Year 11 have significant and unacceptable gaps in their knowledge and understanding. However, as at the time of the last inspection, a group of pupils is taught to GCSE standard outside lessons. Teaching and learning in this group were very good, and included an outstanding revision booklet produced by the teacher.
126. During the inspection week, teaching was consistently very good and occasionally excellent. Lesson planning was very thorough and included a wide range of stimulating activities, such as music, drama, games, the teacher's slides of Uganda, and ICT, which ensured that all pupils were fully engaged. The teacher set clear learning targets and maintained a good pace in all lessons. Subject knowledge was excellent, appropriate encouragement and praise were used, and pupils were challenged to achieve high standards. This had a very positive impact on learning and progress. All work was well matched to pupils' needs, homework always set with relevant tasks that extended class work and marking was very thorough and helpful. Pupils were well motivated, showed respect for the teacher and one another and attitudes and behaviour were often exemplary.
127. Strong emphasis on the promotion of literacy enables all pupils, but particularly lower-attaining pupils, to improve their work, especially in understanding essential religious terminology. Teachers ensure that key words are carefully presented and understood, and use writing frames well to assist learning. There are few opportunities for written work in some teaching. There are no computers in either classroom and limited use of ICT. The library is a valuable resource and is used well.
128. The department is not organised and led effectively. Long-term planning is very poor, and study and lesson plans were, until recently, wholly inadequate. Improvements during the inspection were the result of initiatives taken by the headteacher and the newly-appointed teacher.
129. Although opportunities are not identified in programmes of study, teaching during the inspection was making a distinctive and significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and citizenship education. Through learning about beliefs, values and the concept of spirituality, pupils reflect on their own beliefs and values and consider moral issues such as medical ethics and fair trade. An appreciation of the richness and diversity of other cultures is a prominent feature of many lessons. There are clear

opportunities for reflection on attitudes and values, inspiration, aspiration and motivation. Assessment procedures are in place but monitoring of subject performance is unsatisfactory. Charts showing pupils' progress, due to be operational from last September, are not yet in place. Accommodation is poor in one classroom but good in the other. The distance between the two is unhelpful to the department.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Citizenship issues are very well taught across a range of subjects.
- Citizenship benefits from a wide range of activities outside lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management are weak.
- Arrangements to assess progress are not yet in place.
- Some pupils have poor attitudes in lessons.

130. Citizenship has been successfully introduced. Most aspects are taught through subjects and the personal, social and health education programme, with the addition of special citizenship days in Years 7 to 9 and fortnightly lessons in Years 10 and 11. While the overall time for the subject is low, the school supplements this through assemblies, work in subjects, whole-school events, extra-curricular activities and the work of the lower and upper school councils.
131. Pupils have broadly average knowledge and understanding of citizenship issues for their age, with some good features where issues have been specifically taught or treated in assembly. Pupils' written evaluation about sanctions for criminal behaviour and the rehabilitation of prisoners shows positive thinking. They use information well. A booklet, 'Taking old bags shopping', provoked amusement and lively discussions on the reuse of plastic bags and/or biodegradable materials. Year 10 anti-drug posters reflect a good use of resources as well as understanding of the consequences of abuse. Year 8 pupils appear to have made the most of their citizenship day to meet and find out about the role of the mayor and, through active participation in workshops, to learn about the work of both government and voluntary agencies working within their local area. However, not all pupils respond positively in personal, social and health education lessons, and this sometimes slows progress.
132. Standards are highest where citizenship is delivered in the context of outstanding teaching in other subjects. Pupils learn, particularly in history, geography and religious education, about the role of governments in decision-making and evaluate the impact of legislation on human activities. They show increasing understanding of the reasons for conflicts of interests and beliefs as reflected in discussions, written work and in creative imagery. Work in science shows good understanding of energy conservation, the fragility of ecosystems and issues such as genetic engineering. Pupils understand the importance of personal responsibility in individual as well as team sport as seen in physical education. Younger pupils learn about personal challenge arising from dangerous sports in their English lessons and also about the relevance of rules relating to health and safety.
133. The school fosters citizenship through its provision for personal development. Assemblies deliver strong moral messages - for example, on fair trade. Pupils assume responsibility in their involvement in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award

scheme, music and sport, sometimes representing the school. Teamwork has resulted in impressive local and regional awards for public speaking and sports, while individual commitment has been recognised through Bath's Young Citizen of the Year Award. Pupils' understanding of global inequalities is evident in their fund-raising activities for charities such as the UNICEF Afghanistan appeal and for their adopted school in South Africa. On the other hand, the school councils offer too little scope for pupils to bring up issues for discussion and are sometimes too closely controlled by the teachers in charge.

134. Development of the subject has been held up by the long-term sick leave of the teacher principally responsible. There is no handbook, and there are no arrangements to assess standards. The commitment of all staff to the principles of the subject, however, and the high quality of the best work, put the school in a good position to improve on this situation once effective management arrangements can be put in place.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

In the inspection, nine 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. There are no national comparative data for results in 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	0	52	0	2	-	0.79
Chemistry	1	0	43	0	5	-	0.77

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	7	100	96	57	46	8.0	6.6
Biology	6	83	88	88	34	5.3	5.2
Business studies	10	90	92	10	52	3.6	5.5
Chemistry	4	100	90	50	43	6.5	5.9
Communication Studies	6	100	93	17	31	5.0	5.5
Computer Studies	10	100	86	10	23	4.2	4.6
English literature	22	100	95	18	37	5.5	5.9
French	6	83	89	17	38	3.0	5.6
Design and technology	1	100	91	100	30	10.0	5.4
Geography	15	100	92	40	38	6.4	5.7
History	9	89	88	33	35	4.9	5.5
Mathematics	5	100	87	60	43	6.8	5.8
Music	1	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.7
Other sciences	25	80	90	24	30	4.1	5.2
Sociology	7	100	86	57	35	6.0	5.3
Sports/Physical education studies	10	100	92	50	25	6.6	5.9

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

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

Mathematics

Overall, provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good, and meets the needs of students well.
- Relationships are good, and students support each other's work.
- Teachers give generously of their time to support learning outside lessons.
- A wide range of students have the opportunity to study mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students studying mathematics is very small.
- Students need more detailed information on their strengths and weaknesses.
- More emphasis is needed on thinking skills and independent learning strategies.
- Some students in Year 12 have gaps in their attendance.

135. The mathematics department aims to provide for all students wishing to study the subject and accepts a high proportion of students who barely qualify for the course. Since the last inspection, the number of students has declined steadily, and there are just four students in Year 12 and five in Year 13. A-level results were well above average in 2001. They were lower in 2002, but all five candidates passed. In 2002, seven out of twelve students passed AS, and those who have proceeded to Year 13 are making good progress towards A-level. Given the mathematical background of the students, the results represent satisfactory achievement.

136. The standard of work seen in Year 13 lessons and students' files is broadly average, and occasionally better. The quality of discussion in lessons is similar. These standards represent good achievement from these students' starting points. Year 12 students often find the transition from GCSE difficult as they lack algebraic skills; the school's provision is effective in helping some, but not all, overcome this problem. All Year 13 students have built upon their earlier knowledge effectively, showing good algebraic skills and a good understanding of vectors when formulating an equation for a vector joining two points in space. Most Year 12 students rely on prompts from their teachers in pure mathematics and statistics, but show some initiative when solving critical path analysis problems during decision mathematics. These students are making satisfactory overall progress.

137. Teaching is good overall. Teachers know the syllabus well, and plan their lessons in detail to meet the needs of each student. This, with good liaison between the team of teachers and very good student-teacher relationships, ensures good learning in Year 13. Structured questioning enables these students to develop thinking skills and build upon prior knowledge. Students are not afraid to make mistakes, knowing that support is readily available from fellow students as well as their teachers. However, some students' folders are poorly organised, and they do not set out their thinking clearly enough in writing. Marking and assessment are inconsistent, so that students' strengths and weaknesses are not clearly identified and communicated to them. Teachers give very generously of their time to provide further support and extra classes for students endeavouring to overcome their learning difficulties. This has been very

successful with Year 13 students, but has not had the same impact with all students in Year 12. Some Year 12 students during the inspection had significant gaps in their attendance, particularly in pure mathematics lessons. Year 13 students work conscientiously with enjoyment and speak highly of their teachers.

138. The very recently appointed head of department supports his team well, but has not yet had time to make a real impact upon teaching and learning strategies. However, he has identified areas for development, which are to extend student opportunities to develop their independent learning and thinking skills, and to improve the quality and consistency of assessment and monitoring of student progress. His priority is to develop further strategies to improve the recruitment and success rate of students, while continuing to provide opportunities for the broadest possible range of students.

Biology

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

Strengths

- A-level results are above average.
- The students are interested in the subject and work very hard.
- There is ample opportunity for the students to develop independent study skills.
- The best teaching is very good, and builds carefully on what students already know.

Areas for improvement

- Some work does not provide students with sufficient challenge.
- Insufficient time and support is given to topics that students find difficult.

139. A-level results have improved steadily over the past three years, and half of the students achieved A or B grades in 2002. Standards in students' work during the inspection were above average. Of the seven A-level students, four joined the school in 2001 from other schools. Of the 13 AS students who began the course in 2002, eight have come from other schools. The school is taking steps to encourage more students to study A-level science.

140. The standard of work in students' books is good. The thoroughness and neat presentation of their investigation work and homework show that they are conscientious students. The A-level students' investigations of the rate of photosynthesis in pond weed show how capable they are of independent scientific study. They plan their own course of action and include research, using books and websites. They consider a variety of possible factors which might affect the effectiveness of the enzymes involved, and make effective use of what they already know. They make predictions, which they explain clearly, using scientific language. In the laboratory they displayed their knowledge and skills during pre-investigation trials of their chosen experiments. They chose a wide range of variables and were careful about including controls. They were aware of the level of accuracy they could expect to achieve, and explained how such limitations would be considered in their evaluations. This work shows these students' good progress over two years, and that they have acquired the independent learning skills they will need in higher education.

141. The AS-level students are making equally good progress. They have exceeded their target grades in their first module tests, showing that they are capable of study at this level. They are still acquiring the investigation skills seen in Year 13 work.

142. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. It is good overall. When teaching is very good, lessons are carefully planned and include clear learning objectives for the class and for individuals. Teachers ask open-ended questions to check what students already know, to challenge them and to encourage them to think. There is sufficient information to remind students of relevant earlier work and to introduce new topics, while expecting the students to question and do their own research so leading them toward independent learning. Teachers continuously assesses the students' level of understanding and adjust lessons accordingly. Before Year 12 students carried out experimental trials for an investigation of osmosis, the teacher reviewed their existing understanding of the topic. He made sure that they understood the new vocabulary and gave additional support to students who had shown weak skills in previous investigations. Teachers and students respect each other, and the students learn through mature discussion. However, while there is no unsatisfactory teaching, students are sometimes given unchallenging tasks, which do not allow them to take responsibility for their own learning. The strengths in these lessons only just outweigh their shortcomings.
143. The management of biology is good overall. Students' work and progress are carefully monitored and assessment procedures are thorough. Students are advised on how to improve further and they are involved in the setting of their target grades. Curriculum management ensures that all topics are covered and that there is sufficient revision time prior to the examinations. It does not, however, distinguish clearly enough between what has to be taught in lessons and what students could learn or revise for themselves. This is an important issue, as more time could otherwise be allocated to topics which are more intellectually demanding, and which the students find difficult.

BUSINESS

Business Studies at AS and A-level was inspected.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a wide range of relevant experience and good teaching skills.
- A strong and effective lead in the classroom helps all students to learn effectively.
- The subject is well managed and available resources are used well.
- The course makes good use of conferences and work experience.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used as a regular part of teaching and learning in the classroom
- Students should take a more active role in preparing for lessons.
- A few students do not attend regularly and have poor attitudes to work.

144. Recent A-level results have been below average, although they represent satisfactory progress from students' GCSE results. AS results improved in 2002. Of 18 students entered, seven were awarded A or B grades and only one student failed. Standards in the present Year 13 are broadly average, with female students tending to do particularly well. This is chiefly because some male students in Year 13 have less positive attitudes to their work and do not attend regularly. There are no male students in Year 12. A high proportion of students complete their courses, and the subject offers good opportunities for all students to achieve well if they work hard. Most students do.

145. Students in Year 12 know about business theory and specific Japanese developments such as continuous improvement and Kanban stock control systems. They understand that technological change benefits but also constrains businesses. Higher-attaining students show a very good appreciation of the aims and objectives of government and its concern over inflation rates and the balance of payments. All students understand concepts such as economies of scale and product life cycles but some find difficulty with price elasticity and in-elasticity.
146. Most Year 13 students apply their knowledge well in written work. Average and higher-attaining students discuss marketing strategies, mission statements and stakeholders. Lower-attaining students can provide good examples of varying company attitudes to employees and shareholders. In a lesson on business ethics, all students could give examples of ethical business practices and contribute information on issues such as the use of child labour. Higher-attaining students gave examples of how both customers and companies gain from ethical policies. Individual students have the detailed knowledge and level of understanding to succeed at the highest levels while all benefit from a well-structured revision programme and a careful focus on examination board requirements.
147. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use it well. Teaching challenges the highest-attaining students and is very supportive of those who find the subject more difficult. Teachers understand the constraints placed on learning by the elite athletes' programme, and provide additional support, for example, through copies of notes for students who have to miss lessons. A particularly strong lead in lessons, combining high expectations with a sense of humour, keeps learning moving at a good pace and fosters good relationships. However, although there is a good focus on key skills and group work in class, students do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning outside of the classroom. The range of teaching and learning activities is sometimes limited because computers are not available in the main classroom.
148. Management is good. Students have good textbooks and resources produced by the department. They attend conferences that increase their understanding of the real world of business. Teachers have real experience of business and industry. Assessment data is managed well. Marking is detailed, very thorough and ensures that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. The department is well led and the introduction of new courses has been well managed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

A-level, advanced vocational level (AVCE) and AS courses in ICT were inspected. A-level in computing, which was being taken by two students in Year 13, was also inspected.

Information and communication technology

The provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good.
- Plans to improve the number and type of courses from September 2003 are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are too many courses with overlapping objectives.
- Standards in Year 12 are low, and students are not achieving as they should.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, and too often students do not complete their courses.
- The number of students taking A-level courses is very small.

149. A-level results were broadly average in 2001, with all ten students passing the examination, and a similar standard was achieved in 2002. In 2002, two students were examined for the AVCE and both passed: this was the first year this course had been examined. There was no intake to the AVCE course in 2001. The A-level in computing has yet to be finally examined, and is to be discontinued. Students start their courses with lower standards than for most subjects in the school, and some do not have the skills and interest in the subject that they need for success. In 2002, students from the elite athletes' group were directed to take courses in ICT, whether or not they were qualified for them. Some of these students have poor attendance. Overall, learning among these students has been unsatisfactory.
150. The overlap between courses prevents the teachers from meeting the needs of all students. In Year 12, students from different AS courses are taught as a combined group for some lessons and separately for others. Students do not always attend the lessons they are supposed to. This leads to unsatisfactory learning when students attend a lesson in which the teacher is dealing with topics from another course. In one lesson, two students from the AS VCE course made no progress because they could not get the help they required. Similar problems occurred in another Year 12 lesson.
151. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is satisfactory overall. Teachers know the subject well. When the teaching is very good, they plan interesting practical activities that enable students to apply and develop their skills very effectively. Very good learning in the computing course in Year 13, for example, included designing a scheme to transfer a manual administrative system for a car dealership to a computerised system. Where the teaching is satisfactory, students make satisfactory gains in knowledge, but are not involved actively enough in their learning and spend too much time in copying from the board.
152. The overlap in courses is the result of weak long-term planning. However, the school has good plans to simplify and improve its provision from September. Other aspects of the management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory, and there is good teamwork between teachers.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected at AS and A-level.

Physical education

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

Strengths

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

Areas for improvement

- Facilities and teaching time are only just adequate.
- Students do not read widely enough outside lessons.

153. The overall quality of provision in physical education is the result of outstanding work and commitment from teachers, despite difficulties in their working conditions. A-level results were well above average in 2001, and very high in 2002, with nine of the 12 students gaining A or B grades and all achieving A-E grades. At AS in 2002, eight of the 20 students obtained A or B grades, and all achieved pass grades. The subject is popular, and numbers are growing.

154. Overall, standards in Year 13 are above average. Students' folders show good coverage of the syllabus and indicate that most have sound understanding of the different theoretical components of the course. Several students are confident in making oral contributions during discussions, although others are content to remain very passive. Students' understanding of the historical development of sport varies considerably, and only a minority have a good depth of background knowledge. The quality of some personal performance portfolios, on the other hand, is very good. More than half the students in Year 13 are identified as elite athletes, and practical standards are very high.

155. In Year 12, overall standards of academic work are not quite as good as in Year 13 but students' practical achievement is well above average. Most students are attentive, and concentrate well. Several can comment sensibly on the role of the media in sport and on the impact of sponsorship, but their knowledge of other contemporary issues is limited. Their knowledge of contemporary issues is not extensive. A small number of students in both year groups are not as committed to academic study as the majority. One or two others find aspects of the course too demanding. Attendance by a minority of students new to the school is irregular.

156. Students achieve up to international standard in rugby, women's rugby, athletics and rowing. The Under-18 gymnastics team are national champions. In fencing, one student has recently won the Under-18 sabre championship. Another student won the gold medal in the London Judo Millennium International in February.

157. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Planning is thorough, lesson objectives are made clear and the teachers' subject expertise is very 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.

These include PowerPoint presentations and the very effective use of the interactive whiteboard. The quality of materials produced by the school to support students in their work is very good. Students do not, however, read widely enough outside lessons.

158. Students are encouraged to help with clubs and activities in the main school and several do so very enthusiastically. Particularly good examples of this were seen in gymnastics and dance.
159. The AS and A-level courses have been introduced since the last inspection. As a result of sports college status, the department is able to offer several additional courses. These include the Community Sports Leaders Award, R.S.A. Certificate in Teaching Exercise to Music and AVCE and GNVQ courses. However, the very good examination results are being achieved against a backdrop of barely adequate facilities. Examination students do not always have access to indoor spaces for their practical work. Additional pressure is put on teachers by a shortage of time for both physical education and dance. Whilst some students have the chance to enjoy recreational physical education on Wednesday afternoons, this option is not available to all.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

160. Art and design was fully inspected, and music, drama and media studies sampled. Teaching and learning in music lessons are satisfactory, and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, there are otherwise insufficient opportunities for wider learning because of insufficient time for the subject, poor resources and accommodation. Students are well supported through regularly marked work, and reach broadly average standards. Standards in drama during the inspection were broadly average, and teaching and learning good to very good, though teaching groups are small, particularly in Year 12. Teaching and learning in media studies are very good, and lead to consistently high standards in examinations, with a high proportion of passes at grades A and B.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is well organised, imaginative and often inspiring.
- Teachers expect very high standards, and give students responsibility for their work.
- Assessment procedures and individual tutorials are very effective.
- Relationships are very good, and students' attitudes are very positive.
- Independent learning skills are well developed.

Weaknesses

- There is very limited accommodation for students to work independently.

161. A-level results were well above average in 2001, and over half of the students passed with grades A and B. There was a fall in results in 2002, chiefly caused by problems related to the new examination requirements. By the time of the inspection, the department had dealt with this problem, and the standard of work seen during the inspection showed strong evidence of recovery.
162. In the sixth form, students are creatively and intellectually challenged by imaginative and well planned themes. Very well developed independent learning skills lead, in some

cases, to extensive research, a wealth of experimentation, and the pursuit of individual responses in a variety of two and three-dimensional media. Within a common theme, students are expected to select their own avenues of exploration and to relate their work to the influences of traditional and contemporary artists. Within a very supportive framework of advice and guidance from teachers, this leads to the emergence of strong personal styles, underpinned with good, sometimes very good, observational drawing studies. Sketchbooks are very well presented, prolific in content and impressive in the insight they provide to the development processes involved in the production of a finished piece. The range of exploration is very wide in some cases, making effective and clever use of a wide variety of two and three-dimensional media. Teachers give students responsibility for their work, and most are articulate and well informed when discussing it and their inspirations. This was very well illustrated in a Year 12 class, when students discussed and evaluated a stage of their work, represented by highly individualised box-like constructions, which opened in a variety of ways to reveal a series of well-crafted symbols and images in paint, pencil and print, in response to the theme 'Myself'.

163. In a Year 13 class, the levels of discussion and debate generated by the presentation that individual students made to the group in order to display and explain their progress in preparation for their final examination theme provided an outstanding example of the very high levels of intellectual challenge and expectation that teachers build into the planning of the course. Some of the personal studies in Year 12 were impressive in their range of exploration, the good balance of text and illustration, the originality of literary content and the imaginative presentation.
164. Teaching is very good, and on occasion excellent. Individual tutorials are frequent, very effectively managed and focus on strengths and targets for improvement. Relationships are very good. Teachers are direct in their criticism and positive in diagnosing areas for further development. Students' attitudes are very positive and enthusiastic. They are very aware of their personal and artistic development over time and very appreciative of the quality of teaching and course management that has contributed to their success. Art, in the sixth form, is very well managed by experienced and enthusiastic specialists who know the subject in depth.
165. Resources are good, including ready access to computers in the department. Accommodation, however, does not allow for the provision of a dedicated sixth form work area where large-scale work can be developed. Such provision would allow students increased opportunity for further development as well as contributing positively to the ethos of the department.

HUMANITIES

166. Geography and history were fully inspected and psychology was sampled. There was a high failure rate in AS psychology in 2002, but the school has taken effective action to improve provision. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection were good, and students in Year 13 were reaching close to average standards.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Results at A-level and AS level are good, both at pass level and at grades A and B.
- Students have very good attitudes, behave well and work hard.

- Teaching is good, and very good in some lessons.
- Teachers guide students very well on examination technique.

Areas for improvement

- Students tend to rely too heavily on teachers rather than on their own investigations.
- There is too little use of ICT.

167. Standards at A level are above average. A significant number of students reach grades A and B, and all students in recent years have passed. The most recent AS results are good, with all students passing and over half achieving grades A and B. All groups of students make good progress from their GCSE results.
168. By Year 13, students have a good understanding of the interdependence of natural processes and human activities. Their evaluation of change – for example, in farming and food production – shows good awareness of the impact of legislation, such as the common agricultural policy. Students use subject vocabulary well, and are confident in using statistical data and other sources of information to support their written work. However, they rely too much on information provided for them by their teachers and on their textbooks. Most do not read widely enough, or use the Internet effectively for research. Although students' thinking, listening and written communication skills are good, they are often content to listen in lessons rather than take an active part. They do, however, have a positive view of the subject, and their conduct is exemplary.
169. Most students in Year 12 reach above average standards and make good progress from their GCSE results. In-depth written explanations of topics such as central place theory show good analysis of information and statistics. Students apply their knowledge and skills well in studying new topics, make good notes and compile relevant case studies. They have secure knowledge and understanding of physical processes, such as hydrology, but not always of weather and climate. Most students use ICT for written essays but not enough for their own research. They work hard, behave very well, and are committed to reaching high standards in examinations.
170. Teaching is good, and often very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to plan activities, including continuous assessment that helps students to consolidate their understanding and develop their skills. Lessons are well paced, giving students time to think and to evaluate the information before them. Teachers use questions well to ensure that students understand the work, but do not always press students enough to provide detailed and extended answers. Students appreciate teachers' very good guidance on work and examination technique. Teachers provide good information to support learning, but do not do enough to ensure that students carry out their own research, particularly using ICT.
171. The overall quality of leadership and management is good. There is a clear lead in the drive to raise standards, backed by good systems of assessment and preparation for examinations. There is too little access to ICT in or near the classroom, although this will improve with the relocation of the department in September. Most resources are up-to-date and well chosen, and there is a good selection of resources in the school and sixth form libraries, though the sixth form geography library is located in a classroom and not always accessible. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no weather station to support the study of weather and climate in Year 12. The distance of the department from the main school means that students are always late, and this leads to significant loss of teaching time. Overall, however, geography has shown good improvements in its work since the last inspection, and the department is well placed to improve further.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and rising.
- The quality of teaching is excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Excellent schemes of work include detailed guidance on learning outside lessons.

There are no significant weaknesses.

172. The excellence of provision in this subject is a major strength of the sixth form. Standards are above average, and indicate excellent improvement from students' GCSE results, some of which are lower than would normally be expected for sixth form study. This represents excellent improvement from the satisfactory standards achieved at the time of the last inspection.
173. Students in Year 13 during the inspection were making particularly good progress in reviewing and consolidating their knowledge and understanding in preparation for their examination. They use a wide range of additional reading to add depth to their understanding and to inform and justify their opinions. They make very good progress in the analysis, evaluation and use of a wide range of source material, showing clear understanding of complex ideas. Students have a good grasp of complex historical detail. They put a great deal of effort into their research for and preparation of assignments and have good independent learning skills.
174. The quality of teaching is excellent. This represents excellent improvement since the last inspection, which noted unsatisfactory progress in some lessons and a lack of attention to analytical skills. Students respond very well to this outstanding teaching by working hard, with very good concentration. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to make explanations crystal clear, and use an exceptionally wide range of activities to sustain interest and meet the needs of all students. Excellent use is made of group work and presentations by students to the whole class, and an atmosphere of co-operation is fostered among students. All participate fully in lessons and show a thoughtful approach to their work. Teachers make skilful use of questioning and discussion to probe students' thinking and extend their understanding. They provide a wide range of additional reading material, graded in complexity to meet the needs of all students, and accompanied by advice on how it should be used.
175. Excellent leadership and management are based on teamwork and on clear and effective commitment to raising standards. Detailed schemes of work offer excellent guidance to teachers and promote consistency. There are very good procedures for identifying and supporting students experiencing difficulty, and students receive excellent individual feedback on major assignments. All students have up-to-date, eminently appropriate textbooks. Very good use is made of visits to places of historical significance and to specialised study days in order to enrich the curriculum. Students are very positive about their choice of history as an A-level subject and about the quality of support they receive from teachers. A high percentage choose to continue with the study of history after they leave school.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

176. English was fully inspected, and French in Year 12 was sampled. There is no French in Year 13, and the Year 12 group is very small. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons in French is very good, and standards were above average in speaking and listening. However, teaching time is well below that provided in most schools, and students' folders contain much less written work than would be expected for this stage of their course. This work was of broadly average standard, but included very little extended writing.

English literature

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

Strengths

- A-level results are above average and improving. Achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent.
- Students' positive attitudes enhance their learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some students need to improve their analytical skills, and to write more succinctly.
- Standards in spelling are weaker than in other aspects of students' work.

177. Results in A-level English literature were broadly average in 2001, but showed a very good improvement in 2002, particularly at grades A and B. For the past four years, all students entered have passed. The 2002 AS results were also very good. All the students, from a large entry, passed and over half achieved high-grade passes. This represents very good achievement, both from higher-attaining students and from those with basic qualifications for the course.

178. In Year 13, students' work and progress are well above average. Most students are well prepared for lessons. Discussion is lively and appropriate, revealing a good understanding of text, a willingness to explore ideas and an ability to substantiate a point of view. Students in Year 13, for example, discuss the morality of the principal characters in Chaucer's 'The Miller's Tale' and, in Year 12, explore how Larkin presents time in two love poems. Most essays are well written and well argued. Students explore ideas and language confidently, with appropriate reference to the text and the work of critics. Written work is presented very well, and includes some excellent analytical writing from the highest-attaining students. However, some others tend to describe issues rather than analyse them, and to write at too great a length. Students use information and computer technology very well for research into the background of the literature being studied. As in the main school, however, many students' spelling is weaker than other aspects of their work.

179. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and some teaching is excellent. Teachers have outstanding knowledge of the subject, and expect students to think for themselves. They create positive learning environments and encourage students to discuss texts systematically and analytically. Individual lessons and sequences of lessons are planned to enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding progressively. In Year 13, for example, students move on from a discussion of the morality of the characters to a discussion of the relationship between 'The Miller's Tale' and 'The Knight's Tale' and the notions of courtly love they represent. Learning is further enhanced by the regular provision of homework, as well as assiduous and constructive marking. Students enjoy English; they appreciate the support teachers provide and their positive attitudes contribute significantly to their high standards.

180. Leadership and management are very good. Courses are very well organised, and teamwork among teachers is outstanding. Students make good use of ICT for research but there are few relevant reference texts in the school library. Students told inspectors that they enjoyed their courses and appreciated the quality of guidance they received.