

INSPECTION REPORT

PARK HOUSE SCHOOL

Newbury

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110052

Headteacher: Mr D People

Reporting inspector: Mr R Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 10–14 March 2003

Inspection number: 249702

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Mary Hills
Date of previous inspection:	17 March 1997

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6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Design technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Located on the southern edge of Newbury, Park House is a comprehensive school and sports college serving students, both boys and girls, in the 11 to 18 age range. It draws most of its students from the immediate area of the town but a significant number live in the rural area adjacent to it. There are 1261 students on roll, including 200 in the sixth form, a larger number than at the time of the school's last inspection. The backgrounds of the students are varied but for the most part the area is relatively affluent, although there are some pockets of deprivation. There are few students from ethnic minority backgrounds. For a small number of students, English is an additional language although very few are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs has steadily increased in the past few years and is now about average, as is the proportion of students with statements. The school has a unit for the hearing impaired student on site. Although varying from year to year, the attainment of students is above average when they start the school. Nonetheless, a significant number of students have acute literacy needs. The school has been awarded Investors in People status, Sportsmark Gold in 2000 and Artsmark Gold in 2001. The school has set ambitious targets for raising standards. The headteacher is new in post, having been in the school since the beginning of the spring term.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Park House is a good school with some very good features. Standards are above average. The attitudes of students are very positive and the behaviour of the majority of students is very good. The overall quality of teaching is good and often very good. The school is very well led and managed. The school enjoys the support of parents and a strong governing body. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school provides for clear direction
- The attitudes of students are very positive and behaviour is very good
- The quality of teaching is good and often very good
- Relationships between all members of the school's community are excellent
- Students are strongly supported and are well cared for
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities

What could be improved

- A significant minority of students ought to achieve more
- The systematic tracking of students' progress to help ensure that all achieve their potential
- Provision for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 and its more extensive use throughout the school
- The further development of students' independence

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has moved forward significantly since its last inspection in 1997. It has fully addressed most of the key issues for action although the use of ICT in the curriculum as a whole needs to be strengthened. Standards are now higher and the quality of teaching has improved. The school has made good progress.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	–	B	–	

Key

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

In comparison with similar schools, the overall National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average. The trend of improvement is in line with the national trend. Results at the end of Year 9 in English have fluctuated over the past three years but have not been as good as those in mathematics which have been more consistent over time. In 2002, test results in mathematics were well above average with significant numbers reaching the highest levels, much higher than the national results at Levels 7+. Science results were above average, whereas in previous years they had been well above average. Standards are not high enough in English. In subjects taken as a whole students' overall achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good but ought to be better.

GCSE examination results in 2002 were above average for the proportion of students achieving 5 or more grades at A*-C but in the previous three years results were well above average. They have fallen from their high point in 2000. Results were maintained for 5 or more grades at A*-G at well above average levels. The overall points score was maintained at the above average level. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, or comparisons are made with similar schools, it is a mixed picture but there is evidence to suggest that the proportion of the students achieving 5 or more grades at A*-C needs raising. The trend of improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. Subjects where results are well above the national average include German, home economics, ICT, and physical education. Mathematics results are also comfortably above average although middle-attaining students ought to achieve more. Subjects where results were below the national average included science, French, business studies, dance and drama. Achievement is satisfactory but ought to be better. Higher-attaining students need to achieve more in art and religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most students are keen to learn and this is a major factor in helping them to achieve well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school has high expectations of students' behaviour. They respond positively by behaving very well at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school makes use of an effective system of rewards and sanctions to ensure that achievement is recognized and that unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated.
Attendance	Good. There are very good procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance.

The school diligently follows up any unexplained absences and this contributes to the good attendance levels and the very low unauthorised absence rates. There is an almost complete absence of bullying in the school. Although students are encouraged to take on responsibility, the school does not provide enough opportunities for them to develop their independence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

In three lessons out of four in the main school, the quality of teaching is good or better and in one in four it is very good or excellent. In the sixth form, teaching is good or better in nine lessons out of ten and is very good or excellent in over half of them. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects, organise lessons well, cater for the differing needs of students and manage classes effectively. They are not so good at marking students' work and giving helpful feedback. Although used well in some subjects, such as science and history, homework is not being used systematically to raise standards. The use of ICT to enhance learning is limited. Although still good overall, the quality of teaching is not as consistent in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching in English and science is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is good in mathematics. The quality of teaching in all three subjects is good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching in music is very good. Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in some lessons in mathematics and science. Although there are some very good examples of teachers developing students' literacy and numeracy skills, the impact of what they do is limited because it is not co-ordinated or replicated. Students with special educational needs are mostly well taught and there are good levels of challenge for higher attainers. The quality of learning is good. Students learn how to follow up individual lines of enquiry in art and to work on practical activities in science and music. They learn to appreciate the distinctive properties of different materials in design and technology and to appreciate good literature in English. Lower attainers need to learn more about how to develop their writing skills and all students need to learn more about how best to improve their work so that they reach higher standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All the National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught for appropriate amounts of time and are enhanced by the addition of drama, dance and Latin. There is good continuity between the subjects of the curriculum in the main school and the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. There is good support for students with statements of need and for those with specific literacy difficulties and for students whose needs are most challenging but support for other students is more uneven. Teachers need to be more involved in writing individual education plans and setting targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few students for whom English is an additional language are well supported and make progress which is at least as good as that of other students.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Students have many very good opportunities for reflection in and beyond lessons. The behaviour policy makes expectations clear and encourages self-discipline. Teachers and other adults give a strong lead in distinguishing right from wrong. Students have good opportunities to develop their social skills and are also taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its students. The procedures in place for the support and guidance of students' academic and personal development are satisfactory and sometimes good.

The school has a good working relationship with parents and is seeking to strengthen it further. The curriculum is not sufficiently broad in Years 9 to 11 to cater for the full range of special educational needs. The lack of guidance for subject departments on the use of ICT and limited monitoring of the cross-curricular provision for fifty percent of the cohort not taking the GCSE examination in ICT does not ensure that students' needs are met. There is a very wide variety of extra-curricular activities and a high level of participation by students. There is very good provision for first aid. Arrangements for child protection are also very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school has well established procedures and policies. There is a very clear sense of direction for the development of the school and a shared commitment to its future improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. There is a good level of involvement by the governing body, especially in the areas of finance and of strategic development.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses in detail the results of its students and takes appropriate courses of action as a result. It is continually reviewing its development planning processes and targets are kept under regular review. A detailed tracking system is not yet in use at whole school level for helping to ensure that all students are on course for fulfilling their potential.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Grants are used well to ensure that they support all the appropriate areas.

The school is well staffed. There are no major shortages of books or equipment. Accommodation is varied, extensive and well maintained and the school has very well developed plans for enhancing it further. The major strengths of leadership and management are the strong sense of teamwork in the school at large, the degree to which all parties are consulted before decisions are made and the shared determination to help the school to improve further. Areas for development include the introduction of systems for tracking students' progress and of systems for monitoring homework. There is a good understanding of the principles of best value in the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' enjoyment of school, the way they work hard and make good progress • The very good behaviour of the students • Good quality teaching • The approachability of the school • The range of activities for students to take part in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangements for homework • The information about students' progress. • The school's working relationships with parents

The inspection team found strong evidence to support all the points that parents most like about the school. It also agrees with parents that there is some inconsistency in the school's arrangements for homework and that, despite some examples of good practice, it is not used systematically to raise standards. The inspection team found that the information parents receive about students' progress is good. The inspection team also found that the school's relationship with parents is good and that the school is keen to develop this partnership further.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than many other sixth forms. In 2001, there were 232 students on roll compared with the average size of 166 students. Currently, there are 200 students on roll. Numbers of male and female students are roughly equal. The school uses students' overall GCSE examination results as a guide to admission to the sixth form but uses criteria flexibly. Students are from a wide range of backgrounds but most are relatively affluent. The school offers a wide range of courses leading to AS and A-level qualifications, a GNVQ course and opportunities for students to re-take GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. A notable feature of the curriculum is the Football Association's NVQ course in football coaching.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. Standards of teaching are very good. This is the major factor in helping the majority of students to do well. Overall standards on AS and A-level courses are above the national average. Students' achievement is good. It is especially good in mathematics and science, humanities and modern languages. Recruitment is strong and retention rates are high. The sixth form is very well led and managed and the curriculum meets the needs of most students. There is a good enrichment programme. The sixth form has established itself well since the last inspection and is cost effective.

Strengths

- The quality of relationships
- Overall standards on A-level courses are above average
- The quality of teaching is very good
- Enrichment courses provide additional breadth to the curriculum

What could be improved

- Provision for religious education
- The monitoring of students' overall progress and development in Year 12
- The arrangements for recording attendance
- Provision for vocational courses

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards in the AS and A-level examinations are well above national averages. Students have very good opportunities to take the mathematics modules most suited to their needs.
Biology	Very good. Results at A-level have improved considerably in recent years and were above the national average in 2002. Effective teaching in the sixth form impacts directly on the learning and success of students' performance. With experienced teachers, overall attainment is very good and students show very good progress.
Computing	Good. Results in A-level computing are well above the national average.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Standards are broadly average and the quality of teaching is good overall
Art	Good. Results at A-level are normally above average but fell in 2002. The quality of teaching is very good.
Geography	Very good. Standards are above average and the subject is very well taught
History	Very good. Standards are above average and are improving further as a result of a very well led department and high quality teaching.
English	Good. Standards are above average and teaching is good
Modern foreign languages	<p>Very good: French. Teaching is of consistently high quality and the standards of work reflected in recent AS and A-level results were above average. Students speak confidently and fluently and they write with accuracy.</p> <p>Very good: German. Teaching is of very high quality and recent results at AS and A-level are consistently well above average. Students speak with considerable fluency and write with flair and accuracy.</p>

Other lessons sampled showed that teaching was good in design history and product design and that attainment was average. Examination success is well above the national average in chemistry and above the national average in physics, especially at the higher grades. In the lessons sampled, the teaching was very good and the level of attainment was very high in all three science subjects. Provision for music is good. Results and attainment are improving because of improving standards of teaching. Work is rigorously marked. There are very good opportunities for students to extend their learning. AS-level and A-level courses in drama and theatre studies were sampled. Recent results indicate that standards are above average and achievements on both courses are good. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and well-informed co-ordinator who creates an animated and motivating environment in which good learning takes place providing a good contribution to students' personal development. This is enhanced by theatre visits and many opportunities for students to take part in workshops and school productions. Latin is offered as an additional subject up to A-level and the quality of teaching and students' progress are both good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students receive especially good advice and guidance from their subject tutors. Students' overall progress is also monitored by sixth form tutors but monitoring is not strong enough as many students find the transition from Year 11 very demanding.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Recruitment procedures are detailed and sensitive, showing a good awareness of the needs and capabilities of individual students. Retention rates are high, showing good evidence that students are satisfied with their courses and that courses are well matched to their needs. The school ensures that students have scope for a wide variety of enrichment courses. Relationships are very good and a positive ethos has been created in the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high quality of the teaching • The support and guidance they receive • The wide range of enrichment activities • The harmonious relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better careers advice • More independence

Students' views of the school are mostly positive. The inspection team agreed with students on what they most appreciated about the school. The team also found that over time careers education is good but that given the maturity of most sixth form students they do not get enough opportunities to act independently.

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. In 2002, National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics, and science, at the end of Year 9 taken as a whole, were above the national average. Results in English were in line with the national average whereas in mathematics they were well above the national average. Results in science were above the national average. Although these results show an overall decline from the results of previous years, the trend of improvement is in line with the national trend. When the school's overall test results are compared with those of similar schools, performance is average. In comparison with similar schools, results in mathematics are above average but results in English and science are below average. Given that the starting point for students when they enter the school is above average, their achievement in mathematics tests is good, whereas in English and science it is at best satisfactory.
2. The standards of current work in Year 9 in mathematics are above average and achievement is good, with higher-attaining students progressing especially well, but girls are doing less well than boys. Current work in English shows that whilst standards are above average, girls' achievement is greater than that of boys and that the written work of lower-attaining students needs to be more accurate. Current work in science is above average.
3. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in most other subjects and students' achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good. Standards are well above average in German and achievement is especially good in this subject.
4. From 1999 through to 2001 the proportion of students achieving 5 or more grades at A*-C in their GCSE examination was well above average and, given the starting points of students when they entered the school, this was a good result. However, in 2002, results were less good. Although results were still above the national average for the proportion of students achieving 5 or more grades at A*-C, they were not as high as in the previous three years. However, results were maintained at well above average levels for the proportion of students achieving 5 or more grades at A*-G. The overall points score was also maintained at the above average level. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, or comparisons are made with similar schools, the picture is mixed but there is evidence to suggest that students' overall achievement is satisfactory but that they ought to achieve more, particularly in terms of the proportion reaching 5 or more grades at A*-C.
5. In 2002, GCSE examination results in English were above average. Results in mathematics were also above average with boys again outperforming girls and some students in the middle range of ability not making the progress they ought to by the time they reach the end of Year 9. In science, results were above average. Standards of current work are average in English but are not high enough, given students' prior attainment. Standards are above average in mathematics but there is evidence that students in the middle range of ability are not achieving enough. Standards in science are above average. In other subjects, standards are mostly above average and students' achievement is largely good. Students are achieving especially well in German.
6. On the whole, higher-attaining students are doing well throughout the school but students of more moderate ability are not achieving enough in some subjects. Higher-

attaining students need to achieve more in art and religious education. Most students with special educational needs achieve appropriately, both in lessons and over time. A few achieve very well and make significant gains in learning. Most make good progress towards targets set for them in their individual education plans. However, in a minority of classes students' progress is limited because teaching methods are not flexible or responsive enough to meet students' needs and additional learning support is not efficiently used. Some with emotional and behavioural learning needs, particularly more vulnerable students, make good progress in developing effective social skills and learning a range of strategies to handle situations, which trigger their anxiety and unacceptable behaviour. They begin to attend school regularly and, with support, behave well. Those with specific literacy difficulties also achieve well in regular group reading and spelling sessions. Students follow GCSE examination courses in Years 10 and 11 with successful results and the majority leave school with several GCSE grades, achieving their predicted grades.

Sixth form

7. In 2001, the latest year for which national comparative figures are available, students' overall achievement in AS and A-level examinations was above the national average. Students did especially well in English language, English literature, mathematics, German, sociology, economics, computer studies, chemistry and history. Results were weakest in biology, business studies and physical education (PE) studies. Students entered for GCE VCE/Advanced GNVQ examinations did less well than the national average. Students who re-took the GCSE examination in English language fared better than the national average but results were far less good for those who re-took mathematics. In 2002, the school's performance was similar although results improved in biology and geography. A distinctive feature was the school's performance in the new standard of Advanced Extension Award which graded two students a distinction and a merit for their achievement in English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Students show a very positive attitude towards their learning and indeed in some lessons this was observed to be excellent. They pay close attention to their teachers and are genuinely interested in what they are doing. This is particularly the case when the standard of teaching is good or better. As a result, lessons proceed as planned, learning objectives are achieved and students make substantial progress. On the rare occasions when teaching is less than satisfactory students become noticeably less well motivated. Students participate enthusiastically in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer and this contributes to their personal development.
9. In general, behaviour both in the classroom and elsewhere around the school is very good and is at times excellent. This contributes to a calm and orderly ethos in which good teaching and learning can take place. Such behaviour appears to come naturally to the students and is independent of close supervision. For instance, the behaviour of students coming to school on a service bus was exemplary. However, there is a very small minority of students who exhibit challenging behaviour to which the school responds by imposing appropriate sanctions, including temporary exclusions. Students generally show respect both for their own and the school's property. For example, in chemistry they handle apparatus appropriately. There is no sign of any graffiti around the school but there is a small amount of litter.
10. Relationships throughout the school are generally excellent. Students get on extremely well both with each other and with staff. There are good interactions between male and female students based on mutual respect and the very small number from ethnic

minorities are made to feel welcome by the majority. No significant evidence was found for any form of oppressive behaviour. Indeed, this is a very friendly school. Students respond well to opportunities to take on some responsibility, for example as members of the school council, as prefects or as subject monitors. Through use of the 'student planner' they are learning the skills of time management and the ability to organise their own learning.

11. Attendance is significantly above the national average for secondary schools and has been consistently so over recent years. This high level enables students to take full advantage of all the school has to offer. Instances of lateness are rare, though there is a persistent problem with the occasional late running of one service bus used by a number of students. This, however, is beyond the control of both the school and students. Overall, therefore, the positive attitudes of students and the high standards of behaviour, relationships and attendance reported at the previous inspection have been maintained and indeed in some respects improved. Students are more independent now than at the time of the last inspection, but this aspect still needs further development.

Sixth form

12. Many of the attractive features which are apparent in the main school flourish in the sixth form. For example, students' attitudes towards their learning are always very positive and often excellent. They demonstrate their maturity through the very high quality of their behaviour and the excellence of their relationships. They take full advantage of the enrichment activities that are on offer. Thus, overall, nearly all students are benefiting significantly from their sixth form experience.
13. As at the time of the previous inspection, many students take on roles of responsibility. For example, they run the House system, lead some assemblies and support students lower down the school with their reading. As well as assisting in the smooth running of the school, undertaking these roles contributes to their own personal development. Students are showing signs of the ability to work independently and to take some responsibility for their own learning. As they progress through the sixth form, they increasingly take control of their own timetable and thus they gain valuable practical experience in time management. However, their independence is somewhat constrained by the 'hands on' teaching style at the school, which is largely driven by the rigours of the curriculum and the need to get the students through their examinations.
14. It is not possible to give an objective judgement on the overall level of attendance in the sixth form because of the unsatisfactory nature of the registration system. However, class teachers have registers for their own groups and are rigorous in their pursuit of any students whose absence gives cause for concern. Subjectively, bearing in mind the high motivation of the students, it appears that unsatisfactory attendance is not a problem.
15. Sixth form students have a generally positive view of the school. They particularly like the good standard of teaching, the subject advice they are given, the enrichment activities and the high quality of relationships. They are less content about their new common room which has to perform conflicting functions, advice on careers and their lack of sufficient independence. The overwhelming majority of students would be happy to recommend their sixth form to others.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. In the school as a whole, the overall quality of teaching is good. It is at its best in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. It is not so effective in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' knowledge of their subject, the effective ways in which lessons are planned and organized, the success with which the learning needs of all students are catered for and the effective relationships established in the classroom, are the main strengths of teaching. Most teachers are also effective in the way in which they prepare students for national tests and for the GCSE examinations. There is extensive good or very good teaching in most subjects but it is especially evident in lessons in geography, music, ICT and modern foreign languages. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
17. The quality of teaching in mathematics, although sometimes inconsistent, is good throughout the school and the quality of teaching in English and science is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but is good in Years 10 and 11. Although some teachers, particularly in science and design and technology, help students develop their literacy skills their impact is limited because it is not part of a whole school strategy. In about one in 30 lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Such lessons occurred in mathematics, science and religious education in Years 7 to 9. The major weaknesses in these lessons were poor classroom management and a failure to pitch work at the right level for students. Weaker features of teaching include marking which is inconsistent in frequency, regularity and quality and which does not give feedback to students on how to improve, the limited use of ICT and weak planning.
18. Support teaching for students with special educational needs is usually good. It is most successful where teachers plan effectively and match students' specific learning needs with methods and materials that support them, and where the extra support provided by the special needs teachers and by learning support assistants is carefully targeted. In a few cases, learning support is not used effectively, nor are targets in students' individual education plans always reflected in lesson planning. On the whole, higher-attaining students receive good levels of challenge and respond well. The few students for whom English is an additional language receive effective support. Not enough use is made of homework to focus on the specific needs of individual students and to raise the attainment of all.
19. On the whole, students' learning matches the quality of their teaching. They learn how to pursue individual lines of enquiry in art, and to work with others on practical tasks in science and music. Students' responses showed that they can be stirred by their learning, for instance in an English lesson in Year 8 when they were gripped by the tension created in a novel, or were fascinated by the properties of materials and the characteristics of processes they were working on in design and technology. Students do not know enough about their levels of attainment in individual subjects and what they have to do to improve further. Lower-attainers, in particular, do not learn enough from all their subject teachers about how to improve writing skills.

Sixth form

20. The quality of teaching was good or better in the vast majority of lessons and in over a half of the 50 lessons it was very good or excellent. In just six lessons the teaching was satisfactory. A clear strength of the teaching is subject knowledge. Teachers also have a very good understanding of the requirements of examination courses. They plan lessons well, make especially good use of questioning, mark work regularly and

give good feedback to students on how they might improve their work further. Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

21. In lessons where the teaching was satisfactory, students learned more about the topic under consideration but were not encouraged to probe further, to question or to discuss so that their learning could be further extended. This was an especially noticeable characteristic of lessons in Year 12 in mathematics, physical education and especially in English.
22. Many students are learning well, especially in French and German, where they are effectively encouraged to set the learning of languages in historical and cultural contexts. Students are strongly encouraged in art to develop their own personal style of communication and expression. In a number of subjects, students learn effectively through developing and applying the skills of research and independent enquiry but, generally speaking, they do not benefit enough from opportunities to learn through the use of practical activities. Although stronger in a subject like history, there are too few opportunities for them to present their work to an audience. Sometimes, students adopt a somewhat passive role and need to be encouraged to question and challenge more, especially in lessons in English, mathematics and ICT.

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

23. All the National Curriculum subjects, together with religious education, are taught in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is further enhanced by the addition of drama, dance and Latin, a second optional language taught before and after school, and in Year 8 by the provision for citizenship lessons and a second language, German. The time allocated for each subject is largely appropriate, except for modern foreign languages where it is about five per cent below the recommended time for students studying both German and French in Years 8 and 9. The school has not ensured that the shortfall of time for ICT in Year 8 is being met by cross-curricular provision.
24. Provision for the development of literacy in the curriculum as a whole is satisfactory. Methods for developing the literacy skills of students are often to be found in lesson planning. Provision for numeracy is still not firmly embedded in subject schemes of work and monitoring is insufficient to ensure its implementation. Personal, social and health education is adequately provided through courses and tutorials for each year group.
25. The current setting arrangements are sufficiently flexible to allow students to transfer from one set to another. They also facilitate accelerated learning programmes for gifted and talented and higher-attaining students and the consolidation of work by lower-attaining students and those with specific learning needs. The present arrangement ensures that students with special educational needs are for the most part well supported within the curriculum. Following a curriculum audit of provision for citizenship, plans are being made to combine citizenship with PHSE days for each year group in order to cover topics such as drug awareness, health education and political organisations such as the European union, not covered fully in other areas of the curriculum.
26. The school endeavours to meet the needs and aspirations of all students by providing an extensive curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The core subjects offered are English, mathematics, science, religious education and PE/Careers. Students take a short course in religious education in Year 10 and the time after the summer examinations is used for the delivery of a modular course in political literacy as part of the citizenship

programme. Students also follow a short course in physical education but over two years in order to facilitate a career module delivered in rotation with the various groups. A further 18 subjects are offered from which students have a free choice of four subjects. The school recommendation that students continue with a modern language is heeded and all students continue with either French and/or German. Spanish is offered at foundation level as an alternative to the other languages. Students can study both history and geography and higher-attaining students can take an additional science. Physical education is offered as a full course and students can specialise in one or more components of design technology. ICT is offered as a GCSE examination course. This amounts to a broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

27. A great deal of hard work and good thinking has gone into curriculum planning. Provision for higher-attaining students and gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 continues to be very good. Setting allows accelerated learning, enabling students with particular talents to take their GCSE examinations early and continue to a higher level. Some students, especially those with special learning needs, or specific difficulties are advised to avoid overload and reduce their curriculum to eight subjects. The time available is wisely used to catch up and consolidate work under supervision. The school is largely successful in accommodating students' choices in Years 10 and 11. However, in a minority of subjects individual needs are not being met. In the short course in physical education for instance the imbalance towards team, rather than individual sport, does not meet individual needs. The lack of guidance for subject departments and monitoring of the cross-curricular provision for 50 per cent of the cohort not taking the GCSE examination course in ICT does not ensure their needs are being met and is a breach of the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The time issue for the study of two languages continues to be a problem in Year 10. The lack of vocational courses is not helpful to students with special educational needs.
28. This is a caring school that places great emphasis on the personal development of its students. Overall, it makes very good provision for students' personal development and has improved this aspect of its work considerably since the last inspection. It is a strong feature of the school and is consistent with the school ethos 'Valuing success for all', based on trust, tolerance, mutual respect and positive relationships where students can flourish. Although the school promotes personal development successfully in all aspects of school life, there is no whole school policy, a weakness in view of the school's need to promote independence even more strongly in key aspects of school life. A further strength of the school is its provision for extra-curricular activities and it is here that the school is placing great emphasis on the students' initiating and participating in a very wide range of things to do outside classes. Many different clubs cater for students' individual needs and there are also excellent opportunities for them to take part in drama and music-making activities, including major theatrical events.
29. Overall, provision for spiritual development is very good although the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Weekly Year assemblies are supplemented with occasional house ones. Several high quality assemblies were seen during inspection, such as an inspiring one with a dramatic start, by sixth form dance students, which captured students' imagination. There are many very good opportunities for reflection in and beyond lessons, for example, in lessons in religious education when students are invited to consider values and belief and to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life and in meditation. The visit to Winchester Cathedral gives students personal experience of a spiritual setting. Responses that students are asked to make in art, music, drama, physical education and English offer further opportunities for spiritual development. For instance, in English, Year 7 students explored the mystery of a smile and the simplicity of its message. There is a positive ethos within

the school and the displays in many areas, together with the very attractive and well maintained school grounds, are uplifting.

30. Provision for students' moral development is very good. The school's behaviour policy makes expectations clear, stressing self-discipline and the need to act responsibly. Teachers and other adults in the school give a strong lead in encouraging good interpersonal relationships and in distinguishing right from wrong behaviour. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust, and care and consideration are shown to others. All subjects contribute significantly to this area of personal development. Moral development occurs in physical education through helping students develop honesty and integrity and in learning to handle defeat graciously. Students have many opportunities to discuss and debate moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, marriage and divorce in religious education in Year 10, slavery in history, genetics in science and crime and punishment in citizenship.
31. The provision for students' social development is very good. There are very good opportunities for students to develop their social skills, both through discussion and planning work in lessons, and through extra-curricular activities, visits and residential trips. Students often discuss and plan in pairs and small groups. Team fixtures and theatrical, musical and dance productions help them to work together in larger groups, as does the school council. Skiing trips and adventurous activity holidays, such as the outward bound visit to France, also contribute well in building relationships. Valuable opportunities to take responsibility are offered to students, including acting as prefects, librarians, mentoring, the 'Better reading' scheme and membership of the school council. Modern foreign languages students take part in exchange visits and some do work experience abroad. Sixth formers take responsibility for running the very effective house system. Many students are involved in fund-raising events throughout the year, such as the Christmas box appeal. This not only results in substantial sums of money being raised for charitable causes but also increases students' awareness of the needs of others.
32. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. The school creates a climate of respect for all people. In religious education and citizenship, students are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of other cultures. Social harmony is studied within the GCSE religious education course. The 'Out of Africa' evening was very successful in adding to students' cultural development. Consideration for other cultures is found in art, music, dance, drama, the humanities and English, as well as other subjects. Jamaican and Asian dance are studied and students listen to Indian music. Very strong cultural provision is found in the music of the swing band and school choir and through the visiting American band. Foreign exchanges to France and Germany, the Normandy battlefields, geography field trips, and visits to art galleries, museums and theatres all enhance students' cultural development. In English, Year 10 students explore the difficulties faced by newcomers to this country through poetry and consider the desolation and isolation when there is no common language and means of communication. Students develop a very good understanding of the range of cultures in modern British society. Overall, the quality and range of the curriculum have been improved since the last inspection.

Sixth form

33. A strong feature of the sixth form curriculum is the good opportunity it provides for students to continue to study subjects that are already familiar from the main school in more depth and for advanced qualifications. Good illustrations of this include the study of drama as theatre arts and the chance to study design and technology. Another

strong feature is the wide range of courses leading to A-level qualifications, including some innovative subjects.

34. There are only limited opportunities for students to follow vocational courses as the school has decided not to develop them in any depth, believing that other local colleges have more experience and expertise in the area. Students have good opportunities to make use of the school's facilities for keeping fit and enjoying recreational sport. A notable feature of the curriculum is the Football Association's NVQ coaching certificate course, one of only two in the country. There is no separate key skills provision, which means that the literacy and numeracy needs of some students are not as well addressed as they ought to be. Religious education is not taught to students in Year 13. As in the main school, students have good opportunities to join in many events and activities beyond normal lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its students based on extensive and appropriate policy documents. No significant health and safety issues were identified during the inspection and the high standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. There are clearly marked emergency exits from all teaching areas and evacuation procedures are rehearsed regularly. A designated member of the governing body takes responsibility for health and safety and, together with the resources manager, undertakes regular inspections of the site so that any issues can be identified and rapidly addressed. Risk assessments are carried out on all appropriate activities at the school. There is very good provision for first aid. The resources manager, who has extensive knowledge in this area, leads a team of ten fully qualified staff. There is a first aid box in each department and incidents of injury are fully recorded. The arrangements for more general medical provision are at present unsatisfactory. For example, the dismal medical room acts merely as an area for students awaiting collection by parents if they are unwell. However, the school is addressing this problem. At the time of the inspection the appointment of a school nurse and the construction of a purpose-built medical centre were both imminent.
36. Arrangements for child protection are very good. A member of the senior leadership team acts as 'named person' and has had extensive experience, at both this and a previous school, and ensures that training is undertaken so that knowledge is up to date and procedures are current. An entry in the staff handbook ensures that all teachers have the opportunity to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in connection with child protection matters.
37. There are very good procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance. Registration takes place at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions in tutor groups. Some students are legitimately elsewhere at tutor time, for example in connection with their special educational needs provision, some sporting activity or serving on the school council. Here their attendance is recorded by staff and this information is passed to the school office. The school secretary compiles data on the computer so that the school has an accurate knowledge of the attendance record of all students on a daily basis. This information accords well with the published attendance figures, confirming that the registration procedures are robust. Registers are also called in each lesson and this guards effectively against internal truancy. The school is very active in chasing up any unexplained absences and this contributes to the school's good attendance rates and the very low degree of unauthorised absence. Expectations of behaviour in the school are high and there is 'zero tolerance' of any form of anti-social activity. This is backed up by an appropriate system of rewards and sanctions

and by rapid and effective liaison with parents where necessary. As a result, standards of behaviour are high and there is an almost complete absence of bullying.

38. The procedures for supporting and guiding students' academic and personal development are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Individual target setting is effective in raising standards, good teaching motivates and raises the self-esteem of students, especially those who are less able, and assemblies make a substantial contribution to social and moral development. There is a student support centre to which those with a range of problems can be referred and this has established a good reputation for 'turning round' difficult students. There is extensive support for students when they are on study leave. They also receive extra help in completing their course work and through homework clubs. Although students are encouraged to take on responsibility there are not enough opportunities for them to develop their independence, particularly in the light of their very good behaviour and positive attitudes. Although personal development is well monitored by tutors, who have a close rapport with their students, the time in tutor periods is not always used well. Procedures for the induction of new students into Year 7 are very good, with some good curriculum links, especially in drama, science and mathematics. Good provision is made for disabled students, who have easy access to most teaching areas.
39. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' academic progress are satisfactory. There is good benchmarking at each key stage, frequent testing throughout the year (for example, at the end of modules) and assessment data is generally used well to inform curriculum planning. So the tracking of the progress of individual students is generally good. However, each department has its own assessment system, as reported on the previous inspection, and this inevitably leads to variability. Although each of these systems at least satisfactory, this variability means that the school is not making best use of the extensive amount of assessment data available to identify trends in groups of students or the school as a whole.

Sixth form

Assessment

40. Procedures for the assessment of students' achievement and attainment in the sixth form are generally satisfactory and have some good features. For example, written work is produced in many lessons and this enables class teachers to assess the day-to-day progress of individual students. In some subjects, effective use is made of self-evaluation and individual action plans. However, as in the main school, the assessment system varies from one department to another and some students find this unsettling. Thus, in some subjects, they know what level they have achieved and how they can improve to attain their potential best grade in the examination and that the information supplied to their parents is meaningful, whereas in others they feel they have no idea where they are or how they can improve. Students would have more confidence in the assessment system if it was uniform across the school.

Advice, support and guidance

41. Lessons are predominantly teacher-led and this results in much direct and effective guidance being given to students. This guidance is strongly focused on the requirements of examinations and students generally appreciate this. However, such a style leaves limited room for students to develop independence in their learning which their maturity suggests they have the capacity to achieve, though they are given many opportunities to exercise responsibility around the school. Guidance on more personal matters is delivered well through the tutorial system. This is a result of the very good

knowledge that tutors have of their students and the excellence of the quality of relationships in the sixth form. Overall, the standard of careers guidance provided by the school to its sixth-formers is good. Appropriate higher education courses are suggested that link well with individual career ambitions. Good use is made of outside agencies such as the careers service, visiting speakers from industry and participation in the annual higher education convention at the University of Reading. The provision does not put enough emphasis on students finding their own routes and making their own arrangements.

42. The procedures for registering attendance in the sixth form are unsatisfactory at present. The school is aware of this and hence is in the process of introducing a new system based on 'smart cards' to improve the situation. However, class teachers call their own lesson registers and this enables them to take action should a student's poor attendance give cause for concern. Procedures for induction into the sixth form are good which means that students are well prepared for sixth form study, although the monitoring of their progress in Year 12 needs strengthening to ensure that they make the transition from Year 11 successfully.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. As at the time of the previous inspection, parents have a positive view of the school. In particular, they believe that their children work hard, behave well and make good progress and that the standard of teaching is high. They find the school approachable and appreciate the very good extra-curricular provision. All these aspects were confirmed during the inspection. A few parents expressed concern over the amount of homework, the quality of the information they receive and the size of some teaching groups. The inspection findings indicate that the setting of homework ought to be used more effectively to help students reach higher standards, that information for parents is in fact very good and that although some classes are indeed slightly larger than normal, the very good attitudes and behaviour of students ensure that this has virtually no detrimental effect on learning.
44. Parental involvement has a very beneficial impact on the work of the school. There is a very active parent teacher association, known as the Park House School Association, which through a range of events raises substantial funds for the purchase of equipment for the school. For example, the association recently raised £17,000 over an 18-month period to buy a new school minibus. Members of the association also provide the refreshments at school events and organise discos for the students. There is very extensive parental help in the school, more than is usually the case in secondary schools. This includes coaching and transport for sports, support of music and drama events and help in running the careers library. The support that parents provide for their own children's education is generally satisfactory and is similar to what one would expect to find at a secondary school. They encourage their children to do their homework and they play an active part in assisting them with their course options and career choices, for which the school provides them with relevant guidance.
45. Good information is printed for parents on their children's progress. For example, parents receive an annual written report, which is of very high quality. This describes what has been done well, identifies areas for improvement and sets appropriate targets. There is a range of effective meetings throughout the year at which parents can discuss their children's progress with class teachers and tutors, or hear about topics that are being taught in school. Recently, to mark his arrival at the school, a series of meetings was arranged for parents to meet the new headteacher which they found very useful. The school has established very good links with individual parents, particularly those whose children are giving cause for concern. Parents are provided

with good curriculum information and there is a high quality monthly newsletter which keeps them in touch with the general life of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The leadership of the school is very good. Although in post for only a very short time before the inspection took place, the headteacher has sustained and further developed a strong team spirit with all the talented and capable senior leaders pulling strongly in the same direction. Each member of the senior leadership team has clearly delineated responsibilities and yet all share equally in ensuring that the overall good of the school is promoted. The vision of the headteacher – to create an excellent school which caters for the needs of all its students – is shared with the governing body. Many of the same qualities are to be found in those who are responsible for year groups and those who lead departments.
47. The school is very well managed. A wide range of policies, drawn up in consultation with relevant members of staff and the governing body, helps to give the school a firm framework for its consistent conduct and effective operation. The school development plan has clear priorities and is carefully costed. It is continually reviewed by groups of staff which helps it become a useful tool to help shape the future direction of the school. It is reinforced by departmental plans which help ensure that its priorities are realized.
48. Major areas of the school's work are kept under close review. Performance management is a well-established feature of the school. Professional development is helping to ensure that teachers are up-to-date and effective. The achievements of departments are regularly reviewed by senior staff and appropriate courses of action for future improvement are decided upon, but ICT is not effectively managed because it does not play a significant part in the learning of all subjects. The school does not yet have in place a comprehensive tracking system identifying the progress of all students, so that emerging trends can be identified and appropriate action taken. For the most part, the quality of teaching is regularly monitored, although this aspect of the school's performance is not strong enough to ensure that the school's extensive good practice in teaching and learning is further replicated. Attendance and behaviour are well monitored. The monitoring of homework to ensure consistency of practice is not so established.
49. The school enjoys the support of a strong governing body. Governors help the school to pay particularly good attention to the attractive and well appointed school site, to ensure that it is clean and maintained in very good order and that it provides a safe and healthy environment. Its specific involvement in improvements to the design and technology area in particular have had a very positive impact on standards. A close and productive working relationship with the local education authority means that the governing body can focus on strategic thinking in relation to the future direction that the school might take, especially in terms of ensuring that it provides the means to cater for a wide range of needs. The expertise of its members is drawn on in relation to the development of new projects and to budgeting and expenditure. The governing body also shows care and support for all members of the school community. It is informed at regular intervals about the performance of students and has a broad knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
50. The acting special educational needs co-ordinator is very clear about how to move the school forward and the staff are committed to the inclusion of all students in areas of school life. This provides a firm foundation for moving the school forward. The acting-co-ordinator has successfully built on the good management and procedures

established by her predecessor. Planning for the new code of practice is in place and most staff are familiar with the changes through effective training. However, difficulties with staffing have meant that some teachers still require training on matching teaching method and materials to students' individual special needs and in understanding the significance of the new changes. The element of funds devolved to the school budget is used effectively to enable all students with special educational needs to make progress and the school has moved smoothly over to the new local authority audit system. Accommodation for learning support and resources are sound and they have a satisfactory impact on students' learning and progress.

51. Although there have been some difficulties with recruitment, especially in English, and with maintaining lessons when teachers are absent for extended periods of time, on the whole staffing is good and makes a positive contribution to the quality of education offered by the school. Newly qualified teachers are supported well which means that they grow in confidence and become increasingly effective. Support staff who help administer the school are of very good calibre, bringing expertise and commitment to their work. Accommodation is very good for teaching and learning in most subjects, art being the exception, and is making an especially significant contribution to students' achievement, especially in areas such as design and technology and music. Facilities for dance are especially fine. The library is well used and effective. The efficiency of the drama department would be improved if better use were made of existing storage space so that it could be clearly seen what further storage space is still needed. More storage is needed in the geography department. The use of the main hall for drama is not satisfactory and limits the quality of work. Throughout the school, resources are of good quality and are used well to enhance teaching and learning.
52. The school's financial systems work well. Care is taken to ensure that all grants are used for their specific purpose. Departments have scope to ensure that their work is properly resourced. Little use is made as yet of mechanisms for ensuring that the investment from grants results in good returns but the school does ensure that it gets good value for money when purchasing tangible items such as books and equipment. Its expenditure per pupil is above average but it is producing an educational environment of good quality, especially in terms of teaching and learning and in its shared commitment to improvement in all aspects of school life. It gives good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

53. Leadership of the sixth form is very good. The sixth form has a very positive ethos which is well reflected in students' views. Relationships are very good. The school strikes a very good balance between the social aspects of sixth form life and the demands of academic work. Students are encouraged to be independent but this aspect is not promoted strongly enough in aspects of sixth form life. Sixth form students are encouraged to voice their own views which are heeded. The curriculum is kept under regular review but has still to include religious education for students in Year 13. An enrichment programme is encouraged and promoted. Recruitment procedures are effective. Retention rates are high. Apart from the arrangements for attendance which are in the process of being changed, the sixth form is very well managed. It is seen as part of the main school and as such is expected to share the same values. It does so successfully but has also developed an appropriate degree of autonomy in creating an environment which is conducive to the social and academic development of sixth form students. At the time of the last inspection, the sixth form was in the process of establishing itself. It has done this with great success.

Resources

54. The sixth form is well resourced. All subjects have sufficient books and equipment. Students have good access to a well-appointed library. There is adequate access to computers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to improve the school still further, the headteacher, staff and governing body now need to

- (1) Ensure that standards are raised:
 - for students in English throughout the main school;
 - for students in the middle range of ability in mathematics and science;
 - for higher-attaining students in art and religious education.(Paragraphs 61, 63, 64, 66, 72, 73, 75, 76, 82, 91, 140)
- (2) Introduce systems to track the progress of all students to help ensure that they are achieving appropriately.
(Paragraphs 68, 79, 102, 109, 132, 138, 146, 152)
- (3) Improve provision for the study of ICT in Years 10 and 11 and its use and application in learning throughout the school.
(Paragraphs 23, 91, 109, 116, 119, 120, 125, 132, 144, 149)
- (4) Encourage ways in which students can show further independence.
(Paragraphs 10, 11, 21, 22, 27, 28, 138, 151, 165, 174, 191, 192, 201, 203)

The following, less significant issues should also receive attention:

- improve the use of homework to ensure that it is used in all subjects to raise attainment;
 - ensure that all departments emulate the best practice in assessment which exists in the school;
 - improve accommodation in art and drama;
 - improve the writing skills of lower-attaining students.
- (Paragraphs 40, 63, 66, 70, 78, 93, 102, 107, 108, 109, 117, 136, 138, 152)

Sixth form

- (1) Ensure that all students in the sixth form study religious education.
(Paragraphs 34, 135)
- (2) Strengthen the monitoring of students' personal development and overall progress in Year 12.
(Paragraphs 40, 42, 181, 204)
- (3) Improve the arrangements for recording attendance.
(Paragraphs 14, 42, 53)
- (4) Provide more vocational courses to cater for the widening range of needs.
(Paragraphs 34, 183)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Hearing Impaired Resource Service

56. The hearing impaired resource (HIR) is a local authority funded service, situated within the school in specialist accommodation. The resource provides places for four students with a statement of special educational need who are at least of average ability but are experiencing severe specific learning difficulties and have a low level of literacy. Students may be allocated a place at the school at 11 or subsequently by the Local Education Authority panel according to strict criteria. They receive very effective intensive support through individual tuition and in-class support from a specialist teacher of the deaf who also provides support, through the Sensory Consortium Service, for one student with more complex difficulties, including hearing impairment, who is also statemented, and several non-statemented students with hearing impairment.
57. The hearing-impaired resource service has maintained its good service since the last inspection, enhancing it in many areas through whole school training and individual work with teachers. The specialist teacher in charge has promoted a positive attitude towards the resource and its students, ensuring that all students have access to all of the work in the classroom to enable both academic and social inclusion. There has been steady improvement since the last inspection.
58. Teaching methods are skilled and well informed. This ensures highly effective teaching and students make very good progress. Some students on entry have low literacy skills but soon make noticeable progress due to careful, detailed assessment and expert individual tuition. They develop increasingly effective skills and strategies in managing their own learning, in developing their vocabulary and literacy skills. Many regularly succeed in the important targets set for them and some surpass them. By Year 9 and the end of Year 11, students are as well prepared as possible for National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. The teacher and students have very good relationships which are formed through careful induction procedures, and detailed knowledge of each individual's specific difficulty. The teacher works closely with the careers officer for the deaf, to enable students to have the best possible foundation for their future, ensuring successful work experience placements and highly effective transition plans.
59. Teachers have high expectation of students' achievements and behaviour and, despite their difficulties, students try hard and have very good attitudes towards their learning. Diagnosis is thorough and leads to meticulous planning. The teacher writes high quality individual education plans with clear and measurable learning targets, making certain that individual and group work is carefully adapted to support work in mainstream lessons usually after discussion with individual subject teachers. Students also receive specialist tuition on an individual basis through a highly structured multi-sensory approach. These specialist teaching programmes tackle aspects of students' needs and develop students as independent learners. ICT is used well to support learning and develop literacy.
60. Parents of students with hearing impairment are fully involved in their children's learning and experiences. They are kept well informed about their children's achievement and progress at every stage, from the pre-entry visits and very careful induction, to review and progress meetings. The HIR makes particular efforts to encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning and encourages them to come into the school to discuss their children's targets, individual education plans and annual reviews of their statement of special educational need. The teacher

in charge works closely with teachers in subject areas within the main school and responds to training needs at a whole-school or departmental level, giving advice and providing exemplar work to the learning support team, offering a HI perspective. There is also awareness training on HI, and advice is given on curriculum development and classroom support. At present, there is no awareness training for hearing pupils on the challenges presented to students with HI both socially and academically. This is an area for development. The specialist teacher manages the HIR well. Training and expertise are updated by regular courses and visits to other educational establishments and good use is made of outside agencies to develop further good practice. The development plan for the HIR is detailed and comprehensive and the budget is managed efficiently. The specialist accommodation is small but efficiently used and resources are good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	133
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	31	65	28	3	1	0
Percentage	4	23	49	21	2	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	24	17	6	0	0	0
Percentage	6	48	34	12	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1061	200
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	59	–

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	168	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	128	91	219

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	103	100
	Girls	71	67	58
	Total	162	170	158
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 [76]	78 [78]	72 [83]
	National	66 [64]	67 [66]	66 [66]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 [43]	54 [61]	34 [54]
	National	32 [31]	45 [43]	33 [34]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	99	104
	Girls	73	65	65
	Total	165	164	169
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 [76]	73 [81]	75 [81]
	National	67 [65]	70 [68]	67 [64]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 [37]	53 [60]	40 [46]
	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	102	88	190

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	56	103	103
	Girls	51	81	84
	Total	107	184	187
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 [62]	97 [97]	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	44.3
	National	39.8

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	36	23	59

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.8	16.6	16.6	-	-	-
National	16.9	17.7	17.4	-	-	-

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

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
1201	47	0
0	0	0
27	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
13	0	0
1	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	732.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	56.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	21.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	3,518,951
Total expenditure	3,438,917
Expenditure per pupil	2,727
Balance brought forward from previous year	131,729
Balance carried forward to next year	80,034

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	24
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.48
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1261
Number of questionnaires returned	242

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	54	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	49	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	65	6	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	57	16	3	1
The teaching is good.	28	68	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	57	19	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	45	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	39	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	55	14	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	33	55	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	55	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	46	5	0	6

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Students are well prepared for national tests and public examinations
- Results in GCSE examinations are above national averages
- The school is narrowing the gap between the achievement of boys and that of girls in Year 11
- Standards of speaking and listening

Areas for improvement

- Some students are marking time and are not achieving as much as they should
- More rigorous systems are required to track students' progress throughout the school
- Homework is not used consistently enough to raise standards

61. Students join the school with above average standards, although some still have significant weaknesses in their writing. In 2002, results in National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 were in line with national averages, a decline from the preceding three years when results were either above average or well above average. These results were far less good than the results for mathematics and less good than results for science. In comparison with similar schools, the results were also below average. Students who achieved similar results at Key Stage 2 achieved better results at other schools. English test results showed an improving trend from 1999 to 2001 but declined in 2002. An important contributory factor for these disappointing results was inconsistency in the quality of teaching following an abrupt change in staffing. The situation is now more settled although the quality of teaching is still not consistent enough. There are clear indications that students ought to achieve results which are consistently above average in their national tests, especially given their standard on entry.
62. By Year 9, most students listen attentively to their teachers, answer well in class and take a lively part in group discussions. Higher-attaining students read fluently, bringing the text to life for the listener. Lower-attaining students read accurately, although not as expressively, but all are keen to try. Good reading habits are established early by the silent reading sessions at the beginning of each lesson, by weekly visits to the school library and by the annual Readathon competition, which raised a large sum of money in 2002 for a children's charity fund. The library is used well as a resource for learning and the range of topics researched makes a good contribution to students' personal development.
63. Standards of writing vary considerably although all students have the same opportunities to write for a range of purposes. The majority of students work productively and know how to change their style to suit their readers. For example, students in Year 7 wrote their own versions of 'The Ballad of Rhona Martin' after reading an account of her gold medal win for hurling in the winter Olympics. However, some lower-attaining students mark time and their writing lacks meaning and purpose because there are so many spelling mistakes, careless slips and grammatical errors, and consequently they do not achieve as well as they should. The overall standard of

current work is average and students' achievement is satisfactory but with consistently good teaching over time they should be capable of reaching higher standards.

64. In 2002, results in the GCSE English examinations were just above the national average. Overall, achievement is satisfactory but students are capable of achieving more. As is the case in the national tests, girls do better than boys although the performance of boys exceeds the achievement of boys nationally. This reflects some of the successful strategies introduced by the school to improve boys' performance in English. For example, small classes of boys focus on relevant activities using books that stimulate their interest. Standards of current work in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average and some of the written work is of good quality, especially when students combine their reading and writing reviews of stories, plays and poems studied for the GCSE examination. For example, in Year 11 students wrote successful critical appreciations of Simon Armitage's poem, 'War Photographer,' comparing the image of the photographer's dark room with the darkness of the man's mind as he reflects upon scenes of violence and destruction. By Year 11, students' writing is often adventurous with exciting choices of vocabulary and some good use of punctuation to shape meaning. Lower-attaining students make steady progress with more straightforward tasks because teachers provide a framework to support their writing. As a result, students organise their essays to express their ideas and opinions, supporting these with evidence from the texts they read.
65. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and the learning of lower-attaining students is improving as a result of the carefully chosen tasks assigned to meet their needs. Gifted and talented students achieve well, producing some very good work in response to challenges such as the inter-house writing competitions.
66. Teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. It is sometimes very good but is, nevertheless, inconsistent in quality. This inconsistency is one of the reasons why standards are not as high as they ought to be. Two other major factors are the recent instability in staffing and the absence of a detailed system for tracking students' progress so that any developing under-achievement is detected early enough and action taken to remedy it. Most teachers plan their lessons to interest their students and arouse their curiosity. For example, students in Year 8 were excited by the story 'Walkabout', telling of the adventures of two children lost in the Australian outback. They were keen to explain some of the techniques used by the writer to excite the reader's imagination and create tension. Students suggested appropriate verbs, adjectives and adverbs to make their own writing more interesting. Most teachers manage their classes skilfully and as a result students respond keenly and behave well in lessons. However, they transfer from a range of primary schools and some have not mastered the skills of sentence construction and formats for sustained writing. The school has introduced a range of strategies relevant for these different groups of students, but some teachers set tasks that do not meet the various learning needs and then students do not achieve as well as they should.
67. Students in Years 10 and 11 learn well in response to the good quality teaching and challenges to improve their work in line with the demands of the GCSE examinations. For example, students in Year 10 worked in small groups studying Shakespeare's sonnets before reporting to the whole class reviewing all that they had learned to enable them to write more successful essays. Lower-attaining students are encouraged to persist in their efforts by teachers' expectations for their success and this builds their confidence and self-esteem. For example, in Year 11, students on a basic skills course discovered ways that writers use language to influence their readers to buy different kinds of holidays and one boy was inspired to tell about a memorable football tour of Cornwall.

68. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning, especially when they support the writing of the weaker students. In all year groups, students are encouraged to draft and redraft their written work and teachers mark work carefully, indicating ways to improve. ICT is used profitably, especially for students' personal writing where the excellent presentation is celebrated by wall displays, so that students know their efforts are valued. Teachers assess students' work regularly and lessons are planned to raise the standards of students' performance overall. Nevertheless, teachers' mark books, spreadsheets of results and published schemes do not provide a sufficiently effective system for tracking the individual progress of each student throughout the school.
69. The head of department manages her team of teachers well and they are committed to raising standards of achievement. The staffing shortages and many changes of teachers in recent years have created considerable problems. The department is poised for success in the future if there is a period of stability in staffing to sustain consistent support for students' learning and the quality of teaching and learning can be assured. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Literacy

70. Students possess very good speaking and listening skills and these represent one of the school's strengths. The skills are strongly developed through the encouragement students receive from teachers. For the most part, students communicate easily with each other and with adults, the exception being lessons in design and technology. Opportunities for students to take part in mock trial competitions, after-school debates and the Youth Parliament all enhance students' oral skills. Overall, students read accurately, deducing the meaning from the texts studied and higher-attaining students read with increasing fluency. All subject areas helpfully display lists of key words and relevant terminology to encourage the use of subject specific vocabulary. Literacy skills are particularly well developed in history, geography, modern foreign languages and ICT. However, writing skills in all subjects fall below students' skills in speaking and listening and it is in this area that improvement is most needed. Although some individual teachers address these needs well in different subjects, there is no systematic whole school attention paid to this aspect of students' work, which means that impact is limited, especially in relation to the needs of those students whose literacy skills are weak.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Test results at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average
- Able students achieve well
- The quality of teaching is good
- The department works well as a team

Areas for improvement

- The progress of some students, especially those in middle-attaining groups from Year 9 to Year 11
- The achievement of girls by the time they reach the end of Year 9 and Year 11
- The consistency of teachers' day-to-day assessment of students' progress
- The tracking of students' progress over time

71. Generally, students' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is above average. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 show standards to be consistently well above average. Attainment at the age-expected Level 5 and above, in 2002, despite remaining well above the national average, declined slightly from that of 2001. The results were below the school's own targets but above those of similar schools. Mathematics results compared favourably with those of English and science. The proportion of the students gaining Level 6 or better was slightly lower than in 2001 but remained above that for similar schools. Students made faster progress than those nationally with a similar starting point at the end of Year 6. Those students with special educational needs also made good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Boys achieved better than girls overall, but there is no departmental analysis to explain these results.
72. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of the school's students achieving grades A* to C was above the national average and similar to the 2001 results. Mathematically gifted students, both boys and girls, achieved an above average proportion of A* and A grades. All students entered for the GCSE examination in mathematics, including those with special educational needs, were successful in achieving a pass grade. Based on their achievements at the end of Year 9, the percentage of students gaining A* to C was in line with similar schools. Students attaining average results at the end of Year 9 achieved less well than other groups in the cohort. Boys' performance in GCSE examinations again bettered that of the girls. The department has not clearly identified the reasons for the slower progress of some average-attaining students over the period of their GCSE examination course. Mathematics results compared very favourably with those of science and English.
73. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 in lessons is above average overall, and similar to that recorded in the national tests. Nevertheless, attainment ranges across the mathematics sets from well above to below average. Higher-attaining students have very good numerical skills and are confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. They achieve well across all aspects of mathematics. In a lesson on probability, able students displayed very good oral skills when explaining experimental results. Well-presented exercise books indicate that these students have good graphicacy skills that support their work on loci and constructions. Manipulative algebra skills are strong. Students in the middle-ability range are able to give considered reasons for their conclusions to practical probability tasks. They make good progress in finding generalisations to match simple sequences, but have some difficulty in completing more complex quadratic patterns. By the end of Year 9, students with special educational needs and those in lower groups make good progress in their number skills although they find operations with fractions difficult. Graphical presentation is sometimes careless, lacking labels on axes, for example. However, they have a sound grasp of angle facts and the properties of common plane shapes. Students' literacy skills are sufficient to support their work in mathematics.
74. By the end of Year 11, standards in mathematics lessons are above average overall. Some higher-attaining students reach very high standards, as in a lesson involving surds and volumes of solids. These students approach tasks systematically and are able to offer algebraic generalisations very competently. However, a not insignificant number of this group have a hazy recall of earlier material, sometimes relying too much on half-remembered rules. In a Year 10 lesson, students made fast progress in their work on trigonometry, showing good manipulative skills in using the sine rule for triangles.

75. Students in the middle range of ability are able to give reasons for their geometrical proofs involving angles and parallel lines. In a lesson observed on finding the mean of grouped data, many students moved beyond the routine task to discuss upper and lower boundaries and improve their understanding of class intervals and mid-points. Nevertheless, too many students in the middle range of ability fail to produce coursework of a sufficient standard to support their target GCSE grades, and as a result they underachieve.
76. Students in lower groups, and those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress over Years 10 and 11. They enhance their data handling skills well, and their number skills are at least sound. In work on conversion graphs, for example, most students accurately drew scales on axes, but only after help with interpreting the question. Not unexpectedly, however, they have difficulty identifying patterns in numbers, for example, and in making connections between areas of mathematics. Notably, some students in all attainment groups pay insufficient attention to the mathematical syntax of solutions. Overall, students make slower progress in their mathematics in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years, particularly those in middle-ability groups.
77. The quality of teaching is good overall. Contributory factors to the students' success in examinations include the consistent quality of much of the teaching, the systematic approach to content coverage, and the positive attitudes to work shown by the students. In all lessons, teachers display strong subject knowledge, are well organised, and manage students' behaviour very well. However, the National Numeracy initiative is not yet fully embedded in the work of the department and does not yet fully influence classroom practice.
78. In the best lessons, thorough planning ensures that the work is matched well to the students' needs and earlier learning. The pace of lessons is brisk so that the students make the best use of their time as in a Year 8 lesson on polygons, a Year 9 lesson on properties of shapes, and a Year 10 lesson on trigonometry. Oral work is used well to challenge the students' understanding and there is a considered balance between consolidating previous work and acquiring new skills. Teachers take note of the need to emphasise visual skills, as well as listening and practical skills. In all lessons, students apply themselves well because of the collaborative effort between teachers and students to ensure effective learning. In the less effective lessons, teachers mostly plan the content of their lessons satisfactorily, secure in their knowledge of mathematics. However, in some lessons students spend too long on written activities and do not benefit sufficiently from oral interactions or from imaginative and visual resources to support their learning. In other lessons, there are missed opportunities to assess and record the students' strengths and weaknesses, sometimes the result of imprecise learning objectives which are not always shared with the students. Many individual students regularly receive good and immediate feedback on their work in lessons, but some students spend too long waiting for help because of teachers' focus on individuals in the class. Marking across the department is inconsistent in frequency, regularity and quality. It is not always clear that incomplete work or errors are followed up.
79. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 improved and has remained above average at the end of Year 11. There is a greater proportion of good teaching. Students benefit from an increased use of ICT. The leadership of the department is in a transitional phase. The day-to-day management of the department is smooth, and the department has a clear and shared commitment to improve its provision for the students. However, priorities for the incoming departmental leader include the further

development of teaching, the regular monitoring and tracking of students' progress in mathematics, and the development of numeracy across the curriculum.

Numeracy

80. Overall provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of numeracy across the curriculum remain areas for development. Students' standards of attainment in numeracy are generally above average. Most students show good facility in calculations. For example, a group of Year 7 students were articulate and confident when explaining their understanding of ratio. A lower Year 11 group competently matched equivalent decimals, fractions and percentages while gifted Year 11 students used mental methods to calculate with surds. When required to do so, students use calculators sensibly and efficiently. In science, students make good use of their mathematics, particularly number operations, graphs, equations and the manipulation of formulae. They also use currency conversion tables competently in modern foreign languages, and are confident in using number in survey work. In religious education, students use the pictorial representation of data to illustrate their work, and identify on the world map, numbers associated with the main faith groups. There is frequent reference to numeracy skills in art with good opportunities to enhance the students' experience of symmetry, tessellations, measurement and perspective, for example. History lessons afford students the chance to interpret statistical tables in research work into births, marriages and deaths. Geography makes good provision to support and use the students' numeracy skills and to prepare the students for the mathematical content of their sixth form work. In younger year groups, students apply their skills to interpreting graphs and tables, and to scales. They calculate area and altitude competently. In Years 10 and 11 they explore demographic distributions, and construct and interpret diagrammatic representations with accuracy, particularly population pyramids, for example. Overall, students' number skills support very well their work in other curriculum areas.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is good
- Teaching is especially good in Years 10 and 11, with some excellent practice
- Students have positive attitudes and behaviour is consistently good
- Assessment, tracking and target setting are well developed

Areas for improvement

- Raise attainment, especially for students in the middle range of ability
- Improve some aspects of teaching in Years 7 to 9
- Continue to improve laboratory and preparation room accommodation
- ICT is insufficiently used

81. All students follow a modular course from Year 7 to Year 9, leading to a GCSE examination double award in science at the end of Year 11. One group of students, typically between five and ten percent of the cohort, study three separate single science subjects and, in 2002, this group contained about twice as many boys as girls. Standards are above the national average both in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Students' attainment in science is generally less than that in mathematics. In relation to national differences, boys do slightly better in Years

7-9 than girls and by the end of Year 11, the reverse is true, following the national pattern.

82. In 2002, the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 was well above the national average, and at Level 6 and above was in line with the average. However, the proportion of students gaining these higher grades is below the average for similar schools. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, as in previous years, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was above the national average and for achieving grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Students' achievement is good at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11, but students of moderate ability ought to achieve more.
83. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Students generally show good knowledge and understanding, but there is some variation, especially in Years 7 to 9. For example, some students in Year 7 made good progress in the lesson on inherited characteristics and the practical work on fingerprinting had pace and excitement. Yet, other students produced work of poor quality and progress was unsatisfactory in the Year 7 lesson on particles, and students in Year 9 had a poor understanding of the role of roots in photosynthesis. In Year 8, students enjoyed the work on respiration which very effectively used animated material on CD-ROM. Year 9 students confidently applied their new knowledge and understanding of acid rain to unfamiliar situations in the environment. On the whole, most students show good achievement in lessons.
84. In work seen during the inspection, students in Years 10 and 11 achieved standards which were well above average. Capable students in Year 10 did well in their work on the conservation of energy. They discussed with confidence the transformation of gravitational potential energy to kinetic energy and could accurately calculate the proportions of each form of energy at various points. Year 11 students showed understanding of the general reactions of acids with metals, bases and carbonates. Students with special educational needs make good progress.
85. There has been substantial change since the last inspection when the new head of department was appointed in March 1997. Along with the acquisition of many new staff, the department has made major changes which support learning very well. As a result, standards have continued to improve. Department documentation is outstanding; schemes of work and teaching strategies have been thoroughly revised and the department handbook and policy statements are exemplary. Students are well supported by new texts, key resources and computing software. Teachers work closely together, and the tracking and recording of students' success is well developed. In addition to prior attainment, the results of regular assessment, end of module tests, and other material are successfully used to group students by ability, to set individual targets, to report progress to students and parents and to support and generally inform teachers' work and students' learning. This is a major development and enables the department to communicate effectively and negotiate realistic targets with parents and students, and some modification of the curriculum takes place as a result. Science is well supported by a team of four laboratory technicians. Although further improvement in accommodation and services is required, some recent refurbishment has already made a strong visual and positive impact on the quality of students' work. Teachers are good role models and encourage interest in science through their own specialist knowledge and enthusiasm.
86. The quality of teaching varies. With small exception, in Years 7 to 9 it is good overall and there are some examples of very good and excellent practice. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of science, which they use effectively with

students, and they are enthusiastic about their subject. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in the lesson on environmental pollution in Year 9, the effective use of software on respiration in Year 8 and work on the displacement of the halogens and the periodic table in Year 11. In most lessons, aims and intended outcomes were displayed and known by the students and the promotion and recording of key words is well done. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Where homework was given, it was well thought out, relevant and extended students' learning. Whole class questioning is regularly used and effective, and the pace of lessons is good. In very good and excellent lessons, students are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This was demonstrated well in the physics lesson on the concept of high voltage power transmission where students were fully engaged and able to respond well to focused questions and to establish sound environmental links. Assessment is properly organised and teachers mark students' books and other work regularly. The quality of students' work on display throughout the science laboratories is very good and some is excellent. A small proportion of lessons in Years 7 to 9 were unsatisfactory because teaching was not pitched at the right level for students to understand.

87. Students are enthusiastic about their work in science, behaviour in lessons is very good and attitudes to learning in science are positive. Expectations of teachers are high and relationships are very good. Students take pride in their work which is mostly completed on time and books are generally looked after well. The engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high and students enjoy practical work and investigations in science; they stay on task, work collaboratively and with good concentration.
88. Leadership and management are outstanding. The head of department has a clear vision, and has identified and successfully tackled all of the major issues and has a consummate knowledge of current thinking in science education and handles people well and with sensitivity. Development planning is also a strength and the department has now completed a major review of documentation and schemes of work which includes statements about literacy, numeracy, ICT, teaching strategies and the effective use of resources. The department is very well organised and teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- Independent learning skills are well developed
- There is a wide range of learning experiences

Areas for improvement

- More use of ICT
- Additional strategies for challenging higher-attaining students so that standards are raised further
- Inadequate accommodation constrains learning in some classes

89. By the end of Year 11, students make good progress and achieve well. Many reach standards expected for their age and a significant number exceed them. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in the GCSE examination regularly

exceeds national averages as the result of good teaching. Many students have developed good drawing skills as a result of the strong emphasis the department places on this aspect of learning. Painting techniques are also learnt well through good teaching and much of the finished work is developed to good standards of artistic competency and originality. Students' research is often extensive, wide-ranging and very well presented. Their knowledge of traditional and contemporary artists is wide and is influential in their written and practical work. The artistic richness of other cultures also makes a strong impact on some of the work. Students are encouraged and expected to work independently and to pursue individuality of response, within a very good framework of effective teacher support and subject knowledge. This is successfully reflected in the diversity of outcomes and is a strength of the department. The range and complexity of work inspired by the school's visit to the Tate Modern Gallery is a very good example.

90. Whilst there is no data available to establish levels on entry, end of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2002 show that standards exceed national averages. Standards in lessons and work seen are average and often above average. There is a strong emphasis on the development of observational drawing skills and painting techniques as the result of well planned lessons. Work is based on research and experimentation. Regular homework supports the development of classwork and also encourages individuality of response. The comic book design and the poster work on fish conservation with its strong moral message, both showing strong Japanese influences, are good examples of students' achievement and progress by the end of Year 9.
91. The achievement of students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, is never less than satisfactory and is often good. Provision for the higher attainers, already an identified and targeted group, is still not effective enough. Students are taught to handle a range of two- and three-dimensional materials with confidence. The use of ICT has been successfully integrated in some years, but has not been further developed so that it is incorporated into the courses for all students. As they move through the school, students are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and the development of personal ideas.
92. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well organised and have high expectations of their students in terms of behaviour, pace and output of work. Planning is very good and an effective balance is struck between instruction in technique and process. Students are encouraged to explore the full potential of art and this is evident in the wealth of investigative written and creative work in many of the journals maintained by students in Year 11.
93. Written work is a well established aspect of the department although strategies for improving basic skills are not consistently applied. There are examples of good teaching in different year groups where teachers make demands on the ability of students to think about the development of their work and to explore different forms of expression. Very good procedures for assessment are well established and are used effectively to inform students of their attainment and ways in which they can improve their work. Individual target setting is used with increasing effectiveness and helps students to understand that they are making good progress in Years 10 and 11.
94. Opportunities for reflection, well planned in some lessons and involving students in the evaluation of work, could be more consistently and effectively developed. Students at all levels enjoy art and respond well to the work they are given. Many take a pride in their achievement. This is due to their increasing success as the result of good teaching and course organisation, which many students acknowledge. Behaviour and attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9 and are very good in Years 10 and 11. Students are

able to sustain concentration, to become actively involved in class discussion and talk sensibly about their own and others' work.

95. The department is led and managed very well by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist who sets and maintains high standards. Interesting and challenging schemes of work are in place for all year groups. Planning is very thorough and effectively includes aspects of literacy, numeracy and citizenship. A wide variety of learning resources is very effectively managed to support teaching and extend the students' knowledge and understanding. A good range of extra-curricular activities further extends learning opportunities. There is a shared commitment to extend provision and to raise standards. Progress since the last inspection has been very good despite poor accommodation which inhibits learning for larger groups. The art department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school and art work is prominently displayed in many parts of the school buildings.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Above-average attainment in child development in Years 10 and 11
- Good quality leadership and management
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of the students
- The high degree of finish students bring to their work

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels in teaching
- The provision of lesson time in Year 10

96. At the end of Year 9, attainment is above average. In National Curriculum assessments, students gain an above-average percentage of Level 5 grades and above. In students' current and recent work there are very good examples from each area of the design and technology curriculum. A particular strength is the degree to which work is carried through to a very high standard of finish, especially by students with a special talent for the subject.
97. At the end of Year 11, attainment in GCSE results taken as a whole is above average with standards in child development being particularly high. In work seen during the inspection, there were examples of very good, imaginatively designed work in resistant materials and in graphic products. These show the same concern for good finish which is evident in the earlier years. A clearly designed metal-cased clock, for example, showed a professional concern for finish and reflected the workshop discipline that characterises the department. An imaginative device for holding materials when working on a ladder was equally carefully constructed.
98. Project folders are informative and, in the main, well presented, particularly in food technology and child development. In graphics and resistant materials folders, however, too little attention is paid to areas of lettering as part of the overall design of a page or display sheet. There is good evidence of students' use of ICT to model designs and represent ideas. Computer control is used in routing in resistant materials and in baking in food technology. At both stages, numeracy and literacy are addressed in accordance with school policy. Numeracy is enhanced by measuring and calculation in all areas of the technology curriculum, and logic is developed in circuitry. Word lists in workshops display subject terms and these are discussed in lessons as and when

they occur. Speaking, however, is not sufficiently practised as an aspect of literacy and this is reflected in relatively weak performance when students deliver short discourses in class.

99. Students' achievement by the time they reach the end of Year 9 is good. Their work shows that they make good progress in designing and making, and girls achieve particularly well in textiles, using colour imaginatively and developing a range of skills in sewing and appliqué. Students with special talent are able to fulfil their potential due to the nature of design and technology projects, which allows success at a wide range of levels. For the same reasons, students with special educational needs achieve well. Students show good levels of skill in the design process but their skills of making are generally better because of their expertise with construction and the concern they show for finish.
100. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is good. The GCSE examination options allow for continuous progress from the earlier stage and students build upon skills gained earlier. Particularly good achievement is evident in child development. Individual projects show the acquisition of good research skills and thoroughness in assembling information. The pace of progress in lessons in this specific area is often very good, aided by excellent student response and behaviour. As at the earlier stage and, again, due to the wide demands of projects, students with special talent and those with special educational needs achieve well.
101. The quality of teaching is good throughout the main school. From Year 7, through to the end of Year 9, students are introduced to a wide curriculum. The level of challenge in lessons devoted to the development of skills is high, but is reinforced by sensitive, individual help and tuition enabling good progress to be made by all students. Projects are well conceived to promote imaginative activity. In a Year 7 textile lesson, for example, students took rubbings from a range of texture surfaces using fabric crayons. The rubbings were then developed imaginatively into designs, colours being chosen according to the students' preferences. This constituted a most enjoyable and productive lesson. All lessons are prepared well and care is taken to provide appropriate resources.
102. In Years 10 and 11 there was some very good teaching. In one excellent lesson in child development, a visiting dentistry expert provided very stimulating material including photographs of dental conditions. This contribution was used to maximum effect by the teacher who had planned each stage of the lesson meticulously, including extension work and homework. The teaching, generally, at this stage is planned effectively to provide for the development of individual ideas in projects. Good individual tuition plays an important role and provides good evidence of teachers' subject expertise. Assessment is thorough and students are well informed concerning their progress. The awareness of National Curriculum levels, however, is comparatively underdeveloped and more could be done in lessons to use levels to motivate students further.
103. Learning at both stages is purposeful. The very good attitudes and behaviour of students in most lessons leads to good concentration and good learning. The nature of the challenge provided in lessons also promotes a high level of interest, which has a positive influence upon learning. In a Year 11 food technology lesson, students were involved in designing and producing a meal suitable for diabetics. This involved research, planning and a range of food preparation skills. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen at either stage.

104. A major strength is the quality of leadership and management. The head of department makes a full contribution to the teaching and sets very high standards in the care and organisation of the teaching environment. Workshop discipline is excellent and materials and equipment are very well cared for. Documentation is precise and informative and reflects the general emphasis on orderly working, which is entirely appropriate to all areas of technology. Relationships within the department are very good and provide a secure platform for the development of the subject. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. The accommodation has been extended, refurbished and provides a good range of well-lit, well-equipped workshops, classrooms and offices. The below-average aspects of systems and mechanisms, and textile products are no longer evident and progress to the end of Year 9 is now good. Improvement is still needed, however, in curriculum organisation. Class sizes, are comparatively large, in Years 7, 8 and 9 which makes supervision, especially with regard to health and safety, more difficult to carry out effectively. There is also a relatively low provision of lesson time in Year 10, which inevitably reduces examination prospects at the end of Year 11.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are high
- The quality of teaching is good
- Very good leadership and effective management

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT
- The use of assessment data to inform students of their levels and to track their progress
- The use of homework to raise standards

105. Standards are above average in GCSE examinations. Girls do better than boys and better than girls nationally and more girls also reach the highest grades. Boys, however, do better than boys nationally. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the majority of students reach above-average levels of attainment in the National Curriculum and exceed national expectations. Achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs, is very good over time. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

106. The standards of work in lessons in Year 11 are above average. Progress is good over time, partly because of the very positive attitudes of most students to their work. GCSE examination coursework and other assessed work show that students' analysis of fieldwork data and other statistical information is good and that most students can produce accurately drawn maps, graphs and diagrams. It also shows that they can evaluate information in some detail and arrive at considered conclusions. The very good results achieved in the most recent decision-making exercise for the GCSE examination confirm the good thinking and observational skills seen in lessons. Listening skills are good and students are confident in asking and answering questions. A significant number of students are less confident and competent in their spelling and handwriting.

107. The standards reached by most students in Year 9 are above average in lessons and in their work over time. The majority of students make very good progress. Most students express themselves well, both orally and in their written work. Lower-attaining

students are hampered by weak literacy skills, but they try hard and their answers, although limited, are nearly always correct. Higher-attaining students use detailed information provided by teachers to produce particularly high quality written work and assessments. Students use atlases with confidence to locate significant places and important physical features. Work on weather shows a sound knowledge of microclimates whilst work on rivers and coastlines shows that students know and can use appropriate subject vocabulary. Carelessness and poor presentation spoil the work of a significant minority of students and some do not show appropriate consideration for other students or their teachers, by talking when they should be working.

108. Teaching is good and is sometimes very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their questioning is very good, probing understanding and making students think about answers. Planning, another key issue for improvement at the last inspection, is now good, and ensures that a range of activities consolidate learning and develop both geographical and personal skills. Class management is good and high expectations result in good conduct and positive attitudes in most lessons. These high expectations are not always applied to students' written work where teachers are not critical enough of careless work, poor spelling and poor presentation. This also applies to homework. Teachers strengthen students' confidence by providing clear guidance on what they need to do when they are assessed. The detailed marking of some teachers also gives students helpful information on how to improve their work. Not all teachers are so rigorous. Teachers know their students well and adapt their resources to meet their specific needs. Innovative methods - such as the use of cartoons, quizzes and even of students used as models for illustrating a river system, fingertips representing springs, arms tributaries and the body as the river - enliven lessons and stimulate interest. Students easily recall these 'fun' activities. Although teachers use a range of resources they make insufficient use of ICT to enhance their teaching and students' learning.
109. Leadership is very good. The departmental development plan gives a clear indication of the determination of the head of department, supported by a strong team of teachers, to raise standards still further. Effective management involves the teachers in curriculum planning and makes good use of areas of expertise and experience. Responsibilities are shared. Sufficient resources are available to support the curriculum, but the provision of new technology in the form of computers is minimal and the weather station needs to be renewed. ICT is as yet not fully embedded in schemes of work and needs to be given a higher priority. Classrooms are adequate but an acute lack of storage space results in textbooks, filing cabinets and cupboards cluttering classrooms and restricting movement around the rooms. Assessment, an issue at the last inspection is now in place; it is regular and it is appropriately linked to the curriculum. A remaining issue is that it is not linked to the level descriptors of the National Curriculum so does not inform students about their actual achievement. The tests used for assessment disadvantage lower-attaining students and need to be redesigned with an incline of difficulty built into each question similar to those in GCSE examination papers. The department needs to make greater use of assessment data and other data to track students' progress. The department has, however, made very good progress since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination grades are consistently above the national average
- Attainment is above average by the end of Year 9
- Good quality teaching and learning
- Effective use of assessment to help students improve
- The positive attitudes of students help them to make good progress

Areas for improvement

- To reinstate a local study in the unit entitled 'Britain 1750-1900'
- Increase opportunities for students to make historical visits
- Implement the plan to provide additional computer software

110. Based on assessments made by teachers, the attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was above the national average. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that most students in the present Year 9 are also attaining above average standards. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Many students can write confidently and with a good degree of accuracy about historical events. They can also use different sources of evidence to form judgements. Students are confident when answering questions and have an accurate recall of earlier work.
111. In 2002, 68 per cent of students gained the higher A*-C grades in their GCSE examination. This is above the national average and maintains the trend of recent years. Every student entered gained a pass grade. Students in the present Year 11 are also attaining above average standards and the standards of a significant number of students are well above average. Many have good research skills and can apply historical concepts accurately and with maturity. Written work is carefully presented. Oral contributions from some higher-attaining students are thoughtful and considered, showing a good depth of knowledge and understanding.
112. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9. Most students develop a wide range of skills, including interpretation of data and the ability to analyse difficult historical issues. Most have a good understanding of chronology. Students are confident when using a wide range of learning materials including well-prepared worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, library sources and the Internet. Students in Year 8, for example, made good progress when using ICT to research the life of Napoleon. Students with special educational needs progress as well as others and some benefit especially well from focused and helpful in-class support from the teaching assistants.
113. The achievement of students in the present Year 11 is good. Their work indicates that a high proportion are on course for impressive examination grades. Students make particularly good progress in their ability to analyse and evaluate different sources of historical evidence and to draw conclusions from them. Good examples of this were seen in two different groups. Students' written work is generally well organised and neatly presented. Their achievement is helped by the fact that they have a clear understanding about their own progress and what they need to do to improve. A small number of students on the register of special educational needs are following the examination course and are coping well.

114. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Overall teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Lessons are planned very carefully. Objectives are shared with the students at the start of each lesson. Teachers make very good use of a range of different strategies to stimulate interest and help students to maintain concentration. Questions are used very effectively to assess students' knowledge and understanding and to promote analytical thinking. Opportunities are given for students to research topics independently. Students are challenged at an appropriate level. Learning is good as a consequence. Positive relationships in lessons underpin learning and the acquisition of skills.
115. Leadership and management by the head of department and by the acting head of department are good. Teachers work well together. Very good procedures are in place for the assessment of students' work. The specialist classrooms contribute to a good learning environment with attractive displays of historical posters and students' work. There are very few artefacts available and the rooms lack blinds, making it difficult for teachers to use the white-boards or video on very bright days. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Target setting for individual students has been extended. The department is making greater use of statistical data to monitor students' progress. The work set for lower-attaining students in Years 7 to 9, including differentiated homework tasks, is pitched at a more appropriate level. The use of ICT has increased. The schemes of work now address the multicultural nature of society. At present, there is no provision for a local study in the unit on Britain 1750-1900 as required by the National Curriculum. There are very few opportunities for students to visit places of historical interest. Teachers have identified the need to acquire more relevant computer software, particularly for lower-attaining students. The department has maintained good standards since the last inspection. Although the numbers have fallen slightly, history continues to be a popular option choice. Relationships are very good and the departmental staff have created an environment in which good teaching and learning can flourish.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average
- The quality of teaching is very good
- The attitudes of students are very good
- The effective procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment

Areas for improvement

- The limited range of learning opportunities, especially for students in Years 10 and 11
- The lack of coherence in the leadership
- The co-ordination of the use of ICT in other subjects
- Students' limited awareness of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their work

116. Students' standards on entry to the school vary from year to year but on the whole are above the national average. By the time students reach the end of Year 9, standards remain above average. Girls perform significantly better than boys. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Less than half of the students choose to study the subject in Years 10 and 11. At the end of Year 11, the results in the GCSE examination are

well above the national average with 8 out of 10 students obtaining A* - C grades and all passing the examination. Girls continue to perform better than boys. Other students who do not choose the GCSE examination course, have some opportunities to apply ICT in other subjects. Most of these applications only meet the requirements of the subjects in which they are taught. As a result, students' progress in ICT is variable and unsatisfactory overall. The arrangements in Years 10 and 11 do not meet statutory requirements because students are not able to study enough ICT. Students from ethnic minority groups are well integrated in lessons and progress as well as other students. Students with special educational needs, progress satisfactorily with extra help from teachers. Achievement in the GCSE examination course is good but it is unsatisfactory elsewhere.

117. The overall quality of teaching in ICT lessons is very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and lessons are very well planned. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improving the quality of teaching still further. Most gain the interest of students in lessons by giving very clear and good introductions to topics. They also give very good demonstrations and provide effective help to individual students in practical lessons. Procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment in ICT lessons are very good but assessment in terms of National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 over-estimate students' attainment. Teachers are confident and relaxed and as a result their relationships with students are very good. The attitudes of students are generally very good. Teachers are very effective in helping students revise for examinations. When lessons are less effective, teachers too readily allow students to go off task and tolerate some misbehaviour. Teachers do not give sufficient emphasis to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the work. Homework is set regularly and commented upon well. The quality of the teaching of ICT in other subjects is more variable.
118. The overall standard of learning is very good. In Years 7 and 9 students learn a good range of skills, including the use of word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases, the internet and e-mail. They learn many of these skills in the context of individual projects in which they set up clubs and prepare formal letters, databases of members, spreadsheet accounts, leaflets and club magazines. Students also learn the basic principles of computer control well. In Year 7, students were seen working effectively in pairs to prepare a successful leaflet to advertise their club. In a good lesson in the same year students worked successfully on the Park House News, an exercise they undertake before publishing a leaflet on their club.
119. In the GCSE examination course, students learn in a series of well planned theory lessons and coursework which involve the use of databases and spreadsheets. Some of the coursework is of a very high standard. In Year 10, students developed a database very well. In this lesson the teacher gave a very good demonstration of how to create the database. In a Year 11 theory lesson, students successfully learned about computer hardware and software. In a very good lesson in the same year students were seen improving their coursework, they were guided in this by provisional marks given by the teacher. Other students apply ICT in other subjects. Applications are good in art, business education, design and technology, English and mathematics. In addition, some satisfactory applications occur in history, music, physical education, science and in the learning support unit. The contributions made towards meeting the ICT requirements in these subjects are not sufficiently co-ordinated or known. Applications of ICT in most other subjects need further development in order to promote students' knowledge of ICT appropriately.
120. The management of the subject is fragmented and not very effective because three teachers have various management responsibilities and the use of ICT is not well co-

ordinated. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The GCSE examination results and the quality of teaching have both improved. Computing facilities are now above average.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- High standards in German
- The teaching is very good
- Very good achievement by students in Years 10 and 11
- Students have very positive attitudes which lead to effective learning

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is limited
- The allocation of time for teaching when students study two languages

121. The focus of the inspection was on French and German but work in Spanish was also sampled. Spanish is offered to lower-attaining students in Year 10 as a new subject leading to accreditation through the OCR Certificate of Achievement. The quality of teaching is very good and students make particularly good progress in speaking and listening.
122. Results in French are consistently at least average and in German are well above average. Teaching is often of very high quality and students make good progress in French and very good progress in German. Students have a very positive attitude to their work.
123. The standards of students in modern foreign languages in Years 7, 8 and 9 are average, or often above average. This is reflected in the assessments made by teachers at the end of Year 9. By this time, students have a sound understanding of basic grammatical concepts and in most cases pronounce the language well. Because of the consistent exposure to the foreign language through its use by all teachers, students' comprehension skills are high and in some, but not all lessons, students speak in the foreign language to seek help or advice. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Whereas attainment by the end of Year 9 is usually above average in French it is often well above average in German because of students' oral fluency and their accuracy in writing.
124. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are mostly above average or, frequently, well above average, and the achievement of students is very good. In 2002, GCSE examination results in French were in line with the national average and results in German were well above average. Students have a solid grasp of grammatical structures, are able to deduce meaning with little difficulty from recorded text and have very good pronunciation. In most lessons students make very good progress. In an outstanding Year 11 German lesson on the theme of television and the media, the collaborative approach by students in group tasks and their ability to use a range of tenses and extended language produced work of exceptional quality.
125. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Years 10 and 11. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and in the main school the quality of teaching in over half the lessons observed was very good or excellent. Teachers use the foreign language consistently for all classroom instruction and in the best lessons they

maintain an extremely brisk pace and make good use of a well planned and broad range of activities, covering both productive and receptive skills. A strong emphasis upon grammar enhances the overall quality of students' competence and their ability to expand their language using a sound base of vocabulary. Where ICT is applied it is very effective but its use is still too limited. Teachers have, without exception, established a very positive relationship with their classes and this is borne out by students' commitment to their work and very good behaviour.

126. The curriculum provision, with the opportunity for a substantial number of students to study two languages, is a good feature and is further enhanced by the additional provision of Spanish in Year 10. However, the present low allocation of time for those studying two languages in Years 8 and 9, as well as the equally low allocation for all students in Year 10, should be reviewed. Although not having a negative impact so far, because of the high quality of the teaching, the limited time allocation is inhibiting further success at GCSE examination level.
127. This is a well led department where teachers work well as a team and are consistent in the effective methods they use. The opportunities for students to take part in exchange visits to France and Germany and other extra-curricular activities enhance the strong profile of languages in the school.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Inspirational leadership and management
- High quality teaching
- Very good staffing and accommodation
- Very good range of extra-curricular activities
- The enthusiasm of the students

Areas for improvement

- Better use of targets in the assessment process
- Better provision for ICT

128. Results in GCSE examinations are good. Groups are too small to be statistically significant but numbers are growing. In 2002 14 out of 18 students gained grades A* to C and all gained grades A* to G. In class and in work seen, compositions are well structured and stylistically competent. Students show particular strength as performers. In Year 9, students show above average attainment in class and in recordings of compositions and performances. A large majority of students can perform folk music in parts and can successfully identify major and minor chords
129. Students' attainment is average when they start the school but by the end of Year 9 they make good progress and achieve well. They go on to achieve well by the end of Year 11. The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom and students thoroughly enjoy lessons.
130. The quality of teaching is very good. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are planned meticulously and discipline is very good. Teachers routinely teach basic literacy skills. In Years 10 and 11, teachers show very good knowledge of their subject and the pace of teaching is very good. A good feature of the teaching is the way that it caters for the needs of all students. Students up to the age of 14 achieve high levels of independence in learning

about music. They maintain high levels of concentration for sustained periods of time. Students with special needs and talents make similar progress. On GCSE examination courses, students are fully engaged with the subject and are very clear about expectations of them.

131. A Year 7 lesson on ostinato accompaniment began with swiftly paced reading around the class and linking keywords with their meanings. Expectations are high as students work with detailed unit workbooks through varied tasks. As a result, students made very good progress and their confidence in their work grew measurably. In Year 8, students working on rhythmic patterns understood the high expectations made of them as they explained the task in hand as well as the way in which they were going to be assessed. In Year 9, a lesson on folk music began with quick fire questions followed by crystal clear explanations of a performing and arranging task. Students worked energetically with clearly laid out resources in private practice areas and became intensely absorbed in their work. At the end of the lesson, students applauded each others' performances and were given taxing questions about their work. In Year 10, students were supported with detailed information booklets on Indian music as they composed sequences using recording keyboards. Because of detailed planning, students who were struggling were closely supported with tutorial work and more talented students used computer templates to refine their work. As a result, students made very good progress which was celebrated at the end of the lesson.
132. The new head of department shows very strong leadership qualities. He has quickly identified key areas for development and has established a very effective team, including a technician, that works together with high levels of consistency in teaching and expectations. Staff meet regularly to co-ordinate their work and to moderate their assessments. The curriculum is well planned and the music department is a hive of activity before, during and after school hours. There is a very good range of cultural activities and the school choir and swing band perform to a high standard. Well-attended concerts and recitals are given regularly in and out school. The music society and music prefect systems give students a good deal of opportunity to take further responsibility. The accommodation is very good. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements. Of these, the quality of leadership, teaching and learning and accommodation are key features in improving students' attainment and attitudes. Better ICT provision is required in view of the extensive demands made on computers. More use needs to be made of targets in the department's assessment procedures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Results in the full course are consistently above the national average and students achieve more highly than in many of their other subjects
- Excellent extra-curricular programme
- The effective use of ICT to enhance students' learning

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching
- The management of GCSE examination courses, especially the analysis of results
- Stronger links with primary schools to obtain accurate knowledge of students' attainment

133. GCSE examination results in the full course in 2002 were well above the national average and students achieved better results than in many of their other subjects. Results were below average in the short course and also in dance for grades A*-C, but were above average for grades A*-G.
134. Standards reached by students in Year 9 are average. There is very little information about the students when they arrive in Year 7 and they have had differing experiences of the subject in primary schools. However, the rate of learning is rapid for the majority of students and they achieve well in three years. A significant minority are above average in games such as netball and football. They apply strategies and tactics effectively and pass and receive accurately. In badminton, boys are quick to anticipate and move for the shuttle. The girls' shot technique is less well developed and they hit with a square stance. In trampolining the students perform routines with good body tension and are able to coach each other using basic technical vocabulary. In dance, lower-attaining students in Year 7 find it difficult to move in time with the music and have little sense of rhythm. The specific needs of students with learning difficulties in Years 7 to 11 are generally not well known to the teachers. Tasks are not designed to meet these needs and as a result students make less progress than should be expected. All students follow the GCSE short examination course and they may choose to take the full course and dance to GCSE level. Standards reached by students in Year 11 following the full course for physical education are above average in practical activities and average in theoretical aspects. They are achieving well relative to their predicted grades. Their notes and homework show a good level of understanding in all modules and they are able to answer questions with a good recall of facts. Lower-attaining students are less confident when giving oral answers requiring the use of technical vocabulary in relation to their planned exercise programmes. Students use digital photography effectively in their course work to show how their skills progress and improve over time. They also use it as an effective tool to demonstrate good techniques when working on the development of their practical skills.
135. Standards reached in the short course are below average overall. This is attributed to two factors. At present there is no member of staff who takes specific responsibility for the monitoring of the short course; a significant minority of students are not keen to be entered for the examination, preferring to follow a more varied range of activities. Attitudes are occasionally less than enthusiastic and this leads to unsatisfactory learning and achievement. Others produce work that is above average and which shows a good understanding of theory and a good grasp of activities such as badminton and hockey. The girls are below average in badminton. Overall there are too many inconsistencies in standards of work expected by teachers.
136. Students in Year 11 reach standards that are average in dance. The current Year 11 students began the course at the end of Year 10 and theoretical aspects have been incorporated into practical lessons. This is not a satisfactory arrangement. The students' notes are disorganised and often incomplete and they are not a good source for revision. Students are not confident when required to evaluate work and to use technical vocabulary. Their practical performance is above-average in set dances. They have a good understanding of choreography and perform with precision and good interpretation of the music. They are gaining confidence when performing, but lack refinement in the flow of moves.
137. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good with some very good features. In the most effective lessons, the students are challenged physically and intellectually. Even if their performance is below average they have a good understanding of how a skill is developed. Question-and-answer sessions effectively

draw out information and generate thought. Lesson objectives are explained and students make evaluations of their performance. On-going assessment in most lessons is accurate and constructive criticism leads to improved performance. Tasks progress logically, building to the final activity with sufficient time to consolidate skills. Teacher and student demonstration is used particularly effectively to show good performance. An example of this was seen in a badminton lesson. The teacher demonstrated the drop shot with a student who then made rapid progress and felt a great sense of achievement at the success. There is particularly good progress in dance lessons using this technique. The students' attitudes are very positive in these lessons and they behave very well.

138. Those who are unable to take part in lessons are not always involved in what is being taught. There are lost opportunities to develop their coaching skills. The students are not given enough opportunities to evaluate their performance or to answer questions in dance. The quality of teaching on GCSE course varies and the best practices are not shared. Homework is set regularly and marking is mostly constructive but is not linked to students' expected targets. However some students' work and notes are not checked for accuracy or completeness and there is little help on how to improve. Video and still photography are used effectively to highlight good performance and areas for improvement.
139. New leadership and management of the department are already having a positive impact on the quality of independent learning in most activities. Areas for development have been highlighted and appropriate plans are in place to address these issues. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory. Although there have been a considerable number of changes in leadership, GCSE standards and the quality of the excellent extra-curricular programme have been maintained. Individuals and teams enjoy success at local, county and national events in activities such as netball, athletics, rugby and football. Links with local organisations have been improved, giving the students a wider range of experiences. Dance has been introduced and there is an excellent purpose-built studio and a dancer in residence who makes a positive impact on standards. The structure and organisation of the courses on offer are not yet securely in place. The accommodation issues raised at the last inspection, of limited changing rooms and poor storage in the gymnasium, have not been addressed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Rising standards in the GCSE short course examination
- The quality of teaching in lessons in Year 10
- Teachers are very committed and leadership and management are good
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is not good enough in some lessons
- The limited use of the information derived from the assessment of students' work
- Limited use of ICT to broaden learning further
- The level of challenge for higher-attaining students

140. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average, which represents good achievement when students' starting points are taken into account. Standards are above average at the end of Year 10 and this also represents good achievement. In

the GCSE short course examination, taken at the end of Year 10, despite staffing difficulties, there was a noteworthy rise from 27 per cent A*-C grade passes in 2001 to 42 per cent in 2002. Achievement is good, overall, in Year 10 because of good teaching and learning. There are no significant differences in standards reached by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the support given to them by teachers and learning support staff when present. Although gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress they are not challenged enough.

141. In Year 9, students have good knowledge and understanding of many of the key features of Christianity and other world religions, particularly Islam and Buddhism. They can explore links between religion and everyday life and understand ways in which religious beliefs can influence people's attitudes and values. Students can identify the Five Pillars and their importance to Muslims and show appreciation and understanding of the work of leaders such as Martin Luther King. Literacy is developed through the correct use of specialist terms such as prejudice, discrimination, and sacraments. Numeracy skills are used in the form of pie charts and bar graphs to present results of surveys and the numbers of followers of the main religions. Students know how to make an interesting and informative presentation. For example, Year 9 students researched Islamic lifestyles using the internet before reporting back to other students.
142. Students in Year 10 build on the progress made in the first three years. They are gaining a deep understanding of Christianity and a growing appreciation of religious and moral issues. Students can express reasons for and against believing in God, with supporting texts, and the Christian beliefs concerning marriage. The standards of presentation are good and students work hard to improve their written work. The best work is well structured and persuasive but lower-attaining students have difficulty in providing enough detail to support their arguments. Attention to examination techniques in Year 10 assists students to perform well.
143. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. It is unsatisfactory in some Year 7, 8 and 9 lessons but good or very good in Year 10. There is no teaching in Year 11. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, time is wasted at the beginning of lessons, explanations are unclear and classroom management is weak. In the best lessons, lesson objectives are shared with students, teachers' expectations are high and a wide range of stimulating resources are used. Teachers use good subject knowledge, move lessons along at a good pace and manage students well. The very good teaching is rooted in good planning and activities that meet the needs of all students.
144. Overall, learning is satisfactory apart from the limited use of ICT to enhance learning. It is good and sometimes very good in Year 10 but unsatisfactory, overall, in earlier years because of ineffective teaching. Where learning is weak, students are not engaged in learning quickly enough and become restless, which leads to misbehaviour by a small minority of students. Limited access to computers means that students are not given enough opportunities to support their work in religious education. In lessons where teaching is very good, students often show exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes which enhance learning. The curriculum is enriched by visits to a local church, Winchester Cathedral and the National Gallery.
145. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, overall. All students now take the GCSE short course in religious studies but there are no option groups in Years 10 and 11 for the full course. There is a stable team of committed, experienced teachers delivering the Year 10 GCSE short course examination curriculum and the time allocation has been improved. However, the school is failing to meet the requirement

for religious education to be taught to sixth formers, which was the position at the last inspection.

146. The head of department provides good leadership and management. Documentation is thorough and schemes of work are closely aligned to the agreed syllabus. Assessment procedures are consistently applied but the use of this information to guide curriculum planning is an area for development. The ethos of the department matches closely that of the school. This is a caring department where every student is valued. The department makes a major contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students through extensive opportunities to reflect on attitudes and values, inspiration, aspiration and motivation. Non-specialist teachers are well supported. The excellent organisation of Year 10 teaching uses the five teachers' strengths and has enabled them to become very knowledgeable about the unit of the syllabus they each deliver. There is shared commitment to further improvement of the subject and the capacity to succeed is high.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The successful audit of provision for citizenship in the curriculum at large
- The quality of teaching in Year 8
- Good use of visitors

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of current provision
- The procedures for recording and reporting provision
- Assessment procedures
- Limited use of ICT

147. Citizenship has been satisfactorily introduced into the school curriculum and plans held in abeyance during the long-term illness of the co-ordinator have now been reactivated. Following a very comprehensive audit of the curriculum to identify where aspects of citizenship were already being taught, plans were put in place to offer specific citizenship lessons on aspects not covered in any depth. These were identified as parliamentary and local government, crime, the judicial system, the voluntary sector and the world of work. They are now being taught in one lesson a week in Year 8. Plans are already in place for students in Year 10 to study a six-week module on the European union at the end of the summer term. Modules being planned for other year groups will cover common citizenship/ PSHE topics.

148. Students are reaching satisfactory standards in the Year 8 course. Most students understand what voluntary work involves and how this contributes towards the well-being of others. Their general knowledge of specific charities and the scope of their work is limited but most students make good use of resources to find out more. They also work well together sharing their ideas about how charities raise awareness of their work and raise funds. The written work of higher-attaining students reflects good understanding of their role in society and the contribution they make to their family and to their school. Written work in the module on crime indicates that many students are aware that criminal activity, however petty, is unjustified and has negative impacts on both criminals and their victims. Most students adopt a strong moral stance on punishments for criminal activity. The quantity of work done in the books of the most conscientious students is good. Progress overall is good

149. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their methodology is effective in providing a range of tasks enabling students to record their learning and consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Questioning is good because it helps students to organise their thoughts and provide more detailed oral answers. Tasks are often challenging in as much as students have to think about the issues involved and explain these at some length. Teachers talk with great sensitivity about issues relating to illness and deprivation and students begin to speak with respect and consideration for the feelings of others. Class management is good and teachers get on well with their students. Some lessons, however, are a little slow, allowing some students to drift off task and teachers sometimes overestimate students' prior knowledge. Teachers make good use of visitors to supplement learning and to enlarge experience. There is insufficient use made of ICT for teaching and learning.
150. Citizenship is satisfactorily taught across the curriculum, either as part of a lesson, as seen in art where students discussed the impact of imagery on raising awareness of environmental issues, or as a main focus, for example in history where fascism is compared to democracy. Good citizenship input was observed in some lessons in geography, religious education and English. In all these subjects, the citizenship component was identified on lesson plans but was not identified as such to students. Only a minority of subjects have highlighted citizenship components in their schemes of work but a significant number of subjects have added citizenship education to their development plans. No guidance has been given to subject areas about the compilation of portfolios of specific work on citizenship and whether marks should be recorded under citizenship when it is the main focus of a lesson.
151. The general ethos of the school has fostered good citizenship as seen in the responsible conduct of students, in the consideration they show to other members of the school community, their respect for the environment and in their commitment to music, to sport and other extra curricular activities. Democracy is alive in the school council but students need to be more independent in running it. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. Whole school provision of citizenship development is good.
152. The co-ordinator and all who teach citizenship are committed. The co-ordinator is well supported by senior management and the department has adequate resources available at this time to support the modular course in Year 8, but further resources are needed for use with older students. There is much to be done on the monitoring of cross-curricular provision, particularly the planning of specifically focused assessments within other areas of the curriculum and in the modules linked to the attainment targets for the subject. Methods of recording progress and reporting to parents and governors have still to be discussed.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The opportunities to study the subject from Year 7 through to the sixth form
- Assessment is used effectively
- Provision for extra-curricular activities

Areas for improvement

- The limited storage and work spaces
- Clarifying the role of drama in relation to the teaching of PSHE

153. In 2002, GCSE examination results were just below the national average. Current standards are average although there are individual students who reach higher levels. In the lessons observed in Year 8, the majority of students showed that they were able to work together effectively to devise and present improvisations, and to use speech and movement in appropriate dramatic forms to convey meaning. In Year 11, some groups of students took their work to a higher plane, being particularly imaginative in the striking way they used their bodies to depict meaning. It was at such times that students realized their potential. For the most part, students' work lacked the precision and intensity that characterizes performance at the highest levels.

154. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Lessons are well planned, instructions are clear, guidance is appropriate and assessment is used well to help students develop further. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that students strive to reach the highest levels of which they are capable. Drama, is a popular subject with students, and the majority clearly enjoy what they do and benefit from the good working relationship established by teachers, but sometimes the attention of students wanders and needs to be brought back more urgently to focus, with greater intensity on the work in hand, if standards are to rise.

155. Good features include the continuity provided by courses starting in Year 7 which carry on through the school, culminating in A-level study. The full range of drama conventions is well covered. Students are encouraged to visit the theatre and have excellent opportunities to take part in a wide variety of school productions. The department makes good use of teachers in training, who bring fresh life to the department and help to keep it in the forefront of new thinking about the subject. At present, work in Year 8 has a strong PSHE element. The drama department needs to be clear as to the relationships between the two areas of activity because a focus on PSHE does not necessarily lead to improvements in the full range of drama skills. Existing storage is not used well and resources are not readily accessible. Current storage is also insufficient for books, files and equipment. The hall is not suitable for lessons as its size, and use for purposes other than the teaching of drama, place a number of restrictions on what can be achieved.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

BUSINESS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and the good levels of planning
- The help and guidance given to students
- Leadership and management are good and teachers are very committed

Areas for improvement

- There is a need to broaden the curriculum to meet the needs of all students
- The scope for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the subject is limited

156. Overall standards are average. One in every five students chooses to study this subject in Year 10. Results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average with over half the students obtaining A*-C grades and all but one student obtaining A*-G grades. Standards were higher in the previous two years. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Students from ethnic minority groups are well integrated in lessons and make the same progress as other students. Students with special educational needs make good progress with additional help from teachers. The overall achievement of students is satisfactory.

157. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and lessons are always well planned. Most teachers time activities well and maintain a good pace in lessons. They give individual students good help and advice in lessons. Teachers gain the interest of students by introducing topics well and by asking them appropriate questions as lessons progress. They are confident and relaxed and as a result their relationships with students are good. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are satisfactory overall and sometimes good or better. Students' work is assessed and recorded well in accordance with the examination board's requirements. Homework is regularly set and marked. When lessons are less successful, students' lack of concentration is not picked up by the teachers and they also sometimes misbehave. Not enough is done to make students aware of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their work.

158. The standard of learning is satisfactory. In a Year 10 lesson, students were learning satisfactorily about factors which motivated people. Students began the lesson by considering what factors motivate them at school and later related what they had learnt to people at work in an interesting way. In a good lessons in Year 11, students were learning about how to run and organise a new company. In this imaginative lesson, a girl was designated the director of a fictitious 'cookie marketing company' and other students worked in groups to learn about such aspects as accounting, finance, marketing, organisation, production and recruitment. They used computers well in this lesson to create slides for a presentation.

159. The department is well led and the relationship between teachers is good. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The ICT facilities have been improved, the GCSE examination course is now more firmly established and standards have been maintained.

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

In the inspection nine subjects 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, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Wherever possible, references are also made in the report to students' achievements in the 2002 examinations.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades		Average point score
		A-E	A-B	
		School	School	School
Art	40	80	20	2.13
Biology	20	95	50	3.45
Business	16	81	13	2.00
Chemistry	12	83	42	2.83
Computing	25	100	48	3.48
Economics	11	91	45	2.72
English	55	95	31	2.69
French	7	100	86	4.14
Geography	19	95	53	3.37
German	4	100	100	4.75
Graphics	13	77	0	1.31
History	24	88	25	2.42
Maths	42	79	43	2.69
Music	5	100	20	2.60
P.E.	9	56	0	1.22
Physics	24	83	38	2.88
Psychology	43	88	26	2.21
Sociology	23	52	4	1.05
Theatre Studies	17	100	41	3.29

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades		% gaining grades		Average point score	
		A-E	A-B	A-E	A-B	School	England
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	17	100	96	47	46	6.71	6.57
Biology	10	90	88	30	34	4.20	5.25
Business Studies	7	86	92	14	32	4.57	5.50
Chemistry	6	100	90	50	43	6.00	5.90

Communication Studies	4	100	93	-	31	4.00	5.53
Computer Studies	7	100	86	57	23	7.14	4.62
Economics	5	100	89	80	36	8.00	5.52
English Language	7	100	91	71	30	8.00	5.27
English Literature	11	100	95	45	37	6.55	5.91
French	4	100	89	75	38	8.00	5.99
Geography	7	100	92	14	38	5.71	5.74
German	3	100	91	100	40	8.67	5.81
Graphical Application	4	100	88	25	22	6.00	4.74
History	13	100	88	31	35	5.85	5.45
Mathematics	21	95	87	38	43	6.57	5.80
Music	2	100	93	-	35	6.00	5.74
Other Social Studies	6	83	87	17	34	3.67	5.30
Physics	10	100	88	40	40	5.40	5.67
Sociology	6	100	86	67	35	8.33	5.32
Sports/ PE Studies	12	92	92	-	25	4.00	5.09
Health and Social Care Post 16 VQ	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.00	10.79

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

160. The inspection covered the AS-level and the A-level courses offered by the school. Students cover modules in pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics. There are sufficient opportunities for post-16 students to re-take GCSE mathematics. Currently, there is no provision outside of specialist mathematics courses to enhance the key skill of application of number.

161. Biology was the focus of the inspection of science in the sixth form. Chemistry and physics are also taught at A/S and A-level but not reported. However, it was possible to observe some teaching of these subjects.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average
- Students achieve equally successfully in all areas of the subject
- The department provides well for the needs of individual students
- The teaching is very good and relationships between teachers and students are good

Areas for improvement

- The results of those re-taking the GCSE examination in mathematics

162. In 2001, overall standards achieved in A-level and AS-level examinations were well above the national average. Results in the 2002 examination series were similar to

those of 2001 with over 50 per cent of the students gaining A and B grades. Only one student did not achieve a pass grade. There was no significant difference in students' results in the various mathematics modules studied, although students with lower starting points experienced greater challenges in pure mathematics modules. Given the students' starting points, these results represent good progress throughout the sixth form.

163. Many students re-sitting GCSE mathematics in 2002 achieved little improvement in their results. Only three out of twelve students obtained a grade C. Of the current cohort of students studying GCSE mathematics, all had previously achieved a grade D, but all had low marks in their coursework. There is a need for the department to review the course on offer for such students.
164. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' notebooks in the current Years 12 and 13 confirms a range of attainment that is, overall, well above average. In the pure mathematics modules, students in Year 13 had very strong manipulative algebra skills and good recall of previous work on co-ordinate geometry, for example. As a result, they applied their prior knowledge and skills successfully to their work on the geometry of the ellipse. Similar students following a statistics module understood rapidly how to apply their understanding of statistical testing to practical problem-solving. In a mechanics lesson, students developed their knowledge of forces to include vector methods. Generally, students develop good independent study skills that reinforce the positive support they receive from their teachers. As a result, the majority of the students who begin the study of mathematics complete the course very successfully. Students report a high degree of satisfaction with their progress.
165. Teaching is very good overall. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons are carefully structured conceptually and give thought to the development of the students' thinking skills, as for example, in the lesson on forces and conics. Teachers use questioning very robustly to ascertain students' understanding. The marking of the students' work is regular and helpful and teachers monitor students' progress well. Generally, students do not have enough opportunities for practical work, nor to engage in activities to present their work to their fellow students. In class, they sometimes appear to be passive learners.
166. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has achieved much in significantly raising attainment in examinations. Teaching has improved and the students benefit from very thorough individual guidance. Retention rates on mathematics courses are high. Through its sixth form provision the mathematics department makes a very valuable contribution to raising the aspirations of individual students. However, there is a need to reconsider the provision for students re-sitting the GCSE examination in mathematics.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching
- Standards are above the national average
- Leadership is very good and makes a strong contribution to students' learning
- The assessment and recording of students' attainment and progress are excellent

Areas for improvement

- Improve standards at the higher grades
- Make more use of ICT
- Encourage students to be more independent and to take more responsibility for their own learning

167. Biology is taught to AS-Level in Year 12 and to A-level in Year 13. Retention rates are high. Of the 31 students who started the A/S course in September 2001, 26 took the examination at the end of the year and 23 have continued on to the A2 course in the present Year 13. This reduction has taken place for a variety of reasons; some left very early in the course and others, having been successful in the A/S examinations, simply chose not to maintain biology in their range of A2 studies. This represents an overall retention of about 70 per cent across both years, and only three students left between the end of A/S and A-level. Once started, students tend to remain on the A-level course.

168. There has been an improving trend in the number of students achieving the higher A-Level grades over the past few years, with exceptional results in 2000, where the proportion gaining grades A or B was twice the national average. In 2002 the proportion of students gaining grades A-B is above the national average, as is the proportion of students gaining grades in the range A-E. Achievement and progress are good.

169. The standard of work seen during the inspection is well above average, and students' levels of achievement are very good. Students in Year 12 have good understanding of freshwater pollution and can summarise the change in nutrient and oxygen levels and species diversity in relation to a source of organic pollution. A similar group also are confident in their planning and organisation of individual assessed practical investigations. They cope very well with the considerable demands of both A/S and A-level courses, including the taking and making of notes. Communication skills are well developed and there is spontaneity and experience of cogent discussion and debate, as in their preparation for synoptic assessment.

170. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with some excellent practice in Year 13. Teachers' expectations are very high, and students work hard to meet them. Sixth form biology is taught by the head of biology and two other specialist teachers, all of whom show excellent subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. The range of teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond very well. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on inheritance and the mechanism of the dihybrid cross, responses were focused and mature and levels of confidence were very high. Lesson preparation is very good and students are attentive and work productively. In Year 13, there is a general air of maturity, responsibility and self-assessment, and

students are quick to benefit and make good progress. Pace and challenge are good. The regular assessment of work and supporting commentary is exemplary and students feel well informed and that their learning needs are well supported.

171. Students' learning is very good and the quality of their work is very high. They take a keen interest in scientific investigations. Assessed practical work and projects show well developed skills and include those of practical investigation, the competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confidence in written work and being able to follow detailed instructions. Students generally show good understanding and their files and the recording of practical work are properly organised and written work is very well presented and up-to-date. Work in lessons is well above national standards and students make very good progress. The careful guidance and advice from teachers is effective. Students take considerable pride in their work and some show increasing responsibility for their own learning.
172. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and there is clear direction to the department's development. The head of biology supports staff and students with considerable skill and there is a direct effect on the successful learning of students. The routines for effective curriculum delivery, and mechanisms for regular assessment, recording and reporting are secure and very effective. The use of ICT in biology is developing and greater use is to be made of sensors, datalogging and spreadsheets to improve the handling of information by students. Residential field work is of excellent quality. With very good teaching and technician support, the organisation and management of biology at A/S and A-level is very effective and supportive. Achievement and progress are very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

COMPUTING

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

Strengths

- Results in A-level computing are well above the national average
- The quality of teaching is very good
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are excellent
- The pace of lessons is excellent

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum does not cater for a wide range of individual needs

173. Standards are above the national average. About one in ten students choose to study the subject. In 2001, standards at the end of Year 13 were well above the national average with four out of the seven students obtaining A-B grades and all passing the A-level in computing examination. In 2002, the numbers of students had significantly increased but the proportion obtaining A-B grades was lower. The achievement has been good for the past two years.
174. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are excellent. They plan lessons and help individual students in practical lessons very well. Teachers involve students in lessons very well by holding discussions and asking them questions as the lessons progress. The pace of lessons is excellent. Teachers help students revise for examinations very effectively. Assessment is carried out according to the examination board's requirement very well. Teachers are relaxed and confident,

and as a result their relationships with students are very good. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are excellent. A small number of lessons are marred by students writing notes passively for periods which are too long.

175. The standard of learning is very good. Students learn about the principles of computing, the structure of computers and programming techniques very well. They undertake a practical exercise in Year 12 and an extensive project in Year 13. In an excellent lesson in Year 12, students worked effectively on the examination board's practical summer exercise on re-marking examination papers; it involved the use of a database. In a very good lesson in Year 13 students were working on a 'mock' examination based on processing and programming techniques. In another lesson in the same year, students were learning about linked lists of data, trees, pseudo and binary codes. They were learning these difficult topics very well.

176. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a good relationship between teachers. Courses did not exist in the sixth form at the time of the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

177. The focus of the inspection was on courses provided by the physical education department, which included A-level examinations, the NVQ Football Association coaching certificate and the GCSE examination course in dance.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students have very good attitudes
- Teachers are very dedicated and highly motivated
- Good leadership and management
- The good quality teaching

Areas for improvement

- The need for more strategies to raise attainment further
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is limited
- Students need better feedback on their written work
- The range of courses needs widening

178. The standards of current work in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average. Examination results in 2002 for A/S and A-level were below the national average. A small group of Year 13 students are currently preparing to take GCSE dance and inspection evidence indicates that the standard of work is at pass level. The Football Association NVQ coaching course is well subscribed and students are on course to achieve passes. All students in Year 12 participate in physical education. The course offers a range of activities. In Year 13 students can choose to attend. A small group of Year 12 students are studying A-level dance. Lessons take place in statutory and extended curriculum time.

179. Students in Year 13 are producing work of an average standard. Achievement is good based on prior attainment in Year 12. Students' knowledge of sports performance helps them to understand and apply attribution theories to performance improvement. The more able can identify using technical language the differences between a range of theories. Some written work shows evidence of wider reading and research,

although the accuracy of short and extended answers is not as good as contributions in class.

180. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to the A/S course. They transfer prior learning to new concepts, such as making the correlation between player feedback and sensory deprivation. In class, contributions are confidently made using technical language. Students have a keen knowledge of sport. This helps them to interpret and understand issues such as race and the Olympic Games in relation to examination requirements. Written work is beginning to show a sound understanding of how to use information to answer examination questions.
181. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Weaker features are seen in relation to students' written work and teacher-directed learning strategies on the GCSE examination course. Most effective teaching involves learning outcomes being identified and reinforced and students being able to know clearly what they have learned. Independent learning is a feature of these lessons also. There is always very good management of the students and a range of resources used to aid learning. Some of the middle and higher ability students need to be challenged earlier in their course. Expectations of students are not as high as for written work as those set for work in class. Providing more qualitative marking on all types of written work and assessments would help students to improve.
182. Students have very good attitudes towards their work. There is a high work rate in almost all lessons but this is less when the work is teacher-directed. Students co-operate and support each other's learning very well. Students show a good understanding when discussing world and national moral and political issues relating to sport. Students value the support that is now being provided for them and appreciate the way the course teaching is structured.
183. There is good leadership and management by the director of sport and head of department. The focus is to improve standards and good progress is being made. The department is well staffed by a team of dedicated and motivated teachers. Accommodation is good, especially the dance studio which is well used by students. Students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities and many help with clubs for younger students. The wide range of ICT equipment provides good support to the curriculum. The benefits of being a specialist sports college now need to be seen in the sixth form in relation to the range and type of course offered. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In Year 12, there are more opportunities for independent learning and a class base has been established. There are still no schemes of work for recreational physical education.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

184. Arts courses in the sixth form, in keeping with the school's Artsmark Gold status, include music and theatre studies. Art was the main focus for this inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good
- Expectations are very high
- Very effective assessment procedures and individual target setting help students to improve
- Individual learning skills are well developed

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for sixth form work outside timetabled lessons

185. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in the A-level examination fell last year in what had otherwise been a sustained period of good achievement that had consistently exceeded national expectations. This was largely due to the earlier changes in course management and delivery resulting from the introduction of the A/S course in Year 12 and subsequent disappointments in Year 13. The course organisation and management has since been changed to improve outcomes. Predicted grades for current Year 13 students indicate clear improvement in learning outcomes and standards, and the assessment information on current Year 12 students indicates a marked improvement. The department is very eager to return to the higher standards it regularly helped students to deliver and is working hard to make this a reality.

186. Students are increasingly expected to select their own themes for research and experimentation, within a very supportive framework of teacher advice and guidance. This approach leads to the emergence of strongly personal styles and well developed artistic competencies in drawing and painting. Photography is a very well resourced and managed option in the sixth form which leads to successful and highly imaginative work. Very well developed independent learning skills lead to a wealth of research and experimentation. In many cases, work journals in Year 13 are very well presented, prolific in content and impressive in the insight they give to the development of highly personalised styles of work.

187. Teaching is very good and allows valuable time for reflection and discussion. Individual tutorials focus on strengths and targets for improvement. Teachers place emphasis on individual accountability and students are mature and informed when discussing their work. Students' attitudes are very positive and enthusiastic. They are very aware of their personal and artistic development over time, and very appreciative of the teaching and course management style that have contributed to their achievement and success. The subject is very well managed by experienced and enthusiastic specialists who each possess very good subject knowledge. The limitations of the present accommodation do not allow for the provision of a dedicated sixth form work area. Such provision would allow students greater opportunity for the further development of their work as well as contributing positively to the ethos of the department.

HUMANITIES

188. Both geography and history provided a focus for this inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards at A-level are well above average
- Teaching is very good
- The attitudes of students are very positive

Areas for improvement

- Students need to take more responsibility for their own learning
- The use of ICT

189. Standards at A-level are well above average and at A/S Level are above average. One third of all students attain the highest grades. Male and female students do well in the subject and better compared to most other subjects in the school at both A/S and A-level. The success of both courses sustains recruitment to the A/S course and retention from A/S to A-level.

190. The standard of current work in Year 13 is above average. Achievement over time, in part facilitated by positive attitudes, is very good. Students combine sound knowledge and a range of skills including fieldwork techniques and ICT to produce impressive coursework. Written work reflects increasing understanding of issues resulting from changes in economic activities and a broad view in exploring the links between these and social change and the global economy. Students have a good technical knowledge of physical processes and apply it very well to their evaluation of hazard management. There is a tendency for students to rely on teachers' presentation of information rather than seeking it or even supplementing it for themselves.

191. The standard of current work in Year 12 is above average and achievement over time is very good. Most students consider they have made the transition from the GCSE course well. Their extended essays on population change certainly reflect thinking at a higher level, a good application of knowledge and increasingly in-depth understanding. Most students are confident in using technical vocabulary as seen in good written work on coastal landforms and sound evaluation of the problems of coastal management. Not all students take sufficient pride in their everyday work, although assessments are well presented. Students tend to be over reliant on their teachers for information rather than using their initiative to do their own research.

192. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise and experience to enhance the content of lessons and to provide guidance about examination requirements and techniques. Rigorous marking informs students about progress and improvement. Lesson planning provides opportunities for the development of both geographical and key skills. Teachers go to a lot of trouble compiling handouts as part of classwork, but this absolves students from taking responsibility for and organising their own learning.

193. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork is evident, as is the shared determination to raise standards still further. Assessments are well planned and

responsibilities shared. Resources are adequate but as yet there is insufficient use of ICT in both teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Very strong leadership and management are raising standards
- Teaching is well informed, meticulously planned and challenging
- Excellent relationships exist between teachers and students
- Assessment and target setting are very effective
- Students know how to pursue their own independent research

Areas for improvement

- Learning resources in the library are inadequate
- Students have too little access to computers

194. Standards are above average at both A/S and A-level. The A/S examination results in 2002 indicate a rise in standards, especially at the higher A/B grades. The rising trend in A-level higher grade results over the past four years has been further improved upon in 2002. History results compare very favourably with those of other subjects. There is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students. Students have made good progress since the last inspection.

195. Students in Year 12 are achieving well. They benefit from the department's close attention to course planning and study techniques which enables them to meet the challenges presented by the different work patterns required in the sixth form. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, can interpret and evaluate a range of historical sources, and are developing their capacity for critical thinking. In a lesson on the Whig Reforms of the 1830's, for example, students undertook a critical examination of complex source materials in preparation for individual extended essay assignments. Higher-attaining students' coursework showed significantly above-average historical understanding, combined with good notes and very well written essays. Some less able students find difficulty in achieving the correct balance between the narrative and analytical demands of AS-level extended writing.

196. Students in Year 13 are achieving well, and often very well. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter is very good; they make mature value judgements on source provenance and respond enthusiastically when encouraged to discuss issues or undertake their own research. In a lesson on Stalin's agricultural reforms in the 1930's, for example, students drew on their extensive research data to produce well-argued essays on the social and economic consequences of collectivisation. The last inspection had highlighted the lack of opportunities for such research.

197. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This teaching is raising standards for all students in both year groups. The teachers have a very good in-depth knowledge of their subject, their planning is meticulous and they provide an element of challenge for the whole ability range. This has led to a very positive student response. Teacher/student collaboration enhances the range and depth of their key historical skills and understanding. Year 13 students are willing to engage in discussion and take risks when expressing new ideas. In a lesson on the problems faced by Gladstone in Ireland, for example, students delivered talks of high quality based on their own research. Teachers select written sources gleaned from a variety of texts and

introduce students to the most recent articles written by scholars. Students are encouraged to undertake their own research enquiries into a wide range of historical issues. This prepares them for further study after they leave school. In lessons there is a collaborative ethos. These excellent relationships, together with very good teaching and high quality assessment, have helped raise students' understanding of what they can achieve.

198. The department is very well led and managed by the acting head of department and this is a major factor in promoting high standards. The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress is a major strength of the subject and students are fully aware of how to achieve their targets. The students have access to a comprehensive range of resources, but there is too little support for their study in the library, and there is insufficient access to computer facilities. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Overall, the quality of work in history is improving rapidly, and the subject is set to become a strength of the school.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

199. The inspection focused on the two English courses offered at A/S and A-level, English language and English literature. The focus of the inspection for modern foreign languages was French and German, but work in Latin was also sampled. Latin is offered as an additional subject up to A-level and both the quality of teaching and students' progress are good.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- A-level examination results in English literature are above average
- Students' learning is well supported by teachers' critical guidance
- Teachers share their subject knowledge enthusiastically
- Very good relationships in lessons encourage shared learning

Areas for improvement

- Standards at A/S and A-level in English language need to be raised
- Personal research skills and styles of writing need developing
- Students need more scope to write examination-style answers in class
- There is insufficient independent thinking on the part of students
- Tracking systems are not sufficiently developed

200. In 2002, results in examinations for A/S and A-level English literature were above national averages. However, results in English language were lower in both examinations, chiefly because language classes were so large and there were several changes of teacher. Students enter the sixth form with at least average GCSE passes and often better. The retention rate from A/S to A-level is good because students build on their previous learning and make good progress, which represents good improvement since the last inspection.

201. Students evaluate texts confidently, discussing characters and their motivation and explaining the impact of these on the outcomes. However, students rely heavily on their teacher's knowledge and too readily accept the theories and ideas of respected academics and critics. They need to develop their capacity as independent thinkers

and examine more critically the views and opinions of others. Some written work is outstanding and shows a good grasp of the effects of symbolism and imagery. For example, Year 12 students recognised that the bell which is a key symbol in Iris Murdoch's novel represents the 'truth-telling voice which must not be silenced'. However, some lower-attaining students write descriptively in a clumsy, over-colloquial style and need more opportunities to develop their own opinions and more practice at expressing them concisely.

202. Links between literature and English language studies are developing and students use linguistic terminology effectively to identify the gender differences in the speech of men and women, observing with a wry touch of humour that women 'gossip and twitter' whereas men 'talk'. Students work co-operatively, enjoy their lessons and have very good relationships with their teachers.
203. The quality of teaching is good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and students are well prepared for the demands of A/S and A-level examinations. However, students' own contribution to their learning varies considerably and some students are content to cruise through their courses taking advantage of their teachers' expertise instead of making the effort to learn independently by wider reading around the topics studied. In lessons, students spent too much time listening to their teachers instead of evaluating the texts for themselves. Teachers are committed to their students' success and teaching is purposeful with a clear sense of direction but students need to contribute to their own learning by making more intellectual effort.
204. Sixth form teaching is well led and the needs of the students are the paramount consideration of the teachers. However, more effective management systems are not in place to assess achievements or to track the progress made by each student throughout the A/S and A-level courses.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Consistently very good teaching
- Students' attainment is above average and they make very good progress
- Attitudes to study are mature and very positive
- Students' written work is accurate and they speak with considerable confidence

Areas for improvement

- Library resources for research and independent study are limited

205. Results at AS and A-level at grades A/B are above average at A/S and slightly above average at A-level and this has been a consistent picture over time. It represents a clear improvement since the last inspection. In lessons, the attainment of students in Year 12 is above and often well above average and similarly so in Year 13. This is reflected in the very high oral skills of many students combined with a solid grasp of grammar. They cope well with French delivered at native speed and are able to express opinions and ideas in mature discussion. Scrutiny of written work shows that it is invariably accurate and wide-ranging. The achievement of students in Years 12 and 13 is well-above average.

206. Teaching is a particular strength and it is consistently very good. Lessons are purposeful, conducted at a brisk pace only in French, and teachers have high expectations of their students as they set challenging tasks. In, for example, a Year 13 lesson probing questions on issues of deprivation in the Third World challenged students' comprehension skills and ability to deal with complex language and resulted in intelligent and fluent discussion. Lessons are always well planned using a range of resources and relationships are particularly positive between teachers and students.
207. Students make very good progress and in, for example, Year 12 they are already mastering and applying complex grammar to their written and spoken work. This was evident in a lesson where students understood and accurately used the subjunctive and responded well to the need for correct linguistic style. Pronunciation is invariably good and there is evidence of significantly high levels of fluency with natural use of extended sentences and a willingness to initiate conversation. Attitudes to learning are always extremely positive.

GERMAN

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

Strengths

- The subject benefits from some outstanding teaching
- Standards of attainment are well above average
- High levels of student confidence to discuss intelligently in German
- Extremely positive attitudes of students to their study

Areas for improvement

- Improve library resources for research and independent study

208. Results at AS and A-level at grades A/B are above and often well-above average and this has been consistent over recent years, albeit with small numbers of candidates. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The attainment of students in both Year 12 and Year 13 is well above average. Students in Year 12 cope very well indeed with the consistent use of German by the teacher, and their fluency and range of language are very impressive. In oral work, they already use complex language and have a sound grasp of grammatical structures. Written work is invariably very accurate. In Year 13 there was the confidence to initiate discussion, question and comment with maturity and speak with admirable fluency when dealing with a piece of challenging text. The achievement of students in both year groups is well above average.
209. Teaching is often of outstanding quality and all lessons were very good or excellent. They are very well planned, pace is always brisk and tasks set considerable challenges to students' knowledge and skills. A strong emphasis upon grammar enhances the breadth and quality of their productive language. A range of resources are used to illustrate context and motivate interest. In a Year 13 lesson, song was used to emphasise the emotions excited by the breach of the Berlin Wall and the impact of the event, which in turn led to mature debate. Relations between teacher and students are always extremely positive.
210. Progress of students is very good indeed and this is reflected in the depth of grasp of structures and the firm base of students' knowledge. Pronunciation is usually very good and they give due attention to grammatical accuracy and idiom. Attitudes to learning are excellent and commitment to study is total.

211. Both French and German in the sixth form are well managed and teachers have a sound grasp of the requirements of the courses using a wide range of documents which they freely share. There are insufficient resources in the library for students studying at this level, but the presence of foreign language assistants for both languages and the opportunity for work experience abroad are strong elements in the provision for sixth form language students.