

INSPECTION REPORT

YATELEY SCHOOL

Yateley

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116433

Headteacher: Mr W Sarell

Reporting inspector: Mr R Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 2 – 6 December 2002

Inspection number: 249707

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Graham Ellicott
Date of previous inspection:	18 November 1996

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			Drama	
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			English as an additional language	
			Psychology in the sixth form	
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18912	Catherine Large	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
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13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business education in the sixth form	
			History in the sixth form	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Yateley School is a large mixed comprehensive school catering for pupils in the 11-18 age range situated in the north east of Hampshire. There are over 1514 pupils on roll, including 283 in the sixth form. Incorporating a library, health centre and swimming pool, the school serves families from a variety of social backgrounds which are, on the whole, economically advantaged. About two per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals which is well below the national average. There are a few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds but none is at an early stage of acquiring English. There are also a few pupils from traveller families. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 25 per cent, which is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is 0.7 per cent, which is below the national average. Most of these students have physical difficulties. Although the attainment of pupils on entry fluctuates from year to year, it is normally above the national average. Pupils are required to achieve at certain levels before being admitted to the sixth form but some flexibility is exercised for enrolment on certain courses. The school was awarded specialist Performing Arts College status from September 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Yateley school provides a good education for its pupils. Overall standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and the majority of pupils achieve well. Their attitudes are positive and behaviour is satisfactory. The school's systems for care and support are very good and pupils are very well looked after. The quality of teaching is good. The school is well led and managed and is effectively supported by its governing body. The school is giving satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The care and support given to pupils and their personal development
- Standards in GCSE examinations which are consistently above average
- Work with other schools and colleges
- The high quality of teaching in Year 7 and in a third of all lessons
- Range and take-up of extra-curricular activities
- Very good careers education

What could be improved

- The part played by information and communication technology (ICT) in pupils' learning
- The detail, precision and costings of development plans for the school's future improvement
- The consistent use of assessment to raise standards
- The behaviour of some pupils, mostly boys, in Year 8 and in some lessons in other years
- The use of the very best teaching practice in the school to improve overall quality further

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the school was last inspected in November 1996 has been satisfactory. It has had some success in tackling the key issues for development but there is still outstanding work to do, especially in extending the use of ICT in all subjects. There is much more teaching now of high quality and less that is unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment have improved. However the behaviour of pupils is less good than it was.

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.

Results for 2001 have been used because comparative data for the 2002 results was not available at the time of the inspection

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

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

Standards on entry to the school are above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good progress in these subjects and by the end of Year 9 standards are well above average, which is good achievement. In most other subjects, starting points are nearer the average but standards rise to above average by the end of Year 9, apart from standards in French, drama, ICT and physical education, where they are nearer average. In 2001, national test results in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools these results were average. Test results for 2002 are similar to those for 2001, although results in mathematics improved slightly.

In 2001, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE examination grades or GNVQ equivalent at A*- C was well above the national average. Over the last three years the school's overall results have been consistently good. In 2002, boys' results improved by five per cent and boys' and girls' results are now comparable. The school achieved its target for the percentage of students reaching five or more grades at A*- C but fell short of its target for five or more grades at A* - G. In comparison with similar schools, the overall results were average. This, together with some shortcomings in the work in a number of subjects observed during the inspection indicates that standards can be raised further.

In the school as a whole, higher-attaining pupils make good progress and achieve at appropriate levels. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they have extra support; otherwise their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well. With some improvements to teaching and learning, particularly in the use of assessment, pupils' overall achievement could be raised further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and to school life generally.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Around the school, and in many lessons, behaviour is good but it is unsatisfactory in a significant number of Year 8 classes and in some classes in other years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mostly harmonious and based on mutual respect.
Attendance	Good.

The enthusiasm of many pupils makes for a positive learning climate in many classrooms, especially in Years 7 and 9. Unsatisfactory behaviour in Year 8 slows down learning and has a negative impact on standards. This also applies to a number of lessons in different subjects in different years. Pupils show a good sense of independence and take on responsibility well. Good levels of attendance help pupils to make the most of lessons and have a positive impact on their achievement.

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.

The overall quality of teaching in English and science is good throughout the main school. It is also good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

In one third of all lessons in Years 7 to 11, the quality of teaching is very good or excellent and in Year 7 it is especially good. The quality of teaching is consistently good in art. The main strengths lie in the inspirational ways teachers get pupils to learn, levels of planning, use of good questioning to find out what pupils know and the quality of feedback to pupils to help them improve.

In just over a quarter of lessons teaching is satisfactory; more such lessons were found in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In these lessons, teachers were less effective at matching the work to the individual needs of pupils although the majority normally made the progress to be expected. In a small number of lessons the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, often as a result of the misbehaviour of a minority of pupils which limits the learning of all.

Higher-attaining pupils benefit from good levels of challenge although in some lessons their needs are not met. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and when they are supported by extra staff the teaching and learning are normally good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well taught and learn well. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection although teaching is still not making enough use of ICT.

Pupils learn best when actively involved in lessons. There were good examples of this in design and technology, geography and English. In the school as a whole, pupils learn to work with one another, to solve problems, and to think of the implications of decisions and actions, but they do not learn enough about the way that their learning can be enhanced by the use of computers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils are able to study a wide range of subjects for appropriate lengths of time. Good attention is paid to the development of literacy but not yet for numeracy. Not enough use is made of ICT in the curriculum as a whole.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils generally achieve well in class when they get extra support but they do less well when this is not available. Support for pupils with a statement of special educational need is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	None of these pupils is at an early stage of learning English. They make good progress because they get good support to meet their specific needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils have good opportunities to interact with one another. They often consider moral issues in personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education and in some other subjects. There is good cultural provision in the arts. Pupils do not have many opportunities to study aspects of multicultural Britain today. The spiritual aspect of the curriculum is less well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. This is one of the school's strengths.

The school's partnership with parents is good. Parents support school events and are kept well informed by the school. The curriculum is broadened by the introduction of PSHE and drama. Work in the arts is further broadened by the use of dance and theatre workers. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. More time is needed for design and technology and for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils not studying the full religious education course. The school monitors the work and general progress of pupils very closely and offers effective support.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear view of the future direction for the school. Heads of years provide strong leadership and show good management skills. The management of subject departments is satisfactory overall and good in some cases. Most form tutors act as good role models for pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Virtually all statutory requirements are met. There is a responsible attitude towards the use of finance, and particularly good awareness of the school's work for pupils with special educational needs. The governing body has a broad knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works effectively with senior managers to help it improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The work of departments is regularly reviewed. The school analyses its overall performance and reports appropriately to the governing body.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. There are no major shortages in departments but more could be done through the use of books to promote reading development and the school needs more computers.

The school is well staffed but has found it difficult to recruit teachers with ICT expertise. It is effectively served by its administrative support staff, who are skilled and dedicated. Learning support staff show care and sensitivity and are also largely effective in their work. Technical support staff are efficient; the art department would benefit from such support. Accommodation is adequate for the most part although it is unsatisfactory that dance and drama have to be taught in the main hall because this has an adverse effect on standards. The school is well resourced. Administrative competence, a range of sound policies, and a responsible attitude towards helping the school improve further, are the distinguishing features of the school's leadership and management. Developmental planning, whilst sound, does not identify outcomes precisely enough or set out costings in sufficient detail to help ensure that plans have the desired results. The school has satisfactory systems in place for handling finance and seeks the best value when purchasing goods and services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like attending school. • Pupils make good progress. • Pupils are expected to give of their best. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closeness of the school's working relationships with parents. • Information about how their children are progressing. • Homework arrangements. • The behaviour of some pupils.

The inspection team endorses all the features that parents most like about the school. The team also found good systems for communicating with parents, that parents of pupils with special educational needs work closely with the learning support department, and that heads of year work closely with parents. Parents show good support for school events. Both school and parents could profit from the introduction of some means of finding out parents'

perceptions of the school so that it is fully informed by up-to-date knowledge about parents' thinking. The inspection team found that the school keeps parents fully informed about pupils' progress. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory. In some subjects provision is especially good and tasks are graded to cater for pupils with differing abilities but this best practice is not consistent. Overall, homework is set and contributes to raising attainment, but practice among teachers is somewhat inconsistent. Although only a small number of parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour they had grounds for doing so because in a significant number of lessons behaviour is unsatisfactory and slows down learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Many students from the main school enter the sixth form but students from other schools are also recruited. The school has been using a set of attainment criteria for prospective students to meet but this is being relaxed to include more flexibility now that the school is offering an expanded range of courses, including a diploma course in child development. The sixth form is large and expanding. There are considerably more boys than girls on its roll of 283. The sixth form offers a wide range of courses, especially in subjects leading to an A-level qualification. Students come from a wide variety of social backgrounds but backgrounds are predominately ones which are economically advantaged. There are few students from ethnic minority families.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good education for its students. The majority do very well in examinations and many reach standards which are above average. The quality of teaching is very good and most students learn well. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The sixth form is well led and managed. It largely meets the needs of all its students and is proving to be cost effective.

Strengths

- Quality of the teaching
- Standards in A-level examinations
- The degree of satisfaction expressed by students
- The quality of relationships

What could be improved

- Developmental planning so that intended outcomes are more precisely described and costings more detailed
- The monitoring of students' overall progress in Year 12
- The part played by ICT in learning
- Provision for teaching religious education

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. There is a very high take up for mathematics, and results in 2001 were above average. Teaching is very good; with the students' very positive approach, this leads to high standards. There is insufficient monitoring of students' work.
Biology	Very good. Students achieve very well because they review existing knowledge before building upon it. Good quality discussion helps students learn from each other as well as the teacher. A-level results were high in 2002, with female students doing markedly better than males, but in relation to their GCSE results two years earlier students did less well than expected.
Design and technology	Good. The quality of teaching is good and students are very committed to the subject. More use needs to be made of ICT to develop learning further.
Business studies	Very good. Students achieve well because teaching is good and they have positive attitudes to their work. The department makes very good use of links with local businesses and is very well led.
ICT	Unsatisfactory. Although teaching is mostly of good quality, the attainment of students needs to be raised. Students need to put more effort into their work. More female students need to be recruited to courses.
Leisure and tourism	Very good. Teaching is very good, students are well supported and are given confidence in their work. Although standards are below average, students are making good progress from a low baseline on entry to the course. Leadership and management are very good.
Art and Design	Very good. Very good quality teaching is tailored to suit the individual needs of students. Relationships are very good between students and teachers, students demonstrate a mature approach, standards of work are very good and leadership and management are excellent.
Music	Satisfactory. Recent examination results show a standard of attainment which is in line with the national average, but students do not fulfil the expectations raised by the very good GCSE results.
History	Satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use available resources well. Standards are average and students have good attitudes to the subject. The subject is now well led. There is a clear development plan to aid improvement further.
Geography	Good. Very good teaching leads to good, and often very good learning, but this needs to be enhanced by more use of ICT.
Psychology	Very good. Students are very positive, reach high standards like the levels of challenge offered to them and are very well supported.

English	Very good. Attainment is above average and is rising. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and offer a good range of activities to meet the identified needs of all students.
French	Satisfactory. Overall, standards in Year 13 are broadly average, but in Year 12 they are below average, particularly in spoken and written fluency and accuracy. Basic tenses and agreements are weak. Attitudes are good and progress is satisfactory.

In chemistry, examination results at A level were average in 2002, and above average at AS level. Students did about as well as expected in relation to their GCSE results. Female students did significantly better than males. Standards in the Year 13 lesson observed were above average. In physics, examination results at A level were below average in 2002, while at AS level they were average. Students did less well than expected in relation to their GCSE results because they were the first to be entered for a new and innovative course; current students are expected to do better. In sport studies, teaching and learning are good and results are normally above average. The quality of teaching was good in lessons sampled in economics, and in the child development course attainment was above average and students' attitudes were very positive. The quality of teaching in the theatre studies lesson observed was excellent and attainment was well above average. The teaching of Spanish is of good quality and students make good progress. The attainment of students on AS and A-level courses in religious education is well above average. Students are well taught and display a mature attitude to study.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Most teachers give very detailed feedback to students on their progress but this is a weakness in mathematics. Students in Year 12 would benefit from more regular and frequent feedback on their overall progress.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is well led and managed. Recruitment is well handled. There is a responsible attitude towards ensuring that the sixth form is efficient. The attention paid to students with special educational needs and the use of the key skills programme to help students with communication problems are clear indications that the school offers equal opportunities to its students.

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 good teaching • choice of courses available • courses are enjoyable • the accessibility of their teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • careers education • information on their progress • guidance before entering the sixth form • range of extra-curricular activities

On the whole, students have positive attitudes towards sixth form provision. The inspection team agrees with the majority of students that the quality of teaching is good, that there is a wide choice of courses, that teachers are very responsive and that most students enjoy their studies. The inspection team found that students are provided with good information and guidance before embarking on sixth form courses. Careers education is satisfactory. There is good scope for students to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Whilst most subject teachers give students detailed feedback, their overall progress could be monitored more closely so that they are given more detailed information on the progress

they are making towards their declared aims and targets, especially in Year 12 where many students find the demands of courses much greater than those in Year 11.

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. Pupils' standards on entry are above average in English, mathematics and science. Good progress is made in each of these subjects, especially in Year 7, and by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9 their standards are well above average. This is good achievement. In most other subjects, starting points are nearer the average but by the end of Year 9 standards in most of them have risen to above average levels. This also represents good achievement. Although standards are average in drama and ICT, pupils' attainment is not as high as it should be in these subjects by the end of Year 9. Standards are below average in Spanish and pupils are capable of achieving more.
2. In 2001, national test results at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average for Level 5 and above but they were not so high in comparison with similar schools. Test results for 2002 are similar to those for 2001 although the results in mathematics show a small improvement. These are good results but the comparisons with similar schools and some weaknesses observed in lessons indicate that pupils could achieve more yet in the core subjects. Nonetheless, these standards form a sound basis for further progress through to Year 11.
3. In 2001, GCSE examination results in English were well above average and the majority of pupils achieved well. Lower-attaining pupils could still achieve more in writing through improved teaching and the rigorous use of assessment. Mathematics results were also well above average with the more able pupils achieving especially well, but overall results could be further improved if greater attention were paid to supporting the needs of lower-attaining pupils and if teachers exercised more control over behaviour in some classrooms. Results in science were average. Both higher-attaining and lower-attaining pupils under-achieved. Results in science showed a considerable improvement in 2002.
4. In 2001, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE examination grades or GNVQ equivalent at A*- C in subjects overall was well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools this performance was average. Girls did better than boys but the disparity was not as great as the national difference. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes or GNVQ equivalent at grades A*- G was above the national average in comparison with all schools. This performance was average in comparison with similar schools. The overall points score was well above the national average for all schools and was average in comparison with similar schools. Based on averages over the last three years, the school's overall results have been very consistent – well above the national average and the trend of improvement has been very much in line with the national trend. These are good results.
5. GCSE examination results for 2002 indicate that the best A*- C results were in the separate sciences, art and design, graphics, English and English literature, music and drama. Boys' results improved by five per cent and boys' and girls' results are now comparable. There were improved results in science, business studies, design and technology, graphics and Latin. The school reached its target for the percentage of students reaching five or more grades at A*- C in 2002 but fell short of its target for five or more grades at A* - G.
6. In the school as a whole, higher-attaining pupils make good progress and achieve at appropriate levels. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when

they have extra support, otherwise their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. With some improvements to teaching and learning, particularly in the use of assessment, pupils' overall achievement could be raised further. Current standards of work are mostly at average or above average levels and the school is on track to meet its targets in 2003. Standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection.

Sixth form

7. The overall attainment in the sixth form is above average. The success rate on A-level courses is a good feature. Given their starting points when they enter the sixth form, the majority of students achieve well. Students with special educational needs make good progress. In 2001, in terms of the grades achieved at A level, the most successful subjects were biology and economics and the least successful ones were geography and sociology. In 2002, the proportion reaching the highest grades were at their highest in English, psychology and theatre studies. Students following GNVQ courses are benefiting from the key skills programme. For courses as a whole, retention ratios were disappointing at the end of Year 12 in 2001 but improved in 2002. The school is on course to meet its targets. The standards described in the last inspection report have been maintained but students are not achieving highly enough in music, ICT and French.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to the school are good and their personal development and relationships are very good. Behaviour is satisfactory. The attendance of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is good.
9. Pupils are enthusiastic. They like coming to school, a fact confirmed by over 90 per cent of those parents responding to the questionnaires. Most of the pupils interviewed liked the school. The most enthusiastic pupils were in Year 7. In one Year 9 tutorial period, pupils showed a good level of interest in the range of options that would be available to them in Years 10 and 11. Pupils generally show pride in their work and their books are mostly well kept. They are very interested and involved in the school's activities, a reflection of the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school, including sports and regular drama and musical productions. At the last inspection attitudes were described as excellent. They are now good.
10. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well and are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. However, there is a significant minority of pupils who do not behave well in the classroom. This confirms the concerns of a minority of parents expressed through the questionnaires. In more than a quarter of the Year 8 lessons observed, behaviour was unsatisfactory and in a number caused some concern because it slowed down the pace of learning. Some unsatisfactory behaviour was also observed in other years, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Sometimes the behaviour was unsatisfactory where the teaching was less good and the pace of the lesson lost momentum. However, this was not always the case and behaviour was unsatisfactory in some lessons in spite of the quality of the teaching. Where a small number of pupils behave badly in lessons there is an adverse effect on the quality of learning of the majority.
11. In general, in the corridors, at break times and in the dining hall, behaviour is good. The number of fixed-term exclusions has increased since the last inspection, but the number of permanent exclusions has declined. The exclusions are for appropriate reasons and, though increasing, are below average. So far this term the number of

exclusions has decreased slightly. The standard of behaviour of pupils at the school is less good than at the time of the last inspection.

12. No bullying was observed during the inspection. The school has appropriate systems in place to deal with it and incidents are dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others, even when it is negative. They are helped to this understanding through assemblies and personal and social education lessons where pupils are encouraged to show respect for each other's feelings and beliefs. For example, a very good assembly helped pupils to understand the importance of not stigmatising people.
13. The personal development of pupils and their relationships with each other and with adults at the school are very good. Pupils and students are keen to show initiative and take responsibility and this increases as they grow up through the school. Apart from pupils carrying out various tasks around the school, there are other school schemes where taking initiative and responsibility are positively encouraged. For example, there is a very imaginative 'community service' project for pupils in Year 7. In Year 10, pupils arrange their own work experience. They can apply to become prefects in Year 10 and in other years pupils help out at parents' evenings. There is also a school council which is in the process of being reorganised. The school gives pupils many other opportunities to take responsibility. In the classroom, pupils mostly work well and around the school they get on well together with little evidence of disharmony.
14. Attendance in the main school is well above the national average. This level has been maintained over the last few years. Unauthorised absences in 2000/01 were below the national average as were authorised absences. There is no significant difference between attendance levels across the years. Pupils mostly arrive at school on time unless the buses are delayed by traffic. The use of time in registration sessions has improved since the last report because most tutors now deal with administrative matters efficiently, monitor the progress of pupils helpfully and generally set a positive tone. In some registrations this is still not the case as pupils have too little to do and tutors do not insist on appropriate behaviour or conduct, instances of this being found in registrations in Years 9 and 11.

Sixth form

15. Students' attitudes to the school are good. Around the school they are polite and courteous. They hold doors open for visitors and they are also helpful in directing visitors to where they want to go. At registration, students are at ease with one another and relaxed. In lessons they show responsible attitudes. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons vary between good and excellent. In science, for example, students are very attentive and keen to learn. Eighty per cent of students in Year 12 are involved in school activities.
16. Students' personal development is very good. They show a very good level of initiative and are prepared to take on a lot of personal responsibility. For example, they volunteer to act as mentors for pupils in Year 8, whose behaviour is causing concern; Students of French accompanied the lower school on a trip to France and looked after small groups of pupils. Students also act as role models for the lower school. They have been involved in raising money to build a school in Kenya and a small number have been out there to help build it. They also helped to teach the Kenyan pupils. A few students have also been involved with a project in Peru. Sixth form students are helping to reorganise the school council. In Year 12, they can apply to become senior prefects and they help at discos and in lessons. In one Year 7 registration period, a group of sixth form students were observed working with pupils on the Christmas

assembly. Students develop their learning skills well, but only GNVQ students receive instruction on developing key skills.

17. Students, in the main, have positive views of the school. One hundred and seventy eight students answered the sixth form questionnaires, approximately 63 per cent. This is a much higher rate of return than for the parents' questionnaires. The questions, which students answered most positively concerned the choice of courses, good teaching, the accessibility of teachers and their enjoyment being in the sixth form. Students were not so happy about the advice they received before entering the sixth form, being kept informed about their progress, careers advice and the range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses provided. A quarter of students did not think that the school listens and responds to their views. The inspection team agrees with students on what they find particularly positive about the school. The inspection team also found that students receive good advice before embarking on sixth form courses and are kept informed of their progress but this could be more regular and frequent in Year 12. Careers advice is satisfactory. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The inspection team found no evidence to suggest that students' views were not listened to.
18. The attendance of sixth form students is, overall, satisfactory. They have an informal agreement that they will have a 90 per cent attendance rate as a minimum target. The figures indicate that most of the time it is exceeded. However, the level in Year 13 sometimes falls below the agreed figure, but mostly because students are allowed to take time off to attend open days at colleges and universities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching and learning

19. The overall quality of teaching in the main school is good although it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. The majority of lessons are well planned and organised and teachers use their subject expertise in imaginative ways to create good learning opportunities. They have a good rapport with pupils, make good use of questioning to find out what pupils know and do not know, and are especially good at helping them know what they have to do to improve.
20. In one third of all lessons in Years 7 to 11, the quality of teaching is very good or excellent. As a result, in these lessons, in different years and across a range of subjects, pupils make more progress than would normally be expected. In just over one quarter of lessons, teaching is satisfactory and in these lessons pupils normally make the progress to be expected. In a small number of lessons the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory; this leads to few gains in learning. In Year 7, the quality of teaching is especially good; this means that pupils get off to a flying start to their secondary education. In other years, teaching is less good which means that the gains made in Year 7 might not be maintained. The quality of teaching in English and science is good throughout. It is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
21. In the very best lessons teaching is inspirational. Teachers create original and exciting ways for the pupils to learn and they respond in turn by being fully involved in lessons. High levels of achievement follow as pupils become immersed in what they are doing. A good example was in Year 10 when, in a PHSE lesson conducted by an experienced teacher, pupils became engrossed in an exploration of crime and punishment in relation to the media and major world religions. Pupils expressed their views well, listened attentively to their teacher and to one another, showed respect for all views,

expressed themselves clearly and forcefully and took useful notes in preparation for their next lesson. Higher-attaining pupils in particular benefited from the levels of challenge in these lessons in contrast to some other lessons in the school where their needs are not so well met.

22. In about one lesson in three teaching is more mundane and pupils do not show the same levels of interest. Although these lessons are properly organised and the majority of pupils do make some gains in learning, they are characterised by a failure to distinguish between the pupils and consequently the learning needs of individual pupils are not met. In a small number of lessons, the management skills of the teacher prove to be ineffective in controlling the misbehaviour of pupils who persistently interrupt the flow of learning and challenge the authority of the teacher. In a significant number of lessons in different years and different subjects, the misbehaviour of a minority of pupils, usually boys, whilst not so serious as to undermine the learning experience of the majority, still prevents lessons from starting on time, makes for unacceptable distractions for the teacher and slows down the pace of learning. This results in lower achievement.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sometimes good but is more often satisfactory. On the whole, learning support assistants provide effective help for pupils, especially when they have sufficient basic knowledge to be able to help pupils learn, as was the case with the work undertaken by an assistant on the families of elements in the periodic table in science in Year 11. Learning support assistants are less effective when they are unsure of how best to help pupils learn. In lessons where no extra help is available to the class teacher, individual literacy needs are not adequately addressed. Generally speaking, pupils with statements of special educational need are well supported and their progress is as good as that of other pupils. The few who are learning English as an additional language are well taught and learn well.
24. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection although teachers are still not making enough use of ICT. Teachers are now often using questioning well but in some lessons they need to address their questions more towards those who are less confident as learners to encourage them to achieve and so build self-esteem.
25. Pupils learn best when actively involved in lessons, like the one in design and technology in Year 7 where they became totally absorbed in the design and manufacture of an illuminated badge, or in English in Year 7 where playing games helped them understand the use of prefixes and suffixes. Some learning activities are especially imaginative. For instance, in a geography lesson in Year 7, pupils were effectively helped to learn about the concept of flow by playing with model cars to engineer obstructions and then to observe their consequences so that they could make an analogy with the behaviour of water. On the whole, pupils do not learn enough about the way that their learning can be enhanced by the use of computers. The teaching in most subjects contributes towards the literacy development of pupils but there is not the same stress on numeracy development.

Sixth form

26. Overall, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Many teachers have expert subject knowledge and are very committed to sharing it with their students. Lesson planning is very effective. Relationships are very good and teachers show that they care about their students' achievement and progress. Most teachers strike an effective balance between imparting knowledge to students and helping them to

become independent. They mark work diligently and provide students with very good feedback.

27. Most teachers have high expectations of students, challenge them well, require them to think carefully about their work and provide them with good guidance on how to improve its quality. Students respond well for the most part and this makes for an effective learning environment but in a small number of lessons, especially with weaker students who are less motivated, the pace of lessons falls and less is learned. In some lessons, especially in mathematics, assessment is not used enough to help students know how well they are progressing.
28. A weakness of the teaching is the very limited use of ICT to enhance students' learning, both as an aid to presentation but also as a tool for research. In some lessons, teachers still tend to talk too much so that students do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves or to practise their skills of communication or investigation. However, despite the lack of a key skills programme for most students, on the whole most students are learning to assemble evidence to support a point of view, to analyse material in order to identify key points and to present their findings to an audience. Students learn how to take and use notes and learn how they can build on their previous learning, especially in psychology. The high standard of sixth form teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.

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

29. The school provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities. The curriculum has breadth and balance and there is considerable scope for pupils to learn outside the classroom, partly as a result of activities available and promoted through the school's strengths in the performing arts. Fieldwork is a strong feature of geography and pupils learn well as a result of it.
30. Since the last inspection, the school has adapted the timetable effectively to respond to national initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 strategy, and to provide more breadth to endeavour to meet the needs of all pupils. It now provides more time for ICT and PSHE. Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in drama and in two languages are examples of good features of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. All subjects have appropriate allocations of time to allow them to cover essential ground, apart from design and technology, where coverage of the curriculum is incomplete because time is limited.
31. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are offered a good choice of courses. There are also opportunities for them to study a wider curriculum, including Latin, business education and a vocational course in leisure and tourism. The school is reviewing the scope of these courses and is currently considering the need to offer further work-related courses of study to best meet the needs of all its pupils in the future. The statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education are not fully met in these years. Those pupils who do not choose the GCSE examination course receive their religious education through the PSHE programme. There is not enough time for this course to be fully taught and neither is it an accredited course which is a requirement of the syllabus which schools are expected to follow.
32. The school has improved the planning and provision for PSHE since the last inspection. It is now taught by a team of specialist teachers who work to a clear programme of study. In Years 10 and 11, an effective carousel operates so that the teachers develop an expertise in an area of the programme. Good policies and

programmes for sex and drugs education are in place. The quality of teaching is variable, depending on the experience of the teachers. The school now needs to ensure that adequate time is allocated for the newly appointed co-ordinator to evaluate the quality of the planning and the delivery, especially in the newly introduced area of citizenship.

33. Helpful work on the development of literacy occurs in a number of subjects, especially through the identification and significance of key words, and activities such as extended writing in science which reinforce the skills of pupils in reading and writing. There is far less emphasis on the development of numeracy but this is being planned for.
34. Applications of ICT in subjects are not well developed. They are monitored by senior teachers as a part of their reviews of subject departments and reported to the headteacher but no one person has overall responsibility for their co-ordination. Applications of ICT in subjects do not contribute to the overall assessment of pupils' ICT capability. In some subjects, the statutory ICT requirements are not met. Many teachers have been trained to use ICT but the lack of access to computing facilities is inhibiting application in many areas. The main computer rooms are extensively used for ICT courses and are not always available for use by other subjects. The extent to which ICT is used in subjects varies considerably and depends on the interest of individual teachers and access to facilities.
35. The quality of careers education is very good in Years 9, 10 and 11. The school works with the Hampshire Careers Service and pupils have some opportunity for individual counselling. Pupils are well prepared for aspects of careers such as interviews, writing CVs and letters of application. The careers library effectively complements the provision. All pupils undertake a period of work experience at the end of Year 10 and a very high percentage of pupils receive certificates to show that they are succeeding in adapting to the world beyond family and the classroom.
36. Provision for extra-curricular activities and visits is a strength of the school. There is a very wide range of subject-related visits and social trips planned each year and a specific week allocated to residential and day trips at the end of the school year. Examples of the visits programme include geography fieldwork, and visits to places of worship, museums, art galleries and theatres. There are daily opportunities for extra-curricular activities and pupils value and support them well. These include computer and languages clubs, study support sessions and a very good variety of sport, music, drama and dance activities.
37. There are some links with the community which contribute to pupils' education, for example in business studies and through work experience, but this is an area that the school could strengthen. Links with partner institutions are very good and include a very productive relationship with a provider of initial teacher training. Links with feeder schools are especially good. A high degree of co-operation between most pupils lies behind the booklet of writing and artwork that features work from pupils across all the key stages but links also extend beyond the core subjects, an unusual and high quality feature. The arrangements for introducing the school to prospective pupils and their parents are very good as they ensure that new pupils are well prepared for their secondary education and that teachers receive relevant information to enable them to build on pupils' earlier learning.
38. Provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good although somewhat inconsistent. Opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding, which was judged to be good at the time of the last inspection, are now satisfactory. Spirituality is the least well developed aspect with the

exception of work in English, art and religious education, where it is good, and in geography, where it is very good. In some subjects, teachers narrowly equate spiritual dimensions with religious issues and provide few opportunities for pupils to experience feelings such as wonderment, excitement, astonishment or empathy. Spiritual dimensions are, however, well exemplified in geography, when pupils explore beliefs, values and the reactions of others to geographical issues at a deep level.

39. Pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong. The vast majority have a proper understanding of the effects of their actions on others, both in lessons and around the school. In contrast, a small minority, of whom the school is well aware, have inconsistent patterns of behaviour which impact negatively on others. Pupils in Year 10 made sensible and mature observations on the question of punishment matching the severity of crimes committed when considering recent high profile court cases. They considered views on capital punishment and codes of conduct such as the Ten Commandments, and other codes from diverse religions, in preparation for a forthcoming debate. Pupils have discussed graffiti and its effects on the environment. The school has a clear and unequivocal policy on bullying of which all pupils are aware. A code of conduct is prominently displayed in every room.
40. Opportunities for social development and collaborative work are well established in modern foreign languages, geography, English, physical education, and drama. In art and design, pupils make very high quality murals, which both inform and enhance the school environment. Pupils develop social responsibility by taking care of materials and tools in design technology. In English, older pupils help younger ones by participating in a 'buddies' scheme to promote reading skills and confidence. Events organised to raise money for charities give pupils many opportunities to help others, especially in Year 7, where a newly introduced community service programme encourages pupils to become active participants in their locality. This aspect of the school's work provides a good foundation for the introduction of citizenship.
41. Pupils develop good understanding of the richness and diversity of other cultures, such as Chinese, African and Aboriginal art. Cultural development is enhanced through well-organised visits to Paris, Rome, Florence and Sorrento, as well as to national museums and galleries such as the Tate Modern and National Gallery by the art department and to Spain and France by the modern foreign languages departments. There are good displays of mathematics through the ages, including famous mathematicians, arising from pupils' individual research interests. Pupils learn about a variety of ancient cultures, such as the Greeks and Romans and they know about prominent world leaders such as Gandhi. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop awareness of achievements of those cultures which help to make up modern British society.

Sixth form

42. The curriculum in the sixth form is good. It offers students a very wide range of courses and options. A notable feature is the establishment of courses relating to nursing care. There is a good degree of continuity with courses provided in the main school, such as business education and theatre studies. Provision for extra-curricular activities is strong and there are very good opportunities for study visits, both in this country and abroad. These include a wide range of conferences, demonstration lectures, and business studies and languages study trips.
43. Students in the sixth form have a positive and significant role in the wider curriculum experience of younger pupils. For example, they write, direct and produce the very successful house drama, a very popular event when groups of younger pupils stage

plays on a competitive basis. They are also able to broaden their experience by helping younger pupils who have learning difficulties. Students have an opportunity to keep fit and to take part in sport but this is not a strong feature of sixth form life. There is no timetabled provision for recreational activities for students. The department is currently not able to offer any accredited courses, such as the Junior Sports Leaders Award, that were available at the time of the previous inspection. Several students make a good contribution in helping teachers with activities such as swimming and basketball in the lower school.

44. The statutory requirement for all students to follow a course in religious education is not met. This situation has not improved since the last inspection. There is a well planned PSHE programme. The key skills programme is available only for those students following a GNVQ course whereas all would benefit from its stress on helping to develop the skills of literacy, numeracy and communication.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

45. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development and the educational and personal support and guidance available for pupils are both good. Pupils receive their education in a secure and caring environment and this aspect has improved since the last inspection.
46. The school has proper procedures in place for child protection, including designated personnel with appropriate training. The school has a detailed child protection policy and staff receive regular training on child protection and drugs education. Procedures are thorough. Support and guidance for pupils with statements of special educational need are good because their needs are clearly identified and appropriate teaching programmes planned as a result.
47. The procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are very good. The school takes health and safety issues very seriously and the business manager reports regularly to the premises and health and safety committee of the governing body. Safety inspections, carried out twice a term, are very thorough. The school has a good health and safety policy and risk assessments are carried out in relevant departments, such as science and design and technology, and particularly for school trips. Procedures for dealing with sickness and injury are particularly good. The medical room is run by an experienced first-aider, known as the school 'nurse', and there are a number of other members of staff with first-aid qualifications in different departments. Pupils are dealt with sensitively, caringly and efficiently.
48. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Registration takes place promptly in the mornings and afternoon and good records are maintained. However, not all teachers call registers at the start of their lessons and this is a weakness. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and an appropriate range of rewards and sanctions. The policy is based on the principle that all members of the school community, both pupils and adults, are valued equally. The problems in Year 8 are being constantly monitored and the school has valuable information on the range of concerns and difficulties experienced by pupils in this year. Across the school, behaviour is monitored closely, recorded and analysed. For example, one of the deputy headteachers is studying the effects of the use of the referral room; early evidence seems to suggest that the behaviour of a number of disturbed pupils is improving slowly. The recording process is greatly helped by the school's very good information technology systems. The school is well aware of the problem of the unsatisfactory behaviour by small groups of pupils and is taking appropriate steps to try

to improve it. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are also good. There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place and when staff are made aware of incidents they deal with them firmly.

49. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the use of the procedures to guide curricular planning are good. Pupils' attainment and progress are tracked from the time they arrive in Year 7 using a range of tests and target setting with regular feedback to pupils, parents and the appropriate members of staff. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are analysed well and individual pupils are carefully monitored to help ensure progress. Regular assessments of pupils can result in pupils being moved to a different set if necessary. Assessment procedures are supported by a clear marking policy. The school has made considerable strides in ensuring that teachers give helpful information to pupils on what they need to do to improve the standards of their work. Where the school's assessment policy has been fully implemented, such as in English and geography, the use of the procedures is very good but assessment is still unsatisfactory in ICT in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in subjects as a whole but not all departments implement the key features of the policy so that the school can move forward in concert on what it recognises as a major means for raising pupils' attainment.
50. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. Pupils have clear targets which are regularly reviewed. Tracking information is recorded by computer and reported regularly. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and give information on which curriculum level they have reached with clear information on what the next steps should be. From Year 8 onwards the school issues progress reports in the autumn, while in Year 7 this takes the form of a 'settling in' report. The good communication between subject departments and form and year tutors ensures that information on pupils' academic progress is shared and appropriate support can be made available where necessary.
51. Pupils' personal development is monitored and supported well through the school's very good pastoral system. After a very good induction period, pupils in Year 7 arrive at the school, and the head of year is provided with all the information available on each pupil. Because the heads of year, deputies and tutors move up the school with the pupils, they get to know all of them very well. The school is careful when putting together the tutor groups, based on information from the junior schools. If a child is unhappy with the tutor group to which he or she is allocated, transfers are arranged. To have a permanent link with the feeder schools the school has appointed a primary/secondary liaison officer from the teaching staff. The pastoral system is also very effective because there is very good liaison with departments. A particular strength is the liaison with outside agencies, especially the education psychology service. Heads of year keep very good records of individual pupils' progress through the school, including the certificates and awards they receive as well as the sanctions, such as detentions and 'on reports'. This information is kept on computer and easily accessed. For example, the head of Year 11 has a particularly detailed record system from which he can download information on any one pupil at the touch of a key.

Sixth form

Assessment

52. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. In most subjects it is good because work is closely and regularly marked and students know the progress they are making and what they have to do to improve. In some lessons, however, assessment is a weakness, for instance work in mathematics. Some departments are making very

good use of data to track the progress of individual students but this process is not yet used in all departments. This was a strong feature of the sixth form at the time of the last inspection but it has not developed further.

Advice, support and guidance

53. The educational and personal support provided for students is good. It is provided by their tutors, who are readily available to students and with whom they have regular meetings. They also receive advice and guidance from the head of the sixth form and the deputy heads. Female students usually prefer to seek the advice of the female deputy heads, particularly on personal matters. The school makes use of outside counsellors if needed, including bereavement counsellors. They are also supported through a PSHE programme, during which they develop debating skills, have brainstorming sessions, and discuss drug and sex problems, the law, ethical and other matters.
54. The procedures for assessing students' academic progress and the use of those procedures are good, as they are in the lower school. For example, in English, progress files have recently been introduced for each student; this system traces and evaluates attainment and progress and sets targets. However, there is no formal moderation in French. Year 12 students say that the procedures are particularly good in English. All those interviewed said that they were aware of their progress and attainment levels.
55. In spite of concerns raised by students in the questionnaires, there is satisfactory support from the career service and guidance for future courses of study and career opportunities. To support students in their preparation for their university applications, the Rotary Club comes into the school and arranges mock interviews for potential applicants.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents have positive views of the school. The school has maintained its effective links with them since the time of the last inspection and on the whole parents have a satisfactory impact on its work.
57. The parents' views of the school are positive. Over 90 per cent of parents believed that their children were making good progress at the school, that teaching was good and that the school expected pupils to work hard and achieve their best. They also feel happy about approaching the school and believe that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. However, 17 per cent of respondents did not think that behaviour at the school was good, a proportion three times as high as that at the last inspection. The inspection team shares this concern. A minority of parents also showed some anxiety that they were not kept informed about how well their children were getting on but in the opinion of the inspection team this is not justified.
58. An active parent/teacher association raises considerable sums of money annually and also contributed a major sum towards the school's successful Performing Arts College application. Parents arrange regular education forum evenings and social events. Some parents act as invigilators for public examinations. They are also invited to accompany pupils on school trips. In this way, parents' involvement in the work of the school makes a positive impact on pupils' learning. Around 80 per cent of parents attend the school's parents' evenings. Despite this, the school has only limited knowledge of the perceptions, concerns and preoccupations of its parent body which

means that it is not well briefed about how they might view current issues or new developments.

59. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The prospectus is detailed and very attractively produced, as is the governors' annual report to parents. These documents contain all relevant statutory information. The school also sends out weekly school bulletins which keep parents up to date with events and other information about the school. This is a very good feature. Parents receive a progress report on their children in the autumn term and a full annual report in the summer. The reports are very detailed and for each subject inform parents what National Curriculum Levels their children have reached.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The school is well led and managed. It runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and has clear lines of communication, particularly effective being the links with parents and staff through the issue of weekly bulletins. The school has devised appropriate policies to govern key areas of its work and the majority of these are working well. Appropriate plans are in place to help the school bring about further improvement in its work. There is a good sense of direction and the school's vision is shared by the headteacher, key staff and governing body.
61. The well presented, informative prospectus includes a clear set of wide-ranging aims for the school. It is particularly helpful to parents in describing the school's arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs as well as including useful details on the sex education programme, sport, careers guidance and admission arrangements. There is a clear vision statement which sets out what the school expects from its pupils, staff and parents which matches the curricular statement in the prospectus. The school's internet site is well organized and regularly updated.
62. The school development plan is sound because it makes use of appropriate time-scales and identifies appropriate sets of priorities. Each section is helpfully preceded by a useful summary of progress in 2001-2002. The targets are clear and tasks are appropriate but planning is sometimes weaker in the areas of outcomes, costings and evaluation. In some instances these lack detail or are not present at all, which reduces the effectiveness of the plan as a potential tool for action. The strategic development plan identifies a range of relevant priorities, incorporates means and outcomes, includes the main areas of intended development and provides a satisfactory basis for future detailed planning. It does not, however, specify the intended scale of some developments and this is a weaker feature; for instance, it refers to more adults in classes, a higher percentage of lessons of quality, high participation in the performing arts and reduced work-load for teachers but does not give any projected figures. Although there are references to finance, these similarly lack detail. This leaves the strategic plan also somewhat limited as a tool for action.
63. The school has introduced some effective ways of monitoring its performance. As well as systematically monitoring the work of departments, senior managers have undertaken internal inspections of five departments which have identified strengths and areas for development. All departments review their progress at two points in the year. The written outcomes are presented to the governors' curriculum committee. All these initiatives are very helpful in enabling senior managers and the governing body to see the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve. There are considerable inconsistencies in the use of assessment and as yet the assessment policy is not being fully adhered to.

64. The school has the confidence to set challenging targets for pupils' achievements. Targets have also been set for improvements to the quality of teaching although these are less ambitious. Performance management procedures are well established in the school. There is a strong in-service education programme to support teachers in their work. The programme to support newly qualified teachers is thorough and effective. Learning support staff are mostly effective. Administrative staff provide strong support. An appropriate appraisal system is being introduced for all support staff. Each department is also expected to identify at least one defined opportunity to support the Performing Arts College status through teaching and learning, which is a useful way of ensuring that the whole curriculum relates to this initiative.
65. The governing body is well organised, has a wide range of relevant expertise and is providing effective support for the school. It has a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Its oversight of special educational needs is especially well informed. There is a responsible attitude towards school finance.
66. The school's system of rewards and sanctions is a sound basis for managing the personal development of pupils. Heads of year diligently follow up important issues regarding the welfare of individual pupils, maintain detailed records and have a good grasp of their progress and overall achievements. The school has responded to concerns about aspects of the behaviour of a minority of pupils by setting up a group which looks at the ways in which parents can promote good behavior. The school has also introduced strategies to help ensure consistent practice in the management of behaviour. Heads of department are providing satisfactory leadership and effective management by emphasizing the need for further improvements to provision and devising appropriate development plans.
67. The management of special educational needs is good and is set to improve further. There are effective means for identifying the needs of all pupils and, on the whole, for meeting them. Very good use is made of all outside agencies. Individual education plans have been made simpler and more accessible to teachers, and study skills units and a behaviour management programme have been introduced for some pupils in Year 9 and Year 11. Progress units are in use with some Year 7 pupils. The monitoring of all its work is not yet well developed by the learning support department but it has good records to show the successful and sometimes impressive progress made by individual pupils, especially so in the case of those pupils with statements of special educational need. The school's links with primary school are particularly good and make a very strong contribution to the very successful provision in Year 7. The school has still to set out its strategy for ensuring that all its facilities are readily accessible by pupils with disabilities and for ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met in classes.
68. Good use is made of accommodation, there are no major shortages of resources and the school is largely well staffed, but more specialist help is need in physical education, religious education and ICT. Pupils make good use of the well appointed library. For the most part, the stock meets the learning needs of pupils although more books are required to support learning in chemistry, physics and art.
69. The school's arrangements for handling finance are satisfactory. There are clear lines of command and procedures. Auditors' recommendations are acted on. The governing body shows a strong sense of responsibility in ensuring that the school budget does not stay in deficit. Through the school's awareness of where it stands in relation to other schools and its procedures for ensuring that it gets value from all its services and purchases, the principles of best value are appropriately applied. The overall costs are on the high side for similar schools and the background and the

starting points for the pupils are above average. Pupils are well supported and make satisfactory and often good progress in the school, reaching standards which are well above average, which means that the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

70. The sixth form is well led and managed. Recruitment to the sixth form is successful and the result of a professionally conducted process so that students are left in no doubt as to the nature of the choices they make when entering voluntary education. This helps the school to retain its students and it is generally successful in this respect.
71. A wide variety of course is offered to cater for the different demands of students. The school has not embarked on a key skills course and this is a weakness, especially as there are number of students whose literacy and numeracy skills are weak and who need help with communication generally. ICT is not a well managed aspect of the sixth form.
72. There is an appropriate emphasis on efficiency, and courses only run if they can command sufficient students. The improvement plan lacks precision. Whilst there is some monitoring of students' progress, this is a relatively underdeveloped aspect. Although the sixth form is subsidised to a degree by pupils in the main school, it is cost effective because the majority of students attain very well on advanced courses, high calibre staff are attracted by the opportunity to teach sixth form students and good use is made of the main school itself as a resource to broaden the outlook of students and to develop their skills.

Resources

73. There are sufficient computers for students to use but appropriate software is in short supply for work in modern foreign languages. Whilst the supply of books is adequate overall, more specialised texts are needed in some subjects such as psychology.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to improve the quality of education further, the headteacher, staff and governing body now need to:
 - (1) Extend the use of ICT so that it plays a much larger part in the learning of all pupils;
(Paragraphs 24, 25, 34, 143)
 - (2) Ensure that the school development plans are fully costed and that intended outcomes are precise and measurable so that the plans become effective tools for school improvement;
(Paragraph 62)

- (3) Ensure that all departments fully implement the school's policies for assessment to help attainment rise further, especially in relation to:
 - standards of writing in the work of lower-attainers, particularly the writing of boys;
 - overall standards of lower-attainers in mathematics;
(Paragraphs 49, 63, 80, 91, 93)
- (4) Address the incidence of misbehaviour in classes to ensure that all pupils achieve more from their learning;
(Paragraphs 10, 57, 66)
- (5) Ensure that senior managers promote the already evident outstanding practice in some teaching and learning so that their overall quality is further improved.
(Paragraphs 19, 20, 64)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve developmental planning so that intended outcomes are more precisely described and costings more detailed;
(Paragraph 72)
- (2) Ensure that the monitoring of students' progress is comprehensive and consistent;
(Paragraphs 52, 72)
- (3) Improve the use of ICT in learning;
(Paragraph 28)
- (4) Make provision for teaching religious education.
(Paragraph 44)

The following lesser issues should also be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- Ensure that the school has an effective means for finding out how parents perceive the work of the school;
(Paragraph 58)
- Hold a daily act of collective worship and strengthen the spiritual aspects of the curriculum.
(Paragraph 38)
- Provide more support for pupils with special educational needs in English lessons to help their literacy development;
(Paragraph 83)
- Establish a clear policy and an effective set of practices to provide greater challenges to the gifted and talented pupils.
(Paragraph 21)

- Strengthen provision for citizenship by supporting inexperienced teachers and providing a full in-service training programme for all staff teaching this new subject.
(Paragraph 32)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	177
	Sixth form	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	11	51	59	47	9	0	0
Percentage	6	29	33	27	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	8	24	25	9	2	0	0
Percentage	12	35	37	13	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1231	283
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	25	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	113	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	46
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	73

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	128	119	247

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	92	94
	Girls	112	102	102
	Total	204	194	196
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 [74]	79 [82]	79 [73]
	National	64 [63]	66 [65]	66 [59]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 [33]	56 [59]	50 [41]
	National	31 [28]	43 [42]	34 [30]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	98	84
	Girls	104	102	92
	Total	192	200	176
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 [85]	81 [85]	71 [77]
	National	65 [64]	68 [66]	64 [62]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 [48]	59 [55]	43 [41]
	National	31 [31]	42 [39]	33 [29]

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	142	111	253

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	89	133	139
	Girls	83	109	111
	Total	172	242	250
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 [69]	96 [95]	99 [98]
	National	48 [47]	91 [91]	96 [96]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.7
	National	39

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	62	48	110

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	19	19	19.4	na	na	na
National	16.9	17.7	17.4	na	na	na

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
1496	66	2
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	6	1
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	104.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	647

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.41
Key Stage 4	21.75

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	4367688
Total expenditure	4426903
Expenditure per pupil	2973
Balance brought forward from previous year	103842
Balance carried forward to next year	41927

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	43.71
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	42.98
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	1514
Number of questionnaires returned	112

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	44	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	55	14	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	53	14	4	2
The teaching is good.	31	59	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	45	18	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	39	3	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	26	48	19	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	32	47	7	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	59	8	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	40	7	2	3

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Well above average and improving results in national tests and GCSE examinations
- The progress of higher-attaining pupils
- The range of the curriculum
- Marking and assessment
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The organization of the department

Areas for improvement

- The application of ICT
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9
- The management of reading from Years 7 to 9
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs
- The standards of lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9

75. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6 in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 was well above the national average for 2001. The results of the year group as a whole were in line with the average results in similar schools. Girls did better than boys but the gap narrowed in 2002. Standards have risen over the last four years but pupils have done marginally better in mathematics and science than in English.
76. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in English language and English literature in 2001 and 2002 was well above the national average for 2001. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes has risen over the last three years and in 2002 a third gained A* or A grades in English language and well over a third in English literature. Pupils did better in these examinations than in mathematics and science.
77. Standards in the classroom reflect these results, with attainment by the end of year 9 and again by the end of Year 11 being well above national expectations. Most pupils make very good progress in the development of speaking and listening skills and higher-attaining pupils make very good progress with reading and writing. Most other pupils make good progress in reading and writing. However, pupils with special educational needs and some lower-attaining pupils, who find difficulty mastering the basic skills of writing, make slower progress because there is insufficient support for them in Years 7 to 9. There are a few pupils for whom English is an additional language and none is at an early stage of acquiring English but they receive appropriate support and make good progress.
78. Speaking and listening skills are well above national expectations by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop listening skills well. Most are competent speakers, capable of presenting a point of view clearly and confidently. By Year 11, most pupils show an understanding of other points of view and respond sensitively. The majority argue a case cogently and coherently, using standard English in formal situations, but not all classes have sufficient opportunities to discuss issues and further develop extended speech.

79. Standards of reading are well above national expectations by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Most pupils read fluently and accurately from a wide range of texts. By Year 11, most pupils read and understand texts such as Lincoln's Gettysburg address and appreciate poetry from the GCSE anthology. The development of reading skills is enhanced by the close examination of texts in lessons. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have either a reading book of their choice or a class reading book and many lessons begin with reading as a settling exercise, which is a good feature. The department has recently improved reading strategies with the introduction of reading journals in Year 7 and a credit system to encourage wide reading. However, strategies for developing reading skills in Years 7 to 9 are not secure. Not all pupils read of their own volition nor do they regularly use the library on the campus. There is insufficient monitoring of reading to ensure that all pupils read widely and appropriately.
80. Standards of writing are above national expectations by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Some higher-attaining pupils and some gifted and talented pupils produce writing of exceptional quality. They are encouraged by opportunities such as the literary competition which is judged by professional writers. Pupils develop effective styles of writing in a wide range of forms and there are very good strategies to support the development of writing. Writing is very well supported by positive marking. Teachers provide clear assessment criteria for each assignment that in turn generate future writing targets. Although the assessment of writing assignments is a strength of the department, current assessment procedures do not provide an adequate audit of writing skills to identify the specific writing needs of lower-attaining pupils, nor is there a continuous and progressive programme of basic skills teaching to enable them to meet the writing demands of the GCSE examinations. This is a weakness because there is a significant gap in attainment between the majority of pupils and lower-attaining writers – mainly boys.
81. The quality of teaching and learning is good, although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which ranges, in Years 7 to 9, from unsatisfactory to excellent. In Years 10 and 11, all the teaching is at least satisfactory, most is good and there is some very good and some excellent teaching.
82. Pupils learn well because teachers plan sequences of lessons which allow pupils to build upon their knowledge and understanding. Most teaching is literature-based and lessons skilfully incorporate the development of vocabulary and writing skills with an appreciation of literature. For example, teachers discuss the changes in language usage or introduce free word association to help pupils appreciate the language and underlying meanings of poems. Some lessons are inspirational, with pupils attempting limbo dancing to the music of Bob Marley as an aid to understanding the poem 'Limbo'. Teachers' good command of their subject allows pupils the freedom to explore ideas confidently; their use of recordings of poets reading their own poems, or actors such as Richard Burton reading the opening of 'Under Milk Wood', help to bring literature to life. In most lessons, teachers choose appropriate and stimulating activities to help pupils learn. For example, Year 7 pupils analyse fairy stories to aid their understanding of story structure. In a learning support lesson, pupils with special educational needs completed a sequence of short activities, including play reading and word building games, to sustain their interest and learning. Appropriate homework consolidates and extends classroom teaching. Written work is marked assiduously and supports learning. Pupils are given clear assessments of their standards and progress.
83. Not all teaching is equally successful. In most lessons, teachers carefully match activities to the abilities of pupils in the class and provide them with extra help, but this is not always the case. This particularly affects the progress of lower-attaining pupils

and those with special educational needs. Some pupils in the classes where ability is mixed struggle to understand and complete tasks. There is insufficient support for these pupils in some mainstream lessons and too few opportunities for specialised teaching. Most teachers are introducing the structure of the National Literacy Strategy as part of lesson planning, but not all are providing pupils with clear learning objectives or using 'starter activities' effectively. The behaviour of pupils in some lessons is unsatisfactory and this affects the learning of the majority in these classes.

84. The management and leadership of the department are very good. There are rising standards in both key stages and there have been improvements to the curriculum and assessment procedures since the last inspection. A very good feature is the effective support provided for staff through in-service training and the monitoring of teaching as new initiatives are introduced. Resources are sufficient and are well organised. There is a very good library providing an excellent selection of fiction and non-fiction books. Provision for the application of ICT was inadequate at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case. Nonetheless, the department has made good progress since the last inspection.
85. Literacy levels are sufficient to support learning in all subjects, and in the school as a whole there are effective strategies for teaching literacy skills. Most subject areas have policy statements and some have literacy strategies built into schemes of work. As a consequence, nearly all subject areas use appropriate strategies to support learning. These are very well developed in English, geography, drama and history. Most subject departments provide pupils with useful words and technical terms; some provide pupils with structures to support writing and use group discussion to ensure understanding of texts or key concepts. In science, most pupils write accurately but spelling is often a weakness. Teachers are aware of the importance of key words in science but do not use them effectively enough to help pupils link words with meaning and some pupils are also held back because they are unable to recall correct scientific terminology in explaining their work. On the whole, literacy across the curriculum is very well managed and new initiatives have been appropriately matched with in-service training.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards at the ends of Years 9 and 11
- Leadership and management of the department
- The quality of teachers' planning
- Pupils' attitudes, especially in Years 7 to 9

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of assessment in relation to national standards
- Inconsistent marking
- Insufficient use of computers
- Lack of rigour in use of sanctions in relation to unsatisfactory behaviour

86. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are above average in mathematics. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, standards were well above the national average in both 2001 and 2002. Over half the year groups obtained Level 6 or better, and pupils' achievements during Years 7 to 9 are good. In comparison with similar schools, standards were below average in 2001, but average in 2002. Overall, results

are similar to those in English and science. Results have been consistently high in the last four years.

87. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, standards are also well above the national average in both 2001 and 2002. In 2002, higher-attaining pupils did particularly well, with nearly a quarter of the year group gaining grades A* or A. Almost all pupils obtained a grade. Boys' results have been better than girls' in each of the last three years. Pupils generally do better in mathematics than in their other subjects. In comparison with their results at the end of Year 9, pupils' overall achievements in GCSE examinations in 2001 and 2002 were satisfactory.
88. In work seen during the inspection, the standard improves significantly in Years 7 to 9, and is well above average by the end of Year 9. The pupils are given challenging work from early in Year 7. They cover all the attainment targets of the National Curriculum; higher-attaining pupils are adept at working out number sequences, and are soon introduced to the use of graphs and algebra. Pupils in a group selected because of their low standards of literacy studied fractions. There were very wide variations in their mathematical skills, and the teacher provided a good range of tasks matched to their levels of attainment. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils use Pythagoras' theorem confidently; most of them clearly understand the difference between the square of a number and its square root. In their investigations, they begin to derive formulae in order to predict outcomes. By contrast, lower-attaining pupils are less confident with their number bonds; however, they contributed well to a discussion with their teacher about the reflection of a triangular shape, which he effectively demonstrated using a laptop and projector. By Year 9, there is a wider difference in the quality of written work between higher-attaining and lower-attaining pupils. This is partly due to the difference in their mathematical fluency, but also to the level of pride they have in their work.
89. In Years 10 and 11, differences between higher and lower-attaining pupils increase still further. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 showed excellent powers of concentration and contributed well during the derivation of the formula for solving quadratic equations. They clearly have a very good understanding of the processes involved. Pupils in a lower set distinguished between the properties of a range of quadrilaterals. They were very dependent on their teacher and support assistant to maintain their level of concentration and, even so, a minority of the class accomplished little in the last ten minutes of the lesson. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is therefore more variable, and overall satisfactory. Nonetheless, standards of current work are above average at the end of Year 11.
90. Teaching is good overall; it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, and their planning is good. As a result, most lessons start promptly and with purpose. In a significant minority of lessons teachers spend too much time in maintaining discipline and, therefore, less on helping pupils with their work. Sanctions against poor behaviour are not applied soon enough. Relationships in Years 7 to 9 are good, and often very good; they are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 7 lesson on fractions and percentages, mutual respect between the teacher and pupils led to a very good working atmosphere. Very good learning resulted. By contrast, a high proportion of pupils in a Year 10 class using vectors to study translations showed a lack of respect for their teacher, and their immature attitude to work led to unsatisfactory learning. Good learning does occur in most lessons in Years 10 and 11 and is often the result of skilled teaching overcoming pupils' lack of motivation. In a Year 10 lesson about straight line graphs, pupils learned how to use the formula to calculate the gradient of the graph, and to predict the intercept on the y-axis. Energetic teaching in this lesson and good management skills resulted in all pupils working well, albeit after a slow start.

In another Year 10 lesson about the areas of circles, boys were initially reluctant to work, but the teacher's skills and persistence and the appropriate use of warnings, persuaded them otherwise, and good learning resulted.

91. There is regular use of homework, and in the best examples tasks are graduated so that there is additional challenge for higher-attainers. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent both in frequency and quality; there are insufficient comments to help pupils to improve, and pupils are not informed about how their work compares with national grades and standards. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in mathematics; the quality of support from classroom assistants is often good, but variable.
92. The contribution of the subject to the development of literacy is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good practice, as in a Year 9 lesson on loci where pupils were challenged to express their answers in words, as well as by drawing diagrams. However, key words are not stressed enough or listed on the board as part of consistent practice across the department. The use of computers to help understanding has increased since the last inspection, but not sufficiently for all pupils to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum, mainly because of a lack of access to appropriate hardware. There has been a positive response to the Key Stage 3 Strategy, and there are very good links with primary schools; the use of numeracy starters, and of plenaries to consolidate learning, are not yet part of regular routines in all classrooms.
93. The leadership and management of this large department are good. The head of department leads by example; he is an enthusiastic teacher, and an able mathematician. However, strategies are not in place to tackle the department's immediate priorities, such as a lack of access to computers, and more monitoring of standards is required to improve consistency. Furthermore, there are insufficient standardised assessments of pupils' work, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Examination targets are not set for pupils; combined with the lack of regular testing, this means that it is not always easy to identify pupils who begin to under-achieve. Teamwork is good; there are very good relationships between teachers, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice in order to further improve standards. The monitoring of teaching has increased, but department meetings do not allow enough time for discussing teaching skills and evolving plans for improving the management of pupils.
94. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in mathematics since the last inspection. Standards in national tests in Years 9 and 11 have remained well above the national average. Teaching is still good overall, but some lessons are still dominated by teachers. Marking remains variable, with few constructive comments to help pupils to improve. However, there is very good provision for higher-attaining pupils, and they now show a high level of perseverance.
95. Standards in numeracy and the school's strategies for teaching numeracy skills are satisfactory. The mathematics department has responded positively to the national priority given to the raising of numeracy standards. Training has been provided for all teaching and support staff and other departments now acknowledge their share of the responsibility for the development of numeracy skills. In geography and modern languages, for example, pupils use tally charts, and develop their use of statistics; and in science lessons, there is regular use of graphs for the analysis of results, particularly during investigations. However, pupils are not confident in their handling of number, their number bonds are insecure, and as a result they are over-dependent on a calculator, even in Years 10 and 11. There is no whole school policy for the

development of numeracy, and inconsistencies in practice across the curriculum do not help to improve pupils' confidence.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results are well above average and continue to improve
- The quality of teaching
- The overall achievement of pupils
- Teachers share good practice

Areas for improvement

- Work which challenges higher-attainers
- Standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils in some classes
- Feedback to pupils on how they might improve their work

96. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in 2002. Overall, results were similar to those in the previous year, but the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels declined. In relation to their test results at the age of 11, pupils made good progress through Years 7 to 9.
97. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, standards are above average. They achieve well in lessons; as a result standards are well above average by Year 9, reflecting results of National Curriculum tests. For example, almost all know the basic principles of photosynthesis and respiration, although a few need prompting before using correct scientific terminology.
98. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were well above average in 2002 and significantly better than those in the previous year. The overall proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades was markedly higher, with more than half of those taking separate science subjects gaining these high grades in all three subjects. Pupils made very good progress in relation to their National Curriculum test results two years earlier.
99. In lessons, pupils continue to achieve well overall; standards are well above average by Year 11, matching the results of recent GCSE examinations. Higher-attaining students can explain how the electric motor works, while almost all can suggest some factors that may affect the rate of a chemical reaction.
100. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and this results in good progress. More able pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work to stretch them, while some lower-attaining pupils lack clarity of understanding because work is not well enough structured for them.
101. Most pupils write accurately, although spelling is often a weakness. Teachers are aware of the importance of key words in science, but do not use them effectively enough to help pupils link the word with its meaning; some pupils are held back because they are unable to recall correct scientific terminology in explaining their work. The department is forming useful links with the mathematics department that are helping to further develop pupils' numeracy skills, for example drawing graphs in Year 7 to illustrate numerical relationships in experimental results. Similarly, pupils make good use of ICT in science lessons and their skills are above average. They handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely. By Year 9 most can make predictions based

on their scientific understanding about the outcomes of investigations, for example of reactions between metals and metal oxides.

102. Teaching and learning in science are good. Overall, more than two thirds of the lessons seen were good, and occasionally very good. Almost all the rest were satisfactory, but lessons are very occasionally unsatisfactory. Key features of good teaching are 'starter' activities that help pupils consolidate their existing knowledge, clear explanations by teachers, and high expectations of good behaviour and work rate. In a very good lesson in Year 7, pupils quickly settled to a timed 'word search' activity that helped them link words such as 'chloroplast' to cell types, as well as reinforcing correct spelling. In Year 9, the teacher required pupils to complete a partially written word equation as they entered the laboratory before asking them to use previous knowledge in predicting the outcomes of chemical reactions; these lower-attaining pupils rose very well to the challenge and showed that they could apply their learning from the previous lesson.
103. Pupils usually behave well in science lessons and are attentive throughout. However, lessons in Years 10 and 11 are occasionally disrupted by a small number of boys. While teachers usually deal firmly with unacceptable behaviour, other pupils are sometimes affected, resulting in unsatisfactory learning overall. Lessons are sometimes not structured in a way that makes clear to pupils what they are expected to learn, so that they can see the progress they are making. The quality of teachers' day-to-day marking is inconsistent; comments are not always helpful in showing pupils what they should do to improve their work.
104. The science department is very well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department has developed good teamwork and is very effective in supporting the comparatively large number of less experienced teachers. A number of initiatives are in place, for example the new national teaching strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 9, with a view to further raising standards and encouraging all pupils to develop their interest in science. The technicians provide an excellent service in support of teaching. The department is well resourced; in particular, good quality textbooks help pupils to consolidate their learning in school and at home.
105. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results are higher now and teaching has improved. However, as at the last inspection, some pupils could reach higher standards than they do.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Above average standards at the ends of Years 9 and 11
- The quality of teaching throughout the school
- The attitudes of pupils
- The assessment of pupils' work so they know the progress they are making
- The quality of leadership and the ethos of the department

Areas for improvement

- Limited technical support
- Workshop surfaces and noise of furniture made on hard flooring
- Use of non-specialist rooms

106. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. More time has been allocated to Years 7 and 8 and this is having a good impact on standards. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils are attaining standards that are above average. This confirms the assessments made by teachers in 2002. GCSE examination results in 2001 were above average. Standards by the end of Year 11 are also above average. Given that many pupils start in Year 7 with poor skills and a low knowledge base in the subject, pupils are achieving well by Year 9 and Year 11.
107. Pupils use a wide range of media, including graded pencils, paint, printmaking, fabrics and threads. They work with increasing confidence and skill because teachers actively teach drawing and other practical skills on a sequential, step-by-step basis. This particularly helps pupils with special educational needs, who progress at the same rate as other pupils, which helps to increase their confidence and self-esteem. A small minority of pupils do not extend themselves sufficiently when faced with the challenge of using their own imagination, relying too much on teachers' directions alone. This prevents them from gaining the higher marks of which they are capable.
108. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge of a wide range of artists from different times and cultures, including contemporary artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Frida Kahlo, Hundertwasser, Andy Warhol and Eduardo Paolozzi. They make good comparisons between their own work and that of these artists, using the colour range, qualities of line and style in which they work in some of their own topics as a starting point. The use of sketchbooks is well established. Regular homework exercises are taken seriously and contribute well to pupils' finished paintings and sculptures. Pupils take part in their own assessment by filling out detailed evaluations of each unit of work they complete. Combined with the high quality oral and written feedback pupils receive from teachers, they have clear ideas of how to improve their work.
109. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build successfully upon the rich and varied experiences gained in Years 7 to 9. They make good progress and achieve well. They develop skills in ICT and use them well for personal enquiry in research topics. Pupils scan images into the computer and modify them to inform their own work. They sustain concentration through extended themes, develop ideas well and adapt to the more rigorous ways of working towards GCSE examination requirements. They make very good use of homework projects to practise skills and make preparatory sketches, from first hand and often from very good quality secondary sources, such as books, the Internet or visits to galleries. Pupils talk confidently about their work and ideas have good reasons for decisions taken and know how they want their work to develop. One pupil in Year 11 was observed taking a keen personal interest in the work of Luis Menendez and Juan de Espinosa, making excellent graded pencil drawings of closely observed still-life objects and excelling at capturing natural forms in fine detail.
110. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the main school. Teachers are confident. They have very good subject knowledge and practical expertise which pupils recognise and admire. Teachers create a welcoming ethos for all pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background. The quality of relationships is very good. Teachers support, care about and take justified pride in their pupils. They have high expectations and plan stimulating and challenging learning experiences. They strike a very good balance between whole-class and individual help. Teachers regularly track pupils' progress and give clear oral feedback to explain grades so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. They insist on good behaviour from the outset. Teachers' classroom management techniques are very well developed. This was demonstrated particularly well when a large class of pupils in Year 9 were taught in a non-specialist room in very cramped conditions. Their behaviour was exemplary

despite the unsuitability of the venue, which severely constrained pupils' access to the full art curriculum. There was no sink in the carpeted room, which precluded the use of paints or modelling materials.

111. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. The head of department has very clear ideas for future developments, has very good team building skills and is responsible for the effective and generous way that ideas and skills are shared between all teachers. The high quality art and design work displayed in the school is insufficiently labelled and interpreted to enable all pupils to interpret it. The department lacks specialist technical support to assist teachers in the preparation of learning resources. Considerable avoidable noise is caused by metal furniture on hard floors. Many work surfaces, some inherited by the art department, have been subjected to extensive wear and tear, causing difficulties in fine presentation of pupils' drawings and other detailed works.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Good teaching
- Well structured curriculum and resources
- Efficient day-to-day management
- The contribution to pupils' development

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes and behaviour of some pupils
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning
- Support for inexperienced teachers

112. Both in PSHE lessons and in subjects generally, the curriculum gives pupils numerous opportunities to increase their personal development and their understanding of citizenship. In all year groups they achieve satisfactory standards in their understanding and knowledge of what good citizenship implies. They do well in discussion and group work when considering values and opinions on topics such as crime and punishment, relationships, and the legal system. In discussing issues that affect personal and religious beliefs, pupils learn to justify their opinions and take other viewpoints into consideration, well demonstrated when Year 10 pupils teased out the major religious perspectives on attitudes to affluence before coming to their own conclusion on the ethics of financial wealth.
113. Sixth form students gain good experience of the electoral process through the sixth form council. The council provides the senior students with very good opportunities to participate in important decision-making processes such as the appointment of senior staff. Participation in the council also helps students to begin using their skills to contribute to the immediate school community as mentors and assistant student teachers in Year 7 lessons.
114. Most pupils display positive attitudes, behave sensibly and respond with maturity and interest in their work when covering topics such as sex education in Year 8 or emotive issues such as crime and punishment in Year 11. However, some are passive learners relying on others to contribute. A number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 have negative attitudes to their learning which prevent them from making better progress.

These pupils do not observe the basic ground rules during discussion and do not treat the work seriously, as reflected in their many unfinished pieces of work.

115. The quality of teaching is good and at times very good or excellent. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. In the best lessons, teachers draw on the three-part lesson structure with clear objectives, which are shared with pupils. They use stimulating 'starter' activities that lead into the main part of the lesson and have clear sessions towards the end of lessons when they pull discussion together. Teachers use resources well and ensure that talk is a central activity when exploring issues as they use every opportunity to cover all aspects of pupils' development including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of citizenship. This was well demonstrated in an excellent Year 11 lesson where expectations were consistently high. The teacher challenged pupils to consider the role of the media in a prominently reported crime case and the views of major faiths on violence, crime and punishment. The well selected resources, brisk pace and the intellectually challenging discussion were motivating factors that led to pupils applying themselves conscientiously to the work as they began to make notes and form personal decisions on capital punishment.
116. Although lesson plans have objectives, there is no consistent approach to sharing them with pupils. In some lessons, pupils do not contribute well, there is a lot of calling out, and a lack of concentration. It is unsatisfactory when behaviour declines to the extent that pupils' attitudes prevent teaching and learning taking place and there is insufficient support during the lesson. There are occasions when, despite the good teaching, pupils' behaviour remains unsatisfactory.
117. The curriculum is well organised. Teachers benefit from having well structured curriculum packs and resources to deliver the programme, which covers topics such as sex education, employment, the legal system, the media, drug education and relationships. Subjects such as geography, English, modern foreign languages and religious education also make a significant contribution to the development of citizenship in the curriculum. For instance, in geography, pupils are made aware of human rights, the impact of major terrorist attacks on the world economy, global warming, sustainability, and the plight of refugees as well as Third World debt. Coverage of these issues enhances pupils' understanding of local, national and world events.
118. The teacher in charge of citizenship is new to the role but ensures that the programme runs efficiently. Development planning reflects the immediate needs of the department but the plan lacks a strategic overview with clear targets and success criteria for future development of the subject. There has been insufficient training to ensure consistency of delivery. Timetabling constraints limit the amount of support which can be reasonably given to teachers new to the subject as classes are taught at different times. Given that this is a new subject, the profile is rather low and there are no procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Most books are unmarked. There is limited time for monitoring teaching and learning and this is having an adverse impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject. In order to ensure improvement, there is a need to raise the status of citizenship, and to provide support and training and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning so that the department can be well established.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- The behaviour of pupils
- The monitoring of pupils' progress
- The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers

Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT
- Liaison with primary schools
- Allocation of time

119. At the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Over the last two years, pupils have consistently gained a higher than average percentage of Level 5 or above, girls gaining better results than boys. These results from teachers' assessment compare favourably with almost all other subjects in the school. They could be even higher if effective liaison was established with primary schools so that the department could be confident that pupils had a common basis of skill development.
120. In work seen during the inspection, there were very good examples of the combination of skills in a single project. In a 'clock' project, for instance, pupils showed skill in graphics and electronics, together with skills in cutting and shaping resistant materials, and imaginative design was brought into play in the design of the clock face.
121. In a similar way, skills in food technology are combined in projects requiring knowledge of dietary needs, nutrition, food preparation and processing. Imagination is used too in the solution of problems, like the design of a range of take-away foods. Graphics and presentation are used effectively in projects.
122. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are addressed in accordance with school policy, and subject terms are displayed in workrooms, measuring and calculation are experienced in food technology in relation to recipe and diets, and in resistant materials where accuracy is important in the production of components for assembly. ICT is still in a developmental stage but progress has been made in the installation of computer-controlled work with the use of routers and an extension to this area is in course of completion. These developments represent a significant advance since the school was last inspected. The department is a little short of time, which means that gaps between lessons are sometimes too long to enable pupils to make the best use of their ideas and skills.
123. Progress to Year 9 is good and represents good achievement from the level of attainment on entry. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in response to the demands of projects which allow for success at a wide range of levels.
124. In Years 10 and 11, standards overall are above average. Results in GCSE examinations have been average in recent years but with wide variation between different course options. Particularly good results have been achieved in graphic products, boys and girls gaining broadly equal results, well above average in each case. Results in food technology show an improvement to above average in recent years with notable improvements by boys, although with relatively small numbers.

125. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Project folders show thorough research and logical organisation, which reflect similar qualities in the teaching, and there is an interesting combination of research and imaginative work in textiles. This area represents an expansion of the curriculum and a further improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum has been enriched by the introduction of catering as an examination subject. The above average level of attainment is sustained from the earlier level and constitutes good consistent, progress overall. Girls make good progress and pupils with special needs, together with gifted and talented pupils, make good progress in response to the unrestricted nature of projects.
126. The quality of teaching is good in almost all lessons. Lessons are carefully prepared and well supervised. A variety of teaching styles is used ranging from demonstration and formal instruction to sensitive individual tuition. Work is assessed carefully and pupils' progress very carefully traced through each stage. A noteworthy aspect of the teaching is the very good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. This forms a strong basis for learning and progress. An important feature underlying attainment and progress is the very good level of interest and concentration allied to good behaviour in almost all lessons, which helps the teaching to make a positive impact.
127. The work of the department is managed effectively. The respective managers play a leading role in teaching. Resources for learning are adequate and staffing is satisfactory for present courses. The accommodation is of good quality but workshops are small and pose problems for storage. The use of a 'food' room for textiles classes is unsatisfactory and is a health and safety hazard. There is a continuing danger of the contamination of food by dyes and foreign objects, such as pins. This situation should be remedied urgently.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management
- Quality of teaching

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT
- The monitoring of pupils' work

128. Standards have been consistently above national expectations in GCSE examinations since the last inspection, with a significant number of pupils gaining the highest grades, although the most recent results show a drop to average levels. Girls do better than boys but all pupils achieve well in relation to other subjects in the school. Standards are improved at the end of Year 9 and are now above national expectations with boys doing as well as girls.
129. Standards at the end of Year 11 are good overall. Most pupils make rapid progress and their achievement is good. This is evident in written work, which shows not only good knowledge but also the capability of most pupils to analyse critically, and to evaluate and explain outcomes on such matters as urban renewal. The work of higher-attaining students, particularly on population control policies, shows good thinking and

a balanced view. However, the amount of written work of some older pupils is insufficient for revision purposes. Oral answers in lessons indicate good recall of prior work. Although lower-attaining students succeed in giving thoughtful explanations, their written work is largely descriptive. All pupils know and use a variety of fieldwork techniques supported by good literacy and numerical skills to produce good and sometimes very good coursework. Not all pupils take care with the presentation of their work or use ICT to enhance it. Not all pupils are considerate in their behaviour.

130. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Basic skills, such as the use of atlases and other maps to locate places and identify physical and climatic differences, are consolidated well in Year 7. Younger pupils are adept in collecting and recording primary data, for example on the microclimates around the school. Older pupils show competence in analysing secondary data to test simple hypotheses such as 'crime/graffiti is an urban issue' and come up with a range of ideas and solutions. Progress is evident by the end of Year 9. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can give reasoned, if brief, oral and written explanations and make effective links, for example between the 'push' and 'pull' factors of migration. Not all pupils write enough in their books or finish their class-work and some are careless in drawing maps and annotating diagrams. However, achievement overall is good and is very good for a significant number of pupils.
131. Teaching is very good and on occasion excellent, reflecting a range of effective teaching styles and care about pupils' personal development. This is evident in planning, where pupils can evaluate what they already know and what they want to find out about. In the best lessons, there are opportunities to evaluate information and test hypotheses, sometimes using practical experiments and the recording of conclusions. Good decision-making takes place in both group and independent learning. Titles used for units of study, such as 'Can the earth cope?' and 'Aids, a link to development!' spark interest, arouse curiosity, and focus the attention of the most disaffected. Pupils' posters, leaflets and collages, some using ICT, indicate high levels of social and moral awareness and sensitivity.
132. Teachers' comments about the fascination and wonder of the natural world promote spiritual awareness and students begin to express their ideas in the same way. Teachers are creative, using cartoons and humorous problem-solving exercises to consolidate learning. Teachers know their pupils well; reprimands are applied firmly and often with touches of humour to lighten the mood. Challenging questions probe understanding and create opportunities for debate and discussion. The graduation of difficulty built into fieldwork and assessments challenges pupils. However, the format of some assessments is not in line with the imaginative and creative formats used elsewhere. Detailed marking informs pupils about strengths and weaknesses and a booklet, 'Hotspots', gives clear advice on improvement. However, expectations are insufficiently high as regards corrections, missed work and presentation. The regional, national and international fieldwork greatly enhances pupils' cultural experiences.
133. A very good leader inspires teachers to be innovative, imaginative and creative in their work and think about the all-round development of pupils. Effective management ensures collaborative planning and decision making, as seen in well thought-out and user-friendly schemes of work. Fieldwork is well organised and assessment procedures are good, although the department lacks a database of student progress over time. Given the drop in standards in GCSE examination results, there is insufficient monitoring of the quality and quantity of written work, particularly of older pupils. The department has satisfactory resources and accommodation is good. The purchase of CD ROMs, the creation of a geography search site and access to the

computer suites show improved use of ICT, but opportunities to use it are still infrequent. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Above average standards and the achievements of pupils
- The quality of teaching
- The effectiveness of the new assessment procedures

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work
- Use of ICT
- The quality of marking by some teachers

134. In 2001, attainment in history at the end of Year 9, based on assessments carried out by teachers, was above the national average. In 2002, results were even better. Over the previous three years there had been small fluctuations in attainment but standards have been consistently above average. In 2001, the attainment of girls was significantly higher than that of boys.
135. Attainment in the GCSE examination in 2001 was well above the national average and in 2002 these standards were maintained and even improved at the higher levels. In 2001, the attainment of girls was higher than that of boys and the disparity was greater than seen nationally but this was reversed in 2002. Current standards are well above average. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is good, including those with special educational needs. The majority make good progress in developing good recall, knowledge and understanding of a wide range of historical situations as well as using the full range of key historical skills, such as the interpretation of source material, although the latter is less well developed in the work of lower-attaining pupils. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to achieve well and those with special educational needs make good progress. The majority of pupils make good progress in recording their knowledge and understanding in a range of forms which provide good support for written assignments and revision. They also make good progress in the use of discussion when they compare their ideas with those of others.
136. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The teaching in nearly all lessons was at least satisfactory and in most was good or even better. In about one third it was very good and in one lesson was excellent. In general, lessons are well planned to meet the needs of pupils and offer a good range of activities and groupings to stimulate and maintain interest. When the task is appropriately challenging and relevant to their needs, pupils work hard, co-operate positively and show their intention to do well. However, on the rare occasions when the work is too difficult for some, and too easy for others, pupils at both ends of the attainment range respond by losing interest and behaving inappropriately, which has a negative effect on the progress of all. Insufficient progress has been made on matching work to pupils' capabilities. Teachers give good support to pupils in Years 10 and 11 to develop key examination skills such as the compilation of useful notes. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Most gives clear guidance on improvement but a small minority of marking is brief and uninformative.

137. The leadership of the department is good and the management is currently satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has made a good start in identifying and working on priority areas for development, but there are other areas which remain to be addressed. The early identification of inconsistencies and weaknesses in the assessment of work in Years 7 to 9 has resulted in the introduction of a new pattern of procedures for assessment which has already raised the importance of assessment in the eyes of pupils and is planned to lead to greater accuracy in awarding National Curriculum levels. The schemes of work are very out of date and, although some practical interim adjustments have already been made, they do not offer sufficient guidance to teachers. Because of this, there are some inconsistencies in the way in which topics are covered. The schemes of work do not identify opportunities for teaching ICT skills and this is done partially and inconsistently, which is unsatisfactory. Although teaching has improved since the last inspection, the department has not made satisfactory improvement as several issues such as the use of ICT have still to be addressed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 and 9
- Good introductions to lessons and effective use of the overhead monitor

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work in Years 10 and 11
- Pupils attitudes to work in Year 10 and 11 and the way they are managed by teachers
- The number of specialist teachers

138. Overall standards are average. Standards on entry to the school are variable but are broadly in line with the national average. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9 standards remain broadly in line with the national average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Girls perform better than boys, in line with the national trend. In Years 10 and 11, one in four pupils take the recently introduced GCSE examination and all take the two-year key skills course in ICT. Neither of these courses has been finally examined. Eight out of ten pupils on the key skills course were examined at Level 2 in Year 10 last year and the remainder at Level 1. The results were below expectation but a significant number of pupils intend to re-sit these examinations in Year 11. Attainment in lessons is satisfactory overall. Achievement is broadly satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with help from teachers and learning assistants in lessons. Individual assignments in Years 10 and 11 enable gifted and talented pupils to make appropriate progress.

139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. Most teachers give good introductions to topics and demonstrate work well in practical lessons, using overhead monitors. They give effective help to individual pupils, particularly to pupils with special educational needs. They make use of good teaching materials and handouts in lessons. The best motivate and involve pupils well by asking them questions as the lessons progress. When teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers fail to capture the interest of pupils and keep them on task.

140. In Years 10 and 11, teachers do not discipline pupils sufficiently in some lessons. The quality of the work they expect from pupils and the pace of working are also unsatisfactory. Pupils do not write enough about their work. Teachers miss opportunities to help pupils develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their work. Homework is set regularly. All work is marked and recorded well but in Years 7 to 9 pupils' attainment in terms of National Curriculum levels is overestimated.
141. The standard of learning is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils learn a good range of ICT skills in these years, including the use of word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and the internet. In two lessons in Year 7, enthusiastic pupils were effectively learning to plan a two-day holiday in the UK by researching locations, hotels and the weather on the internet. In two lessons in Year 8, pupils produced good spreadsheets relating to the school's performance of *Grease*, and compiled a report on the sale of tickets, costs and profit. In Year 9, pupils were successfully modeling mobile phone costs by considering different tariffs. In a satisfactory lesson in the same year, pupils created computer presentations on a wide variety of careers.
142. In the key skills course, pupils learn by undertaking assignments on such topics as a theme park and the best selling CD charts, assignments which have been developed in co-operation with other Hampshire schools. In Year 10 and Year 11 lessons, pupils produced a leaflet for a commercial undertaking to a satisfactory standard, including text and image, based on information they had obtained from the internet. In the GCSE examination course, pupils learn more about the theoretical aspects and by carrying out practical assignments. In a Year 10 lesson, most pupils undertaking the examination board's set assignment on ways to improve the image and efficiency of a plant house showed little enthusiasm and the outcome was unsatisfactory. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils learned little about the internet but, in another lesson in the same year, pupils learned how to access and manipulate data in a spreadsheet to a more satisfactory standard.
143. Pupils have some good opportunities to use ICT in business studies, design and technology, and science but lack of access to computers restricts use in other subjects. Whilst the subject is well led, the co-ordination of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. The school has had difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers and as a result there are insufficient specialists for the demands of the curriculum. The computing facilities have been much improved but the number of pupils to each workstation remains well above the national average. Access of other subjects to computers remains a problem. Statutory requirements are now met and the range of learning opportunities has improved but the quality of the teaching is less uniform than at the time of the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good levels of progression in listening and writing
- Range of the curriculum

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning
- Extent of oral work
- Use of ICT by pupils
- Initiative from the leadership of the department

144. Pupils' results based on teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were just above the national average for both boys and girls. In 2002, results were well above national expectations for both boys and girls. Girls have outperformed boys by more than the national average in the last two years. Results in GCSE French examinations in 2000 were well above the national average, climbed higher in 2001 for both boys and girls, but declined sharply in 2002 to a position above national expectations. Results for the smaller cohort in GCSE Spanish examinations are similarly volatile. They were above the national average in 2001 but below in 2002.
145. Standards of work in French in Year 9 are average. Pupils move quickly through a good range of topics in Year 7 and by the beginning of Year 8 are already able to do some writing in the past tense. They mark time in the remainder of Year 8 as the topics are often less challenging. The pace quickens in Year 9 and topics gain in depth. Pupils consolidate their knowledge of tenses and make appropriate use of conditional forms to express ideas and state opinions. Throughout, there is a strong focus on writing and listening and, as a result, pupils of a wide range of attainment are comfortable at working at, or even just above, the expected National Curriculum levels in these skills. Reading and speaking are less well developed, as pupils are given few opportunities for independent reading and productive oral work. Setting and appropriately graded textbooks help to ensure that all pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards of work in Spanish in Year 9 are below average. The curriculum offers good opportunity and choice for languages but pupils studying Spanish are disadvantaged by less time in Year 9. This factor, combined with some uneven teaching, results in unsatisfactory achievement.
146. Standards of work in Year 11 in both French and Spanish are average. Pupils studying French build on the sound foundations in the listening and writing skills, consolidate their knowledge of tenses and add a further past tense form which enables them to widen the range of their work. Their reading requirements are addressed through exposure to authentic texts and attention is given to speaking, in accordance with examination requirements. Again, standards are highest in writing. Higher-attaining pupils can write at copious length on a wide variety of subjects while maintaining accuracy, middle-attaining pupils write short, accurate accounts in more controlled contexts and lower-attaining pupils can write a few connected sentences to communicate meaning. Achievement in French is therefore satisfactory. The smaller numbers of pupils studying Spanish for the most part show good commitment to their studies and the teaching is better in these years. The higher-attaining pupils progress well to achieve a level close to those reached by their counterparts in French, while

middle and lower-attaining pupils remain a little behind in comparison. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement.

147. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There is, however, considerable variation in quality. The sharing of objectives and clear exposition enable pupils to follow the direction of lessons and good use of visual aids enhances their learning. In Years 10 and 11, teachers' good knowledge of syllabus requirements is well used to direct pupils through advice on how to improve their work. In the best lessons, activities are carefully planned to ensure that pupils are involved in oral work at an early stage and teachers regularly assess learning to check that pupils understand what they have covered. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson the teacher used games in a well-paced, varied lesson to maintain pupils' interest and concentration and the pupils enjoyed the opportunities for practical involvement. They were able to use the new structures they had learnt and combine them with prior learning to make a success of interviewing the boy in the 'hot seat'. Similarly, in a Year 9 Spanish lesson, the teacher modelled a dialogue very thoroughly with pupils so that they were confident in working through the ensuing pair-work exercise while she circulated to keep a good check on pronunciation and accuracy.
148. In the less effective lessons, opportunities are missed for pupils to consolidate and extend their learning through productive oral work. There is also a tendency for the quality of activities to be sacrificed to quantity. As a consequence, pupils' understanding is sometimes insecure as they have insufficient time to complete one activity before proceeding to the next. Overall, pupils' learning is satisfactory. Some of the lessons are heavily teacher-directed and pupils, although attentive, become passive. Pupils make connections with prior learning and on occasion ask for clarification in a mature way. Homework is regular and clearly marked and, particularly in Years 10 and 11, pupils are given good guidance on what they need to do to improve their performance. Pupils have little access to ICT and this retards progress. The use of a 'best book' in Years 7 to 9 for samples of work helps pupils to see progression in their learning as their writing is assessed in accordance with National Curriculum levels. Generally, the pupils want to get involved in the lesson and when the teaching promotes this in a purposeful way they do so; they become enthusiastic and this helps them learn.
149. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear division of responsibility amongst the post-holders and the faculty now enjoys greater continuity of staffing. The teachers use ICT well to prepare interesting worksheets of good quality. The head of faculty practices an open, consultative style of leadership and encourages colleagues to contribute fully. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching have not yet been effective in ensuring consistency throughout the faculty in establishing best practice and a stronger steer is required to promote and implement new initiatives if present standards are to be maintained. The schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 in French lack detail and provide insufficient guidance for new staff. A few teachers set targets for pupils' learning but this is dependent on individual initiative, and assessment is insufficiently developed in reading and speaking. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Mandatory curriculum requirements are now satisfied.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Some teaching of very high quality
- The range of opportunities for instrumental tuition
- The extended provision available through Performing Arts College status

Areas for development

- Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9
- Choral work both in and out of class
- Use of ICT

150. Teacher assessments indicate that standards in Year 9 are above average. The best work seen during the inspection supports this, although there is some lack of consistency from class to class. In spite of a slight fall in the standard of the most recent GCSE examination results, the overall level is currently well above the national average.
151. All pupils have access to the music curriculum and most make satisfactory progress. In some classes, boys achieve less well than girls – although the disparity decreases as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and supported appropriately.
152. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 meets National Curriculum requirements. In one Year 9 class, outstanding work was seen where pupils worked in groups to produce a *Blues* piece which successfully combined the 12-bar chord sequence with a walking bass accompaniment and a melodic improvisation. A high level of enthusiasm and collaboration was also evident in this class. In a Year 7 class, pupils engaged with vocal sounds in an imaginative way to produce an ‘effects piece’ related to a scenario. Basic knowledge of music terminology is consistently reinforced, though musical literacy related to performing skills is not developed consistently enough.
153. In Years 10 and 11 pupils develop good listening skills. They show stylistic awareness and can make informed observations on structure, period, instrumentation and a range of recalled theoretical and historical matters which indicate a thorough and systematic build-up of knowledge and understanding. Composition work is less confident. Pupils do not currently have access in school to music technology and appropriate software which is needed to extend the scope of their creative work.
154. The standard of teaching is good overall and in some instances is outstanding but varies in quality in Years 7 to 9. Work is generally well prepared and the atmosphere in most lessons is positive. Although the overall standard of behaviour is good, boys in some classes fail to respond and this contributes to some under-achievement. There is an on-going review of the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 but, at present, singing and ICT are undervalued and too little account is taken of music from the British Isles and folk music.
155. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The allocation of time for music is now adequate in Years 7 to 9. The school has achieved Performing Arts College status with the associated increase in resources. This includes the

contributions from the composer in residence, who supports curriculum work in Year 10 as well as undertaking work in the community.

156. The leadership of the department is positive and committed. Pupils have the opportunity for a wide range of musical experience outside the classroom and are encouraged to strive towards the standards of performance appropriate to a specialist school. Within this provision, place needs to be found for more choral singing. The level of uptake in these activities is a little disappointing. The number of pupils learning musical instruments is well above the national average and the visiting part-time staff are a valuable resource. In addition to school concerts and productions, staff and students take their music making out into the wider community, which is a good feature.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- The enthusiasm of pupils
- Relationships between pupils and teachers

Areas for improvement

- The overall management of the subject
- The accuracy of assessment procedures
- Monitoring attainment and progress in examination classes
- Scope for pupils to comment on their own work and that of others
- A permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the GCSE examination

157. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average according to teachers' assessments, with girls attaining at a higher level than boys. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by most pupils in Years 7 to 9 is average with a minority of pupils attaining above average standards. This is similar to the picture described at the time of the last inspection. Fifty-nine per cent of pupils entered for the GCSE examination in 2001 gained the higher A* to C grades and all pupils achieved A* to G grades. These figures are just above the national average and are very similar for boys and girls. In 2002, 57 per cent of pupils obtained the higher grades. Boys achieved at a higher level than girls. Lesson observations and analysis of written work indicate that the majority of pupils on examination courses in the present Year 11 are achieving average standards. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the theoretical aspects of their work. The setting arrangements are proving of benefit to pupils by enabling work to be set at appropriate levels. However, there are several pupils in the lower sets in Years 10 and 11 who lack the motivation and self-discipline necessary to succeed on a course of this nature. In core physical education, girls' attainment in swimming is above average in Year 10.

158. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils in Year 7 are making good progress in hockey and gymnastics. They are highly motivated and their enthusiastic attitude results in good learning. The majority of pupils in the examination classes also work hard in order to improve. Pupils with special educational needs, who are integrated fully into all lessons, progress as well as others. Several pupils with special needs are following the GCSE examination course.

159. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good in the majority of lessons. Thoughtful planning, effective organisation and good management of pupils

are strong features in most classes. Teaching and learning are particularly good in those lessons where different challenges are set for pupils of different abilities. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and encourage learning. In practical lessons pupils respond well to challenges that are both appropriate and progressive. Pupils are rarely given the opportunity to exercise initiative by, for example, leading warm-up activities. They are not encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of others as a means of improving performance. There is insufficient monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress in examination classes. Plans are in place to improve this. In GCSE dance, where the attitude and commitment of pupils is excellent, teaching and learning are very good. The expertise, enthusiasm and high expectations shown by the teacher are central to what is being achieved.

160. The departmental staff, supported by several other colleagues, offer a good range of extra-curricular activities throughout the year. The comparatively short lunch break means that most activities take place after school. During the inspection, activities included swimming, indoor hockey, basketball, netball, football and dance. School teams of various ages have enjoyed a number of recent successes. The under-13 football team won both the league and the district cup. The under-16 team achieved similar successes in basketball. The under-13 cricket team are league champions. Girls as well as boys are district champions in both cross-country running and athletics. Each year, pupils in Year 8 have an opportunity to attend a residential course in Bude to experience outdoor and adventurous activities. This year more than 100 pupils took part. In Year 9, 40 pupils went to France on a sailing course.
161. Indoor facilities, including a sports hall and swimming pool, are very good and make a positive contribution to learning. The tennis courts cannot be used in wet weather because of problems with the surface. Whilst resources are generally good, several items of school equipment are used regularly by the community centre, with the result that wear and tear are increased significantly. There are very few resources to encourage the development of ICT. There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the GCSE course. Such a facility would make it possible for teachers and pupils to access books, magazines, videos, posters and other items more easily and it would also enable teachers to promote the teaching of literacy and numeracy more effectively.
162. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory but has been hindered by various staffing difficulties that have persisted for some time. At present there is only one full-time female teacher supported by four part-time colleagues. Staff are having to work particularly hard to ensure that this instability does not have a detrimental effect on continuity and progress. Whilst levels of participation are excellent in most classes, there is evidence of some disaffection by a minority of pupils.
163. The teacher in charge of boys' physical education is unavoidably absent at present. Although the two staff members who currently hold positions of responsibility are exercising effective leadership, there are weaknesses in the overall management of the subject. These result mainly from the fact that girls and boys are regarded as being in two completely separate departments. Timetabling arrangements, coupled with this rigid demarcation, result in some unacceptably large teaching groups. This is particularly evident in swimming. Some documentation is duplicated, other policies are different, and several are well out of date. There are inconsistencies in assessment and record keeping. Examples of good practice are not systematically shared. There are no specific policies relating to gifted and talented pupils. Meetings take place separately. There is no common development plan aimed at raising standards. There is very little evidence of joint planning and no one has a clear overview of the whole subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The extent of very good teaching
- Above average standards at the end of Year 9
- Improvements to the assessment of pupils' progress

Areas for improvement

- The progress and attainment of boys
- The use of ICT
- The full implementation of the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus
- More specialist staff

164. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils understand key religious ideas ranging from symbolism to what it is to have a sense of vision. Their knowledge and understanding of world religions such as Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity are both above average. Year 9 pupils in particular are very perceptive in their learning. For example, they are able to reflect on the principles and practices of Buddhism and consider how they affect everyday life. For pupils who undertake the GCSE examination course, standards at the end of Year 11 are consistently well above national averages, both in the higher and the full range of grades. Girls' attainment is better than boys. The numbers taking this course are very high in comparison with other schools. Those pupils who receive their religious education in the PSHE modular course attain standards below those required by the Agreed Syllabus, largely because they have insufficient time for study.
165. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is good. It is best for middle and higher-attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attainers, especially boys, make satisfactory progress. From Years 7 to 9, pupils make good progress in their understanding of how religious beliefs affect the everyday life of the believer, for example, in the observance of the Shabbat in Judaism. Pupils develop their evaluative skills well. For example, Year 7 pupils are able to give an informed opinion on theories about the existence of God. The overall achievement for pupils in GCSE examination classes is good for pupils of all abilities. The progress of pupils not following this course is good in the lessons allocated but unsatisfactory overall.
166. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned with an interesting range of activities that motivate pupils and encourage good learning to take place. For example, in Year 7, pupils considered the symbolism of the poppy and shared their personal family reasons for remembering the war. They reflect on the concept of sacrifice and were helped to make links to Christian beliefs about the sacrifice of Jesus. Teachers are very good at questioning and challenging pupils to think deeply about issues. Relationships with and management of pupils are very good, except in a minority of Year 8 lessons. There has been significant progress recently in the assessment of pupils' progress measured against the standards in the Agreed Syllabus. The approach is innovative and is having a positive impact on standards in the subject, particularly as it enables pupils to be clear about what they need to do to improve. There is some inconsistency in general marking across the department and the support materials used, do not always meet the needs of the lower-attaining pupils.

167. The quality of learning throughout the school is good overall. There are some very good features. Pupils are able to recognise religion as relevant to the everyday life of the believer. They are able to discuss religious ideas and express their own opinions. They take an interest in their work and ask many questions about the application of belief to life. They show better than average attitudes to the subject and develop a respect for the beliefs and values of others. Weaker features are most evident in Years 10 and 11, where the learning of non-GCSE pupils is adversely affected by the lack of time and continuity. This is more the case with boys than girls. There is little opportunity to build on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in Years 7 to 9.
168. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in Years 7-9. There is a broad range of resources. The major weakness in the curriculum is the lack of planning and resources for ICT. The department has made a start in this area but current provision is unsatisfactory. There is a team of teachers, eight of whom are non-specialist. These teachers depend heavily on the guidance and resources of the head of department. The support given to them is excellent and a major factor in the high quality of teaching. However, another specialist teacher is essential to support developments and ensure that high standards in the subject are maintained. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Progression in the curriculum
- Opportunities given to all pupils to enjoy extra-curricular activities
- The quality of planning
- Attention given to literacy

Areas for improvement

- Facilities
- Consistency in teaching and learning
- The management of pupils' behaviour in Years 8 and 9

169. Overall standards are average throughout the main school. By the end of Year 9, pupils are acquiring a good range of skills, particularly in relation to voice and basic movement. They are building up a good understanding of narrative, of how they can use their bodies to depict significant points in the unfolding of story and how the voice is used in a wide range of situations. During Year 10 and pupils specialising in drama show that they have further enhanced these skills and that they can bring them together to make more complex presentations using dramatic techniques to interpret a wide range of mood and situations. GCSE examination results in 2001 were in line with the national average but in 2002 were much better.
170. The quality of teaching is largely good. Lessons have clear objectives which are shared with pupils so that they can see that their learning has a clear sense of direction and purpose. A weaker feature is the failure to explain to pupils the full purpose of the work they are undertaking. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Lesson planning shows that time is intended to be very well used and teachers use a wide range of appropriate activities to further learning. In too many lessons the immature attitudes of pupils in Years 8 and 9 interfere with the learning of the class because

teachers are continually being distracted. This seriously affects the quality of much of the work in drama.

171. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into activities, although little work was seen which seeks to address their specific needs. Higher-attaining pupils are well challenged by the ambitious work which is undertaken.
172. The department is well led and managed but the quality of its work is limited by the need to use the main hall with its many distractions for the teaching of the subject. Its lack of a specific drama ethos is not conducive to focused work in the hall and the concentration span of pupils in lessons was weak. Over time, the subject has built up a strong tradition of extra-curricular activities, including productions and house competitions which are enjoyed by many participants, many of whom are not drama specialists. The sixth form course in theatre studies, which is excellently taught, builds well on drama provision in the main school and provides for good progression. Drama has an important to play in the development of the arts college and its leadership is ensuring that it is outward looking and links with the learning of the whole school; its current work on literacy development is indicative of the quality of its contribution to the wider curriculum.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Computer studies	4	100	100	0	13	2	1.75
Music	1	100	84	0	29	1	2.41

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	9	100	96	44	46	6.67	6.57
Biology	12	83	88	50	34	6.00	5.25
Business Studies	17	100	92	29	32	5.41	5.50
Chemistry	13	92	90	38	43	5.08	5.90
Classical Studies	4	100	95	25	49	5.50	6.51
Communication Studies	12	92	93	17	31	4.67	5.53
Computer Studies	7	100	86	-	23	5.14	4.62
Economics	15	100	89	73	36	7.47	5.52
English Literature	17	100	95	41	37	5.88	5.91
English Language	22	91	92	27	30	5.36	5.28
French	10	90	89	20	38	4.40	5.59
Full Design and Technology	34	94	91	15	30	4.88	5.38
General Studies	74	85	85	39	30	5.22	4.91
Geography	15	80	92	13	38	3.33	5.74
History	9	89	88	33	35	5.11	5.45
Mathematics	57	93	87	51	43	6.18	5.80
Music	5	100	93	51	43	6.80	5.74
Other Social Studies	16	94	87	50	34	6.00	5.30
Physics	22	95	88	14	40	4.36	5.67
Religious Studies	3	100	92	67	38	7.33	5.84
Sociology	10	70	86	-	35	3.40	5.32
Spanish	3	100	89	67	39	7.33	5.70
Sports Studies	4	100	92	25	25	4.50	5.09

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Post 16 VQ	11	na	na	na	na	na	na

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Biology was fully inspected, whilst chemistry and physics were sampled. The inspection also focused on what the school is currently offering for mathematics.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards at AS/A level are often well above average
- Good leadership and a very organized department
- Teachers' knowledge of mathematics
- Recruitment to courses
- Very good relationships between teachers and students

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient marking and assessment of students' work
- Insufficient use of assessment to analyse closely the performance of individual students and the department as a whole

173. Standards in the A-level examinations in 2001 were above the national average; in 2002, overall standards were slightly down in both the average points score, and also in the proportion of students gaining the higher grades. There was no overall difference in the results of male and female students in either year. Results were generally in line with expectations, and often above, based on GCSE examination performance

174. In the AS examinations in 2001, the results followed the national trend and were well below expectations. However, steps were taken by the mathematics department to review the organisation of the work in Year 12, and in 2002 there was a significant improvement in AS results, with a very high proportion of A and B grades.

175. A small number of students have normally taken the further mathematics examination each year. These students have regularly gained a very high proportion of A and B grades, indicating that they are receiving a high level of tuition. The department also provides the opportunity for students in Year 12 to retake the GCSE examination paper in order to improve their grades; the take-up is low, and results are satisfactory. There is a small number of students taking the key skills course, and their standards also are satisfactory.

176. The take up for the AS/A-level courses is very high, providing the opportunity for classes in Years 12 and 13 to be set according to attainment. Retention in Year 13 is also normally high, though it was low in 2001/2 because of the disappointing AS results. Standards on A-level courses are above average overall, and well above average in a significant minority of classes. Standards in students' books are also above average. Female students, in particular, present their work clearly and also show more commitment to homework. In Year 12, most students make effective use of time in lessons; they learn to justify their reasoning and their answers, as in a lesson about predicting the shapes of graphs. By Year 13, they are confident with the

processes of differentiation and integration, and are experienced and skilled in the use of graphical calculators.

177. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall; it is often very good in AS/A-level classes. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject; combined with the very good relationship they have with students, this leads to a very positive working atmosphere in most classes. Planning is also very good. There are high expectations of students and their mathematical development. Very good teaching in a Year 12 revision lesson, for example, required students to think carefully about their work, and led to a deeper understanding of the topics covered. Teachers are beginning to use more innovative teaching methods, such as those in a lesson about integration in Year 13, where students enjoyed using scissors and paste to consolidate the steps involved. In a Year 12 lesson about the sketching of graphs, overall teaching was good; however, a minority of students had a rather casual attitude to learning and were not corrected soon enough by the teacher. There is insufficient marking and grading of students' work, including the work set for homework. As a result, underachievement is not identified soon enough, and students have insufficient knowledge of how their standards compare with national grades.
178. Leadership and management of the work in mathematics in the sixth form are good. The teaching of A-level classes is well organised and shared by a large number of staff, all of whom clearly enjoy the intellectual challenge of the work. However, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and teaching methods, and of the quality and extent of marking. The formal assessment of students' standards is also infrequent, and the department does not use detailed annual value-added figures in order to monitor sixth form provision.
179. In the last inspection report, overall standards were described as just above average, similar to overall standards in the examinations taken in 2001 and 2002. Work observed in the department was better than this, suggesting higher results in the future. The department has therefore made satisfactory improvement. With the large number of well-qualified teachers and the generally good response of students, the capacity for further improvement is good.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well because they review existing knowledge very well before building upon it
- Students appreciate working with teachers in overcoming difficulties
- Good quality discussion enables students to learn from one another as well as from the teacher

Areas for improvement

- Work in AS-level lessons is not always matched closely enough to students' abilities
- Students make insufficient use of ICT in presenting their work

180. A-level results were well above average in 2002, similar to those for 2001, with female students doing markedly better than males. In relation to their GCSE results two years earlier, students did less well than expected. For current students, standards in Year 13 are well above average, matching the results of recent A-level examinations. Students achieve very well in lessons because teachers use 'starter' activities to

assess what students already know before moving on to more demanding work. In one very good lesson, the teacher used questioning effectively to build up a 'mind map' of what students already knew about plant root systems before helping them understand how the structure of root hairs enables plants to absorb water and minerals.

181. AS-level results for Year 12 students were above average in 2001 but dipped significantly in 2002. Students enter the sixth form with wide-ranging GCSE examination results in various science subjects. Although standards in the current Year 12 are average overall, students achieve very well in their lessons. About one third should gain A or B grades at AS-level; the rest should pass, but a small number of male students may struggle to do so because they are less attentive in lessons than they should be.
182. Teaching in biology is consistently very good. Teachers use their subject knowledge to explain clearly and emphasise the key features that students need to learn, often drawing their attention to examination requirements. Lessons usually contain a variety of activities that capture and maintain students' interest. This was the case in Year 12 when the teacher built on what students already knew about the structure of blood by using a modelling activity to help them speculate about reasons for the shape of red blood cells. Discussion between teacher and students is an important feature of most lessons. In Year 13, the teacher made very effective use of good subject knowledge to draw all students into a discussion that explored how the body controls gastric secretions. As a result of their own contributions as well as those of the teacher, students gained very good understanding of how the body's digestive system might react to changes in diet and how the effects could be investigated. In Year 12, work is not always matched well enough to students' abilities because teachers sometimes find difficulty in coping with the wide range of students' prior attainment.
183. Students learn very well, particularly in Year 13 where they are very attentive and keen to participate in discussions. They enjoy biology lessons, particularly practical work, because they find out for themselves why animals and plants function in the way they do, and often have opportunities to consider in depth issues of moral or social importance, such as genetic engineering. Residential fieldwork in Wales last summer gave them an insight into how professional biologists carry out investigations, for example into how changing environmental conditions affect the growth of selected plant species. They appreciate working with their teachers to identify areas of difficulty and the help they receive in overcoming them. Although they use the internet for research work, students make insufficient use of ICT skills in presenting their work.
184. Leadership and management of the department are good. The newly appointed head of department is reorganising schemes of work to ensure that all students have the same experiences, and there is commitment to building on current success to further raise standards. Examination results are better than at the time of the last inspection; there has been good improvement since then.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused on courses in design and technology, including food technology.

DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes and commitment
- Quality of teaching

Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT

185. A good range of sixth form courses is offered in technology and food technology. These include one and two-year courses in product design, resistant materials technology and graphic products materials technology. In food technology, one and two-year courses are offered in food and nutrition and childcare and education. In addition to AS and A-level courses, there is a newly introduced GCSE short course in photography as part of the sixth form curriculum. This provision represents a widening of the sixth form curriculum following a contraction in recent years due to staffing difficulties, which have been overcome by the employment of part-time teachers with a range of relevant qualifications and experience.
186. Standards in the sixth form are at an average level in terms of results in A-level examinations and compared with similar schools, though variable between options, but small numbers mean that such comparisons are inconclusive. In the most recent year, especially good results have been gained in graphics with boys gaining better results in terms of the highest grades; and in resistant materials in which results overall were average, but the sole girl entered gained a high grade. In food technology, very small numbers of students have taken A-level and have gained below average results. AS-level results have also been variable with, again, very small numbers in food technology gaining below average results. The results in childcare and education have been at an average level with no boys entered for the examination.
187. In work seen, there is evidence during the inspection that practical presentation in graphics is above average and of good research skills in child development. Students show good progress in resistant materials and food technology. In classes, there is a sense of serious commitment and purposeful research. Students display maturity and a good capacity for independent enquiry.
188. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are given individual help and advice from expert and versatile teachers. The working atmosphere generated reflects the very good quality of teachers' very good sensitivity to individual need. Students' work is monitored and assessed carefully in relation to targets set and based upon past performance.
189. Students' views of their work in the sixth form are very positive. They see themselves as involved in self-directed work, aided by the good judgements and experience of their teachers. Academic rigour is the main characteristic of the challenge presented in the sixth form and students accept that they have a large measure of responsibility for their progress but that the learning environment provided is a secure basis for the realisation of their aims.
190. Accommodation and resources are adequate for sixth form work but the use of ICT is an area for further development.

BUSINESS

191. Business studies at AS, A2, AVCE and Intermediate GNVQ levels were inspected.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Students' achievements
- Good range of vocational and academic courses
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and of courses
- The management of the department
- Teachers have relevant experience in commerce or industry and there are very good links with local business

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the intermediate course are low
- In some classes students are not acting as independent learners
- The use of ICT

192. At A Level in 2001, standards were close to the national average and students achieved well in relation to their predicted grades. Results at A2 in 2002 were similar, with all students passing but few achieving the higher grades. In 2001 and 2002, students all passed on the advanced vocational courses but no students were awarded the highest grades, again a broadly average picture. At GNVQ Intermediate level, completion rates are good but standards are low, reflecting the low standards on entry to the course.

193. Achievement is good overall but is only sound at intermediate level; however more successful students do progress to the AVCE course. The trend is one of general improvement. Numbers taking courses vary from year to year and retention rates are at least sound. There are more male students overall but no clear differences between the sexes in attainment. Individual students with learning difficulties have achieved well and progressed to the AVCE course because of the high quality of support available.

194. Overall standards in Years 12 and 13 are satisfactory and students achieve well. The subject does not usually attract many of the highest-attaining students. Attitudes to the subject are good. At AVCE and GNVQ Intermediate level the consistent vocational approach to the subject clearly challenges the average-attaining students but also supports those who encounter problems. Students make good use of their part-time employment to inform their studies. AS and A2 students are achieving well because of the good quality of teaching and of their own response.

195. Teaching is good. Teachers are skilled at questioning to assess understanding and to encourage students to think for themselves. Teachers have experience in business and industry and good contacts with local businesses. They use these to provide excellent models for their classes – for example, in using a visiting speaker to provide examples of marketing strategies in the computer industry for Year 13 AVCE students. A2 students in Year 13 show a secure understanding of human resource management, with higher-attaining students demonstrating a good knowledge of motivational theory and different styles of leadership. In Year 12, both AVCE and AS students have secure knowledge of business theory and practice, and they use the appropriate vocabulary

with confidence. Intermediate students are making good progress because of the skilled teaching, although they find break-even calculation difficult.

196. Learning in all lessons is effective because of the pace and challenge that encourages students to apply their communication and numeracy skills. However, ICT skills are affected by the lack of good quality ICT resources and students are not always encouraged to be sufficiently independent. Assessment is rigorous and the data are managed well. During the inspection students were clearly benefiting from a carefully planned revision programme.
197. The department is managed very well. Teachers work very well as a team and this has helped to compensate for the long-term absence of a member of staff. New courses have been effectively introduced, planning is good, and documentation is comprehensive and readily accessible. Improvement since the last inspection has clearly been good and students recognise the high quality of the provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY(ICT)

198. The inspection focused on ICT at AS and A Level.

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

Strengths

- Good introduction to the work
- Help given to students in lessons
- Good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- Students' achievement
- The recruitment of female students
- Students' effort and pace of working

199. Standards are unsatisfactory. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is below the school average. One in ten students now take the A-level course in ICT (formerly information technology); most of them are boys. In the 2001 AS-level examination, one in five students obtained the higher A and B grades and all passed, a good result. Half these students went on to take the A2 course in the school. In the 2001 A2-level examination in ICT no student obtained the higher grades but all passed, another good result for the small number of students involved. However, the results at both levels were very much lower in 2002. Attainment was below average in one half of lessons seen during the inspection. Achievement has fallen and is now unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they receive extra help from the teachers.
200. The overall quality of teaching is good. Most teachers have good relationships with students, give effective help to them in lessons and use the textbook well. Topics are introduced well in lessons and students' work is marked and commented on appropriately. However, good teaching is not always matched by the interest and commitment of the students. Students' intellectual and creative effort in lessons is all too often unsatisfactory. The pace of working, particularly over time, is also unsatisfactory. Some students are unsure about what theme to follow in the coursework and some have lost valuable time by selecting a second topic after spending too much time on their first choice. Students do not have an appropriate

sense of urgency and most do not reach their target grades. When teaching is less satisfactory, teachers tend to talk to students for long periods and give too much technical information at one time, which results in students losing concentration. Students need to write more about what they are taught.

201. The overall standard of learning is satisfactory. Students learn by taking units on information, systems and communications in Year 12 and information systems in organizations, policy and strategy in Year 13. They also learn about the impact of computing on society. In two lessons in Year 12, students were observed learning to validate data in spreadsheets and use IF statements, only just satisfactorily. In two lessons in Year 13, students were seen working satisfactorily overall on individual coursework – for example, to design an ordering system for a pizza shop and a database for a local computer service centre. In a theory lesson in the same year, students were seen learning effectively about different ways to capture and collect data.
202. The subject is well managed. The school has had difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers. The head of department is satisfactorily supported by the director of information, who is a senior teacher, and the examinations officer, who is a mathematics specialist. Since the last inspection, the A-level course has been introduced. However, overall attainment is lower and the progress made by students is no longer sound. The computer network has been much improved.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

203. For students in Year 12, the business studies department currently offers the GNVQ course in leisure and tourism at intermediate level and the AVCE course in travel and tourism run as a single award. Nine students are following the intermediate course and three are studying travel and tourism. Both courses were introduced only last September and so there are no previous results to report.

LEISURE AND TOURISM

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

Strengths

- Quality of the teaching
- Support given to students
- Leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT

204. Although there are differences in the levels of understanding among the students within both courses, attainment overall is below average. This is because the department readily recruits students of lower academic ability and in some cases students who have experienced behavioural problems in earlier years. Most students in the leisure and tourism group could comment sensibly on aspects of marketing. They could distinguish between 'flyers' and 'posters' and some could suggest a number of possible improvements in marketing strategies. A minority of the group found this more difficult. They were well supported by the supply teacher who was taking the lesson. Standards of written work are also variable. For some students the work in their folders is of a higher standard than their oral contributions and is indicative of an eventual pass

grade. All nine students have recently completed a week's work experience in relevant placements. The feedback received by the school is very positive.

205. Two of the three AVCE students were present in the lesson seen. They worked well throughout. They spoke confidently about their recent visit to Winchester and understood its historical significance. Under perceptive questioning from the class teacher, they could explain why Winchester is seen as a popular tourist destination. They were offered clear guidance to help them with their forthcoming assignment. The quality of their written assignments is good.
206. Students in both groups are achieving well in the light of their previous examination results. The AVCE students, in particular, interact well with each other. They also relate very well to their teacher. Although they rely heavily on the teacher's help to direct their work, they are also encouraged to become independent learners and to find out things for themselves. The efforts of students in both groups are valued and their self-confidence increases as a result. Attendance is good.
207. The quality of teaching is very good. Staff are well qualified and have sound business knowledge. Students spoke appreciatively about the support that they receive. The travel and tourism students had clearly gained much from their earlier visit to Chessington. The planning and the delivery of lessons are extremely methodical. Information is shared with students at a pace that helps them with their understanding. Questions are used effectively to encourage even the least confident students to contribute. The teacher's comments on written work are helpful and supportive. Teachers are currently working particularly hard in the absence of one member of the department.
208. Leadership and management are very good. Documentation is of a high standard. There are very good links with local travel agents. Resources, including a wide range of relevant literature, are good and contribute to the progress being made. Accommodation is good. The room is warm and welcoming. Wall displays help to stimulate and maintain interest. Students have good access ICT and they use word processing well in their coursework. The department has identified the need to increase provision for ICT still further in order to extend the opportunities currently available to students.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

209. The inspection focus was on art and design and music although work was also sampled in theatre studies.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good quality teaching tailored to suit individual needs
- Very good relationships between teachers and students
- Mature approach of students
- Standards reached
- Excellent leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Provision for technical assistants to allow teachers to spend more time on teaching tasks
- Noise levels generated by metal furniture on hard floorings

210. Standards are very good and have improved since the last inspection. The A level pass rate is high, particularly at grades A-B. Female students tend to achieve higher standards than the smaller numbers of male students taking the course.

211. In Year 12, students adapt quickly to sixth form work. They achieve equally well in both two and three-dimensional projects. Their very well developed drawing skills enable them to transcribe accurately and confidently the images from their 'mind's eye' to paper, fabrics or ceramics. In many lessons, students work in self-imposed silence because they have become enthralled in their individual projects. They gain mastery over tools and materials, as demonstrated in a lesson on Cubism when students re-created their large-scale pastel drawings, taken from a still-life group, into very competent card sculptures.

212. In Year 13, students work long hours on coursework out of lessons, in order to gain the highest grades. They work initially from sketches and small prototypes for sculptures, scaling-up accurately, using a range of mathematical techniques. Students use computers well to research new projects. They scan images and modify them imaginatively when analysing the work of mainly European artists such as Delaunay, Braque and Escher. Students also appreciate the wider heritage of ancient Japanese, African and Egyptian artists. Students take pride in their work and share a healthy spirit of competition. They do this through evaluative discussions about each other's work and this raises performance. Most students are not afraid to experiment with new materials, such as wax, and take calculated risks, by developing unorthodox methods. They enjoy producing accidental effects, which they use creatively to enhance their work.

213. As in the main school, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan for a good balance between fostering students' own skills and developing their knowledge and understanding of art. They know their students very well and support them personally as well as academically. In return, students trust, appreciate and respect teachers. Teachers regularly hold individual tutorials with students, negotiating future work, analysing homework, sketchbooks and coursework, in depth, so that students know what they have to do to improve. Teachers hold after-school master classes, where pupils and students of all ages, can explore new individual ideas, work collaboratively on major mural projects around the school, or simply catch up on coursework. Teachers organise visits to the Tate and National galleries in preparation for AS and A-level work. They also take longer, residential visits to Rome, Florence, Sorrento and

Barcelona, to extend students' perceptions and understanding of international artists and designers.

214. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department has clear ideas for development. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection, including more focused planning and more effective assessment procedures and practices. As in the main school, teachers have to spend too much time preparing lesson materials. There is an unacceptable level of noise generated by metal furniture on hard floorings.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good relationships
- Performing Arts College status

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- Extra-curricular provision

215. Recent examination results show a standard of attainment which is in line with the national average, but they do not fulfil the expectations raised by the very good GCSE results. By Year 13, however, historical and stylistic studies show a maturity and breadth of understanding which reflect the thorough teaching students are receiving. Year 12 students' work in composition lacks some confidence and technical assurance. The planned additional resources for music technology will provide additional new opportunities to support creative work, which are lacking at present.

216. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the standards observed. In the most successful lessons, areas of learning are clearly targeted in relation to the subject knowledge required. This degree of focus is not evident in all lessons and lesson content is not always appropriate, resulting in an inefficient use of time.

217. Although there has been no significant improvement since the last inspection, leadership and management are satisfactory overall and most students respond positively. They have access to a range of extra-curricular activities, but there is need for experience of a kind and standard which challenges and enriches work at this level. This should include full and chamber and chamber ensembles, choral work and the opportunity to direct performances.

HUMANITIES

218. History, geography and psychology provided the focus for the inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Books and other resources are readily available and are used well
- Students enjoy their work
- Leadership is now good

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT
- Assessment information is not used to plan activities to match the range of attainment in classes
- Information about courses is not included in the departmental documentation and students do not have handbooks
- In some lessons students are not challenged or encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning

219. Standards at A level in 2001 were average. Standards were a little higher in 2002 in the new A2 examination, when more students were awarded higher grades. At AS level in 2002, most students were able to meet course requirements but one failed to complete the course and others are retaking some modules to improve their grades. Most have stayed on to the second year. Overall, standards are being maintained at close to the national average and pass rates are good. Students achieve appropriately or better in relation to their results in the GCSE examination. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students; there are far more of the former in both year groups at present.

220. Standards in the present Year 13 are sound. In the recent past, students have been affected by staffing changes within the department but it is clear from the number of A grades that the highest-attaining students have achieved well at AS level. The highest-attaining students can argue confidently about the problems faced by the Labour and National governments in the interwar period. They show a high level of understanding about leadership issues during Stanley Baldwin's period in office. Lower-attaining students are able to pick out key issues and to identify main factors – for example, in the development of the economic crisis after 1929. The oral and written work of the highest-attaining students shows an analytical approach and a good knowledge of the political background in Germany between the two world wars. All students understand that historians have very different views on the period and that some put a greater emphasis on the role of Hitler. However, many students feel that they have already spent too much time studying Germany in the 1930s and would have liked the opportunity to focus on a different period of history.

221. In Year 12, students are confident in identifying some of the key developments of the periods that they are studying. They have a sound knowledge of the history of Germany prior to 1914 and can use a variety of sources of information to form opinions about the character of its monarchy. They understand that reform after 1906 in Britain reveals a major change in political attitudes, and higher-attaining students can link this with the growth of socialism and the creation of the Labour party. The key skill of communication is developed well in written work and discussion but not in the use of computers because these are not available in the classroom.

222. Teaching and learning are sound. Students say that they enjoy their studies although individuals are sometimes passive and unresponsive in lessons. Assessment procedures are sound, examination skills are developed and work is assessed in a way that is valuable to the learning of individual students. Data showing individual students' test and examination results are available for target setting but not used to plan for the range of ability in the classes. There is a clear lack of challenge in some lessons. In the most effective lessons, students are active participants but in some they do not take enough responsibility for their own work because the teaching style only requires them to answer questions, read and take notes. Teachers are knowledgeable and in some lessons questioning is particularly effective because it focuses classroom discussion, challenges individuals and takes forward the learning of all members of the group. Questioning is less successful in when it fails to involve all students.
223. Management is satisfactory overall and leadership is now good. Resources have been well chosen and they are used well by students. There is appropriate support for newly qualified teachers. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in that standards have been maintained and the new system of examinations effectively introduced. However, students do not have handbooks to guide them through the course, documentation is incomplete and schemes of work are not available. Numbers are increasing although the subject is not attracting enough of the highest-attaining students, despite improvement at GCSE level.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Teachers work effectively as a team

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT
- Confidence in the use of statistical techniques

224. Standards are below national expectations at A level but there is a rising trend of improvement. Girls do better than boys overall. However, the most recent results show that boys' performance at the highest grades is now better than that of girls. Students do not do as well in geography as in other subjects. Standards at AS level are average, but the most recent results show a slight regression. Girls are slightly ahead of boys at AS level. Recruitment to the AS course is good although numbers are down significantly in the current year. Retention rates to A2 remain at around 50 per cent of the AS group. Standards in the sixth form are below those at the last inspection.
225. Standards in Year 13 are good, particularly in the physical and human components but less so in the statistical unit of study. There is some lack of confidence in the mathematical content of the course. The written work of most students shows a broadening view of the subject and some good thinking, as exemplified in good coursework. Students' thinking skills are reflected in oral work, which demonstrates their capability to link strands of evidence to explain, for example, the characteristics of tundra biomes. The work of higher-attaining students on industrial change shows a grasp of geopolitics and economics indicative of good reading around the subject. For some students, A-level work presents a real challenge and they rise to it with determination. There is insufficient use of ICT in coursework, particularly in data

analysis. The rigour applied to coursework is not consistently applied to classwork and homework. The achievement of most students is good. Progress is good over time.

226. Standards in Year 12 are average, with some good achievement and progress to date. Written work shows that most students have made the transition from GCSE examination level well and the majority are beginning to use information to write in some depth, using technical vocabulary to explain, for example, the causes of flooding. Students demonstrate a good understanding of economic growth as seen in their evaluation of the Rostow model. However, there are big gaps in students' general knowledge, such as the significance of financial centres like Hong Kong to the economies of adjacent regions, and there is insufficient research using ICT and other sources to fill these. Students take insufficient pride in the quality of written work and in the organisation of their work.
227. The quality of teaching is good and is sometimes excellent; the addition of a gifted teacher to the team is already raising standards. Teachers have very good subject knowledge reflected in their questioning that challenges and extends students thinking, ensuring that they describe processes and explain links. Students confirm evidence that their work is critically evaluated and that comments are both informative as regards improvement, and supportive. Lessons are well planned and resources are relevant to AS and A2. Lessons have good pace and a variety of activities allow for discussion, investigation and consolidation of information. Touches of humour lighten the experience, especially in statistical techniques. Progress is closely monitored and small groups allow teachers to target individuals and evaluate their understanding. Students appreciate this. Teachers do not make use of new technology to enhance their teaching nor do they insist that it is used by students in all their work.
228. Leadership and management are good. Teamwork is a priority and all teachers are involved in planning and the preparation of resources. Schemes of work reflect exam requirements. There is on-going dialogue about and review of practice and procedures and a deal of collaborative thinking on raising standards. The department provides effective guidance for students. Resources are adequate although the A2 texts require updating. The use of ICT, an issue at the last inspection, although improved as regards access to computers is too infrequent in teaching and learning.

PSYCHOLOGY

229. The provision caters for two AS groups in Year 12 and two A2 groups in Year 13. There are almost 60 students studying psychology, the majority in Year 12.

Overall, the provision for psychology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Rising A-level standards, which are above the national average.
- Very good quality of teaching
- Highly committed students
- Very good management
- Very good monitoring and assessment procedures

Areas for improvement

- Resources
- Improvement plans

230. Standards in psychology are above national expectations. Although results have fallen this year, more than 40 per cent of students achieved A or B grade passes in the AS examination in 2001. Performance at A level has risen steadily over four years, with half the students achieving A or B grade passes in 2001 and almost two-thirds in 2002. The overall pass rate has risen over four years and results for 2001 and 2002 are above the 2001 national average. In 2001, students as a whole achieved higher results in psychology than the school average of other subjects. More girls than boys currently choose to study psychology and girls do better in the public examinations. Fewer than half the students taking the AS examination in 2001 were entered for the A-level examination in 2002. Students make good progress, including those with special educational needs.
231. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is also above the national average. From a base of no prior experience, students quickly begin to learn the complexities of psychological theory. In Year 12, students explore perceptions of 'abnormality'. They are quick to accept the complexities of the concept and learn critiques such as 'statistical infrequency'. They discuss Freud's theoretical constructs of the human mind and relate the model to their own childhood experiences. In Year 13, students compare Freud's psychodynamic model with behaviourist and cognitive explanations of phobias. Students have a secure knowledge of research models but find more difficulty analysing their strengths and weaknesses.
232. The quality of students' written work is good. It ranges from satisfactory to some exceptional performance. Most students present at least satisfactory responses to short answers on the subject of short and long-term memory, with carefully considered evidence and reasonable conclusions. There are examples of extensive research studies that take a proper account of ethical considerations. There are some excellent, well-constructed essays that summarise extensive research material and clearly explain the main characteristics of different models in a critical discussion.
233. The quality of teaching is always good, with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching. The best teaching is inspirational, rooted in a deep understanding and passion for the subject. For example, students wear hats to correspond to Freud's Id, Ego and Superego and produce behaviours to match. All lessons are very carefully planned, allowing students to build on previous knowledge and understanding. There are clear learning objectives and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Lessons are challenging: students are expected to research and to reach their own conclusions through class and group discussions. For example, students are led towards the complexity of the concept of 'abnormality' through paired and group discussion before being introduced to traditional models. Lessons end with an effective consolidation of learning and a careful assessment by the teacher of learning achieved. There are opportunities for students to evaluate their own progress.
234. Learning is enhanced by thorough marking of assignments and clearly explained assessments. Each assignment also has a literacy checklist attached to it. Students are given opportunities to discuss concerns with teachers and there is a regular monitoring scheme to discuss progress. Learning is enhanced by students' commitment to the subject, especially in Year 13. Students keep extensive notes and are well prepared for lessons. They have a good grasp of previous work and there is no wasted time. Students' positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. Students appreciate the level of support provided. They endeavour to match the commitment of their teachers. They enjoy psychology.
235. The leadership and management of psychology are very good. Psychology is managed within a small social science team that includes a head of department and a

teacher in charge of the subject. The cross-curricular links for students are a strength, but a limitation is the lack of action planning for psychology. There are clear policies in place and a scheme of work that ensures the continuity and progression of learning through the GCE syllabus. Students justifiably complain about the lack of resources available and the number of core textbooks in the library is inadequate.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

236. Both English language and English literature were the focus of the inspection, together with French. Spanish was sampled.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Attainment is above the national average and is rising
- The quality of teaching is very good
- Leadership and management are good
- Students are very well supported

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that all students benefit from discussion

237. Attainment in the English literature A-level examination in 2001 was above the national average for the percentage of students attaining grades A and B and close to the national average for grades A-C. A higher percentage than is seen nationally attained the lowest grade although no student failed to gain a pass. In 2002, there was a considerable increase in the percentage of A and B grades and also of grades A-C. Both these figures were significantly above the national average for 2001. There was a marked decrease in the percentage of students attaining the lowest grade, to a level which was below the national average for 2001. In 2002, a high percentage of students gained grades A and B at A/S level and three quarters gained grades A-C.

238. In 2002, the first group of students who took the English language A-level examination achieved percentages of A and B and also A-C grades which were above the national average for the previous year. One student failed to attain a pass grade.

239. According to the evidence of the inspection, attainment of most students, including those who are in the early stages of their course, is above the national average. This confirms that the high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

240. Most students enter both the English literature and English language courses at the start of Year 12 with attainment which is above the national average. These students achieve well to meet the increased demands of A level by attaining results which are above the national average. The English department has a flexible entry policy which means that a small number of students whose attainment is lower, and who might be expected to find the demands of A level rather challenging, are admitted to both courses. These students also achieve well to obtain an A-level pass. Students make particularly good progress in producing a full range of interpretations of what they have read and analysing the effectiveness of a text for the purposes for which it was written. Students make very good progress in the use of discussion in order to evaluate and refine their own ideas and similarly, in using the work of well known writers and critics to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

241. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned, offering a good range of activities to meet the identified needs of all students. This is particularly important in courses which admit students with a wide range of prior attainment. Teachers make good use of discussion to challenge pupils' thinking, although not all pupils are encouraged to participate on an equal basis. Very good support is given to students at the start of the course in understanding and adapting quickly to its new demands. Marking is very good and makes comprehensive use of the examination assessment objectives to help students understand their own progress and what they need to do to improve.
242. Leadership and management of both courses are very good. There is a commitment to the continued raising of standards by enabling students to become more aware of their own progress. A clear strength of the department is the recently introduced student progress file, which actively involves students in tracking and recording their progress. Students are provided with an informative handbook and weekly and termly work plans so that they know in advance what the demands of their work will be. Particularly stimulating use is made of well-planned and clearly focused visits to places of cultural interest.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Coursework is well researched and referenced to up-to-date source material.
- Studying a wide range of social and political topics enhances students' personal development.
- A well-deployed French assistant helps improve students' French and their knowledge of France.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' accuracy in spoken and written French is below average.
- The department lacks languages software to support independent grammatical improvement.
- Marking and grading does not give a clear indication of attainment and improvement required.

243. Overall, French standards in Year 13 are broadly average, but in Year 12 they are below average, particularly in spoken and written fluency and accuracy. Basic tenses and agreements are weak. Year 12 students struggle to speak and write from memory, having become used to consulting reference material for GCSE work. Students with special educational needs develop their speaking and understanding and achieve well. By Year 13 students are more confident and have gained a much wider range of vocabulary and structures, although they make many basic grammatical errors in first drafts of written work and several lack oral confidence. Prepared coursework essays are well researched, draw on a wide range of sources, and show, for example, good factual knowledge of measures taken in France to reduce pollution. Students' French is understandable, many use ambitious and accurate constructions, but all have several, and a few many, basic grammatical errors. Too much English was used in lessons of both years.

244. A-level results fluctuate from well above to below both the school and national averages. In 2002, results improved significantly; all students passed and two thirds gained grades A or B, but AS results dropped from a very high proportion gaining the two top grades and all with pass grades to a much lower proportion of top grades and a quarter ungraded. More girls study languages than boys, but boys often achieve very well.
245. Students have good attitudes to their work and make satisfactory progress, but several do not participate readily. They enjoy studying current social and political topics, such as unemployment, immigration and the rise of the extreme right. They respond well to lessons with the French assistant, conducted largely in French. Independent learning is well developed.
246. Overall, French teaching is satisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection. Teachers are sound linguists. They select learning material of suitable difficulty, and appropriately spend much time on grammatical revision. Progress is slow when tasks are changed too frequently and material is not fully exploited and consolidated. Most work is carefully corrected with helpful comment; the lack of a consistent marking system and the use of a letter grade to reflect both effort and achievement make it unclear how well students are doing.
247. Management of, and long-term planning for, sixth form courses are satisfactory. Resources are good but the department lacks languages software to enable students to work independently at improving grammatical accuracy. Students draw well on experiences gained in their three-day visit to Paris. Numbers studying French in the sixth form have risen steadily.