

INSPECTION REPORT

CHENEY SCHOOL

Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123253

Head teacher: Mr A Lane

Reporting inspector: Mr R Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th November 2002

Inspection number: 249708

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Cheney Lane Headington Oxford
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor C Newbold
Date of previous inspection:	29 th April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
31198	R. Palmer	Registered inspector	Provision for students in the sixth form	Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14404	A Rolfe	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3758	T Barringer	Team inspector	English	
19026	B Downes	Team inspector	Geography Provision for students with special educational needs	
2628	J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	
8873	C Evers	Team inspector	History	
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Provision for students with English as an additional language	
5985	M Holland	Team inspector	Physics	
31688	B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design	
23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	
20189	J Nagra	Team inspector	Urdu	
32081	C Pailthorpe	Team inspector	Business studies Economics	

19214	G Price	Team inspector	Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
18846	P Priest	Team inspector	Music	
20767	J Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
23891	P Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology	
19528	R Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10275	J Cosgrove	Team inspector	Religious education	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	16
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	21
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	26
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	29
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	32
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	33
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	38
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	39
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	45
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	71

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cheney School is a community, comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 13 to 18 years, situated in the Headington area of the City of Oxford. The school is being reorganised to accommodate students aged 11 to 18 from September 2003. The school is oversubscribed and is about the same size as other secondary schools in England. It has 1006 students (517 boys and 489 girls), compared with 830 students at the time of the previous inspection in 1996. The attainment of students on entry in Year 9 is below average overall. Students come from a very wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, that are average overall. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals (about one in every six) is average. The proportion (around one in four) of students who speak English as an additional language is high. It includes eight students who are at an early stage of learning English. A large proportion, almost one third, come from ethnic minorities. A unusual feature of the school is the wide international and cultural mix of students, among whom more than thirty languages are spoken. The proportion of students with special educational needs, about one in every five, is above average. Most of these students have learning or behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, one in 40, is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Students improve their standards from below average when they enter the school in Year 9 to average by the end of Year 11. Standards are above average in the sixth form and represent good achievement. The school provides a good quality of education for students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. Students of all ethnicities work well together. The very good leadership and management of the head teacher and the very good and strong support provided by the governors and senior staff contribute greatly to the school's continuing improvement. Achievement is good because teachers and students relate very well to one another and have suitably high expectations for students' all-round and academic development. Students respond positively to the overall good quality of teaching they receive. The school has many strengths and few weaknesses. It manages its resources well and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes to work lead to good achievement by the end of Year 11.
- Very good leadership and management succeed in improving standards and the quality of education.
- Students of all ethnic, social and economic backgrounds get on very well with one another.
- Excellent provision for students for whom English is an additional language helps them to achieve well.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good.

What could be improved

- The attainment of boys is well below that of girls in Years 9 to 11.
- Lack of a coherent policy for the teaching of key skills hinders standards in literacy, ICT and numeracy.
- Attendance and punctuality to school and to lessons are unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection in 1996. Numbers on roll have increased and the school is oversubscribed. Leadership and management have improved and are very good. The head teacher, assisted well by senior managers, makes an important contribution to the school's many successful developments and ensures that students of all backgrounds receive a good quality of education. The school has maintained its previous strengths. It exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE results in 2001 and again in 2002. Students attain better GCSE results than expected from their previous attainment. Standards in the sixth form have improved well and are currently above average. The proportion of teaching observed that was good or better has increased. In respect of the six key issues identified for action, improvement is good overall. However, although attendance has improved it remains unsatisfactory. The school has the capacity and the commitment to continue to make improvements.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Students' attainment when they join the school in Year 9 is below average. It is usually close to average by the end of Year 9 and improves to average by the end of Year 11. This indicates satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 9 and good achievement by the end of Year 11. In 2001, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average in English, mathematics and science. They were above those attained by schools that have a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals. In 2002, results in the national tests were average in mathematics and below average in English and science. Compared with students' previous attainment these results represented satisfactory achievement. Results have been improving faster than the national improvement. Girls have attained higher standards than boys in the national tests. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are currently average in English and mathematics and below average in science. They indicate good achievement in English and mathematics and satisfactory achievement in science. In all other subjects, students' achievement after their first half term in the school is at least satisfactory.

In all three years 1999 to 2001, GCSE results matched the national average. In 2001, the results matched those of similar schools and indicate good achievement compared with students' previous attainment at the end of Year 9. Over the past three years, boys' results were slightly below average compared with those of boys nationally. Girls' results were slightly above the national average for girls. GCSE results are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. Results in 2001 were average in the large majority of subjects. Results at the highest grades A* and A were above average in English, art and design, drama, French, geography and history. GCSE results in 2002 are higher than those attained

in 2001. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 confirm the overall average standards indicated by recent GCSE results. Students of all levels of attainment, including students with learning difficulties and those who are gifted or talented, achieve well by the end of Year 11. Students of all ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well. The good and improving GCSE performance is a result of much good teaching and students' positive attitudes to their work.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is usually average. AS-level results in 2001 were above average and indicated good achievement. A-level results in the same year were average overall and represented good achievement compared with students' prior attainment. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are above average in most subjects. Students make good progress in most lessons.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students have good attitudes, want to do well and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The vast majority of students behave well and are respectful of staff and other students in lessons and around the school. Although above average, the number of exclusions is declining.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students of all backgrounds get on very well with each other and with the staff. They respond very positively to good opportunities to work independently.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance has improved but is well below average. The punctuality to school and to lessons of a few students is unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good overall. Teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent. A small amount of less than satisfactory teaching was seen in which teachers did not manage the class well and did not plan the work well enough to match students' capabilities. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 9 to 11 in English and mathematics and are satisfactory in science. They are good in most other subjects and satisfactory in the rest. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of boys and girls of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, including those who are gifted or talented. The teaching of literacy and of numeracy is satisfactory across subjects. Students with special educational needs receive good support that enables them to make similar progress to others. Students for whom English is an additional language achieve well as a result of excellent support and very good teaching. Learning is good in the majority of lessons because most students have positive attitudes, concentrate well and acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding. They work at a fast pace to complete the work set. The

inadequate writing skills of lower attaining students, particularly boys, hinder learning in a few classes.

Teaching has many strengths. Teachers' high expectations and effective use of their good expertise in the specialist subject motivate students of all levels of attainment to achieve well. In most lessons, teachers use a good range of different activities for learning that help to maintain students' interest and concentration. The large majority of teachers manage classes well and ensure that students receive work of suitable difficulty. Teachers take considerable care to ensure that students of all backgrounds and ethnic groups are treated equally and fairly. Most teachers, especially in Years 10 to 13, make effective use of marking and assessment to help students to improve their work, to set suitably challenging targets and to match the work to meet students' individual needs. In lessons in which teaching was satisfactory rather than good, teachers did not always make the most effective use of all the time available. They provided a limited range of learning activities so that a few students found it difficult to sustain concentration and effort.

In the sixth form, teachers make good use of their expertise in the subject to help students to achieve well. Students assist their own learning by working hard and with enthusiasm. Very good relationships between teachers and students ensure good learning overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Students have equal access to a broad range of learning experiences that are appropriate to their needs. The lack of a separate course in ICT in Year 9 restricts their learning. Provision for students to extend their learning in activities outside of lessons is satisfactory.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students with learning difficulties achieve well as a result of good teaching and support. The new Code of Practice for special educational needs has been implemented fully.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Excellent. Students who speak English as an additional language improve their knowledge of English very rapidly as a result of excellent support and encouragement provided by staff. Their achievement matches that of other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Very good provision for students' social education makes a substantial contribution to their all-round personal development. Provision for moral and cultural development is good; that for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Teachers provide good support for students' personal and academic development. All students are valued equally. Very good relationships are based on trust and fairness. The use of assessment to help students to improve their work is good overall but varies across subjects. Suitable procedures for child protection and for health and safety are in place.
How well the school works in partnership with parents.	Good. Parents have positive views about the school. They receive appropriate and informative documentation about the work of the school and good information about students' progress and attainment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher, with good support from senior staff, sets a very clear direction for the school's development. Very effective management has helped the school to make many important improvements, particularly in raising students' achievement. Management in subjects is good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very effective, committed and supportive. They know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. They have high expectations for the school's future improvement. They carry out their duties well apart from ensuring the provision of a daily act of collective worship and of religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Governors and senior staff analyse assessment and comparative data carefully to see if the school is doing as well as it should. They set suitably challenging targets for improvement. Procedures to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning operate successfully.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial management is good. The school makes effective use of its good staffing and adequate accommodation and learning resources to support students' learning. It considers spending decisions carefully to seek best value and to meet its educational priorities. The use of ICT to enhance students' learning is insufficient in a few subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students like the school and make good progress. • The school is led and managed well. • Teaching is good. • The school expects students to work hard. • Parents can raise concerns easily with staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The setting of homework is inconsistent. ▪ They are not well informed.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They agree with parents that the setting of homework is inconsistent but judge that the quality and amount of homework are satisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and good in the sixth form. They disagree with those parents who feel that the school does not keep parents informed sufficiently. The school provides parents with helpful and relevant information at appropriate times. The quality of reports to parents about students' work and progress is good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than in most other schools and is growing in size. It has 247 students (119 boys and 128 girls), of whom just under one third are in Year 13. The composition of the sixth form matches that of the main school in terms of ethnic groupings and students' backgrounds. A small number of students have special educational needs. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is average. Students' attainment on entry to Year 12 is average overall. The school operates a sixth form partnership with five other local schools and the nearby college of further education. Together, they provide access to a wide range of AS/A-level and vocational courses. Most students study AS-level courses in Year 12 and A-level courses in Year 13 on the school's site. A few students follow vocational courses. About two thirds of students stay on from Year 11 into the school's sixth form. A small number of students join the sixth form from other schools. All courses of study at the school have suitable requirements for entry. Students require a minimum of five GCSE grades A*-C, with at least three grades B and above, for enrolment on the AS-level. They need GCSE grades in the range of A*-E to enrol on the vocational courses. There is no provision for students of well below average attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good quality of education. It is cost-effective. Good leadership and management are succeeding in improving the quality of care, support and guidance for students. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection and are currently above average. Students learn well and achieve good results overall. They choose from a suitable range of courses, though the take-up on vocational courses is not as high as the school would like. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects and very good in English, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages. A-level results in 2001 matched the national average and AS-level results were above average. These results showed good achievement based on students' previous attainment in GCSE examinations. The sixth form meets well the needs of its students apart from those who would benefit from a wider range of vocational courses.

Strengths

- A-level and AS-level results represent good achievement.
- Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to work lead to good learning.
- Good leadership and management help to provide a good climate for learning.
- Students respect teachers' knowledge and appreciate the very good relationships with them.

What could be improved

- The range and amount of vocational courses are insufficient.
- A limited range of extra-curricular activities and the absence of courses in religious education restrict enrichment of students' learning.

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. Students respond very well to very good teaching and achieve very good results in A-level examinations.
Biology	Good. A-level results were very high in 2001. Teachers use their very good expertise in the subject to help students to achieve well.
Physics	Good. Achievement is good because teaching is good and students have positive attitudes to learning. A-level results are above average. Little use of ICT is made to enhance learning.
Product design	Good. Standards in this recently introduced course are average and represent good achievement based on students' prior attainment. Good teaching assists learning. There is currently no vocational course option in Years 12 and 13.
Business studies	Good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning. Results in the advanced vocational course were well above average in 2001.
Economics	Good. Achievement is good currently because teaching is good and students want to succeed. A-level results in 2001 were below average.
ICT	Good. Achievement is good compared with students' previous GCSE results. Teachers make good use of their subject expertise to enable students to make good progress in lessons.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Standards of work seen are average and indicate good achievement. Good teaching helps students to learn well. Students do not have a good understanding of physiology.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students work independently but with a limited range of media and materials. Standards are currently average and represent satisfactory achievement.
Geography	Good. A-level results in 2001 were very high. Standards are currently above average and represent good achievement. This is a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes to work. Students rarely use ICT in lessons to enhance learning.
History	Very good. Achievement is very good in this very popular subject. Very good teaching helps students to make very good progress and to attain high standards.
English literature	Very good. Achievement is very good in this very popular subject as a result of much very good teaching and students' very good attitudes to work.
French	Very good. Challenged by very good teaching, students in Year 13 are reaching very high standards. A-level results have been

	well above the national average in the past three years.
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In a few other subjects, work was sampled. In theatre studies, teaching observed was excellent and standards in the lesson were above average. In Italian, very good teaching ensured very good progress. In German, standards were below average in the lesson seen and teaching was satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students of all backgrounds receive an improving and good quality of guidance and support. Staff prepare students well for entry to the sixth form. The choice of courses is generally matched suitably to students' aspirations and capabilities, though there is insufficient provision of vocational courses particularly for lower attainers. The tutorial programme provides students with suitable access to advice and help regarding examinations, university applications and careers. The use of assessment to raise standards and to set targets for academic and personal development is good and improving. Students know at an early stage what they are expected to achieve. Teachers check students' progress closely and frequently.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The good leadership and management of the sixth form within the partnership arrangement make an important contribution to students' good achievement. Effective planning has resulted in good improvements in the quality of education provided. Attendance has improved and is satisfactory. Increasingly effective use of assessment makes staff and students aware of what standards should be attained. Students have equal access to the curriculum. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship in Years 12 and 13.

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"> • They enjoy the sixth form and recommend it. • The choice of courses is suitable. • Teaching is good and challenges them. • They learn independently and receive good support from teachers. • They can achieve well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and guidance are insufficient and they lack enough information about future options. • The range of activities outside lessons is limited.

Inspectors agree with students' positive views, although the range of courses could be made more suitable by including more vocational subjects. In respect of areas for improvement, students' comments about advice and guidance no longer apply. The school recognised that this was an area for improvement and under the new leadership in the sixth form has implemented good procedures to provide a good quality of advice and support. Inspectors

agree with students that the range of extra-curricular activities is not as good as it could be, mainly because of the limitations caused by the current building programme.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11. A particularly strong feature is that students from the very wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and different levels of attainment in the school make good progress. Students' attainment when they join the school in Year 9 is below average overall. It improves as they move through the school so that attainment is average by the end of Year 11. Standards in the sixth form currently are above average and represent good achievement based on students' prior attainment.
2. In 2001, attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 matched the national average. Results were higher than those attained by similar schools, as defined by those schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to receive free school meals. Provisional results for 2002 indicate that results in the national tests were below average. Attainment in GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 matched the national average in all three years from 1999 to 2001. Provisional GCSE results in 2002 indicate a good improvement, particularly in the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C.
3. Improvement in standards since the previous inspection in 1996 is good. Over the three-year period 1999 to 2001, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 rose faster than the national improvement, although they declined in 2002. GCSE results have improved faster than the national improvement over the past five years and improved further in 2002. Standards by the end of Year 13 have improved and are now above average.
4. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys when they join the school in Year 9 and remains so at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. The gap between their performances in external examinations is wider than the national difference. One of the main reasons that girls do better than boys is that girls have better skills in literacy, particularly in writing, than boys. In a few subjects, such as modern foreign languages, boys' standards are hindered because they present their work scrappily and untidily. This makes revision of their work when studying for examinations difficult. KIA1 KIA2
5. Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory rather than good because teaching is satisfactory and a few students, mainly boys, take a little while to adjust to the routines of the new school. This is particularly noticeable in the immature behaviour of a few students early in Year 9. However, teachers manage students' behaviour well so that, in Years 10 and 11, students have positive attitudes to work that help them to achieve well. Good teaching and increasingly effective use of assessment to show students in Years 10 and 11 how to improve enable them to make good progress in most lessons.
6. Students' achievement varies from satisfactory to good among subjects in Years 9 to 11. It is good throughout Years 9 to 11 in English, mathematics, citizenship, history and Urdu.
7. A few factors hinder the school's good attempts to raise standards at the end of Year 11 from average to above average. They include the lack of a sufficiently effective policy to raise boys' attainment and shortcomings in the development and use of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Despite the school's considerable attempts to improve attendance, students' rates of absence and a lack of punctuality to lessons by a few students impede faster progress. KIA1, KIA2, KIA3

Standards and achievement at the end of Year 9

8. In 2001, students' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. The overall results matched the national average and were above those attained in similar schools. They indicated good achievement in English and mathematics and satisfactory achievement in science. Provisional results for 2002 indicate average performance in mathematics and below average in English and in science. Differences in the results in these two years reflect the different levels of prior attainment of the separate year groups.
9. In Year 9, standards seen in classes and in scrutiny of work are currently just below average overall. They represent satisfactory achievement over the short time that students have been at the school. Standards are currently average in English and mathematics and below average in science. They are below average in design and technology, modern foreign languages and Urdu and are average in other subjects.

Standards and achievement at the end of Year 11

10. In 2001, the GCSE results, in terms of the average number of points scored by students, matched the national average. They matched the results of similar schools. When compared with students' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the results indicated satisfactory achievement. Girls attain higher results in GCSE than girls nationally, whereas boys attain below average results. Results in 2002 were higher than in previous years and indicate good achievement based on students' prior attainment. KIA1
11. In Years 10 and 11, standards seen in classes and in scrutiny of work are average overall. They represent good achievement. Standards are currently average in English and mathematics and below average in science and design and technology. They are above average in geography and history, below average in ICT, physical education and Urdu, and are average in other subjects. Students' achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects.

Achievement among different groups of students

12. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A*-G in 2001 was average and met expectations based on their previous attainment. This indicates that students of below average attainment, including those with learning difficulties, achieved satisfactorily in those examinations. Provisional GCSE results in 2002 indicate that the achievement of these students was at least as good as expected based on their previous attainment.
13. Over the three-year period 1999 to 2001, boys' GCSE results have been below those of boys nationally and represent satisfactory achievement. Girls' GCSE results were slightly above those for girls nationally and indicate good achievement.
14. The much lower levels of literacy among boys are the main reason that boys' achievement is not as good as that of girls, as is the picture nationally. This is evident in the results in national tests in English taken at the end of Year 9. For example, in 2002, about two boys in every five attained level 5 or above in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9, whereas the figure for girls was close to four in five. KIA2
15. Currently, students on the register of special educational needs, including those who have statements, are making appropriate progress in Year 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11 towards their individual targets. This is because they receive good support from teachers and classroom assistants in lessons.

16. The large numbers of students of many different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other students. They integrate easily into the school and work hard to achieve well. The very good relationships among students and between students and teachers create a very positive climate within which all students can learn well.
17. Students who are gifted or talented achieve well by the end of Year 11. In 2001, the proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades of A* and A was above average in many subjects, such as art and design, geography, history and French.
18. The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good, and often very good, throughout the school. This is a result of the excellent provision made to assist the learning of these students.

Standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT across subjects

19. Students' skills in literacy are average throughout Years 9 to 11. They are generally adequate to meet students' needs in all subjects. Weaknesses in the writing skills of lower attaining students, particularly boys, restrict progress in a few subjects such as English, modern foreign languages and history. The standard of oracy of students in Years 9 to 11 is above average. In most lessons, students have satisfactory opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills but planned oral work does not play a large part in lessons in a few subjects. In English and drama, work in pairs or in groups is an everyday technique for sharing ideas and consolidating opinions. Such good practice is not widely disseminated. Students read competently, cope well with the demands of all subjects and make good use of the library to extend their range of reading. KIA1
20. Standards of numeracy are average throughout Years 9 to 11. Students' mathematical skills are adequate for their work in all subjects. Students develop their skills in number work, including the use of calculators, through frequent and regular practice in mathematics lessons. In geography, they use a range of data handling skills well to enhance their understanding and presentation of the work. They analyse information in a variety of ways and present results using appropriate charts and diagrams. Students use and develop similar skills in work in physical education and science. In design and technology they make effective use of skills in measuring and estimating.
21. Students' skills in ICT are average in Year 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. They use and develop their ICT skills well in a few subjects. In design and technology, for example, students make good use of the resources available and benefit from using the facilities of local institutions to extend their experiences in computer-aided manufacture and design. In mathematics, students apply their computing skills satisfactorily in graphical work and in using spreadsheets to record information. In history and religious education, students make satisfactory use of the Internet for research and word processing of work. In a few subjects such as science, students have too few opportunities to extend their learning through the use of computers. In English, they use the word processor well for their coursework but, as in most subjects, limited access to the computer suites is restricting progress.

Sixth form

22. The large majority of the courses available for students are taught in the school and a small number in the other institutions in the local sixth form partnership. The inspection focused on 13 subjects. All of these, apart from ICT in Year 13, are taught wholly or in most part at the school. Most students in Years 12 and 13 follow courses that lead to AS/A-level examinations. A few students follow vocational courses in Year 12.

23. In 2001, results at A-level matched the national average. Boys' results were above average and girls' results were average. In the previous year, results were above average for boys and for girls. Provisional results for A-level in 2002 indicate that results were above national and county averages. Half of the grades attained were at the highest grades of A and B. Results at AS-level were above average in 2001. Provisional results for 2002 indicate similar standards. Results in the GNVQ intermediate vocational courses were average in 2001. Results attained in AS-level, A-level and vocational examinations indicate good achievement when results are compared with students' prior attainment. The attainment of boys in Years 12 and 13 is not very different from that of girls. It varies from year to year to reflect the different levels of prior attainment of successive year groups. The main reason that boys' attainment and achievement is as good as that of girls in Years 12 and 13 is that the boys who have chosen to continue their studies in Years 12 and 13 have very positive attitudes to work, want to succeed and have good basic skills.
24. Standards of work seen in classes in Years 12 and 13 of subjects inspected and sampled, in scrutiny of coursework and written work, and in discussions with students, are above average overall. They are well above average in mathematics and French, average in art and design, physical education and design and technology and above average in the eight other subjects. They indicate good achievement overall compared with students' earlier attainment in GCSE examinations.
25. The current good achievement is a result of much good teaching, students' positive attitudes and their willingness to work hard.
26. Standards of literacy and numeracy are appropriate for students' work in all subjects. However, a few students on GNVQ courses do not sufficiently develop their numeracy because of timetabling difficulties relating to the key skills course on application of number. Students use their good skills in ICT well to enhance their work in a few subjects such as design and technology but in several subjects, such as geography and music, they have too few opportunities to make the most of these skills to enhance and extend their work. Students develop good skills of research and independent study through good use of the library and its resources.
27. The school has a good record for retaining the students who continue A-level courses in Year 13. Most students complete the course and sit the examination. Rates of retention on courses in Year 12 are satisfactory. They range from high in English, in which 52 of the 55 who started the AS-level course last year completed it, to low in a few of the GNVQ courses in Year 12. In most subjects the rates of retention on courses in Year 12 are good. After AS-level courses, most students move on to A-level courses in Year 13. Students on vocational courses usually complete their education at the school at the end of Year 12.
28. The good results in recent external examinations and the good overall achievement currently in sixth form classes are a direct result of the good, and often very good, teaching in the sixth form and students' very positive approach to learning. Students' good achievements show that the school and the partnership meet students' needs and aspirations well. Standards have improved considerably from the below average standards reported at the previous inspection.

Targets

29. The school sets challenging targets for performance in external examinations. It bases these targets on students' prior attainments and comparisons with appropriate national data.

It exceeded by one per cent its suitably challenging target for 44 per cent of students to gain five or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2002.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

30. Students of all ethnic backgrounds and levels of attainment have good attitudes to learning, their behaviour is satisfactory and they make very good progress in their personal development. Attendance is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11. It is well below national averages and unauthorised absence is above the national average.
31. Discussions with students in all year groups indicate that they have positive attitudes to learning. Most say that they enjoy coming to school. Many participate in the extra-curricular activities provided by the school. The majority of students are interested in what they are doing and take an active part in their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain concentration for appropriate periods of time and make positive contributions to discussions in class. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson in which students were studying German history between 1919 and 1945, they showed very positive attitudes and maintained their concentration throughout the lesson. They co-operated well together, sharing ideas and supporting each other, and therefore made very good progress in their learning. Most students take a pride in their work, engage in good discussions about their work and explain their ideas well. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes to work and behave well in lessons and around the school. Good systems to support behaviour enable students with behavioural difficulties to make good progress. The Cheney Plus support unit is effective in providing support for the few students who have disaffected attitudes to school.
32. In almost all lessons behaviour is at least satisfactory, and is often good or better, and promotes effective learning. For example, in a Year 11 geography lesson, relationships were very good. Boys and girls of all ethnic groups mixed and worked well together. They entered into the lesson with enthusiasm and were prepared to listen carefully to their teacher's instructions and each other's ideas. Behaviour was consistently good throughout the lesson and had a positive impact on students' learning. Most students are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. They like the school's merit system and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour. Nevertheless, in a small number of lessons, mainly in Year 9, a few students have not settled into the school's routines, and behaviour is unsatisfactory and on occasions disrupts the learning of others. Outside of lessons students interact well together, before and after school. At breaks and lunchtime they chat and socialise together without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Students treat school equipment with care and respect. Bullying is a very occasional problem. The school has a good anti-bullying policy that makes clear that the school will not tolerate bullying. Students and parents have indicated that these procedures are effective. The school's exclusion record indicates that during the last academic year there were 50 fixed-term exclusions involving 27 boys and 10 girls. There have not been any permanent exclusions. Whilst the number of temporary exclusions is quite high, the school has been successful in reducing the number of them. Procedures for inclusion are operated properly. The school has good procedures to ensure students receive appropriate work to complete whilst excluded and to reintegrate them into the school.
33. Students make very good progress in their personal development. Relationships between staff and students and among students are very good. These have a positive influence on students' learning. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson relating to South Africa, students showed a keen interest in the lesson. They worked very well in groups discussing sensibly with each other the legacy of apartheid. They concentrated well on their work and made very good progress. Students are developing well their understanding of

other people's cultures and beliefs. They are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others through their studies in subjects such as religious education and personal and social education. Students in all years show a willingness to undertake additional responsibilities such as classroom monitors and serving on year and school councils. Students use their own initiative well. On many occasions, students were observed undertaking personal research in the library unsupervised. Many students use their initiative when raising funds for various charities. They take on considerable responsibility when helping to produce whole school musical productions such as 'Bugsy Malone'.

34. The rate of attendance of 87.5 per cent for the past year was unsatisfactory. Although it was one per cent higher than the previous year, it was well below the national average. Unauthorised absence was above the national average. Several students arrive late on a regular basis. In a few lessons the late arrival of a few students slows the pace of learning. Procedures for dealing with unpunctuality are insufficiently rigorous. KIA3

Sixth form

35. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. Students have settled well into the sixth form routines and show good interest and commitment to their studies. They value the support of teachers, who are readily available to give support and guidance. Students are developing well their ability to work independently, whilst demonstrating the ability to work co-operatively together in pairs and small groups. Most students consider that the courses available meet their needs and aspirations and that the teaching they receive is good. Inspection findings support these positive views of the sixth form. A large minority expressed some concerns relating to the quality of advice and guidance they received, and the range of activities and enrichments provided by the school. Inspectors agree with students, that as a result of staffing difficulties in the previous academic year, students did not have access to an appropriate quality of advice and guidance, particularly about careers. Currently, they receive an improved and good quality of advice, support and guidance. Inspectors agree that there is scope to improve the range of activities and enrichments provided in Years 12 and 13. KIA5
36. Students' personal development is very good. Relationships between staff and students and among students are very good. Students use their initiative, take responsibility for arranging charitable fund-raising events and assist at school open evenings. All students in Year 12 commit a period of time to a community service project. Behaviour in lessons observed was never less than satisfactory and often good or very good.
37. Attendance in the last academic year was satisfactory. However, the school's official attendance data shows attendance below 90 per cent. This was primarily due to inadequate registration procedures in the sixth form that resulted in a large number of students failing to register their attendance. Improved registration procedures have now been introduced and the sixth form official attendance figures show a good improvement.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

38. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are both good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form. Teaching in all years meets the needs of students of all levels of attainment, including students who are gifted or talented. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. In two out of every three lessons observed, teaching was good or better. The proportion of lessons observed that were very good or better has improved from about one in 30 to nearly

one in every four. The proportion of teaching observed that was less than satisfactory has declined from one in every 10 lessons to one in every 30.

39. In the core subjects, teaching in English and mathematics is good in Years 9 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. It is satisfactory in science in Years 9 to 11 and is good in the sixth form.
40. Over the past few years, occasional staffing problems have hindered the school's attempts to improve the quality of teaching and learning further. In ICT, for example, the school was unable to recruit teachers of suitable expertise until very recently. As a result, it removed some of the ICT courses from the timetable. Currently the school has sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications and experience to meet well the requirements of all subjects.
41. Students' achievement in Years 9 to 11 usually matches the good quality of teaching and learning. However, achievement is occasionally of a slightly lower quality than the teaching and learning seen in lessons. This is mainly because the attendance of a few students is erratic and hinders the continuity of their learning. The weak writing skills of lower attaining students, particularly boys, adversely affect their achievement over time. KIA1 KIA3
42. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress overall as a result of outstanding provision and support. The many students of different minority ethnic backgrounds make similarly good progress because teachers and support staff make them all feel equally valued. One of the school's considerable strengths is the way students of all different groups relate easily and comfortably with one another and with the staff. Students of high attainment, including those who are gifted or talented, achieve well by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form because the large majority of teachers ensure that the work set for these students is of appropriate difficulty to stretch them.
43. Teaching for students with special educational needs is good. Teachers make effective use of the good individual education plans to assist these students to reach their targets. The provision of work in lessons that is tailored to the requirement of students with special educational needs is good. However, in a few lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to students' individual needs. Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is good overall but lacks consistency. Usually, teaching assistants have plans of the lessons in advance. In a few lessons, they are not aware beforehand of what is being done. In a few lessons, teaching assistants are present when they are not needed. Teaching assistants provide effective and caring support that helps students with special educational needs to achieve well by the end of Year 11.
44. The quality of teaching observed was not as good in Year 9 as it was in the rest of the school. This is mainly because teachers have only known the students in Year 9 for a short time and are still working out the best ways to modify the immature behaviour of a few students, mainly boys. Teachers do not have as accurate and detailed information about students' attainment and capabilities in Year 9 as they do in other years. Teachers manage classes better in the rest of the school than in Year 9. They have higher expectations of the older students. In Years 10 to 13, teachers make more effective use of information from assessment and marking to help students to improve their work than in Year 9. KIA1
45. The quality of learning is better in the sixth form and Years 10 and 11 than it is in Year 9 because the attitudes to work of the older students are at least good and they are keen to work hard and to do their best. In all years, the large majority of students show a keen interest in the work and concentrate well on the tasks set in class. Most have a good awareness of

how well they are doing. In most lessons, students of all levels of attainment respond well, work at a fast pace, gain a good understanding of the work and complete the tasks set with enthusiasm. In a few lessons, including a number that were good, the unpunctuality to lessons of a few students interrupted the continuity of learning and slowed progress. Across many subjects, teachers provide insufficient opportunities for students to practise and apply their skills in ICT to extend their learning. KIA2 KIA3

46. Teaching has many strengths. Teachers' high expectations and the very good relationships between teachers and students help students to learn well. Teachers in Years 10 and above make generally good use of marking and assessment to show students how to improve their work. Most teachers use homework suitably to extend students' learning with a good range of tasks including investigation, research and revision. This helps students to develop their skills of independent learning. Teachers make effective use of their good expertise in the specialist subject to motivate students and to ensure that students of all levels of attainment acquire a good understanding of the basic skills of the particular subject. In most lessons, teachers use a good range of different activities for learning that help to maintain students' interest and concentration. The large majority of teachers manage classes well and ensure that students receive work of suitable difficulty.
47. Teachers take considerable care to ensure that students of all backgrounds and ethnic groups are treated equally and fairly, so that all students make progress that is nearly always at least as good as it should be. More usually, progress is better than expected. In a Year 9 class in Urdu, for example, containing students of a wide range of attainment and different ethnic backgrounds, the teacher spoke in Urdu for most of the time and at a level that encouraged students to listen carefully. This helped students, including the few with special educational needs, to practise and develop their speaking skills. By the end of this lesson, all students made good progress in arranging Urdu words in alphabetical order and in joining letters together to make words in Urdu.
48. Occasionally teaching is outstanding and leads to students of different levels of attainment making excellent progress in lessons. In one such lesson for a Year 11 class of lower and middle attaining students in English, students of a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds developed their analytical and inferential skills considerably in a continuing study of the text *Of Mice and Men*. Students responded very positively and naturally to the very high expectations set for them. The very effective use of discussion exploited students' good speaking skills and consolidated their learning. The students for whom English is an additional language made excellent progress in this lesson because they received work that was prepared specifically to meet their individual needs.
49. In lessons in which teaching was satisfactory rather than good or better, teachers did not always make the most effective use of all the time available. Insufficient attention to developing the writing skills, particularly of boys, meant that progress in some of these lessons was hindered. The range of learning activities was often limited in these lessons so that a few students found it difficult to sustain concentration and effort. Occasionally, the teacher did not use the individual education plans of students with special educational needs effectively to provide work of appropriate difficulty. KIA2
50. Teaching and learning were less than satisfactory, and very occasionally poor, in a few lessons seen. Common features of these lessons were low expectations and inadequate planning to ensure that the work was suited to the needs of all students. In these lessons the teacher tended to do too much and did not provide enough opportunities for students to become actively involved in the work. Occasionally ineffective management of students' behaviour resulted in unsatisfactory progress. KIA2

51. The teaching of literacy, oracy and numeracy is satisfactory in most subjects. The teaching of ICT across subjects varies considerably but is satisfactory overall. Partly because students enter the school in Year 9, the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy for students in Years 7 to 9 are not fully in place. As a result, the teaching of literacy, oracy and numeracy lacks consistency across the curriculum. This is particularly noticeable in the different emphases placed by different subjects on developing the skills of writing and speaking across the curriculum.
52. The lack of an effective policy for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum means that students have insufficient opportunities in many subjects to improve their reading and writing skills. Although several subjects recognise the need to improve writing skills and a few are developing such items as prompts for writing, the lack of a consistent approach means that students do not receive good help to improve their writing in many subjects. In a few subjects such as English, history and religious education, students use their good speaking skills to debate and discuss their work and accordingly increase their understanding. In many subjects, teachers do not plan sufficiently for students to discuss their work and to use their good speaking skills to extend their understanding by learning from one another. Teachers generally emphasise the need for accurate spelling, especially of the technical terms in subjects. Students have adequate opportunities to develop their silent reading skills in most subjects but have few opportunities for reading aloud in most subjects. KIA2
53. In mathematics, the effective use of methods suggested in the National Numeracy Strategy helps students of all levels of attainment to develop their mathematical skills. Students use and develop their numeracy skills well in geography for statistical analysis and the interpretation and display of data. Although students' numerical skills are adequate for their work in all subjects, the lack of a coherent policy for the teaching of numeracy across subjects means that they have insufficient opportunities to practise and develop their skills further. KIA2
54. The teaching of ICT varies in quality across the curriculum but is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, teachers have become more confident in using ICT. Limited access to specialist rooms restricts the use of computing facilities.
55. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework to extend students' learning. The setting of homework lacks consistency, as indicated by some parents in their responses to the questionnaires completed before the inspection. Teachers set a suitable range of tasks for homework that include investigations, research and revision. Homework helps students to develop their skills of independent learning.

Sixth form

56. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 are good. They enable students to make good progress in lessons and to achieve well. In nearly four out of every five lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good. It was very good in just under one third of lessons observed. Teaching was very good in English, mathematics, history and French. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The good quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The few students with special educational needs in the sixth form make similarly good progress as other students because teachers provide them with good support and work that is of suitable difficulty.
57. The very good relationships between students and teachers ensure that learning proceeds at a good pace. Students' careful attention in class, their very positive attitudes and hard work enable them to make good progress in lessons. Students enjoy lessons because they respect the teachers' very good expertise in the specialist subject. Teachers use a good variety of methods and activities to motivate and enthuse students and to maintain their

concentration. In most lessons, students are involved actively in their own learning. They have good skills of independent study and enjoy thinking things out for themselves or in groups. Many teachers involve students in earnest discussions that help them to understand the topic thoroughly. In many lessons, as seen in English, for example, the quality of debate and discussion is high. The good emphasis by teachers in many subjects on the development of skills of independent learning and research helps students to improve their work. As a result, students are confident and competent learners.

58. Sixth form teaching has many strengths. Teachers' very effective use of their expertise in the subject enthuses students and encourages them to do well. In lessons observed in Year 13 in French and Italian, for example, the high level of intellectual and linguistic stimulus encouraged students to respond very positively and to make very fast progress. Students and the teacher engaged in lively and complex debates of high quality, speaking the foreign language very well and as native speakers.
59. Teachers plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of all students in the class and provide them with stimulating challenges. Teachers question students well to ensure that they participate actively and to improve their understanding. Students in a Year 13 mathematics class made excellent progress in a lesson on complex numbers. The teacher's very good questioning and very effective organisation of learning activities made the students think deeply about their work.
60. Features of many of the very good lessons seen were evident in a very good geography lesson in which Year 12 students made very good progress. As in most lessons seen in the sixth form, the teacher was very careful to ensure that all students received individual help at appropriate times in the lesson. Students quickly understood the aims of the lesson and learned at a fast pace because the teacher had organised a variety of interesting and relevant learning activities to increase students' knowledge and understanding of river environments. These activities helped students to develop their analytical and graphical skills. The teacher's very effective use of question and answer sessions made students think carefully and analyse causes and events. Students enhanced their learning through good opportunities to use and develop their basic skills in note taking and reading for research purposes. Because relationships between the teacher and students were very good and the work was of suitable difficulty, students worked hard and with interest throughout the lesson. The small number of students for whom English is a foreign language made equally very good progress as the rest of the class because the work was matched well to their needs. Students have made very good progress in the few weeks they have been studying the AS-level course as a result of the teacher's careful marking that sets out clearly for students how they can improve their standards in the subject.
61. In about one in every four lessons observed in the sixth form, teaching was satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, teachers tended to rely on a narrow range of learning activities and did not always provide work that was of sufficient difficulty to extend the learning of all students. Occasionally, students were not sure about how to improve their work. In a few lessons, teachers tended to be too dominant and did not involve students actively in the work.
62. The teaching of the key skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. All students have suitable basic skills to meet the requirements of the courses they are studying. The teaching of the key skills course in number for GNVQ students is not as effective as it should be, partly because one of the lessons takes place during the lunchtime and is not well attended. Students enhance their learning by using and applying their ICT skills well in many subjects. However, they have insufficient opportunities to use ICT in a few subjects such as art and design and science.

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

63. The quality and range of learning experiences are satisfactory throughout the school. The school provides an appropriate curriculum that gives students good opportunities for learning and that meets statutory requirements. Students with special educational needs have access to a full range of subjects. Satisfactory opportunities for learning are provided in activities outside lesson time.
64. At the time of the previous inspection, links with middle schools did not offer students continuity in their learning when they changed schools, particularly in modern foreign languages, design and technology, art and design and physical education. This is no longer a major concern, particularly since current planning for reorganisation has necessitated close liaison with schools transferring their Year 7 and 8 students next September. However, in physical education links remains unsatisfactory.
65. The previous inspection also highlighted several other areas for development. Opportunities for students to learn ICT were unsatisfactory. They have now improved overall but remain unsatisfactory for Year 9 students, none of whom have separate ICT lessons. Shortage of teaching time for Year 9 students no longer depresses standards of work in music or art and design. The building programme currently nearing completion has taken the gymnasium out of service and the new sports hall has not yet become available. Time available for religious studies in Years 10 and 11 is now sufficient to cover the agreed syllabus. No daily act of collective worship takes place but regular assemblies usually have a spiritual dimension and offer students occasional opportunities for reflection. AA
66. The curriculum is strengthened by the very active involvement of governors. They know the school well, have strong links with individual departments and make important contributions to planning.
67. The timetable provides appropriate amounts of teaching time in Years 9 to 11 for the National Curriculum. In English, the provision is enriched by drama. In modern foreign languages, almost three quarters of students in Year 9 are currently studying a second language. In geography, good fieldwork enhances students' opportunities. However, in subjects such as mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography students have limited opportunities to use ICT. In modern foreign languages, few students opt for a second language in Year 10. Citizenship is taught through subjects such as personal and social education, religious education and geography. The school has not yet ensured that the National Curriculum programmes of study for citizenship are being covered fully. In design and technology, students receive a good spread of topics, although the lack of computer control in the systems and control unit and of vocational opportunities generally limits the overall provision. Latin is one of five languages currently taught at the school and teaching and learning are good in the subject, as seen in a Year 11 class.
68. A notable strength of the curriculum is the support given to students for whom English is an additional language, which enables them to take a full range of subjects. Through additional language lessons and very good in-class support from specialist teachers, these students follow the same learning programmes as other students and achieve equal success. Students are encouraged to take GCSE modern languages examinations in their first language.

69. There are good procedures in place for identifying students with special educational needs and for arranging the necessary provision for them. Arrangements for tracking attainment and progress for students with special educational needs are good. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly complete assessments. These supply consistent information that is used to complete reviews of students' progress towards their targets and to adjust them if necessary. They contribute to raising standards
70. Provision for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory overall but the planning for their inclusion in departmental schemes of work is haphazard. The lack of a co-ordinated approach to the teaching of the key skills of literacy, oracy, numeracy and ICT across subjects restricts students' all-round and academic development. The provision for ICT across the curriculum was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. Although there has been some improvement, a few subjects such as geography do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to support learning. Access to the computer suites is limited and is restricting the development across the curriculum. KIA2
71. The curriculum for students in Years 9 to 11 offers few opportunities for vocational study. One group of students choose to follow a general programme of study leading to a national youth award. This programme is outward looking and encourages students to work independently as they tackle such topics as the community, the environment and health and survival.
72. Provision for students' personal and social education is good overall. The programme of study of one lesson every week is taught well by a team of four specialist teachers supported by other teachers. It includes suitable courses in sex education, drugs education, citizenship and careers guidance. The school's drugs education policy has been adopted by the local authority as a model policy that other schools are encouraged to adopt.
73. Provision of careers education is satisfactory. Careers guidance is provided through the school's personal and social education programme. It begins in Year 9 when students receive guidance concerning choices available to them as they consider their subject options. The programme is developed in Year 10 when all students undertake a period of work experience. Discussions with students indicate that work experience placements do not always match students' long-term aspirations. In Year 11, students complete their national record of achievement. All students have the opportunity of an interview with an external personal adviser to assist them in making their post-16 options.
74. Students with special educational needs have access to all areas of the school's activities and to the same curriculum as other students. The Cheney Plus support unit provides good support for students who have some disaffection with school through a work-related curriculum.
75. A programme of additional activities outside lesson time gives all students satisfactory opportunities to extend their learning. In areas such as music, drama, citizenship, modern foreign languages and design and technology, opportunities are good. Students play in an orchestra and in smaller ensembles such as the woodwind group. The quality of playing is consistently good. There is also a very good choir. Concerts are held at Christmas and in the summer term. 'Rock Challenge' is a popular dance group that is rehearsing weekly for a public performance at the Oxford Apollo theatre in March. The current production, which focuses on deconstructing fairy tales, involves around 100 students. A drama production of 'Guys and Dolls' is also currently in rehearsal.
76. Good citizenship is very evident in the weekly meetings of the León Link and the Amnesty International Youth Action groups. In both groups, students from all years organise

themselves very effectively to maintain very good links with a partner school in Nicaragua and to involve themselves in issues of human rights. Substantial funds are raised. The school council is another activity in which all students have good opportunities to influence decisions on issues that they raise. After-school clubs and annual trips to Boulogne and Aachen give students good opportunities to extend their learning of languages. The 'Young Engineers' groups for students in Years 9 and 10 meet weekly and students are able to work after school on design and technology projects. The library offers a good range of books for reference and additional access to ICT but is only open on two afternoons after school. Students have good opportunities to participate in football and trampolining at lunchtime and after school but the range of extra-curricular sporting activities provided is limited.

Personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

77. The school rightly takes pride in its efforts to ensure that students of all ethnic backgrounds are valued and supported. Earlier this year the strategies being followed to bring this about were reviewed comprehensively. As a result, all staff focused on the theme of partnership during a recent training day and considered ways of strengthening this inclusive approach. The English as an additional language department has done much very good work on fostering the school's international approach to education, celebrating the diversity of the school society and establishing close links with agencies such as those representing refugees. Units have been established to provide alternative programmes and additional support for students whose attendance patterns are erratic. Better links between different agencies within school have been established with the formation of the Connexions base. This is helping staff to offer more coherent programmes of support to students with problems.
78. The school provides students with good opportunities for personal development. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory. Assemblies are reflective but tutorial time has little of a spiritual nature to offer students. A few examples of spiritual development occur within subjects. Mathematical posters on pattern and shape, work on medicine in history and on earthquakes and volcanoes in geography and the range of experience offered through literature in English all help students to reflect on their place in the world.
79. Opportunities for moral development are good. Assemblies have a strong moral theme that is reinforced by the school's behaviour policy. Moral considerations are at the heart of much work across the curriculum. In history, topics studied include slavery, child labour and the rise of fascism. In design and technology, students consider sustainable development and the treatment of animals prior to slaughter. In modern foreign languages, students look at moral issues such as the environment, healthy eating and human relationships. English texts such as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* involve students in important moral issues surrounding friendship and loneliness. Staff set very good examples of moral conduct in their dealings with students.
80. Provision for social development is very good. In almost all subjects, students have very good opportunities for working independently in pairs and small groups. Whole-class discussions show very good examples of students communicating readily and listening attentively to others. Relationships among students and between staff and students are very good. There is very little bullying or hostility amongst students. The absence of racial tension is a very positive feature of the school. One outstanding example of students working harmoniously together was seen in the 'Rock Challenge' rehearsal in which around 80 students organised themselves to practise dance routines with the very minimum of supervision. Other very good examples are seen in the work of students involved in the school council, the León Link project and the Amnesty International group. In all three groups,

students are largely self-regulating. This makes the very good outcomes of their collaborative work even more impressive.

81. Provision for cultural development is good. Students learn about other cultures in mathematics from work on Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Babylonian and Chinese number systems. There are number games in the appropriate language for Urdu and Panjabi-speaking students. Students extend their knowledge of other cultures in history from the study of medicine in Greek, Roman and ancient Egyptian times. In design and technology, the textiles and food units of work have multi-ethnic aspects that show students the influence of other cultures on how we live. In geography, the cultural richness implied in studies of other peoples is extended for students by cultural elements in field courses. In modern foreign languages, cultural diversity is emphasised through the wide range of languages offered and the good displays that celebrate different cultures throughout the department. Native-speaking staff offer further opportunities for cultural enrichment.

Sixth form

82. Students have satisfactory learning opportunities in the sixth form. A good range of AS-level and A-level courses is offered. Students have a good choice of three modern foreign language courses to study in the sixth form. However, they do not have the chance to begin a new language. Year 11 students are encouraged to stay on into the sixth form and this year around two thirds of them chose to do so. Vocational courses are limited to GNVQs in science and business. The curriculum does not include courses that match the needs of lower attaining students but current planning seeks to deal with this. Students do not follow a general studies course but all students in Years 12 and 13 follow a suitable programme in basic skills for learning. A few courses, including this key skills programme, are taught partly during lunchtime. This presents additional constraints to good learning. Recreational sport is not offered on the timetable and opportunities outside lessons are limited by the temporary shortage of indoor facilities brought about by the current rebuilding programme. KIA1

83. Provision for students' personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good overall and matches that found in the rest of the school. Provision for careers education and advice has improved and is good. Students have access to a good quality of careers information from the form tutors and from booklets available in the library and sixth form area.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

84. The quality of care is good. The school provides a friendly and welcoming environment in which students are happy and secure and can learn and develop. Students receive a good quality of educational and personal support. The school's pastoral system is well organised and has a positive influence on students' learning. Good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance have led to improvements in both aspects.

85. Procedures for health and safety meet statutory requirements. Arrangements for risk assessment are in place, although their implementation is inconsistent in physical education. The school has effective procedures for child protection. A deputy head teacher is the designated teacher for child protection, has received appropriate training and has a good knowledge of child protection matters. Records are organised well and kept securely. All staff have received appropriate training on child protection procedures. Senior staff attend case conferences as appropriate.

86. The good system of pastoral care ensures that tutors and heads of year know their students well and respond well to students' academic and personal need. Staff value

students of all backgrounds equally. Through staying with the same class throughout Years 9 to 11 tutors enhance the quality of care given. Students say that this has increased their confidence in approaching tutors should they have any problems either about work or on a personal matter. The pastoral system is enhanced further by the involvement of careers and advice staff that include the school nurse, the educational social worker and the family support worker. These all provide additional support, particularly for the most vulnerable students in the school. The school provides students with a good standard of personal and academic support that has a positive effect on their learning.

87. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. Nevertheless, attendance remains well below average. The school operates an automatic first day call system. Tutors monitor attendance on a daily basis and seek reasons for absence. If no reasons are forthcoming, tutors advise heads of year, who make further enquiries involving parents if necessary. The attendance officer provides tutors and heads of year with details of students' absence on a weekly basis to assist them to monitor long-term absence. A few students who are identified with poor records of attendance are referred to the educational support worker who implements the rapid response scheme that involves contacting parents either by telephone or home visits. The educational social worker is based full time at the school and meets with the deputy head teacher and heads of year on a weekly basis. They discuss and agree appropriate action to be taken in response to instances of poor attendance. The educational support worker makes contact with parents and makes home visits where necessary with a view to improving attendance. Students receive awards for good and improved attendance. These awards have motivated some students to improve their attendance.
88. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The comprehensive management plan for behaviour makes clear that teachers should have high expectations for students' behaviour and that good behaviour is rewarded. The policy is supported by a clear code of conduct that is displayed in each classroom. It provides for a system of rewards and sanctions. The merit system is popular with students, particularly the prize draw system. Many students say that it encourages good behaviour. Disruptive students are withdrawn from lessons by senior staff and counselled about their behaviour. They then either return to their class or work under supervision in the behaviour annex. Tutors monitor students' behaviour in all lessons and take early action to correct poor behaviour, involving parents as necessary. Heads of year maintain good, centrally held records of students' behaviour and attitudes to learning. A deputy head teacher monitors incidents of poor behaviour in relation to ethnicity, gender and year groups, with a view to identifying students at risk of exclusions. Any student deemed to be at risk of exclusion receives additional support from the family support worker. These procedures have been successful in reducing the number of fixed and permanent exclusions. Procedures to discourage bullying and oppressive behaviour are effective. Bullies and students who have been bullied receive both support and guidance from the family support worker.
89. Procedures for assessing students' progress are good. At the beginning of Year 9 students sit nationally recognised tests that predict future performance. Their subsequent progress is measured against these predicted levels and any underachievement identified by subject teachers and followed up by form tutors. At the beginning of Year 10, students again receive predicted grades, based on tests taken at the end of Year 9. The progress of all students is reported on each term, either through a short report, a full report or a parents' evening. Thus, underachievement against predicted grades is effectively identified and acted upon. Teachers in all subjects have good access to information about students' prior attainment. This helps them to monitor progress and to plan appropriate lessons. A few teachers do not always make effective use of information from assessment to help them to plan their lessons to meet the needs of all in the class.

Sixth form

Assessment

90. The use of assessment to promote students' learning is improving and is good. It helps students to achieve well because they know from an early stage what is expected of them. Tutors and teachers also receive this information so that students' progress can be checked. Reports give good information about students' progress. The progress of sixth form students is assessed well and supported. In Years 12 and 13 students receive a short report early in the autumn term followed by a parents' evening. This enables teachers to identify promptly any students whose progress is a concern. Students are then supported appropriately by interventions from tutors, who are at the heart of the monitoring system. They meet regularly with individual students during tutorial time. Additionally, all students meet with tutors at the end of each year for a full review of progress. Targets are then set for future performance. Students of all backgrounds and at all levels of attainment benefit from this support and value the system.

Advice, support and guidance

91. The quality of advice, guidance and support for students has improved and is now good. Previously, students felt, correctly, that the quality of personal and careers advice was inadequate. This was largely because of staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. During Year 11, students receive information of good quality and sound guidance about opportunities for continuing their education post 16, primarily from the head of sixth form who works closely with the careers co-ordinator. Students receive good information about the courses available and the qualifications that can be obtained. There are open evenings for parents and students, at which time they look at predicted GCSE results, consider future career ambitions and discuss appropriate courses to match these ambitions. On the day that GCSE results are published, the head of sixth form is available in school to interview students to check results and to revise options if necessary. Most students consider that the advice and guidance they received prior to entry to the sixth form was helpful and appropriate.

92. Procedures for students' induction to the sixth form are good. Students are assigned to tutor groups and their tutor is available to give advice and guidance on domestic and personal problems, on a confidential basis if necessary. Students have indicated that the school's induction procedures have helped them to settle into the sixth form and the level of pastoral support enables them to concentrate on their studies. Students have a good amount of academic support. They correctly say their work is assessed quickly in most subjects. They receive constructive comments on their work that provide good guidance on how to improve their work. Tutors maintain good records of students' academic and personal development that are used to produce half termly reviews and to set targets for future development. There is a helpful and planned programme of advice and guidance relating to university entrance. Students have access to a wide range of guidance materials in the library. Tutors work well with students in tutor time on the completion of university application forms. Improved procedures for recording attendance have resulted in satisfactory attendance

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

93. The school has established a good partnership with parents that has been maintained since the previous inspection. Parents expressed positive views of the school in the questionnaire returns and at the pre-inspection meeting. They feel comfortable about discussing matters with staff. The majority of parents are pleased with the progress their

children make, the quality of teaching and the expectation that their children will work hard. Parents also indicated that their children enjoyed coming to school, that the school is helping students to become more mature and responsible and that the school is led and managed well. Inspection findings confirm these positive views of the school. A few parents expressed some concerns about the amount of homework, the information they receive about their children's progress and how closely the school works with parents. Inspectors disagree with these views and judge that the school's homework provision is appropriate, and that the school provides parents with good information about their children's progress and works hard to involve parents in the life of the school.

94. Parental involvement in the life of the school is good. The school provides frequent events for parents including workshops on drugs and sex education. It provides parenting classes and support for the parents of disaffected students. Tutors and heads of year indicate that they have good relationships with parents and generally receive good parental support when required. The Parents and School Association is active in organising social and fund-raising events. It has raised substantial funds that have been used to provide additional learning resources. The school's links with parents have a positive impact on students' learning at home and at school.

95. The quality and range of information for parents are good. The school prospectus and governors' annual report are well presented and provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities. Student planners provide an effective means of two-way communication between parents and the school. In addition, parents receive a parent's handbook, regular newsletters, a range of explanatory leaflets and letters about specific events, all of which keep parents well informed about the school and its activities. The school provides, appropriately, information in a number of different languages. Parents are invited to one parents' meeting at which they can discuss their children's progress and to a number of other meetings relating to specific events. Bilingual staff contact parents for whom English is an additional language to notify them of various school events. Parents are provided with two interim reports and a full report about their children's progress. Generally, these reports are of good quality and give parents an overview of the subjects, students' strengths and weaknesses and advice on how students can improve their learning.

96. The Cheney Plus support unit is effective in improving attendance for a number of students who would otherwise not be attending school. There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of students who have special educational needs. Parents and students are now involved in the review and target setting process in line with the 2002 Code of Practice for special educational needs. Very good contacts with local authority services provide effective support for students with learning or behavioural difficulties.

97. Students in the sixth form hold positive views about the school. Most feel that the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 lives up to their expectations. They value the extended range of courses available through the partnership arrangements. They appreciate the good quality of teaching and the good support and guidance they receive. They commented very favourably about the harmonious race relations within the school and felt that they had good opportunities to express their views, knowing that they would be listened to and acted upon.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

98. The very good leadership and management of the head teacher, supported very well by a strong and effective senior management team, are important factors in the school's continued success and good improvements. Under the head teacher's thoughtful, sensitive and well-considered guidance, the school vigorously seeks to achieve a high quality of

performance in all aspects of its work. The school has maintained the strengths identified in its previous inspection report in 1996 and has made good progress since. It is popular and oversubscribed and deserves its good reputation locally. The aim of promoting the all-round and academic development of all students is evident in the school's daily life. Standards in external examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are now average at the end of Year 11 and above average in the sixth form. Students of high attainment do particularly well. In 2000, the School Achievement award from the Department for Education and Employment recognised the school's good improvement in performance in GCSE examinations. Since 2000, results have improved further.

99. The clearly defined responsibilities of the senior managers lead to efficient management of the school's policies and priorities. A particularly successful outcome is the very good quality of relationships among students and between students and staff. In this school, in which students come from a very wide range of social and economic backgrounds and from a large number of different ethnic backgrounds, there is an absence of racial tension. The very effective work of the deputy heads, who oversee arrangements for the personal and academic development and care of students, ensures that all students are valued equally. The atmosphere within the school is one of mutual respect, friendliness and openness. As a result, the large majority of students respond very positively to their work and enjoy school. In the words of one Year 11 student, "leadership and management are very good because they motivate you to do things. Management is great because they know what they are doing." The school gained the award of Investor in People in 1993 and has had the award confirmed at regular intervals since. This award indicates that the school's systems of management are appropriate and effective.
100. The head teacher and governing body provide a very clear educational direction for the school. They have very high expectations of staff and students. They have planned very carefully and effectively to ensure that the current reorganisation of the school provides a good quality of education for existing and new students. A testament to the very good relationships among students and staff is the manner in which the school has gone about its daily life with minimal fuss, despite all the distractions, disruptions and inconveniences posed by a major building programme currently taking place on site. As a result of the foresight and determination of the governors and senior staff, arrangements for accommodating the large number of additional students in Years 7 and 8 for the first time next September are proceeding very well. Arrangements for the future staffing of the greatly enlarged school are at a suitably advanced stage. They have required governors and senior staff to act sensitively in appointing new staff and existing staff from this school and the local middle schools due for closure, to new posts.
101. Governors are very supportive, active and committed to the school's improvement. They are proud of the school's strengths and know what needs improvement. They work hard and carry out their responsibilities very effectively, apart from those relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. They manage the school's finances well. Weekly meetings of the chair of governors and the head teacher help to keep governors very well informed about all the aspects of the school's work and development. Governors monitor developments rigorously and effectively. They review frequently the school's performance and take effective action to improve it. Governors value the work of the head teacher and all staff at the school. They call the head teacher and senior staff to account suitably and sensitively and set appropriately challenging targets for the school's performance. They show a keen interest in the all-round development, as well as the academic success, of all students. They recognise that the governing body represents a limited section of the school's population. They plan, sensibly, to use the current reorganisation of schools in the area to attract a wider representation of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds.

102. The school's procedures for checking how well it is doing and planning for improvements are good. The outcomes of these procedures are good. For example, governors and senior staff identified the need to improve the system of assessment in order to raise achievement further. This resulted in the creation of a new post at a senior level and a consequent better understanding among teachers in all subjects about how to set meaningful and challenging targets for students and teachers. The system of performance management has been implemented successfully. The head teacher, governors and senior staff frequently and rigorously check information relating to the school's performance. The school improvement plan contains suitable priorities for raising standards. The school analyses its data from examinations and tests carefully and uses suitable systems to assess and predict achievement. These systems are effective in helping students to achieve well overall. In 2001 and 2002, the school slightly exceeded its suitably challenging targets for the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations. Targets for future performances in external examinations are set at suitably challenging levels.
103. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are effective in sharing good practice and identifying areas for improvement. The professional development of teachers is linked appropriately to priorities in the school and departmental improvement plans and to needs reported in the reviews of teachers' performances. A suitable programme of induction enables new and newly qualified teachers to settle in quickly to the school's routines. The school's good work in the initial teacher training of students has been recognised by an award from the Teacher Training Agency. The arrangements for the training of student teachers help the full-time teachers to develop a wider range of teaching methods.
104. The generally good leadership and management of subjects is a contributory factor to students' good achievement by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Leadership and management are very good in English, history and in the department for English as an additional language. The departmental development plans are linked suitably to the priorities of the school's improvement plan. Heads of year manage their students and staff well to ensure that students receive a very good quality of care. Good leadership in the sixth form is having a positive influence on attempts to raise achievement and the quality of education from good to very good.
105. The good leadership of the learning support department has prepared the school well for the changes brought about by the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. Statutory procedures for special educational needs are fully in place. The individual education plans have appropriate information and targets that are effective in meeting students' needs. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of provision for students with special educational needs and to the classes generally in which they work, although they are occasionally not deployed to most efficient effect. The link governor is effective in providing support and advice and in ensuring that the governing body is kept informed. The development and funding of the Cheney Plus unit for students who experience some disaffection with school are managed well.
106. The school's financial planning is good. The school's budget is now in balance, having shown a slight deficit recently. Appropriate checks and comparisons are made to ensure that the school spends its money carefully and to get good value. Specific funds coming into the school, such as those for support of ethnic minority students, staff development and special educational needs, are used properly for their designated purposes.
107. The school manages its resources well. The overall match of teachers and support staff to the requirements of the timetable is very good. Staff have appropriate experience and are

well qualified. The induction programme for new staff, the support given to newly qualified teachers and the arrangements made for staff training are excellent. In subjects such as English, modern foreign languages and history, staffing is very good. Recent appointments of staff of good quality in several subjects are helping to raise standards of teaching and learning. However, the school is experiencing difficulty in retaining teaching assistants over the long term.

108. Accommodation is satisfactory. Current problems arise in part from the extensive rebuilding programme which reduces available space and which has necessitated the loss of the gymnasium. As a result, accommodation for physical education is currently unsatisfactory. However, the provision of a new sports hall is expected to improve provision for the subject. In modern foreign languages, the very good accommodation contributes substantially to high standards of work. Divided accommodation in science and design and technology is less than ideal. Here the new building will help to solve these and most other problems of accommodation. The library is spacious and used well. The good stock of books and other resources and additional ICT facilities support students' learning well.
109. The amount and quality of learning resources are adequate to meet students' learning needs. Following the previous inspection when ICT resources were found to be unsatisfactory, the school has focused successfully on upgrading and extending the provision for ICT. Resources for ICT are now satisfactory, though access to computing facilities is limited so that students' learning is restricted in a few subjects.
110. Through the hard work and commitment of staff at all levels, the school has made good improvement since its previous inspection in 1996. Standards in GCSE and A-level examinations have improved well. The quality of teaching and learning continue to improve and is good overall. Improvement in dealing with the six key issues identified in the previous inspection is good overall. Firstly, improvement in the provision for ICT and design and technology is satisfactory. Attempts to improve ICT have, until recently, been hindered through difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff. Secondly, the school has developed good strategies to improve attendance and is doing more than could reasonably be expected to improve it. The one per cent rise in attendance last year was scant reward for the school's hard work. Thirdly, behaviour in the school has improved and is now satisfactory overall and usually good. Fourthly, the links with the middle schools have improved so that the continuity of students' learning is better. Fifthly, resources for learning have increased and are adequate overall. Finally, statutory requirements for subjects of the National Curriculum are now met although those for the provision of a daily act of collective worship and for the provision of religious education in Years 12 and 13 are not met. The school has the capacity and the shared commitment to improve further.
111. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of students and the current quality of education and achievement, the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

112. Good leadership and management in the sixth form set a clear direction for future improvement and make an effective contribution to students' good achievement. The head of sixth form co-ordinates the work of all colleagues well and has a good awareness of the sixth form's strengths and areas for development. Students benefit from the good management of the local sixth form partnership arrangement that provides access to a wide range of courses and additional facilities.

113. Procedures for checking what it does well and what it could do better have helped the school to identify the strengths and areas for development in its sixth form provision. The school is correct to include among these particular strengths the good performance of high attaining students in A-level examination, the help that staff give to middle attainers to add good value to their previous attainment, the very harmonious relationships among students of all backgrounds and the provision of a good overall quality of care and guidance. It has, appropriately, included among its plans for improvement the need to extend the range of courses in Years 12 and 13 to attract a wider range of attainment into the sixth form and to improve the provision for vocational education. It sees the need to improve the rates of retention on a few courses in Year 12 and to provide more enrichment activities for students. The analysis of students' previous attainment and current capabilities is thorough. As a result, students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and are set suitably challenging targets for improvement. Students are guided carefully towards suitable examination courses and know what they need to do to succeed.
114. Governors support the extension of courses to include those with a more vocational element. Governors are kept fully informed of developments within the sixth form. Agenda items appear regularly, with reports to governors about developments and work in the sixth form. Accordingly, governors are able to make decisions regarding the sixth form from an informed basis. This was apparent in the criteria used by governors to appoint the current head of sixth form and the subsequent priorities and targets for improvement.
115. Good planning has resulted in improvements in the quality of education provided in Years 12 and 13. More effective procedures for monitoring the attendance of sixth form students have led to satisfactory attendance. Good systems have been developed to track students' academic and personal development throughout Years 12 and 13. These are helping students to raise standards.
116. Teachers try hard and successfully on the whole to ensure that students follow courses that suit their aspirations and needs. Students enjoy equal access to the curriculum. Provision for students for whom English is an additional language and for the few students with special educational needs is very good. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and for a daily act of collective worship. This restricts the range of activities to enrich students' learning. KIA AA

Resources

117. The school makes effective and efficient use of its good staffing and adequate resources and accommodation for the teaching of courses in Years 12 and 13. Resources available for learning in the sixth form are of similar good quality to those in the rest of the school. Provision and access to ICT are limited in a few subjects, such as geography, and slightly restrict the development of students' study and research skills. The accommodation available to sixth formers is adequate, with several parts, such as in the new block, of good quality. Teachers have good qualifications for the sixth form courses they teach and use their expertise well to encourage good standards. Governors have a good overview of financial affairs. They plan spending in accordance with realistic budgetary information. They assess priorities suitably before spending decisions are taken. The sixth form is cost-effective in relation to the school's expenditure as a whole. The financial aspect of the sixth form partnership is worked out carefully so that the school receives good value for money in this respect. Resources available for learning in the sixth form are adequate and broadly match those in the rest of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

118. In order to raise standards and to make further improvements to the quality of education the school should include the following key issues in its action plan.

- (1) Raise the achievement of boys by implementing more effective strategies across subjects to provide activities for learning that increase boys' interest and concentration and help them to improve the presentation of their work.
KIA1

- (2) Raise students' standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT and increase their use across subjects by
 - implementing a consistent approach to the teaching of these key skills;
 - frequently and regularly checking the effectiveness of students' use of these skills to assist their learning in all subjects;
 - improving students' access to ICT facilities. KIA2

- (3) Intensify efforts to raise attendance and introduce more effective measures to ensure students' punctuality to school and to lessons. KIA3

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students. AA

Sixth form

- (1) Extend the range of learning opportunities for students of all levels of attainment through the provision of more vocational courses. KIA5

- (2) Improve provision for the enrichment of learning experiences of sixth form students through a wider range of extra-curricular activities and by meeting statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 12 and 13. KIA 6

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

Years 9 – 11

136

Sixth form

52

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students

68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 9 – 11

Number	7	21	59	44	3	2	0
Percentage	5	15	43	32	2	2	0

Sixth form

Number	3	12	25	12	0	0	0
Percentage	6	23	48	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	759	247
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	166	18

Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	18	9
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	181	9

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	206

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	10
National comparative data	8.1

School data	3.5
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	131	131	262

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	83	67
	Girls	98	90	87
	Total	161	173	154
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (60)	66 (63)	59 (48)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (19)	42 (38)	32 (24)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	93	62
	Girls	104	108	73
	Total	167	201	135
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (57)	77 (66)	52 (42)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (23)	45 (35)	22 (20)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	145	117	262

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	54	124	136
	Girls	53	107	114
	Total	107	231	250
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	41 (39)	88 (86)	95 (92)
	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 student	School	37.0 (37.8)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	40	49	89
	Average point score per candidate	17.4	15.5	16.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	33	46	79	8	7	15
	Average point score per candidate	17.8	14.4	15.8	13.5	13.7	13.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	623	25	0
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	58	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	61	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	27	4	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	98	10	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	49	3	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	35	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	12	3	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	12	0	0
Information not obtained	9	2	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	16

Financial year	2001/2002
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Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
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	£
Total income	3 213 303

Total aggregate hours worked per week	699
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Deployment of teachers: Y9– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	22.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Total expenditure	3 158 859
Expenditure per student	3204
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 44 436
Balance carried forward to next year	10 008

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30

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

* Includes teachers on temporary contracts.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1006
Number of questionnaires returned	115

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	54	9	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	56	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	66	11	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	55	19	9	4
The teaching is good.	16	66	8	2	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	51	16	5	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	33	58	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	36	52	9	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	20	49	18	8	5
The school is well led and managed.	31	59	5	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	59	5	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	54	11	4	12

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

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and leads to high academic standards.
- Very good assessment and thorough tracking of progress help students to achieve well.
- Very good management and excellent leadership ensure standards continue to rise.

Area for improvement

- Boys' results are well below those of girls in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.

127. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. In national tests in 2002, results were below the national average. Performance was below average compared with similar schools. Girls did significantly better than boys. This reflects the differences in their attainment when they joined the school. Results in 2002 were uncharacteristic of those in the last three years that showed a steady upward trend. Performance was affected adversely by staffing difficulties and the poor commitment of a large minority of boys. In 2001, results in the national tests in English were average and similar to the results attained in mathematics and science. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. Bearing in mind standards on entry to the school, which are below average, students make good progress by the end of Year 9.
128. Standards at the end of Year 11 match the national average. GCSE results in 2001 were below average in both English language and literature. Girls performed much nearer to their respective national average than boys did to theirs. Results were as expected from previous performance. They were similar to results attained in mathematics and above those in science. Overall, students attained slightly lower grades in English than in many of the other subjects they sat. The proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in 2002 was higher than the school's average. Girls did outstandingly well in literature. Work seen matches this standard and reflects the generally upward trend of recent years. Students of all levels of attainment, including those who are gifted or talented, make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 11. Results for drama in 2001 were above average and were even better in 2002. The poor attendance of a few students hinders the English department's attempts to raise standards further. KIA1 KIA3
129. The overall standard of speaking and listening in the main school is above that found nationally. Students collaborate constructively in pairs and small groups. They listen attentively to staff and classmates. There is wide variation in the quality of speech. A few students lack confidence and fluency. The large majority, however, answer questions willingly and articulately. They take part in discussion and feed back ideas to the class clearly and responsibly. In drama, students improvise lively dialogue, often successfully creating a sense of tension and excitement. Many high attaining students in all years read aloud well. They communicate understanding effectively through lively variations in pitch, pace and intonation.
130. The great majority of students have average levels of reading comprehension. A large minority, however, enter the school with a reading age well below their actual age. Such students receive intensive, specialist support and make rapid progress. All those with special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, receive frequent and

regular assistance with their reading. This enables almost all of them to understand and enjoy the range of books studied in lessons. Students make good use of the well-stocked library. Students in Year 9 read widely for pleasure. By the end of Year 9, students have studied a wide range of literature and identify accurately such elements as plot, themes and the interplay of key characters. They analyse the ways in which writers use language for a variety of purposes, especially to create tension and excitement for the reader. Students in Years 10 and 11 develop increasingly mature and perceptive responses to literature. A class in Year 11, for example, working on Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, knew the text thoroughly, as a direct result of excellent teaching. They discussed sensitively relationships between the characters in the novel and their importance to its structure.

131. Standards of written work at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are average. Most students write well for a range of purposes and audiences. They usually draft their writing carefully. A few lower attaining students do not read their first drafts carefully enough and so fail to correct errors. By the end of Year 9, the best writing of high attaining students is carefully planned, imaginative and, in the main, accurate in detail. Some of this work reaches very high National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11, students produce longer and more ambitious assignments. Many of these are in response to their study of literature. Lower attaining students make errors with paragraph and sentence structure, as well as in the expression of ideas. High attaining students plan thoroughly, craft their work skilfully and, in a few cases, create an individual sense of style. KIA2
132. The quality of teaching in the main school is good. It is often better. In Year 9, it is uniformly good. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers prepare lessons very well and have very high academic standards. They use questioning skilfully to encourage accurate answers. Students with special educational needs receive teaching of particular sensitivity. The teaching of mixed ability classes is very effective with tasks set at appropriate levels according to students' needs. As a result students of all levels of attainment, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Teachers employ a wide range of methods and a stimulating choice of language activities. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Students generally respond enthusiastically. Relationships in almost all lessons are mutually respectful. Teachers mark students' work conscientiously and consistently, with clear diagnostic comments and constructive and positive advice on ways to improve.
133. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Work in drama adds a valuable dimension, aiding students' self-awareness, oral confidence and sensitivity to their peers. The department makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum. The amount of time allocated for English in the curriculum for Year 10 is less than that found in many schools. This has had an adverse effect upon results, particularly as all students enter for two separate GCSE subjects. The varied language backgrounds of a large minority of students make the shortage of time even more acute.
134. All teachers are very well qualified in the subject. They are all highly committed professionals and share the same high expectation of students. Management of the department is very good and leadership is excellent. There is a very clear sense of shared energy and purpose. Much effort has concentrated on improving teaching and learning. Assessment of students' work is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. All the key issues for development have been addressed successfully.
135. In other subjects across the curriculum, students generally listen attentively. The standard of oral work is above average. However, teachers do not exploit this strength fully in

many subjects. The essential contribution of speech and discussion to students' learning has not, as yet, been fully recognised and implemented in many subjects. KIA2

136. The great majority of students read well enough to understand textbooks and other printed materials in other subjects. In mathematics, design and technology, geography and history, key words are displayed and used well in lessons. A few subjects teach lessons in the library and take advantage of good subject sections. Students are encouraged to use ICT facilities to extend their knowledge, but use of the rich book resources in the library is not fully integrated into research assignments in a few subjects.
137. The quality of presentation of written work is satisfactory overall. Prompts to help students to structure their writing are used in mathematics and history. Students in geography have help with grammar, spelling and punctuation through the marking of their work. They also have the chance to develop other writing skills through field courses and case studies.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject well to plan and teach effective lessons.
- Students' good response to the good teaching enables good progress in GCSE courses.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in lessons to broaden students' experiences of using mathematics is insufficient.
- Teaching does not always ensure that all students are involved fully in the work.

138. In 2002, results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average overall. They were below the national average for students gaining level 5 and above. They were above average for those gaining level 6 and above. These results matched those of similar schools. Higher attaining students achieve higher standards in mathematics than those in similar schools. The results for girls were better than for boys. The difference is greater than the national difference and reflects the differences in their attainment when they joined the school in Year 9. In 2001, results in the national tests in mathematics were average and similar to the results attained in English and science. Over recent years results have improved faster than the national improvement. GCSE results in 2002 were close to the national average for those students gaining A*-C and A*-G. GCSE results are rising faster than the national rate of improvement. When compared to students' prior attainment, achievement is good. Mathematics results in 2001 were similar to those in English and better than those in science. Overall, students attained slightly lower grades in mathematics than in most of their other subjects.
139. In work seen in class and students' books, standards are currently are higher than those suggested by recent examination results and are average overall. Higher attaining students in Year 9 use the intercept and gradient technique when working on straight-line graphs. They use quadratic expressions when investigating number patterns. This is work from levels 6 and 7 of the National Curriculum and indicates above average standards and good achievement. Work seen indicates that at this stage in Year 9 fewer students are at the higher levels than would be expected. However, the work of students in Year 11 shows that the proportion of students working at the higher levels has increased. The highest attaining

students factorise and add or subtract algebraic fractions with confidence. Most of these students are on course to gain A* or A grades in their GCSE examinations. Average attaining students calculate compound interest and are confident in using conversions between percentages and the appropriate decimals in their calculations. Lower attaining students develop their numerical work well alongside work on shape and space. Students who have special educational needs make good progress because the grouping of students by prior attainment allows work to be suited well to their needs. These students benefit from the help given by learning support assistants. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress because they can communicate well using the language of mathematics. A few of these students agree that mathematics is making a positive contribution to their skills in speaking and writing English. Students' number skills are good. They use calculators sparingly and in an appropriate manner.

140. Students' good achievement is a result of good teaching overall. Teachers use their good knowledge of mathematics to plan lessons carefully. The National Numeracy Strategy is not implemented fully in Year 9 but a few elements are in use. This is a developing feature of the department in preparation for the forthcoming changes to the age range of students in the school. Many lessons have a starting activity comprising of a mental arithmetic or a related activity that leads to the main focus of lessons. Plenary sessions are often brief but point the way forward to the next lesson. Teachers use homework effectively to reinforce work covered in lessons. One lesson seen in Year 11 was excellent. It contained very challenging algebraic material and students worked at a brisk pace on short time-limited exercises. This lesson involved all students actively. Students worked out solutions to questions on the board confidently, explaining their method to the whole class. A few lessons lacked sufficient challenge and did not involve students actively in their learning.
141. Students respond very well to the good teaching. They arrive at lessons promptly and settle quickly. They work hard during lessons. Students work well together in groups. One lesson placed students in groups and required them to discuss formulae to decide what units were given. The discussion was backed up by reason and all members of each group made positive contributions to the findings. The good atmosphere in lessons encourages students to approach teachers for extra help out of lesson time. This is given readily and helps students to improve. Students of all levels of attainment, including those who are gifted or talented, make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 11.
142. Effective leadership has fostered a mutually supportive atmosphere amongst teachers that has a positive effect on standards. The good scheme of work, based on and referenced to the National Curriculum, satisfies statutory requirements. Teachers give students a copy of the learning objectives at the start of each topic that enables them to have a good indication of their level of working. This is particularly good in GCSE courses as students are in no doubt as to the tier of entry they are following. There is limited use of computers to enhance learning. Other resources are adequate to support learning and are used well. A few of the classrooms are small for the numbers of students using them and restrict the range of learning activities that can take place. Attempts to raise overall standards are hindered by the unsatisfactory attendance of a few students. KIA2 KIA3
143. Students' skills in numeracy are adequate for their needs in other subjects. The lack of an effective whole-school policy for the development of numeracy across all subjects means that few subjects provide good opportunities for students to practise and develop their mathematical skills. KIA2
144. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results have risen and teaching has improved. The department is now in a position to develop and improve further.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to assist students' learning.
- Students have positive attitudes and want to do well.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment is below average in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching and learning is of inconsistent quality.
- Assessment of students' work does not always show them clearly enough how to improve.

145. Standards on entry to the school in Year 9 are below average. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, in 2001, were average and similar to those attained in English and mathematics. They were average compared with similar schools. Results for 2002 dropped back to the below average results obtained in the three years 1998 to 2000. Over the past few years, girls have achieved better results than boys.
146. GCSE results in 2001 were average and matched those attained by similar schools. Girls' performance was much better than that of the boys mainly because the prior attainment of girls was higher. Unconfirmed results for 2002 are similar to those of 2001 and are an improvement on those of 2000 when they were below average. Students do less well in GCSE examinations in science than they do in many of their other subjects.
147. Standards at the end of Year 9, as seen in classes and in scrutiny of work, are below average and slightly lower than those indicated by students' results in national tests in 2001. Based on attainment when they joined the school in Year 9, this represents satisfactory achievement. Students are grouped according to their level of competence. However, a few teachers do not plan lessons to meet the wide range of students' individual needs in these groups. As a result, a few students are not sufficiently challenged and these more competent students make unsatisfactory progress. In a few classes, a small number of less competent students underachieve because they do not understand the relevance of what they are doing.
148. With the exception of scientific enquiry and experimental method, standards are broadly similar in all aspects of science. Students' practical and investigative skills are inadequate because they have too few opportunities to make their own predictions or to define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding. They seldom plan their own experiments and evaluate the results. Students are generally good at carrying out experiments planned by the teacher. In a class of high attainers in Year 9, students learned through experiment that the moment of the force depends on the size of the force and its distance from the fulcrum or pivot.
149. Many students in Year 9 lack confidence in using basic scientific terminology. Although most teachers help students to develop their literacy skills appropriately, they do not always do so rigorously enough. Numeracy skills are satisfactory as most teachers pay suitable attention to the development of graphical skills, problem solving and analysis of data. Students do not have enough opportunities to use or develop their ICT skills because they rarely get hands-on experience of such useful activities as recording information. KIA2
150. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 to 11 are average. They are not quite as high as those indicated by the GCSE results in

2001. Most have a satisfactory knowledge of the topics they are studying. For example, students in a Year 11 class of high attainers learn that chemical reactions take place at a variety of speeds and that the rate of a given reaction can be found by experiment. They understand that the rate of most reactions changes with time. Through experiment, students find that the rate alters by changing the surface area of a solid reactant. Higher attaining students use a graph of mass loss against time to explain the formation of a product of a reaction. The lack of investigative experience in much of their science means that students' practical and investigative skills, though improving, are below their attainment in other areas of science.

151. Most students of average attainment and below, including those with learning difficulties, reach the standards expected of them. However, in a few classes the work is not always matched to the needs of everyone in the class so that a few higher and lower attaining students underachieve in GCSE examinations. Many students do not express themselves clearly and at length in their spoken and written responses. Consequently they do not demonstrate their knowledge and understanding fully. KIA2
152. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress because they receive good, and often very good, individual help from their teachers and support assistants. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Those with statements, who receive support from learning support assistants, make good progress.
153. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The teaching observed varied from good to unsatisfactory. Teaching was good in just over one quarter of the lessons seen. The department has no effective procedures for checking the work of students and teachers, with the result that there is insufficient sharing of good practice about teaching and learning. The differences in the quality of teaching produces marked differences in students' responses to learning.
154. In the good lessons, the teacher's good knowledge and expertise combined with high expectations and enthusiasm resulted in effective planning. These lessons gave students confidence so that they responded positively and tried hard. Teachers shared the lessons' aims with the class and challenged students with carefully constructed open-ended questions. These helped students to explore their understanding and made them reflect and think critically. This happened in a Year 9 lesson on forces, in which the pace was good so that learning was effective. The lesson included a range of activities for finding out about air resistance, how it is caused, what it feels like and what it does. Students learned well, gaining confidence in the use of new terminology such as air particles, colliding, resistance, force and motion.
155. Features that resulted in good learning included the active involvement and participation of students in their own learning and the care taken by the teacher to make science relevant and interesting to students through the provision of a variety of teaching and learning methods. These features were not always prominent in the lessons that were only satisfactory. This meant that a few students took little part actively and made slower progress. Much of the teaching is instructional, directed at the whole class, without adaptation for the highest and lowest attainers. Whilst this method is effective in conveying information, it reduces opportunities for students to take any initiative, think for themselves and solve problems. In the few lessons in which teaching was less than satisfactory, the teacher used too much time in trying to control the class, the pace was slow, planning was weak and the level of difficulty of work was inappropriate, so that insufficient learning took place.

156. Marking is regular and frequent. The emphasis is on encouraging the students. However, comments do not always give students a clear enough indication of how well they are progressing, of what they have got wrong, and what they need to do in order to improve. The grading system for written work lacks uniformity among teachers. As a result, grades are frequently given to students that they do not understand and are of little value in helping them to progress.
157. Most students have a good attitude to work. They co-operate with teachers, concentrate well, and help one another when necessary. Behaviour is usually good, but at times a few students are inattentive and easily distracted. Good relationships lead to effective collaboration in group work. For the most part, students are good listeners and answer questions in a courteous manner to the best of their ability. However, their responses occasionally lack fluency and they show little initiative in raising scientific questions or ideas to enquire more deeply into a topic. When teachers provide suitably challenging and purposeful tasks, students respond well, use their initiative and show commitment.
158. Leadership is satisfactory. However, responsibilities within the department are not defined clearly. The day-to-day management is satisfactory and teamwork is good. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Improvements have occurred in tracking the subject's performance. However, planning is insufficiently rigorous, particularly in respect of checking and assessing students' and teachers' work and setting targets for improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to support learning.
- Good planning sets clear objectives for students.
- Standards of work in Year 9 improve as a result of teachers' high expectations.
- Good relationships exist between teachers and students that support learning.

.Areas for improvement

- The narrowness of the current curriculum restricts the range of learning experiences.
- Students work with a very restricted range of media and materials.
- Boys' attainment is much lower than girls in the subject.

159. Students enter the school at the start of Year 9 with well below average attainment. Basic drawing and painting skills are weak and students have difficulty in producing accurate, well-observed studies of simple objects. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are average and represent good achievement for students of all levels of attainment. In 2001, teachers' assessments showed that the number of students achieving level 5 and above at the end of Year 9 was above the national average. Boys' attainment was below that of girls in the school. The figures for 2002 show that girls' attainment was much higher than boys' attainment as expected from students' prior attainment.
160. GCSE results in 2001 were slightly above the national average. Girls' attainment was much higher than boys' attainment, but both were slightly above their respective national averages. Students performed better in art and design than in most other subjects that they took. In 2002, there was further improvement in girls' GCSE results and a decline in boys' attainment. In 2001, the number of students attaining the highest grades A* and A was above average.

161. At the beginning of Year 9, students' basic skills in art and design are weak. Students have difficulty in sustaining concentration over any length of time. The majority are interested in learning how to draw and paint well. They make good progress throughout the year. Many of the highest attaining students make very good progress and have acquired the capacity to think and learn for themselves. However, a few of the lowest attaining students in Year 9 find it very difficult to settle readily to work. They chatter constantly and are disruptive, which affects not only their concentration but also that of all others in the group. This behaviour has a negative impact on overall standards of work. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported well by teachers and make satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs are integrated well and work to the best of their ability and achieve well.
162. In Years 10 and 11 students make satisfactory progress. They are producing work that is of average standard. Most settle readily to the given tasks and work with reasonable concentration to develop ideas and concepts through art and craft activities. Most students are continuing to think and learn for themselves. Others continue to experience difficulty with basic drawing and painting skills. Although teaching and learning are good, achievement is satisfactory rather than good. This is partly because the attendance of a few students is unsatisfactory. Another reason is that the time allocation of one 45-minute lesson for the short GCSE course in Year 11 is insufficient for students to reach the highest possible grades. Students work within a narrow range of work, which consists mainly of drawing, painting and craft skills. Students with special educational needs make good progress, as do students for whom English is an additional language. KIA3
163. Teaching is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, there are many strengths in teaching. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan well and to set clear objectives for students. Relationships between teachers and students are good. There is a lack of variation in teaching methods. Teachers do not make enough use of resources such as videocassettes, filmstrips or CD-ROMs to enhance learning. Students lack experience of design in work-related contexts such as the use of photography, computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers.
164. Leadership and management are good. Appropriately, the department is improving its procedures for assessment in order to provide more detailed written feedback to students on a regular basis. The forthcoming move of the department to new accommodation as part of the school's reorganisation is expected to improve the department's current inadequate facilities for storage of students' work and for materials and resources. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Good teaching enables students to produce good work.
- Students have very good opportunities to develop good citizenship in activities outside lessons.

Area for improvement

- National Curriculum programmes of study are not fully in place.

165. Citizenship is taught through subjects such as personal and social education, religious education and geography. There are no national test results or records of teachers' assessment to use for comparison against standards of work at the school.
166. Nevertheless, in work seen, students showed impressive levels of maturity and competence when communicating in lessons and participating in activities. In a Year 9 lesson, students worked together very effectively in pairs and small groups when exploring different types of family. In a Year 11 lesson, students discussed their recent work experience thoughtfully. Several students showed well above average skills in communication. All students, including those with special educational needs, showed that they could talk perceptively about their personal experiences. A Year 10 class produced group posters presenting students' own views on relationships. In this activity, students had good independent learning and awareness of media techniques. The folders of Year 10 students showed good reflection on the purpose of laws but written responses were quite brief. Year 9 work on bullying included the preparation of anti-bullying leaflets that showed good awareness of what causes social conflict. KIA2
167. Citizenship is taught principally through personal and social education lessons. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good relationships with their classes that help students to enjoy their work and achieve well. Year 10 students responded sensitively to their class teacher's account of her grandfather's experience in World War I. Teachers use their very good knowledge and experience of citizenship to direct discussion of human rights and responsibilities in ways that encourage students to participate.
168. Students are also taught aspects of good citizenship in other subjects. In geography, for example, students undertake studies of inner-city regeneration. They examine counter-urbanisation in local villages and consider such issues as pollution, the developing world and the role of multi-national companies. Good teaching and learning also occur in religious education in which one class produced work of very high quality on prejudice and stereotyping. Students for whom English is an additional language play a full and active part in citizenship lessons, as seen in a fluent presentation to the rest of the class on issues surrounding abortion.
169. Examples of very good citizenship are found in additional activities that take place outside lesson time. A thriving school council with representatives from each tutor group gives every student a voice for influencing decisions on issues that students raise. A student chairs regular meetings of the León Link group at which students from all years organise activities to help the school to maintain close links with a partner school in Nicaragua. An Amnesty International Youth Action group meets weekly. This group of around 30 students from all years has its own committee and chairperson. Human rights issues are discussed keenly. Students participate actively in, for example, writing letters of protest about violations of human rights.
170. In the absence of an appointed co-ordinator of citizenship the head of the personal and social education department has provided good interim leadership and management. However, no audit of the overall provision has taken place to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum requirements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 11 from a very low starting point in Year 9.
- Effective monitoring of teaching and learning is improving standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Improved computing facilities and good management of poor accommodation and resources help to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of a vocational course means that the subject does not meet fully the needs of all students.
- Year 9 students do not know clearly what they need to do to improve.

171. Students' attainment when they enter the school in Year 9 is well below average. Currently, students make steady progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is below average. In 2001, GCSE results were well below the national average. Boys' results were slightly lower than those of girls. Students did slightly less well in design and technology than in other subjects. There were variations in attainment across subject specialisms. Provisional results for 2002 indicate improved standards that are below the national average but represent good achievement, particularly in food technology and graphic products. Performance is low in the newly introduced electronic products course. Over the past three years, GCSE performance has been variable, but standards are rising on both the full and short courses, although students perform less well on short courses than on full courses.
172. Students' achievement during their short time in Year 9 is satisfactory. They work safely with a range of materials and tools, but their designing and process skills remain poor. Students do not use basic graphics equipment correctly. They have limited skills in three-dimensional drawing. They adapt and modify basic recipes and make a simple soup but make little effective use of basic nutritional information. They can construct an electronic circuit. Students find it difficult to develop a range of annotated and different design ideas so that designs are largely superficial. A few students, particularly boys, do not take enough pride in their work. KIA1
173. Throughout Years 9 to 11, teachers use and explain key vocabulary, and are starting to develop writing prompts to assist evaluation of work. They do not sufficiently display key word lists. Students develop numeracy skills when they measure accurately for making or for calculating proportions of ingredients. They present the results of research in graphical form. Students make good use of ICT to assist their work. They learn how to use computer-aided design software.
174. By the end of Year 11, students work independently to produce designs. Overall their work is below average and their achievements are satisfactory. They take account of nutrition and particular dietary requirements when designing meals for individual needs. They model electronic circuit ideas using computer software. They suggest changes by evaluating their work as it progresses. They acquire insufficient graphical and presentational skills. Many students use ICT well, but there is wide variation in the use of ICT to enhance design and presentation. Girls organise their design folio work carefully. Boys respond well to the sequence of activities in the 'objective unit' approach. Boys and girls of all levels of attainment, including those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress in most lessons.

175. Boys and girls approach their work with equal enthusiasm. They enjoy their time in design and technology, and particularly the practical work. The vast majority of students are motivated and many have an independent approach to their work. A small minority, particularly of boys in Year 9, have an immature attitude to their work that restricts progress in a few lessons.
176. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 9 to 11. In one lesson seen in Year 9, teaching was unsatisfactory because low expectations and inadequate control of the class restricted progress, particularly of the higher attainers. Just under half the teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 was good. In these good lessons, teachers involved students actively in the work and communicated high expectations and clear deadlines for work. They made good use of resources and external links. In Year 9, students made good progress in lessons in which work was organised well around students' workbooks. Overall, teachers do not use product analysis consistently to improve students' understanding. Students have few opportunities for extended discussion, particularly in Years 9 and 10. KIA1
177. Effective leadership manages the limited resources well by developing external links including the extended use of ICT. The department has, appropriately, identified the need to develop more vocational opportunities when the department moves into new accommodation next year. The recent induction of a large number of staff was managed well. Procedures to check the effectiveness of teaching are helping to raise standards. Students' work is assessed regularly in Years 10 and 11 to set targets for improving their work. However, the practice is inconsistent across the department. In Year 9, students do not know their working National Curriculum level and are less clear about what they have to do to improve.
178. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. GCSE results and the performance of boys have improved. Students' attainment upon entry is still very low and this continues to have an effect upon standards in Year 9. Schemes of work are now planned well to develop aspects of the National Curriculum, although in Year 9 there is still insufficient challenge in tasks for design and making. Resources such as ICT facilities have improved. Accommodation and resources are inadequate. New accommodation is currently being built and equipped.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, resulting in standards that are above average and improving.
- Good management ensures a consistently good curriculum for students.
- Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good.
- Students behave well and have good attitudes to work.
- Very good relationships ensure a good working atmosphere in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to enhance and enrich the curriculum is limited.
- Boy's attainment remains below that of girls.
- In a few lessons, the range of work does not always ensure that the needs of all students are met.

179. In 2001, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that the number of students attaining level 5 and above matched the national average. Results in 2002 indicate similar standards. In 2001, GCSE results were average at A*-C, A*-G, and in the average points score. An above average proportion of students attained A* and A grades. There was a big improvement in results in 2002 mainly due to a large increase in girls' results at A* to C. Boys attain lower results than girls, both in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE. However, boys' results match the national averages for boys. In relation to other subjects in the school, geography is consistently one of the best performers in examinations.
180. Students' attainment in geography is below average overall when they come to the school. As a result of good teaching, students reach satisfactory standards at the end of Year 9. This provides a good basis for development and standards are above average at the end of Year 11. Students achieve well overall, but boys' attainment is still lower than that for girls. There is no difference in achievement across the different ethnic groups in the school or across different levels of attainment. Students with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment. Consistently good teaching has ensured that standards have remained above average as national standards have risen.
181. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired a good geographical vocabulary. Students in Year 9, for example, study earth movements and understand such terms as continental drift, Pangaea and collision boundary. Students are not so good at establishing worldwide links and connections. Only the higher attaining students can explain geographical patterns that occur throughout the world. Higher attaining students in Year 9, for example, establish the links between the tectonic plates of the earth's surface and the distribution of earthquakes and volcanoes.
182. During Years 10 and 11, students build on their understanding of topics covered in Year 9. They add others such as urban regeneration, world trade, the influence of multi-national companies, and studies of worldwide weather patterns. Students develop good drawing and mapping skills. A criticism of the previous inspection was that the department did not offer a course in fieldwork to develop students' skills. This has now been corrected and fieldwork is an integral part of the programme. It makes a good contribution to the rise in standards since the previous report. High attaining students produce some outstanding work as part of their fieldwork and in case studies. This was seen in work done by Year 11 students on studies of counter-urbanisation in a nearby village and on extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes.
183. Geography makes a good contribution to students' literacy development. Students develop their speaking skills through taking part in discussions about issues such as world trade and pollution. Teachers draw attention to important vocabulary in lessons. This emphasis on vocabulary and on grammar and spelling has a positive impact on standards. Students regularly write at length when completing case studies and write-ups about fieldwork, thus developing a range of writing skills. Students draw and use graphs and tables routinely to present information, to interpret data and to work out scales and distances. As a result, the subject makes a good contribution to students' numeracy. Students' use of ICT, to refine and edit their work, for research and to create graphs and diagrams, is unsatisfactory. This is mainly because of problems over access to computers in school and because a few teachers are not confident enough to make best use of ICT to enrich and enhance the curriculum. The work done on a number of environmental and social issues, and opportunities for research and discussion make a good contribution to the school's programme for citizenship. KIA2

184. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to assist students' learning. This is demonstrated clearly in the quality of advice that older students receive on how to maximise their marks in examinations and in the quality of work produced by high attaining students. Teachers have good skill in class control. This is achieved with quiet authority and without students being demeaned. As a result, classrooms are relaxed and businesslike and little time is lost in controlling any unsatisfactory behaviour. Very good relationships between students and with their teachers are a strong feature of the subject. Relevant homework is set frequently and regularly. Students' work is marked frequently and corrected. Teachers make good use of this form of assessment to tell students what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers plan most lessons carefully so that students do not just receive a range of geographical facts, but are expected to think for themselves, interpret evidence and work out solutions. Nevertheless, in a few lessons, teachers tell students too much. This detracts from the overall effect because students are not developing independent thinking. In a few lessons, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to match work to the range of attainment found in classes. Boys' attainment still lags behind that of girls and the department has few plans to remedy this. KIA1
185. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In most lessons, students are able to reflect on their environment and appreciate the power of nature and the wonders of the world. A moral dimension is found in lessons and students are taught how to distinguish right from wrong. In discussions, students are taught to listen to, and respect the views of others. Good opportunities for social development occur through working together and taking part in discussions. The in-built cultural element about people from other countries provides good multi-cultural development. This is enhanced by field courses and trips
186. The previous inspection drew attention to a lack of planning in the budget. This has been corrected. The department's development plan contains clear financial controls. The shortage of resources has been corrected so that resources are now good. The good leadership and management have established clear priorities and effective teamwork among a group of hard-working and committed teachers. The subject was strong at the time of the previous inspection. Standards have risen since that time and the subject has made good progress.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, occasionally excellent, enables students to make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers' high expectations and good management of classes help students to achieve well.

Area for improvement

- Teachers provide few opportunities for students to use ICT to enhance their learning.

187. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment overall is average. This is an improvement on the standard reported at the previous inspection. In 2002, teachers assessed their students' work at the end of Year 9 as matching the national average. The overall standards of work seen are average. Most students begin Year 9 with below average attainment and, because of good teaching, the vast majority make good progress during the year. Those students who

have English as an additional language make good progress, as do students with special educational needs, because teachers make very effective use of their learning assistants, who support students well.

188. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations matched the national average in 2001. This represented a dip in attainment from the previous year's above average grades. The proportion gaining the highest grades A* or A was above average. In 2002, the results were higher than those of 2000, and above the provisional national average. Students gain higher GCSE grades in history than in most other subjects they take. The overall standards of work seen are above average. Many students have the potential to gain the highest grades. These standards are an improvement on those reported at the previous inspection. Most students make good progress. Higher attainers usually make very good progress from their Year 9 standards as they move through Years 10 and 11 because the teaching is often very good.
189. Students in Year 9 have good knowledge and understanding about the past. They use a range of sources very well to make valid and often perceptive deductions. Some good whole-class teaching led to students gaining a good understanding of images of war from a painting. Effective teaching means that most students learn quickly. The higher attainers successfully explain why this is so. Most students write well. The highest attainers produce extended pieces of writing that are planned and structured well. The lower attainers describe and explain events in the past, but find evaluating sources of evidence difficult.
190. Most students in Years 10 and 11 have very good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. They successfully explain changes over time, and see that change does not always mean progress. Lower attaining students in Year 10, for example, used a series of pictures to identify successfully problems of housing and health in the period 1000-1500. They compare and contrast different periods of history well, as, for example, in work on Galen and Hippocrates. They use technical terminology in the history of medicine correctly. High attaining students in Year 11 understand well the problems of reliability of evidence. In work on Germany in 1919, they identified some sources as possible propaganda and questioned their trustworthiness as evidence. Students for whom English is an additional language have good understanding of, and use with confidence, terms such as revolution and trephining.
191. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. No teaching observed was less than satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are often very good and occasionally excellent. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers know their subject well and communicate effectively and with enthusiasm, so that students acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. They plan lessons well to take good account of students' differing capabilities. Teachers often use a series of short activities, each followed by a short feedback session. This ensures teachers know how well students are learning. The work set for students in Years 10 and 11 gives them good opportunities to learn what makes a good examination answer. Teachers successfully use an appropriate range of teaching methods, including group and paired work, individual work and whole-class teaching. They do not, however, use ICT sufficiently to develop students' learning.
192. Teachers expect their students to work hard and behave well. They manage students well to create a good working atmosphere in their classrooms. The vast majority of students have a positive approach to their work. They show interest in their work, concentrate, work hard and behave well. These are important contributory factors to their usually good progress in lessons. This is especially true of students in Years 10 and 11. A very small minority of students, largely but not entirely in Year 9, have a poor attitude to their own work and so learn less well and occasionally disrupt the learning of others.

193. The very good leadership and management of the subject result in an ethos of hard work and challenge both for students and staff. The well-qualified and experienced team work very effectively together and have successfully improved the attainment of boys at GCSE from below average to above over a two-year period. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject well to motivate and interest students.
- Improved provision of ICT helps students to raise achievement in the subject in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not use or develop their ICT skills well enough in many subjects.
- The lack of provision of ICT for students in Year 9 restricts students' learning.

194. Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed that standards were below the national average. There has been a steady improvement over recent years. In 2001, about six in ten students who sat the GCSE examination in the short course attained grades in the range A*-C and all entrants gained a grade. Girls' attainment was better than that of boys. There are no national figures available for comparison. In 2002, no students were entered for the GCSE examination.
195. As there are no separate ICT lessons for students in Year 9 it was not possible to observe any teaching. No work was available for scrutiny. Judgements on students' attainment have been made by examination of teachers' assessment by the contributory middle schools and discussion with a group of Year 9 students. Although students' previous experience is varied, achievement is satisfactory. Discussion shows that the attainment of students in Year 9 is at the level expected.
196. The communication element of ICT is well established. Students have a good working knowledge of the word processor. They use the application with confidence to edit and present their work. Students have experienced desktop publishing techniques and add art images to enhance their work. Students are familiar with a multi-media presentation using the *PowerPoint* program to present a series of slides. Most students have used a simple control program. Higher attaining students have experience of a more sophisticated program using an on-screen program to control and sequence traffic lights. Students have an understanding of a spreadsheet and know how to use the formulae for easy mathematical calculations. Students' knowledge of data handling is limited and few have experience in its use. Knowledge of the use of ICT in its wider applications is too narrow. Few can give examples of where it might be used. Attainment has improved since the previous inspection.
197. The overall attainment at the end of Year 11 is below average. Attainment in Year 10 currently, however, is average and at the level expected because students had the benefit of regular lessons in Year 9. Although students in Year 11 started the course with below average skills their achievement has been satisfactory. They have acquired a good knowledge of a range of applications. This was seen in their Year 10 'Sports Day' project using word processing and desktop publishing techniques to present a programme of events. Higher attaining students have a clear understanding of the use of a spreadsheet, using the

appropriate formulae effectively for calculations and to record the sports day events. This understanding is not established so well with other students. As part of the project, students have developed and designed their own web-site using hyperlinks, a technique used to link pages to select further information to return to the title page. Higher attaining students are advanced with their personal projects and have a clear understanding of how to develop their work. However, a few students who are in the early stages of their projects lack a clear understanding about the different applications to utilise. Although additional support for students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is limited, these students make satisfactory progress and achieve realistic targets. The overall attainment by the end of Year 11 has not improved since the previous inspection.

198. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A particular strength of the teaching is teachers' good subject knowledge that is used well to motivate and interest students. Teachers circulate well during lessons, advising and keeping students on task, impacting positively on their learning. Teachers manage students well, dealing firmly with any unacceptable behaviour. Learning is better when students are given clear targets at the beginning of the lesson but this approach is not consistent. Teachers generally finish the lesson on a positive note but the session does not always include an assessment of students' progress and their understanding. The lack of a projector or interactive whiteboard means that teachers use overhead transparencies to explain procedures. The outcome of this was that the initial exposition of the lesson lacked pace, students could not clearly see the transparency and time was spent during the lesson instructing students about the task thereby slowing learning. During lessons, a few students had to share computers and, as a consequence, their learning and progress was slowed. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the previous inspection.
199. The attitude of students in the examination groups is positive. Behaviour is generally good and students settle quickly to their work. A small number of students, usually boys, are disruptive, lack focus on their work and display a reluctance to work. Students are confident to discuss their ICT experience and are enjoying the challenges of the work. Younger students are less enthusiastic about the subject, showing little concern at the lack of opportunities to use ICT.
200. Provision for the teaching of ICT across subjects was judged to be unsatisfactory in the previous inspection. Although there has been some improvement, a few subjects do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to support learning. Satisfactory use was seen in mathematics, using a graph program and spreadsheets to record information. In English, students use the word processor for their coursework but limited access to the computer suites is restricting progress. Use of ICT in history and religious education is satisfactory and students use the Internet for research and word processing of work. Although some good use was seen in Year 11 geography coursework, the use of ICT in geography is generally unsatisfactory. There is insufficient use of ICT in science. Students use music programs for sequencing techniques to support their creative work but there is a lack of appropriate resources within the department and most work in ICT is completed on students' own computers. The design and technology department makes good use of the resources available and where necessary utilises the facilities of local institutions to complement the teaching of computer-aided manufacture and design. Access to the computer suites is limited and restricts the development of ICT across the curriculum. KIA2
201. Good leadership supports the work of the subject by monitoring teaching so that it contributes to students' learning and progress. The overall management of the subject is satisfactory, in particular the teaching of ICT across the curriculum. The overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

French, German and Italian

Strengths

- The wide range of languages taught offers students very good choice and contributes greatly to the school's international flavour.
- Very good leadership and committed staff contribute well to students' good achievement.
- Good teaching, in particular teachers' very secure command of their languages, ensures that students learn well.

Areas for improvement

- Students have few opportunities to use ICT to extend their learning of a foreign language.
- Standards reached by boys and their attitudes to learning a language lag behind those of girls.

202. The modern foreign languages department offers an unusually broad choice of foreign languages. Currently, the four modern languages taught are French, German, Italian and Urdu. Additionally the school provides teaching for students for whom English is an additional language. One lesson was observed in Latin, in which a class of Year 11 students of a wide range of attainment were making good progress as a result of good teaching in a lesson dealing with translation and the poetry of Ovid. French, German, and Italian are the subject of the rest of this section of the report.

203. In 2001, the number of students gaining GCSE grades A*-C in French was similar to the national average. In Italian and German, results have been below average. The large majority of students entered for a foreign language and nearly all of them gained a GCSE grade. This represents good achievement. Particularly strong were the results of the highest attaining students. They achieved a well above average proportion of grades A* and A.

204. In 2002, students did better than in previous years, especially in French and Italian. Boys' results have been consistently lower than those of girls, and by a larger gap than nationally. KIA1

205. Work seen shows that standards in all three languages overall are a little below the national average in Year 9. Given students' prior attainment, this represents satisfactory achievement. Teaching in general is good and most students learn well. In French, however, students have had very different experiences in their middle schools. Teachers have to spend too long going back to basics and filling gaps in students' knowledge. As a result of this, coupled to the relatively low allocation of time given to each language, it is not possible to cover enough ground in Year 9. Many students have good understanding of the foreign language because teachers use it all the time in the classroom. Higher attaining students, too, are beginning to speak confidently in full sentences. However, many students of average or low attainment struggle to pronounce the language properly. Their reading and writing, also, are under-developed. KIA2

206. By Year 11 the consistently good teaching that students receive has improved their achievement over time. Standards are average in French and Italian and most students achieve well. This applies particularly to higher attaining students who, by virtue of persistent exposure to the foreign language, have very good comprehension. A few of them speak quite fluently with very good accent. All students learning German, however, are in one set containing a very wide range of attainment. Able linguists are attaining above average standards of work, but they are at a disadvantage as the pace of teaching is inevitably slower

than in a group with more students at their level. Standards in this group are below average overall. Writing and speaking in the foreign language present a problem for many students of more modest attainment. This is particularly true of boys, who are more slapdash and have less concern for accuracy. Students with special educational needs achieve well in small classes because the work is suited to their needs. Students of different ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers and having English as an additional language does not handicap their learning. KIA1

207. Teaching of all three languages is good throughout the main school. In a few lessons, teaching was very good or excellent and no teaching seen was less than satisfactory. Teachers are all very competent linguists and use the foreign language in the classroom with ease and sensitivity. Students learn to listen carefully and to understand the language spoken at native speed. When teachers also allow plenty of chances to practise speaking through repetition and pair work, students speak confidently. In a very good French lesson, for example, high attaining students in Year 10 showed in a role-play activity that they could go ahead on their own and hold quite complex conversations in French. They made very swift headway in speaking and their fluency improved as a result. Teachers are very skilful at making best use of assistant staff and trainee teachers so that students have good opportunities of working in small groups. Good use is also made of dictionaries to improve students' basic skills and increase their vocabulary.
208. In a few respects, teaching could be even better than it is. Teachers do not insist enough that students use the foreign language to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. Lessons do not always have good clear starts with objectives shared with the students. A small amount of teaching relies too heavily on the teacher and the textbook, and lacks suitable visual stimulus. When this happens, the teacher spends too much time talking and gives students too little chance to use the language themselves. Students lose concentration and learn less. The marking of students' work is regular and encouraging, but is rarely linked to National Curriculum levels and does not make students aware enough of what they need to do to improve. Apart from routine word processing of written work, the department makes little use of ICT for extending students' experience of foreign languages or improving their motivation. KIA2
209. Most students are well disposed to learning a foreign language. They listen attentively, answer questions eagerly, and, when the opportunity arises in paired or group activities, they co-operate with each other and work independently. The highest attaining students are very alert, studious and committed. Behaviour on the whole is good. A small number of students, mostly lower attaining boys in Years 10 and 11, however, have lost interest in learning a language and pay little attention in class. These students consequently underachieve because they learn too little. KIA1
210. The foreign languages department, with its very good modern suite of rooms and complement of well-qualified teachers and assistants, many of them native speakers, provides a dynamic and colourful environment for the learning of foreign languages. Very clear-sighted leadership has led to a thriving department in which staff work well as a team and share good practice. The department has made good contacts with the two local universities through the teacher training it carries out. Good leadership checks rigorously the quality of teaching and encourages staff to continue their professional development. The raising of standards is at the heart of the department's future plans.
211. The department has made many good advances since the previous inspection. Most of the main areas for improvement mentioned in the report are now strengths. Students' speaking and their use of the foreign language in lessons, while still needing improvement, are much better. The poor attitudes and motivation of a few low attaining students, mainly

boys, is an area of concern still waiting to be put right. The department is very well placed to continue improving.

Urdu

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to make good progress in lessons.
- Achievement is good because students behave well and are keen to learn.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to assist learning is insufficient.
- The limited amount of appropriate textbooks restricts learning.

212. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average. Achievement in relation to students' prior attainment is good.
213. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below the national average. GCSE results for A*-C grades in 2000, 2001, 2002 were below the national average. However, GCSE results for A*-G grades in 2000 and 2001 were above the national average but below the national average in 2002. Boys performed better than girls in all these years.
214. Considering that the home language of many of these students is Panjabi and not Urdu and many did not have the chance to learn Urdu script in Years 7 and 8, their progress is good, although their attainment in relation to national expectations is below average.
215. Speaking and listening skills of students are better developed than their reading and writing skills. This is because the teacher acts as a role model and the use of Urdu is encouraged in lessons. Students speak with confidence when answering the teacher's questions. Their pronunciation and intonation are good. Students in Year 11 answered questions correctly in a listening exercise and showed understanding of short texts in Urdu. However, they have few opportunities of listening and responding to longer texts.
216. Standards in reading and writing are below average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. However, considering that students have to learn a new script and also that they did not learn Urdu in Years 7 and 8, their progress in these skills is good. Students of below average attainment in Year 9 recognise letters of the alphabet and can read and write simple words and phrases with the teacher's help. Students of average attainment did so without help. Students of above average attainment read and write simple sentences. In Year 11, higher attainers read and write short sentences and, in a few cases, long sentences without making many errors. Average and below average attainers read and write short sentences but make several errors. They produce very neat and well-presented written work.
217. Students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language are making good progress. The very small number of English students taking Urdu in Year 9 show a keen interest and make good progress. All students are fully supported in lessons. Learning is good because teaching is good. Students show much interest in their work, are always very well behaved and are keen to learn.
218. The quality of teaching and learning was good in all the lessons observed. Teaching by a native speaker is effective because the good knowledge and understanding of the subject is used well to enthuse students. This causes the learning to be good. Classes are managed well. Teaching is successful in motivating students and creating a good learning atmosphere in the class. Lessons are planned well and expectations are high. Audio-visual aids such as a tape recorder and overhead projector are used well to encourage students to learn. Students'

work is marked regularly and frequently. Useful comments are made in both Urdu and English for further improvement.

219. Good leadership of the department leads to good learning. Teamwork is good and teachers support each other well. Links with the rest of the modern foreign languages department are effective in sharing good practice in teaching and learning. There are good plans to visit other schools to talk with other teachers of Urdu about matters concerning professional development.
220. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There are now no disruptive students. The quality of teaching is better but ways of enhancing and extending teaching approaches still need to be considered. Urdu will be offered from Year 8 onwards from 2003.

English as an additional language

221. Almost a quarter of the school's students speak English as an additional language. The majority of these students are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin and are bilingual, having received all or most of their schooling in the United Kingdom. A small but significant number of students, however, have arrived more recently in the UK and are at an early stage of learning English. Without specialist help they cannot take full advantage of the subject teaching they receive. The English as an additional language department supports them extremely well. This support consists of five teaching and support staff working closely with other teachers to provide a very high quality of tutorial support for these vulnerable students.
222. As the school takes on new students at different points in the year and at varying levels of proficiency in English, it is not appropriate to evaluate their standards of attainment in relation to other students of a similar age. Because of the excellent support these students receive, however, they make very good progress in their academic subjects and are achieving very well. The very good information the school provides about students' performance shows that bilingual students also achieve well and make similar progress to that of others.
223. Progress is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science in which students at an early stage of learning English enjoy very careful and sensitive individual help from a member of the department working in close co-operation with the classroom teacher. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, a small group of these students made very good gains in their understanding of technical terms. The support they received from the learning assistant enabled them to learn at their own pace and level because it was focused on their individual needs. One student from Eastern Europe was full of praise for the help he had received since his arrival at the school.
224. In addition to this support in class, many students receive extra English lessons from the specialist teachers in the department. The standard of this teaching is very high. Small groups of students in each of Years 9, 10 and 11 at a similar stage of learning English make very good progress in these favourable circumstances. The lessons are specially planned in collaboration with the students' main English teachers to explain and reinforce the work they are doing in their mainstream lessons. In one lesson, for example, two African and one Kosovan student worked on the text of Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*, one of the GCSE English texts studied by other students. The student from Kosovo, recently arrived in the UK and with relatively little English, had very sensitive support from an assistant in addition to the English as an additional language teacher. All three students made excellent headway in the lesson by virtue of this very close individual help. By the end of the lesson, the Kosovan student had learnt to write with much greater confidence. The African students used appropriate language to describe the scene and showed real appreciation of the text.

225. In other subjects in which there is less individual support, students still achieve well and make good progress. This is largely due to the sensitivity and awareness of subject teachers who make a special effort to include students with lower levels of English in all activities for learning. Year 9 students for whom English is an additional language have no difficulty taking a full part in music lessons, for example. The materials produced by the teacher are clear and well presented. One asylum-seeking student from Eastern Europe has drum lessons paid for by the Oxford Social Services department.
226. Students with English as an additional language are very well integrated into the life of the school. They are responsive to individual support, and are eager to work hard and, when the opportunity arises, to contribute to discussion in class. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary.
227. Apart from the very effective classroom help they offer, the English as an additional language department gives excellent support and encouragement in many other ways. The performance of students is carefully tracked and analysed according to their ethnic origin. They have individual targets for improving their English. This ensures that any student who underachieves can receive extra tutorial help. If students are in difficulty or fail to attend school their parents receive a telephone call from the department, in their native language if appropriate. Staff act as interpreters at parents' meetings, translate routine letters and urge parents to attend important school events. All this allows parents to play a greater part in the life of the school, and, by extension, in their children's education. The department encourages bilingual students to take a GCSE examination in their native language to add to their qualifications. Other departments have access on the school's Intranet to information they need about these students. By regularly attending subject and pastoral meetings, the English as an additional language staff find out more about students in their care and, in turn, pass on information about them. In this way, awareness of students' needs is kept constantly alive.
228. Leadership of the department is very good. It is energetic and clear-sighted. The welfare of the students with English as an additional language and their academic progress are at the heart of the department's activities. To this end, staff are deployed imaginatively, playing to their individual strengths and giving them considerable responsibility beyond the classroom. Relationships with other departments and with the middle schools are very good, nurtured by frequent contact and a regular flow of information. The department's accommodation is spacious and inviting; its resources, including computers and a well-stocked library, are ample and up to date. The effect of this is that students make frequent use of the English as an additional language area and feel comfortable and welcome in it.
229. In the previous inspection report there was no separate mention of the provision for students with English as an additional language. However, the department has made large strides forward since that time and now enjoys a prominent profile within the school. It is a highly effective department with a vision for the future and is very well placed to continue improving.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Achievement at GCSE is good because of good teaching.

- Extra-curricular work in music is of very good quality.

Areas for improvement

- There is inadequate provision for computer-aided music making.
- Specialist accommodation is insufficient for the number of students.

230. Standards overall are above average by the end of Year 11. GCSE results fluctuate from year to year. Results over the past three years, including those for the full and short courses, are close to the national average. In 2001 all candidates on the full course gained A* or A grades. A larger than usual number of students enter, with girls doing better on average, as they do nationally. Currently, students in Years 10 and 11 follow a Certificate of Achievement course in music. Those who have difficulties in learning improve their self-esteem through good achievement in music. Performance is a strength, with many GCSE students demonstrating a high standard on more than one instrument. Most can use technical language with understanding. The best compositions show fluency in melodic invention and uninhibited harmonic support. A few use computer facilities at home for this.
231. Teachers' assessment of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 shows large differences from year to year. There is a wide range of attainment and capability. Many current students have had scant experience of music in their former schools. A few have already developed well as instrumentalists. No sample of work from previous Year 9 students was available. However, observation of lessons and of work this term shows standards are average. Students make good progress in lessons. They respond well to rhythmic work based on chanting words, using notation and constructing their own pieces. Students of different ethnic origin and background work well together. Higher attainers on entry show an understanding of music as an expression of feelings.
232. Teaching is good. For students in Year 9, and those following the certificate course in Years 10 and 11, teachers provide effective activities to maximise concentration and to involve students actively in their learning. These include varying voice levels and providing practical tasks that enable students at differing levels of attainment to achieve well. Teachers are well aware of the background of individuals so that they can help those with particular educational needs, including refugees. Teachers' enthusiasm for music and effective use of praise encourage students to participate. Teaching maintains a positive atmosphere for learning by dealing quickly and efficiently with minor cases of inappropriate behaviour. Relationships are generally very good. Teachers ensure students appraise their work, and learn from this, for example, after listening to a recording of their rehearsed class performance on keyboards. Students' learning is good rather than very good because lessons do not always include enough live music and students have not developed fully their skills of communication using eye, ear and voice. Teaching that has to be in non-specialist rooms restricts the range of learning activities in music. Homework tasks do not always extend, reinforce or anticipate learning through music, and tend to be of a mechanical nature. Teachers' own knowledge and skill are equal to the task of preparing high attaining students for GCSE music. For the listening paper, aural analysis with Year 11 students is thorough enough to be applied to any given extract of music. Instrumental teaching of good quality supports the performance aspect and supports extra-curricular groups, thereby providing valuable experience for these students.
233. Leadership and management in music are satisfactory overall. A good feature is the regular review of schemes and courses to generate interest and challenge and to enable students to succeed. Another is the fostering of extra-curricular learning of high quality, through instrumental lessons, regular ensembles and concert giving. Teaching and learning in composition are restricted by the lack of resources in school for computer-based music making. Recording facilities, necessary for the curriculum, need updating urgently.

Accommodation is inadequate for the volume of curricular and extra-curricular work currently. A few aspects of assessment and its recording need development. These include procedures to ensure that Year 9 students are aware of levels to which they can aspire.

234. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Time for music in Year 9 is now adequate. Teaching has improved and the use of technical language is no longer a weakness. While a few deficiencies remain, especially the provision of computers, these are acknowledged. Plans for the expanded school, in 2003, are expected by the school to make these good. The school is well placed to improve provision and standards for students aged 11 to 18 in the future.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Much good teaching helps the majority of students to make satisfactory and often good progress.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge of activities to assist students' learning.
- Extra-curricular activities are wide ranging and school teams are successful in a range of sports.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average in Years 10 and 11.
- A minority of students do not have positive attitudes to the subject and do not participate fully.
- Time in Year 11 is inadequate to cover fully all the requirements of the National Curriculum.

235. In 2001, GCSE results were just below the national average and show an improvement over previous years. Provisional results in 2002 indicated a drop in performance. In all years, all students attained a grade in the range A*-G, with more boys taking the examination than girls. The numbers of girls on the current GCSE courses have increased. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments in 2001 indicated that standards in physical education were well below the national average.

236. By the end of Year 9, standards vary between the activities taught but overall they are average. Students arrive at the school with well below average levels of skill and experiences. In football, most students control a ball and pass accurately but their knowledge and understanding of the tactics and strategies of attack and defence are below average. The higher attainers are among the students from minority ethnic backgrounds who display standards above the average. They dribble the ball with control and pass accurately. In trampolining, which is a new activity for girls, the standards are average. Students demonstrate good technique of seat drop and front drop, often with good control on the trampoline bed. Higher attaining students show progression to include swivel hips and straddle. They know and understand the need for the safety principles, such as spotting. Students of all levels of attainment are making good progress. Overall, progress in Year 9 is satisfactory, an improvement since the previous inspection.

237. By the end of Year 11, standards on the general course taken by all students are below average in most activities. Students make satisfactory progress, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. A large minority of students do not always take part in lessons

and a few have a poor attitude to the subject. As a result, these students make unsatisfactory progress. The knowledge and understanding of the principles of football are below average for most students. They are let down by weak skills of passing and controlling the ball.

238. In the GCSE course standards are below average but indicate satisfactory achievement. The scrutiny of students' work indicates a high proportion of work sheets, particularly in Year 10, and little opportunity for extended writing. The overall presentation of work is below average. In a theory lesson on exercise, students in Year 10 were unable to recall previous learning and showed an immature attitude to their work. They did not know the role of glycogen, carbon dioxide and lactic acid when the body was exercised despite covering the work. They did not know how the body recovers after exercise. In Year 11, students have a good understanding of body typing and can relate this to different sports. They measure skin folds, length of bones and muscles and use the results to determine the groupings. KIA2

239. The quality of teaching is good. It has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of learning is satisfactory rather than good because a large minority of students do not always participate in practical lessons. Most lessons are planned well and learning objectives are shared with students. The pace of learning is brisk and teachers use their good subject knowledge to motivate the class. Students with a special educational need are identified and make satisfactory progress, as do those for whom English is an additional language. These students are integrated well into lessons. Teachers form good relationships with the students who take part in lessons, but the large number of non-participants are not involved adequately in the lesson. This is noticeable with girls, particularly in Years 9 and 10. The rate of participation in practical lessons has not improved since the previous inspection. Teachers make effective use of a range of technology such as video and heart-rate monitors in lessons, particularly on the GCSE courses.

240. Good leadership in the department is keen to raise standards and is already preparing for the re-organisation of the school in September 2003. The management of the department is satisfactory. Suitable procedures for assessment of students' work are in place in Years 10 and 11. Those for Year 9 lack consistent criteria for teachers to assess standards accurately. Not all policies are in place and procedures for formal risk assessment are not implemented fully. The amount of curricular time in Year 11 is inadequate and insufficient to cover in suitable depth all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Single lessons provide insufficient time for practical activities and for students to shower and change clothes. Accommodation is currently of unsatisfactory quality and contributes in some part to the department's difficulties in motivating all students to participate fully in activities. The development plan in place has realistic targets for development. Good links with outside agencies assist the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. School teams are successful in cricket and football and there is a successful girls' football team.

241. Improvement since the previous inspection is just satisfactory. However, the curriculum in Year 9 still lacks balance and links with feeder schools have not been developed sufficiently. The developments of Curriculum 2000 have not been implemented fully and schemes of work for the general course in Years 10 and 11 are inadequate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to improve standards by the end of Year 11.
- Good leadership and management lead to the inclusion of all students in activities.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices are good.
- The subject provides well for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient analysis of why boys attain much lower standards than girls.
- Religious skills are less well developed than knowledge and understanding of religions.

242. Students' attainment overall is below average when they join the school in Year 9. Standards improve so that by the end of Year 9 they are below, but closer to, those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This represents satisfactory achievement and progress in the short time available before the end of Year 9. GCSE results have been below average for the past three years, with girls doing much better than boys. Girls demonstrate that students can achieve standards close to the national average and can get the higher marks. These results represented satisfactory achievement based on students' previous attainment.
243. Standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of work are higher than those indicated by examination results. This is due to good teaching. By the end of Year 9, most students have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and other world religions. They have an understanding of how beliefs influence the way individuals and groups of people act. They have a satisfactory knowledge of Hindu gods and scriptures. Students investigate for themselves the chief characters and events in the early history of Israel before combining this knowledge into a project. Their short time in school and the limited time allocation to the subject restrict how far they can develop the more specific skills of religious education such as reflection. The knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other main religions are developed more than the application of it to their own lives and personal values.
244. In Years 10 and 11 all students study for a short GCSE course and almost all of them enter for the examination. This is an improvement on the situation reported in the previous inspection. Students discuss sensitively moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia and have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christian doctrine, practices and worship. Students make more progress in religious skills and in the application of learning to personal values than in Year 9. Standards seen indicate average attainment and at least satisfactory achievement for most students.
245. Students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented students receive work of suitable challenge and difficulty, attain appropriate standards and make satisfactory progress. Students from ethnic minorities were comfortable with the teaching provided. Students for whom English is an additional language made similar rates of progress as other students. In a Year 10 lesson on the topic of abortion, students of all capabilities and backgrounds took part in a good discussion on this moral issue. This demonstrated how successfully the department includes all students in its activities. In lessons, students were respectful and co-operative and responded well to the good learning experiences provided for them.
246. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the development of citizenship. Students have good opportunities to respond to questions relating to the deeper meaning of life and death. They make informed judgements on moral issues and consider carefully the answers given by people holding a range of different beliefs.
247. Teaching and learning are good. Achievement over time is satisfactory rather than good because the poor attendance of a few students restricts their learning. Features of good teaching are good relationships between staff and students, good planning of lessons and the teachers' enthusiasm. A lesson for a Year 10 class on the topic of prejudice provided a very good learning experience. The well-motivated students responded enthusiastically to a well-planned and organised lesson. Required to find out for themselves rather than being told the

answers, the students gradually discovered the folly of stereotyping others by appearances. They enhanced their learning by making applications to their own lives and linking these with biblical references. Students with special learning needs played a full part in the lesson. The oral contributions showed how the department's successful policy of inclusion plays a satisfactory role in developing general literacy and oracy skills. Numeracy skills are less obviously developed but are used in a few lessons.

248. Underpinning the good teaching, good relationships and satisfactory achievement in Years 9 to 11 are good leadership and management at departmental level. Documentation is informative and suitable plans are in place for future improvement. Departmental activities are monitored and evaluated satisfactorily although there is insufficiently rigorous analysis of the relatively poor performance of boys. The use of ICT is well considered but access to specialist facilities does not always coincide with the planned activities. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Currently, the time allocation is relatively low but does allow for a general coverage of the agreed syllabus in Year 9 and for the short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. KIA1

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
Mathematics	13	92	71	69	30	3.7	2.2
Chemistry	5	80	87	40	40	2.2	2.8
Biology	5	80	84	20	34	2.2	2.6
Physics	14	86	86	50	39	3.1	2.8
Geology	4	100	N/a	25	N/a	3.3	N/a
Design and technology	3	100	86	33	32	2.7	2.5
Economics	11	91	87	91	42	4.1	2.9
Computer science	2	100	81	0	22	2.0	2.2
Physical education	4	100	88	0	25	2.8	2.4
Art and design	18	94	88	33	43	2.9	2.9
Theatre studies	9	100	95	56	40	3.8	3.0
Geography	25	100	91	60	38	3.7	2.9
History	29	100	91	69	41	3.9	3.0
Psychology	18	94	N/a	56	N/a	3.5	N/a
English language	6	100	93	33	35	3.0	2.8
English	20	100	93	55	35	3.6	3.0
French	6	100	89	83	40	4.3	2.9
German	3	100	90	100	39	4.3	2.9
Italian	4	100	N/a	100	N/a	4.0	N/a
Latin	2	100	N/a	100	N/a	5.0	3.3
Sociology	9	100	86	89	34	4.3	2.7

Figures are for students aged 16 at beginning of school year 2000/01.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	17	100	87	65	43	7.4	5.8
Chemistry	9	67	90	22	43	3.3	5.9

Biology	12	100	88	67	34	7.8	5.3
Physics	4	75	88	25	40	4.5	5.7
Science AVCE	7	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	14.6	9.8
Business studies AVCE	8	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	12.8	10.5
Economics	12	75	89	17	36	3.3	5.5
Sports/PE studies	4	50	92	25	25	2.5	5.1
Art and design	25	88	96	48	46	6.1	6.6
Music	1	100	93	100	35	10.0	5.7
Geography	12	100	92	75	38	8.3	5.7
History	30	93	88	33	35	5.4	5.5
Religious studies	4	50	92	25	38	3.0	5.8
English literature	31	97	95	23	37	5.2	5.9
Communication studies	11	73	93	18	31	4.0	5.5
French	5	100	89	60	38	6.8	5.6
Other languages	8	100	93	50	56	8.0	6.8
Other social studies	17	88	87	35	34	5.2	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and physics.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very good A-level results as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good relationships with teachers encourage students to work hard and achieve high results.

Area for improvement

- The GNVQ programme for key skills lacks a suitable priority for students.

249. The department provides courses at AS-level in Year 12 and A-level in Year 13. It also contributes to the key skills teaching of the Year 12 GNVQ courses. In 2001, A-level results in mathematics were very high when compared to national averages, with two thirds of students gaining the highest grades of A and B and all students gaining a grade A-E. Provisional A-level results for 2002 indicate similarly high standards. Results at AS-level taken at the end of Year 12 were well above average in 2001. Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment. The students who study key skills as part of the GNVQ course achieve good results.
250. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are well above average and reflect the high standards attained at AS/A-level recently. Most students start the course after gaining grades A*-B at GCSE. A few students are accepted on the course with lower grades. They work very hard to cover the extra work required. Students in both years build well upon their previous knowledge. They extend their algebraic skills to study calculus and complex numbers. They increase their knowledge of trigonometry to solve problems involving multiple angles. Students make equally good progress on other modules studied in advanced statistics and discrete mathematics. A few students deepen their knowledge of mathematics through studying a one-year AS-level course in further mathematics. Students who study key skills are consolidating their knowledge by looking at further ways in which mathematics is applied.
251. The well above average results in the sixth form are a result of the very good teaching that students receive. The teaching observed was good overall and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to prepare effective lessons in which students work very hard and at a fast pace. Teachers use a good range of questions, carefully chosen to reinforce learning without being daunting. This was very effective in a lesson about complex numbers in which students made excellent progress throughout a double lesson as the teacher used graded questions of increasing difficulty. Teachers give students very good feedback on their work that enables them to understand how to continue to improve. This is generally spoken and with the whole group so that a continual dialogue of improvement is established.
252. Learning is good. Students respond very well to the good teaching. They are prepared to discuss their work and question teachers to confirm their understanding. They appreciate the mature relationship that exists between themselves and their teachers and are confident to ask any of the teachers for help if their own teacher is not available. They work very hard and keep to deadlines set for the handing in of work. The very small number of students who leave the course after one year indicates the positive attitudes.
253. Good management ensures a good deployment of teachers and a wide range of modules available for students. Computing resources are limited but with smaller groups it is possible to use facilities available to other departments on some occasions. In one class observed,

the computers were only available for one half of the double lesson. This meant that the development of the work started was restricted by having to move to a room in which there were no computers available. Because a few lessons are timetabled away from the departmental area the range of material that is available in these lessons is limited and teachers cannot always respond instantly to students' requests for further information or additional materials. The GNVQ course for key skills does not have the high profile that is necessary to have a major influence on standards. A few lessons take place during the lunchtime and others are so planned that students cannot attend because of arrangements for other courses that are studied away from the school site. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching involves the students actively and holds their interest.
- Students have a good grasp of concepts and apply them well in class work.
- Students work well in practical work and make good progress with their practical skills.

Areas for improvement

- Tracking of students' progress and the marking of assessed work lack consistency.
- Schemes of work need to be updated.

254. A-level results were above average in 2000 and were high compared to the national average in 2001. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B was also well up on the previous year. Unconfirmed results for 2002 suggest a drop to below average. The proportion of grades A and B was much lower. Achievement was very good in 2001 because students did much better than was expected from their GCSE results. In 2002, achievement was good compared with students' prior attainment. All students completed the course. AS-level results in 2001 were slightly below average. Unconfirmed results for 2002 indicate similar standards. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades at the start of the course these results represent satisfactory achievement.
255. Work seen shows that current standards are above average and that achievement is good. The very best work makes hypotheses explicit, and conclusions consistent with results and good critical evaluations. Generally students make good, accurate use of statistics. This was seen in work supporting the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in the size and shape of the shells of limpets living on exposed and sheltered shores. A few students have difficulty justifying the methods they use to solve problems.
256. Numbers choosing to study advanced courses in biology are high and rates of retention on the courses are good. Students are only a little way into their course, but achievement is good. Their knowledge and understanding of food groups, the structure and function of carbohydrate molecules and in particular monosaccharides and disaccharides are very good. In one lesson seen, students had a good understanding of protein structure and knew that shape was important in their functioning. Higher attaining students explained how the shape of polypeptide molecules was due to four types of bonding that occur between various amino acids in the chain.
257. Teaching is good overall, with some notable examples of very good teaching, and is reflected in the good quality of students' learning. Teaching has high expectations of what students are capable of achieving. Teachers plan stimulating activities and are imaginative in the choice of activities used to explain complex ideas, as seen, for example, in a Year 13

lesson. In this class, students were studying co-dominance in monohybrid inheritance. The lesson began with a teacher-led discussion on the genetic principles involved in co-dominance, during which good exemplar material was used. Effective questioning by the teacher ensured that all students gained a good understanding of the topic. Higher attaining students applied their knowledge very well to tackle a variety of problems involving co-dominance, for example, coat colour in cattle, the human ABO blood group system, and the occurrence of cystic fibrosis and sickle-celled anaemia in humans.

258. Students' learning is good. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to their teachers. The mutual respect amongst students is evident in the open way they interact with the teachers and with one another. Lower attaining students lack confidence in offering ideas in open discussion and are not always brought into the question and answer dialogues as much as they could be. Students take a keen interest in practical lessons and develop their practical skills very well.

259. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Because there is no overall head of biology, responsibilities for teaching the subject have not been clearly defined or delegated. The result of this is that teachers largely work independently, having their own systems for doing things. Although students' achievement is good, more purposeful leadership could improve it. The tracking of students' progress and the setting and marking of assessed work lack consistency. Assessment is not used effectively in the planning of teaching programmes and there is no effective checking of the quality of teaching. Schemes of work lack sufficient reference to assessment, key skills and ICT. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Students' positive attitudes towards learning lead to good discussions in lessons.

Area for improvement

- Students rarely use ICT in lessons for recording and using information.

260. The inspection covered the teaching of AS and A-level courses. The number of students following these courses in the past three years has fluctuated but in 2002 there has been an increase in numbers on the AS-level course in 2002 and two groups have been established. The rates of retention have been high.

261. AS-level results for 2001 were above the national average. Nearly half of the entrants attained an A or B grade. A-level results for eight students in 2000 were above the national average with nearly half achieving high grades. Provisional A-level results for 13 students in 2002 indicate similar standards. In 2001 the small A-level entry of four students attained below average results. The achievement of students is nearly always good and at the expected grades or better based on GCSE results.

262. In work seen in Years 12 and 13, attainment is above average and indicates good achievement based on students' prior attainment. Students work hard and develop enquiring minds. They engage readily in debate and raise challenging questions as seen in a lesson on the properties of electromagnetic waves in which polarisation was explained with the aid of a three-dimensional computer simulation. Students know how standing waves are formed and

how diffraction patterns can be formed using a laser. They display a real interest in the 'big ideas' such as gravitation, relative time in space travel and fundamental particles. A few students following the AS-level course in Year 12 found the mathematical treatment of mechanics to be difficult, as observed in a lesson on momentum. Students have access to a good range of learning materials. They make good use of books, Internet sources, practical experiments and simulations to develop their understanding. Students learn well as individuals and in small groups and are supportive to each other. They enhance their understanding of physics by visits to the Rutherford Laboratory to see experimental equipment not available in school.

263. The progress of students in Years 12 and 13 is good. This because their work becomes increasingly more sophisticated as more modules are completed. Students in Year 13 make links between concepts and ideas covered previously and also to other science subjects and mathematics. When studying radioactivity, students use new mathematical ideas such as exponential equations and logarithmic graphs effectively to interpret quantitative measurements from experiments. They also develop progressively an understanding of how simple harmonic motion can be expressed by a differential equation and relate to other examples of rates of change with time. Exercises seen in files show that students are consolidating and extending their understanding of scientific principles. Feedback from teachers to these exercises enables students to know how they are progressing and how to improve their work.

264. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is because the teachers have good knowledge of the subject and know how to explain it to learners in a variety of ways. Discussion during lessons plays an important part in helping students' understanding. The sharing of teaching between two teachers benefits student's learning as they obtain different interpretations of ideas and concepts.

265. The leadership and management of the subject are effective in ensuring that teaching is well organised and that teachers work as a team. The laboratories used for sixth form work are some distance apart, resulting in movement of resources and a slight restriction on the learning opportunities for students. Links with industry and other uses of physics such as in medicine are satisfactory but not extensive to promote students' appreciation of the relevance of physics to society. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on product design. The course in systems and control was sampled. This is the first year of systems and control in Year 12. Students are taught alongside students on the product design course. There are no post-16 examination results. The school is aware of the course overlap and differences. It makes good use of a neighbourhood engineer to fulfil the current specific needs of these students. Attainment in current work and the two lessons seen is average. In the short time the course has been running, students have made good progress. The current range of courses offered is small and does not include a vocational option.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Effective management of limited resources assists students' learning.

- Good checking of students' work results in suitable targets for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- There is currently no vocational course option in Years 12 and 13.
- Product analysis is not used widely enough to develop students' understanding.

266. The numbers of students starting the course has increased since last year. Seven students started the course in the current Year 12. Rates of retention on course in Years 12 and 13 are good and have improved.
267. There is little historic data for Years 12 and 13 courses in design and technology. In 2001 no students took the A-level examination but three students in Year 12 gained above average grades in the AS-level examinations. In 2002, provisional results for the two students who took the A-level examination suggest average attainment. The small number of AS-level students attained below average results.
268. In work seen in product design, standards are average. At times, when the work is particularly challenging, progress is good as seen when students visited the engineering laboratories one of the local university. Students organise their work well and make good use of graphics and text as their folio work develops. They use ICT well to enhance the work. They make models of products in a range of materials to develop and modify their prototype ideas based on what they have learnt. The quality of finish of practical work, particularly in Year 12, is below average. Students have inadequate skills to sketch and develop a busy page of design ideas.
269. At this stage in the course, Years 12 and 13 students have made appropriate progress. Folio and practical project work is developed well. Students make good progress with computer-aided design and its application. The introduction of enhanced computing resources and facilities is having a positive influence on the standard and presentation of current work. Students of all capabilities make equally good progress. Ethnic minority students and those for whom English is an additional language feel included in the group, and make similar rates of progress as other students
270. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 are good. Teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise contribute to learning. Work has been enhanced considerably when industry links have been made. Learning is good because teachers have high expectations, interact well with students and are good facilitators. Insufficient use is made of product analysis at all stages of the design process. Students learn well when they are given opportunities to enter into extended debate, for instance when they attend a conference exploring sustainable development. Progress in most lessons is good because teachers set realistic deadlines, learning proceeds at pace and students understand what they have to do within a planned programme. Students are enthusiastic and motivated.
271. Priorities identified as a result of effective leadership include, suitably, improvements in resources and the range of opportunities offered when the department moves into new accommodation next year. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The application of ICT in all aspects of the department's work is good. Courses are planned well and make good use of available resources. Teachers take appropriate measures to supplement shortfalls in resources in a number of ways, for instance, by establishing close links with industry and one of the local universities. Students' work is assessed regularly and frequently and suitable targets are set for improvement. Students receive good guidance on how to organise the very demanding project work and value the support given by all teachers in the department.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies and economics.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- AVCE results were above average in 2001.
- Good teaching leads to students' good achievement over time.
- Work experience helps to raise standards on the AVCE course.

Areas for improvement

- The range of vocational courses does not meet fully the needs of lower attaining students.
- The drop-out rate on intermediate courses is sometimes too high.

272. Classes are offered in AVCE and intermediate level GNVQ in business. Although the foundation GNVQ in business is also offered every year, there have been insufficient applicants for the course to run for the last five years. There are no courses in the more practical skills based areas of administration, customer service or secretarial skills. Rates of retention are good on the AVCE course but vary from year to year on the intermediate course from satisfactory to unsatisfactory.

273. Results on the AVCE course in business in 2001 were well above average for the eight students who completed the course and represented good achievement based on students' prior attainment. Results in the intermediate GNVQ course were below the national average in 2001 and indicated satisfactory achievement overall for students of a very wide range of attainment.

274. Standards of work seen in class and in folders are above average in the Year 13 AVCE course. Students have a good understanding of all aspects of the syllabus and show good skills of independent research. Students whose GCSE results were modest are making better than expected progress on the advanced course. Standards on the intermediate course are below average and most students have made satisfactory progress at this early stage. In a Year 12 lesson on business finance, students had an adequate knowledge of how to set up and run a business and were improving their understanding of how to work out fixed and variable costs.

275. The quality of teaching is good on the advanced course and satisfactory on the intermediate course. Most students make appropriate progress. Teachers use their good subject expertise well to motivate the students and to give clear and precise explanations of difficult concepts and complex relationships in business. However, in one lesson in Year 12, the teacher did not reinforce students' understanding of costings by enabling them to handle and apply key concepts in practical examples. Students participate actively in lessons and work well without direct supervision. They are eager to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through responding to undirected questions. In one intermediate GNVQ business lesson, although learning activities were well planned, an unnecessary amount of time was devoted to students copying information from one source to another rather than the teacher providing handouts based on the overhead transparencies used in the lesson. As a result, higher attainers in this lesson were insufficiently challenged. Although students

develop their skills of independent study well on the A-level course, limited use is made of the Internet to research topics in business.

276. Students on the AVCE business programme enhance their learning through attending a work placement for a day per week throughout the course. The employers involved act as a good resource to assist students' research into current business practice. This system operates effectively and students' portfolios contain abundant evidence of good independent research as a result.
277. Procedures to monitor teaching and learning are effective in sharing good practice. Good leadership of the department has identified the need to provide a wider range of vocational courses for low attaining students. Resources and accommodation are adequate and are managed well. Students receive suitable support and guidance from teachers to assist their learning. Procedures for assessment help students to know what to do to improve. Improvement since the previous inspection is good so that students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.

Economics

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

Strengths

- AS-level results in 2001 were well above average.
- Good teaching enables students of all backgrounds to achieve well by the end of Years 12 and 13.

Area for improvement

- A few students in Year 12 have difficulty with mathematical concepts.

278. The inspection covered the advanced course taught at the school within the local 16-19 partnership. Rates of retention are good both on the AS and A-level courses. Nearly all students proceed to study the A-level course after completing the AS-level course.
279. Results in A-level economics have fluctuated in recent years. In 2001, A-level results were well below average for the 12 candidates. Provisional results for 2002 indicate a considerable improvement with all candidates attaining a pass at grades A-E, and results overall represented good achievement based on students' prior attainment. In 2001, the AS-level results for the 16 students involved were well above average and showed good achievement.
280. Standards of work seen are currently average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13. Students acquire good skills of analysis and research. They use their good skills in literacy to produce suitably extended written answers. Most students have adequate skills in numeracy to enable them to cope with the work. In a Year 12 lesson on elasticity of demand, for example, nearly all students were able to follow the mathematical content adequately but a few did not have a good understanding of percentages and proportions. Across all aspects of the syllabus, students in Year 13 show a good level of knowledge and understanding.
281. Teaching and learning are good. Students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment make at least satisfactory progress. Lessons in economics are planned carefully to ensure appropriate variety of activity and independent study outside the classroom. Teaching makes good use of questioning and short written exercises but little use of brainstorming or small group activities. The teacher's good command of the subject motivates students and helps them to make suitable progress in lessons. Clear and helpful explanations of the work help

students to become more confident and competent. Students are taught well to read and research independently. Occasionally, students' progress slows when the teacher uses abbreviations on the board that are not easily understood or recognised by students, as observed in a Year 12 lesson.

282. Students have positive attitudes to their work that assist learning. In class they reply enthusiastically and often in good detail to the teacher's structured and probing questions. They participate willingly and work well on unsupervised projects.
283. The department is led effectively and the adequate resources for learning are managed well. Systems for target setting and showing students how to improve work well. Students receive good support, advice and guidance that help them to understand the work and to see the relevance of what they are doing. Procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus was on ICT.

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their knowledge of the subject well to guide students' further learning.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject assist their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not often experience ICT in its wider sense in a work situation.
- The department lacks projectors or interactive whiteboards for demonstration.

284. The computer studies and ICT courses were inspected. Students in Year 13 are taught off-site at the partnership's sixth form centre. Students in the sixth form have the opportunity to study an ICT key skills course. Teaching and learning are good. The attitudes among students to learning are also good. Retention is good, the majority continuing their studies.
285. The most recent results for the AS-level computing and the ICT examination show that the students achieve well relative to their previous attainment. All the students entered attained a grade, with three of the seven students achieving the higher grades. In 2002, the two students entered for the A-level examination both achieved E grades. This is an improvement on the 2001 results.
286. In work seen and in examination of previous work and discussion with students about their personal projects for the A-level, standards in the Year 13 computing course are above average. Students have a good understanding of a database and are confidently entering the data for their projects. Discussion with students about their projects shows that they have a clear vision about the future developments and how to overcome problems. Students have good knowledge of programming language and procedures. They are confident to use the visual basic language in their projects and are familiar with the syntax. Although students discuss the use of ICT in its wider context, few have had the opportunity to experience first hand the complexities of its use in large organisations.
287. The Year 12 groups, now taught at the school, are larger and indicate the increased popularity of the subject. Although their attainment is lower than that expected of students in Year 12, not having had the benefit of ICT lessons in Year 11, their achievement is good. They are acquiring good skills with a range of applications. Students in the computing group

are already beginning to use programming language with understanding. Good opportunities are provided for all students in the sixth form to study an ICT key skills course.

288. Students' attitude to the subject is positive, showing a very good level of interest. Students are confident to discuss their work and comment that they find the work challenging. In discussion, all the students felt that they were advised well about the course and receive good support. All students on the advanced courses in Years 12 and 13 have their own computer at home and access to computers in school is good.
289. The quality of teaching is good and as a result students learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and computing skills and use their expertise well to guide students. When students are working individually, teachers circulate well, intervening when necessary and contributing positively to their learning.
290. Lessons start with a clear explanation about the task but there are occasions when the initial exposition of the lesson is slow, lacking vitality and resulting in students losing interest. The absence of a projector or interactive whiteboard means that procedures have to be explained rather than demonstrated. This was most noticeable during a Year 12 key skills lesson. Although the teacher used a series of transparencies to guide students through the query procedure for a database, a few students did not understand so that time had to be spent visiting individuals, which resulted in slowing the pace of learning.
291. Satisfactory management of the department at the school assists the learning of Year 12 students and tracks the effectiveness of teaching on a regular basis. Students in Year 13 are taught at the sixth form centre and there is no teacher with overall responsibility for their development or to oversee their progress. Improvement since previous inspection is satisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Attainment has improved and students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students promote good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge of the physiology of exercise is inadequate.
- Provision in sport for students not following the advanced courses is limited.

292. The department provides courses at AS-level and A-level in the sixth form. In the past two years the A-level course has been taught at the school. Previously, the number of students taking the course has been low and A-level results were well below average. Currently, the numbers of students in Year 12 and Year 13 have increased, especially girls. Provisional results at A-level in 2002 show an improvement over previous years. In 2001, results at AS-level were slightly above average. Retention of students on courses has been good with 12 of the 13 who started the AS-level course last year completing it and five out of seven completing the A-level course.

293. In the work seen, students attain average standards except in exercise physiology. Based on their prior attainment, achievement is good by the end of Year 12 and by the end of Year 13. There is a wide range of attainment in sixth form classes but most students in both Year 12 and Year 13 make good progress in lessons. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In practical work, students plan a personal fitness test with enthusiasm and link the theoretical principles to a range of different sports. Students in Year 12 gain a good knowledge of the development of the pagan Olympic games through to the modern era. They trace the influence of the introduction of women and black athletes into the games and understand the role played by politics. Many in Year 12 do not understand the difference between aerobic and anaerobic exercise and cannot recall the role of oxygen in the blood. In Year 13, students have a good understanding of the issues of sport in different parts of the world. They show good analytical skills when comparing attitudes and approaches to sport in the United Kingdom with those in Australia.
294. The quality of students' written work varies and is average overall. Their files are presented well because many show pride in their work. They demonstrate good research skills in planning individual fitness programmes and interpret data through graphs and calculations. In discussion, students use a wide range of relevant vocabulary and speak enthusiastically about their work.
295. The quality of teaching and learning at both AS-level and A-level is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations, plan the work carefully and share the lesson's objectives with students. Very good relationships between teachers and students and among students contribute to the good achievement made by most students throughout the course. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to motivate the students, who appreciate the efforts made by teachers on their behalf, especially in assistance with revision prior to examinations.
296. Students have a mature attitude to their work and are enthusiastic. In the small amount of practical work observed, students collaborated well in groups and recorded results after thorough discussion. A few students are reluctant to be involved in discussion in class despite their enthusiasm for the subject. They are aware of their progress on the course as a result of some thorough analysis of their results by teachers and good guidance about how to improve. A few students make good use of word processing to aid presentation of work and several use the Internet to enhance their personal study.
297. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and suitable planning for the use of the new sports facilities expected next year is taking place. There is no planned practical course available to sixth form students in the school to enrich their current programme. Systems to monitor teaching and learning are adequate. Currently, the accommodation and resources for the subject are restricted because of the building improvements taking place. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design. Work in theatre studies was also sampled. In the A-level examinations in theatre studies in 2002, all students achieved the pass grade but the number of higher grades was low. In the lesson seen, the standard of attainment was above average with some outstanding oral work. Students were totally committed. Teaching was excellent.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and students lead to good learning.
- Students have good skills in working independently that help them to improve standards of work.

Areas for improvement

- Students rarely use modern technology to experiment with a range of media and materials.
- Systems for assessing work do not provide enough feedback of good quality to students.

298. The department offers the GNVQ intermediate course, AS-level and A-level courses in Years 12 and 13. Rates of retention are satisfactory overall. In 2001, eight out of ten students completed the GNVQ intermediate course and the full complement of 18 students completed the AS-level course in July 2001. However, out of the 20 students who started the A-level course in 2001, only 14 completed it.
299. In 2001, A-level results for the 25 students entered were slightly below average and represented good achievement based on prior attainment. The number of students who attained grades A or B was marginally above the national average. Provisional A-level results in 2002 indicate a decline in the number of students who achieved grades A or B.
300. In work seen, standards are average and as expected when compared with students' earlier attainment. Year 13 students are currently working well. They apply effort to the tasks that are set, either by their teachers or by themselves, and are reasonably productive. Their pace of working is slow when they produce initial research studies for further development. They are acquiring important analytical and evaluative skills. In one lesson observed, students made a good analysis of the paintings of the two artists Max Ernst and Dieric Boutts. Their self-confidence is growing and they are prepared to work more from their own ideas, concepts, attitudes, values and beliefs without over-reliance on their teachers. The highest attaining students carry out good, independent research. They collect very useful visual information that is stored in their visual diaries. They develop these initial studies into final paintings in the art studios. Currently, students work in very uninspiring surroundings with a very restrictive range of media and materials. Most draw and paint within the narrow confines of fine art and craft and do not often explore ideas and concepts through photography or computer-generated design.
301. A few students in Year 12 have not acquired the greater independence and concentration required of them for study at AS-level compared, for example, with work done on the GCSE short course. The majority, however, are working well. They carry out good research and are improving their skills in drawing and painting. These skills enable them to communicate ideas and concepts and express feelings through art and design. They make good use of a very limited range of media and materials. Students for whom English is an additional language are making good progress and are highly articulate when asked to comment on and discuss their work.
302. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. At times, insufficiently challenging exercises are set for the highest attainers. Teachers are well informed and possess good subject knowledge that helps students to improve the standard and quality of their work. They offer good advice and provide support for students as and when it is required. There is little use of modern technology in the context of art and craft to encourage students to explore and communicate their ideas.

303. Assignments are set regularly. Students carry out initial research studies independently and develop final paintings out of this research. Verbal assessment is provided for students during each lesson that provides students with a good appraisal of their work. However, the system of assessing and recording students' work does not always result in the setting of suitably rigorous targets for individual students to improve their work.
304. Good leadership and management have helped students to achieve at least satisfactory standards despite the staffing difficulties experienced in the department over the past few years. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory despite the very limited range of media and materials available. Accommodation is unsatisfactory at present, but this state of affairs should be resolved in the near future when the art and design department moves to new premises.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and history.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 and in Year 13 are above national averages.
- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Good use of assessment results in students knowing exactly where they are and what to do to improve further.
- Good leadership and management have helped to improve standards.

Area for improvement

- The availability and use of ICT in school for research, editing work and producing graphs and charts are unsatisfactory.

305. Geography is a popular course in Years 12 and 13. Rates of retention on the AS-level and A-level course are good. In 2001, results at AS-level were above the national averages. This applied to results at A and B grades and results at A to E. Results at A-level in 2001 were very high. Results in 2002 were at a similar high level. There are no significant differences in results or in work seen between male and female students or for ethnic minority students in the school. Based on predicted grades from GCSE results, students achieve well. Work seen indicates that standards are above average in Year 12 and Year 13.
306. Students have good knowledge and understanding of the range of topics covered in physical, human and economic geography. They develop the ability to interpret a range of sources of evidence such as video extracts, graphs and charts. Students in Year 12, for example, use a range of information to study the causes and effects of flooding in the Mississippi valley and to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods that have been used to try to contain it. Students work confidently on their own and have good skills of independent learning. The basic skills of reading, analysis, note taking and writing bullet points of the main facts are developed well by the end of Year 12. The use of ICT to produce maps and pictures, for research or to refine and edit students' work, is unsatisfactory. This is partly because of some difficulties of access to computers in school, and partly because a few teachers are not confident enough in its use to make it an integral part of lessons.

307. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their wide knowledge in the subject to ensure that students have all the factual information needed for success. There is also an emphasis in lessons on students using their knowledge to develop independent learning and research skills. As a result, they are skilled at these important areas of learning that help them to towards A-level success. Occasionally, question and answer sessions between teacher and students are used when students would gain greater benefit from discussions among themselves or from describing what they see in the evidence to the rest of the group. Lessons are planned well and have a clear structure so that a good range of resources such as videos, maps, information sheets and textbooks are used to good effect. Students' work is marked carefully and teachers give useful hints and advice to help them to improve the quality of their work. This is so, even where groups are very large. Students achieve well. They are attentive in lessons and have a high level of motivation to produce good work. Teachers expect work of good quality and students respond well. Students talk with confidence about their work and discuss geographical issues with competence and maturity. Very good, highly supportive, relationships among students and with their teachers are a strong feature of lessons.
308. The good procedures for assessment ensure that students are set realistic targets and know what to do to improve. Good leadership and management of the subject are important factors in the rise in standards and the increase in numbers studying the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and results in students' very good progress.
- Careful, thorough marking, with detailed comments, helps students to make very good progress.

Area for improvement

- The arrangement of seating does not stimulate productive discussions in class.

309. The inspection covered the AS and A-level courses taught by the school. A-level results in 2001 matched the national average at grades A and B and were above average at grades A to E. This represents a dip from the above average results of 2000 when over half the students gained A or B grades. In 2002, attainment rose and nearly two thirds of students gained grades A or B. This is an improvement on the standards reported at the previous inspection. Students tend to perform better in history than in their other subjects. All students who took the AS-level examination in 2001 gained a pass grade, and over two thirds gained grade A or B. Students make very good progress overall from their GCSE work as a result of very good teaching and their own hard work.
310. Standards of work seen are above average. Standards are closer to average in Year 12, where students are still coming to terms with the demands of advanced level work. A few, however, are already working at the highest standards, as seen in their well-structured and analytical essays. They have good knowledge and understanding of the periods of history they are studying. They successfully select, collate and present evidence to support a view of the past. Many, however, do not easily understand abstract concepts such as the nature of power and influence. This was seen, for instance, in work by Year 12 students on protest groups in Russia in 1905.

311. The work seen of students in Year 13 was above average overall, and from a large proportion, well above average. These students write essays that are well structured, analytical, show considerable depth of understanding and present a valid viewpoint, backed up by well-researched evidence. The essays from the majority are carefully thought out, but a few tend to lack the depth of analysis needed for the very highest grades. Those from the lowest attainers are usually narrative rather than analytical. Students use historical texts very well to select evidence. They use technical terminology confidently in their oral and written work. The highest attainers argue a point well and are prepared to challenge their teachers' views and suggest alternatives.
312. Teaching is very good overall and is a major contributory factor in the students' very good progress in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately challenging and is matched well to the requirements of the examinations. The usually detailed comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance and targets to improve their answers in the future.
313. Teaching methods ensure that students have a variety of ways in which to learn. They have good opportunities to work independently, and not to rely too heavily on their teachers. Group work is effective and ensures all students participate in the work. Teachers rightly emphasise students' oral contributions to lessons, and give them good opportunities to make oral presentations of their work. Students in Year 13 working on the Lenin's April Theses presented their group's findings to the whole class. Students in Year 12 presented their findings about protest groups in Russia in 1905. Although teachers encourage group discussion, they do not always ensure that the seating arrangements are appropriate and that students are facing one another.
314. Students work hard and come to lessons prepared for work, thus enabling the teachers to move on to new work effectively. They have very good commitment to their studies and clearly want to learn and improve. As a result, they make very good progress. Students' work as independent learners is helped by the good provision for history in the library and in the departmental libraries in teaching rooms.
315. The very good leadership and management of the department ensure that high standards are maintained. The organisation of the teaching groups makes effective use of teachers' individual strengths. History is a popular subject, and virtually all students who start the course remain on it through the two years. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French. Italian and German were also sampled. In Italian, A-level results have been well above the national average over the past three years with all students gaining at least a grade C and over half achieving grade A. Fewer students have entered for German, but, in 2002, all three candidates passed with a grade that matched their prior attainment. Two lessons were observed, one in Year 13 Italian, one in Year 12 German. Teaching is good overall. In Italian, very good teaching has led to very high achievement. In German, Year 12 students are achieving satisfactorily but are still too dependent on their teacher. Their standards of speaking are below expectations.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Much very good teaching and students' commitment and enthusiasm lead to very good achievement.
- Students' oral work is well above average with articulate, perceptive and mature judgements.
- Management is very good and leadership is excellent.

Area for improvement

- The standard of written work varies considerably.

316. In AS-level examinations in 2001, students' results were well above the national average. The same students performed even better at A-level in 2002 with a high percentage of A-B grades and improved average points scores. A-level results in 2001 were slightly below average. Based on students' prior attainment, achievement in external examinations represents good achievement. In general, students of all ethnic backgrounds and levels of attainment make good progress throughout Years 12 and 13.
317. The overall quality of work seen in Years 12 and 13 was above average. Most students are articulate, well informed and mature. Male and female students make equally valuable contributions. Not all, however, show the same confidence in oral communication and, in a Year 13 class, one or two examples of oral feedback lacked confidence and clarity.
318. Students in Year 12 at the early stage of the course have re-adjusted to its more rigorous and challenging nature. A class in Year 12, for example, engaged in a perceptive and articulate discussion of the author's intention in the novel *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan. The general standard of discussion was knowledgeable and fluent, with one or two gifted and talented students making outstandingly mature critical judgements. Almost all students read aloud well and give life and understanding to texts.
319. The standard of written work varies considerably but the great majority of students write accurately. Some of the writing of high attaining students is of very high quality, already reaching the highest A-level grades. Such writing is always based upon very detailed and thorough knowledge of texts. It shows evidence of wider reading, is carefully planned and is written accurately. Most students make helpful notes to aid their revision.
320. The quality of teaching observed was very good and sometimes excellent. Procedures for sharing good practice in teaching and learning are very effective in ensuring that students' learning is very good. Students recognise the very high academic standard of teachers and respect their commitment and effort. Texts are thoroughly prepared for examinations and students are encouraged to read widely. Relationships are excellent. Teachers have very high expectations and are very well informed about students' progress and potential. The marking of work is very thorough with much positive comment. Teachers provide very good support and advice to students about how to improve their work. The great majority of students who start courses complete them. The very good management and leadership have helped the department make good progress since the previous inspection.

French

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

Strengths

- Challenged by very good teaching, students in Year 13 are reaching very high standards.
- A-level results have been well above the national average in the past three years.
- Students in Year 12 are achieving well.

Area for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to read for enjoyment in French.

321. Over the past three years the numbers of students taking French at A-level have been small, but stable. Results have been well above the national average with all students passing and six out of ten achieving the top two grades A and B. Most students did better than expected when taking account of their attainment when they joined the sixth form. The majority of students have continued to A-level after taking the AS-level examinations.
322. Work seen shows that standards in the present Year 13 are also well above average. Students' understanding of complex French, spoken at native speed, is unusually well developed. This reflects the very demanding teaching they receive and the abundant opportunities they have to hear French of a very high quality. Their spoken French is of an equally high calibre. The ablest linguists speak with little trace of an English accent and with a rare fluency and grasp of advanced grammar. Others are not far behind and speak with above average confidence and accuracy. Written work, also, shows maturity, depth and independence of thought.
323. Standards in Year 12 are above average at this early stage of the AS-level course. Students have made good progress during this time and are thriving on teaching that makes copious use of French. Most students have cleared the very large divide between GCSE and the much greater intellectual demands of AS-level. Their understanding of French is better than expected. The most competent linguists among them speak fully and with good pronunciation. Others, however, are still diffident in speaking and need even more practice than they are receiving. They would benefit from more opportunities to read in French for pleasure.
324. The teaching of French is very good overall. Teachers have a native command of French and use it uncompromisingly in the classroom so that students are exposed to French of the highest quality. As a result they improve their listening skills well. Teachers also make excellent use of topical materials from the media to stimulate interest and provoke good discussion. A very effective lesson with Year 13 students, for example, stimulated them to give reasons why young people in certain areas of France vote for right wing parties. In another lesson, Year 12 students listened to a modern version of a French 'chanson' and had to reproduce some of the song's lyrics. These exercises were very successful in coaxing good responses from students and getting them to listen carefully.
325. Apart from a small amount of reluctance in Year 12, all students are hard working, mature and attentive. Year 13 students are entirely independent workers and do their own research using the Internet. Students spoken to were very positive about their experiences of learning French and appreciate the rigorous teaching and supportive help they receive.
326. The opportunities of learning foreign languages to AS and A-level are unusually broad in the sixth form, as in the rest of the school. However, these opportunities could be broadened further to include courses for students who would like to pursue a language to a lower level.
327. The management of French in the sixth form is very efficient and committed to the continuance of high standards. Good practice is widely spread within the department through

frequent consultation and checking on the quality of teaching. Teachers mark students' work with care and imagination so that students know what they need to do to improve. Assistant staff make a very helpful contribution to the development of students' spoken fluency. Since the previous inspection standards in the sixth form have risen considerably.