

INSPECTION REPORT

DAVENANT FOUNDATION SCHOOL

Loughton, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115342

Headteacher: Chris Seward

Reporting inspector: Roger Holmes
2632

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th November 2002

Inspection number: 249709

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Voluntary Aided
School category:	Secondary
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Davenant Foundation School Chester Road Loughton Essex
Postcode:	IG10 2LD
Telephone number:	020 8508 0404
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Huckle
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2632	Roger Holmes	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23016	Terry Morrison	Team inspector	English Drama	English as an additional language
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
3937	John Seed	Team inspector	Chemistry Biology	
12470	Brian Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Special educational needs
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	French	
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History Economics Business education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Equal opportunities
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	
15709	Roger Crocker	Team inspector	Music Information and communication technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Davenant Foundation School is an ecumenical Christian comprehensive school. Pupils are not selected by ability but their parents have to demonstrate their commitment to the school's ideals by regular church attendance. The school has many more requests for places than it can accommodate. It is a little larger than it was at the time of the last inspection, with 1077 boys and girls on roll. Although the school is average sized overall, the sixth form, with about 290 students, is much larger than most. Many pupils stay on into the sixth form but about a third join from other schools.

Pupils joining the school in Year 7 represent the full comprehensive range but their average level of attainment is much higher than usual for their age. Fewer than eight per cent of pupils are on the schools' register for special educational needs, which is less than in most schools and the proportion with statements for special educational needs is much lower. Only 1.7 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much less than in most schools.

Since the last inspection the school has achieved Sports College status and has become a Beacon school. It has also achieved the Investors in People award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Pupils make good progress and achieve high standards in examinations as a result of very effective teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work. Their personal development is also very good as a result of the school's provision and its distinctive ethos, to which all staff in the school contribute. Leadership and management are very good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress and achieve high standards.
- Teaching is very good and pupils have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.
- Leadership is very effective and is taking the school forward whilst maintaining its distinctive ethos.

What could be improved

- A few lessons, whilst satisfactory, are not as good as they could be.
- More effective use could be made of assessment information.

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 progress since it was last inspected in November 1996. All of the issues identified in the report have been tackled. The quality of teaching has improved. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 have risen more quickly than in most schools, despite already being well above the national average. GCSE results have also remained much higher than in most schools. Since the last report the school has achieved Sports College status and become a Beacon school.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Pupils make good progress throughout the main school and achieve even higher results at GCSE than would be expected from their well above average levels of attainment when they join the school. This is because of their very positive attitudes to work and the quality of teaching they receive.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average for all three core subjects, but not quite as high in science as in English and mathematics. GCSE results are well above average by all comparisons including the proportion of pupils who receive high grades as well as those who achieve more modestly. Boys and girls achieve equally well at both these stages and the standards achieved in the tests are reflected in the quality of work seen in the school.

Students in the sixth form achieve better results at A level than their GCSE results would predict in almost all subjects, but results in the science subjects have been lower. Students are now making good progress in all their sixth form studies, including the science subjects where teaching arrangements have improved. Overall, male students achieve relatively better than female students, compared to their national averages. Results have stayed at much the same level for several years, including those for 2002. These are also likely to be above average, although no national comparisons are yet available.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils work hard and concentrate well, often playing a lively and effective role in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and are polite and helpful around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The school's very positive ethos encourages pupils and students to take a very active role in the school's life. They take responsibility willingly and grow in maturity at the same time as developing enthusiasm and commitment to activities such as sport and music.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils very rarely miss school without good reason.

	Attendance is closer to average in the sixth form.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Almost all lessons are very successful. Teachers know their subjects well and almost all make the work interesting for pupils. Teachers expect the pupils to work hard and pupils respond very well. They concentrate hard and are keen to play an active part in lessons, answering questions enthusiastically and working very well together. Behaviour is generally so good that teachers can concentrate on teaching. Work in the sixth form is tackled at a high level and students are prepared for examinations rigorously.

A small proportion of lessons, whilst satisfactory, are not as effective because the teacher is not clear enough about what the pupils will learn or relies too much on the pupils' very positive attitudes rather than making the lesson stimulating.

Pupils are expected to express themselves clearly in lessons and to use mathematical skills as part of their learning, which they do as a matter of course. This supports their development of literacy and numeracy skills very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced at all stages and meets the needs of all pupils well. In the sixth form the strong academic emphasis complements other provisions in the area and matches students' requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' special needs are catered for well, in class and in the learning support base. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is also good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All pupils speak English well and none require special provision, at the moment.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good overall. Provision for moral and social development is excellent. Cultural and spiritual development is very strong. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's provision and the clear expectation that they will take full advantage of it.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for all its pupils. Assessment information is beginning to be used effectively; a whole school approach is being developed.

The school's extra-curricular provision is particularly strong. The great majority of pupils and students take part in activities such as sport, music and drama. Standards of performance are very high and social aspects of the activities play a major part in defining the school's ethos.

The school has particularly strong links with parents. Their commitment and support are significant factors in the school's success.

Sports College status has further strengthened links with the community and provided an even wider range of opportunities for pupils and students.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is very effective and is well supported by senior staff. There is a very strong sense of purpose in the school as a result of the shared vision that has been developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very well informed, committed and very effective. Decisions are based on a careful consideration of facts and finances are used skilfully to support them.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The evidence is collected well and used effectively to formulate very good plans for the school's continued development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are deployed very effectively and support the work of the school very well. Staffing and equipment levels are good, but accommodation for the sixth form is inadequate. Arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are very effective and the programme for training new teachers in the school is strong.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils are expected to work hard, and make good progress. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Staff are approachable and work well with parents. Pupils like the school and grow well in maturity. The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework: some would like more, some less. More information about pupils' progress.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good. • Behaviour is good. 	
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Inspectors agree with the parents' overwhelmingly positive and unusually strongly expressed views of the school. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning. Information about pupils' progress is generally helpful and accurate, but more information about what is to be taught could be provided.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is much larger than in most schools with 290 male and female students currently on roll, almost all following AS or A level courses. About two thirds of the students have moved from Year 11 into the sixth form and the remainder come in from other schools. Entry requirements are a minimum of five GCSE passed at grade C or above, with at least B grades in the subjects to be studied. Consequently attainment on entry is above average but not as relatively high as in the main school. The social and ethnic composition of the sixth form is the same as the rest of the school.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very good. Students are making good progress in all subjects and achieve good results. Teaching is very effective and students have very positive attitudes to their studies. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities and students benefit from taking many responsibilities within the school and its community. The sixth form is managed and led very well. It provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Standards are good and students make good progress.
- Teaching is very good; teachers know their subjects well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their studies.
- Extra activities are very good and contribute very effectively to the integration of the sixth form into the rest of the school.

What could be improved

- Some teaching could be more effective.
- Assessment information is not used consistently enough.
- There is insufficient space for students' private study and the accommodation for some courses is unsatisfactory.

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. Results are consistently well above the national average. Students gain results significantly higher than in their other subjects. Students are very appreciative of the help teachers provide.
Biology	Good. Students are attaining above average standards in lessons, with recent examination results being in line with national averages. Teaching is good.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are above average at A level and in lessons. Teaching is good and often very good.
Business studies	Good. Very good leadership and management and good teaching help students make good progress. Standards seen during the inspection were above national expectations.
Economics	Good. Examination results are consistently high and are above national averages. Teaching is good and students develop a good understanding of economic theory.
Information and communication technology	Good. AS and A level results are above average. Teaching is effective and students develop a good grasp of the subject.
Physical education	Good. Results have risen well since the course started. Teaching is good; students are very motivated and learn very well.
Drama and theatre studies	Very good. Results are above average. Teaching and learning are good. The attitude of students is very good, as are leadership and management.
Music	Excellent. Students reach very high standards as a result of very effective teaching and dedicated leadership which has built the subject up over many years.
Geography	Very good. Standards are well above average and students make good progress. Teaching is thoughtfully planned and effective. The scheme of work is very detailed and informative. The subject is very well led and managed.
History	Very good. Students develop a very firm grasp of the subject and examination results are well above average as a result of very good teaching and students' attitudes to work
English	Good. Results are above average. Teaching and learning are good overall. The attitude of the students is very good.
French	Good. Standards are generally in line with expectation. Students have very good attitudes to the subject and teaching is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students receive very effective general support and relationships with tutors are very effective. Assessment information is used very well in some subjects to raise performance, but not consistently across the school.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are integrated well into the overall school structure. There is clear strategic direction and effective procedures to ensure its smooth running. Students are consulted and involved well in the running of the sixth form. Finances are managed carefully and the sixth form is cost effective. Some of the accommodation is not good enough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers are accessible.It is enjoyable.Teaching is good and challenging.There is a good range of courses on offer.Support is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Better advice on what to study.Better advice on future options.More information about the progress they are making.

Inspectors agree with the student's positive views of the sixth form. Response to the students' questionnaire showed a number of areas of dissatisfaction, which were not substantiated in discussions with students. The level of information on their progress varies between subjects and should be more uniform. Advice on courses and on future options is provided within lessons as well as through student services. The level of advice is good, but some students would prefer the information earlier.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils make good progress and achieve high standards.

1 Pupils do not have to pass any tests to get into the school and the school's intake covers the full comprehensive range. However, pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of primary school is much higher than usual and their average attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is well above average. They make good progress throughout the school in almost all subjects, as a result of very effective teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work.

2 In the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9, results have been well above average for several years and are rising faster than the national picture. Compared to other schools with a similar small proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results for English and mathematics are also well above average while science is above average. Teachers' assessment of pupils work in almost all other subjects shows a similar picture. This is confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. Almost all pupils are achieving the expected Level 5 by Year 9 and most are going on to Level 6 or above. The only exception is within design and technology: although pupils are doing well in food and textiles, they are only reaching average levels of attainment in their work with resistant materials.

3 All groups of pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results are well above average by all measures including the proportion who achieve five or more A*-C grades and the average points score which takes into account all grades achieved. Virtually all pupils achieve some accreditation, however low their starting point when they joined the school, and many do very well.

4 These results are high, even considering that pupils were well above average when they joined the school. In 2001, 74 per cent of pupils achieved five or more passes at grades A*-C whereas the average achieved by other schools with a similarly high intake was 65 per cent, a significant difference.

5 Again, as in Years 7 to 9, high examination results are reflected in the quality of work seen in the school. Pupils take pride in their work and often develop a firm understanding of the material through discussion in class.

6 Most pupils stay on into the sixth form but about a third join from other schools. Students have to have achieved at least five GCSE grades at A*-C with B grades in most of the subjects to be studied. This makes the students' attainment above average when they join the sixth form, but not as relatively high as in the main school. Results at A and AS level are above average and students achieve better results than their GCSE grades would predict in almost all subjects. The exceptions are biology, chemistry and physics where students have made considerably less progress than in other subjects. During the inspection, students were making at least good progress in all subjects inspected, including the sciences, where new leadership has changed the approach to teaching. Standards of work and progress were even higher in mathematics, music and history.

Teaching is very good and pupils have very positive attitudes to their work.

7 Over 80 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection were good or better, and none were unsatisfactory. About 30 per cent were very good or excellent, with an even higher

proportion in the sixth form. Teachers know their subject well, plan carefully and mostly make the work interesting for the pupils.

8 Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. They listen attentively in class and are keen to answer questions, showing considerable interest in their work. They concentrate well, work hard in lessons and take pride in the presentation of their work.

9 The great majority of lessons capitalise well on the pupils' attitudes to learning. Because behaviour is so good, teachers can concentrate on teaching without the distraction of having to resolve problems or repeatedly call for pupils' attention. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to talk about the work they are doing. This often develops into discussions. Because there are such good relationships amongst the pupils and between pupils and teachers, pupils are able to exchange their ideas confidently. They can resolve any misunderstandings without feeling they would be laughed at, because they had got something wrong or were trying too hard.

10 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result of the increased importance that has been placed upon it by school management. There has been extensive debate amongst teachers, led by senior staff, about the features of an effective lesson and the importance of matching work to pupils' needs and their various ways of learning. Ideas from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been incorporated thoughtfully, together with the Key Stage 3 strategy, into useful guidance, to which the great majority of the teachers have responded very positively. Support staff have been fully involved and play an important part in helping the school achieve this quality of teaching.

Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.

11 Pupils join the school in Year 7 from a large number of primary schools. They are helped to settle quickly as a result of the contacts that are made with primary schools by Davenant's pastoral team and the very supportive procedures that they have established in the school. These include the extensive use of sixth form students as mentors for younger pupils, which provides very good personal development for the students as well as helping the younger pupils feel secure.

12 Almost all students joining the sixth form settle in quickly. This happens particularly well when students take part in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and meet other students and staff in situations less formal than normal lessons.

13 The school has a very strong ethos, based on its Christian principles. The ethos encourages pupils and students to try their best in everything they do and to support each other in their efforts. As a result, it is part of the school culture to work hard, to be interested in lessons and to answer questions willingly. It is far removed from the culture where it is 'uncool' to try.

14 This attitude is one of the main reasons for pupils' academic success and it also plays a major part in their personal development. They respond very well to the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual issues are addressed naturally as a normal part of many lessons; for example, in a biology lesson looking at the function of the heart, pupils' understanding and interest were extended by encouraging them to wonder at its effectiveness compared to a mechanical pump. Pupils responded thoughtfully and positively.

15 The school has a very strong moral structure underpinning its work. Staff provide very effective role models and pupils develop a very clear understanding of fairness and the importance of mutual respect. Older pupils and students express these ideas clearly and forcefully.

16 Pupils value the opportunities they have to take responsibility and to play an active part in the life of the school, including participating in making decisions through the various pupils' councils.

17 Cultural development is also strong, both through the formal curriculum and within the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. These play an unusually important part in the life of the school, both developing and capitalising on pupils' positive attitudes. A very high proportion of pupils and students are involved in these activities, particularly in sporting activities, drama and music. These very high rates of participation and the quality of performance that is achieved provide a powerful and tangible affirmation of the schools' success and are a major strength.

Leadership is very effective and is taking the school forward whilst maintaining its distinctive ethos.

18 The current headteacher has been in post since September 2001. He succeeded a headteacher who had introduced many innovations and moved the school rapidly. He has had the difficult role of maintaining the school's momentum whilst ensuring that all staff subscribe to its continued development and feel that they can cope with the changes. He is achieving this very successfully by involving staff effectively in consultation and decision-making. Working with the senior leadership group, he establishes a clear overall plan for the school's development. Strategic management groups have also been established to work within the school's overall development policy and formulate more detailed plans for such aspects as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the sixth form.

19 Senior managers have responded very well to this approach. They take significant initiatives and support the headteacher effectively. Other post holders also carry out their roles effectively, subjects are managed well and the heads of year play a particularly strong role in the life of the school.

20 The continued professional development (CPD) of staff has been established as a very significant feature of the school. Teachers and other staff take their professional skills seriously and there is regular discussion about effective methodology. This has been strengthened considerably by the publication within the school of the CPD Update in which a wide range of staff exchange ideas and pass on information from courses they have attended. The school's strong programme for the initial training of teachers also contributes well to this process by providing an influx of new ideas and giving an additional reason for considering what works in the class room.

21 The governing body is very effective. Governors have very clear views about the way the school should respond to its Christian character and are determined that this should permeate every aspect of its work. They are very well informed about the school's progress, its strengths and weaknesses and bring considerable skills and dedication to their work.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

A few lessons, whilst satisfactory, are not as good as they could be.

22 In a few cases, lessons succeeded because of the pupils' very positive attitudes rather than the quality of the teaching. There were two main problems with those lessons.

- Planning concentrates on what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. This means that whilst the pupils are busy during the lesson and work hard, they do not learn as much as they should. In these lessons the teacher is not clear enough about what is to be achieved and so does not emphasise the main points of the lesson sufficiently; sometimes the lesson tries to cover too much at once and so lacks an effective focus. When the teacher is unclear about the lesson's purpose, then so too are the pupils. They almost always carry out the work that is set for them, but in these lessons they are not always able to see why the tasks have been set and so cannot become properly involved in their own learning.
- Some lessons do not capitalise sufficiently on the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Sometimes pupils are set uninspiring tasks which would result in misbehaviour in many schools, but which they accept without complaint at Davenant. When asked what they would improve if they could, pupils stressed that most things in the school are very good, including the teaching, but they wished that in a few lessons they were able to do more than just listen to the teacher. During the inspection a few lessons had very long introductions, in which the teacher talked at length without involving the pupils. They listened but it was hard for them to maintain concentration and the approach reduced the time for learning.

Assessment information is not used effectively enough.

23 The governors have recently appointed a senior member of staff to further co-ordinate and strengthen the use of assessment information across the school. A good start has been made but there is still some way to go before assessment is used as effectively as it is in many schools.

24 Some departments, notably mathematics, already make good use of assessment internally, establishing and reviewing teaching groups, comparing performance and identifying areas for individual pupils to improve. This very effective practice is not followed by other departments. There is now a general consensus that it should happen but some time and training will be needed before there is a uniformly strong picture across the school.

25 All subjects set targets for their pupils at GCSE. Progress against these targets is then checked within the departments and monitored by the leadership group. Evidence from tests and other assessment information is being used by heads of year as part of their role in establishing an overview of each pupil's performance. For example in Year 10, subjects are required to provide grades, which are collated for each pupil, to see if there are patterns of low achievement. In Year 11, assessment data are used to identify pupils who are on the C/D grade boundary and would benefit from extra support. These are useful procedures, but at the moment insufficient use is being made of previous attainment in setting targets and in looking for pupils who may be falling behind the standards they should be reaching.

26 In the sixth form there are a number of mechanisms to monitor students' progress, including information generated by subject teachers and regular meetings between students and their tutors. These are often fruitful meetings as a result of the positive relationships that exist. Issues of progress are often raised by students and discussed, but tutors do not have

the sort of assessment information that would enable them to monitor all students' progress and raise issues for themselves if they were not raised by the student.

27 Progress is being made on all of these points and the school has recognised the importance of developing its assessment procedures.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28 The school has very few areas for improvement, but to raise standards even further the school should: -

- (1) Raise the standard of teaching in those lessons which, whilst satisfactory, are not as effective as most. This will involve supporting teachers so that they focus more clearly on the intended learning in each lesson and provide stimulating activities which involve pupils more effectively.
(see paragraphs 22 and 44)
- (2) Make more effective use of assessment information to monitor the progress that pupils and students make and set realistic targets for them to improve.
(see paragraphs 23-27 and 60)

Sixth form

- (1) Seek to improve accommodation for the sixth form so that they have adequate space for private study, more access to ICT facilities and better teaching space for subjects such as business studies.
(see paragraphs 73, 92, 111, 116 and 144)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	22
	Sixth form	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	0	3	14	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	14	64	23	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	19	30	9	0	0	0
Percentage	2	32	51	15	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 enter Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents almost four and two percentage points respectively.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	787	290
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17	0

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	46	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	87	69	156

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	80	79
	Girls	65	63	65
	Total	142	143	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	92 (82)	92 (83)	92 (86)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	66 (37)	70 (66)	63 (62)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	81	79
	Girls	69	66	63
	Total	151	147	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (90)	94 (88)	91 (86)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	62 (61)	76 (71)	60 (62)
	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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	80	77	157

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	52	76	78
	Girls	65	73	73
	Total	117	149	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	75 (81)	95 (98)	96 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49.0
	National	39.0

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	56	72	128
	Average point score per candidate	17.4	18.2	17.9 (17.7)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (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	48	65	113	9	7	16
	Average point score per candidate	18.2	18.5	18.4	11.3	15.4	13.1
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

** National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
763	15	0
5	0	0
42	0	0
14	0	0
2	0	0
8	0	0
11	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
25	1	0
27	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
170	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

Education support staff: Y7 – 11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	540

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24
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Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3922682
Total expenditure	3904319
Expenditure per pupil	3,579
Balance brought forward from previous year	182239
Balance carried forward to next year	200602

Key Stage 4	22
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1000
Number of questionnaires returned	352

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	42	5	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	44	3	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	55	3	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	14	2	3
The teaching is good.	31	58	3	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	52	13	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	38	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	28	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	46	7	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	46	44	3	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	32	3	0	1

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

29 Standards in the sixth form are above average. In almost all subjects, students achieve better results at A level than their GCSE scores would predict. As in most schools, female students' results are higher than males' but at Davenant there is far less difference than usual with the boys' results well above their national average.

30 Examination results have remained above average for many years. In 2001, the most recent from which there are national comparisons, A level results were well above the national average for computer studies, geography, history and mathematics, and above average for business studies, chemistry, economics, English literature, music, Spanish and theatre studies. Most other subjects were close to the national average, apart from art and design and physics, which were below. Results for vocational qualifications in leisure and tourism were very high, in the top ten per cent of schools in the country. There is a similar pattern of results for the 2002 examinations, apart from art and design which has improved and is now likely to be above average.

31 When students' starting points when they begin their sixth form studies are taken into account, students make most progress in textiles, drama, business studies and music. They achieve better A level results than their GCSE results would predict in all other subjects apart from chemistry, biology and physics.

32 The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the good levels indicated by the examination results. The quality of work being produced by students is very good in mathematics, music, geography and history, good in most other subjects and at the expected levels in ICT, modern languages and physical education. Students are making good progress in all the subjects inspected, including the science subjects where a change of subject leadership is improving the way students are taught. Progress is very good in mathematics and excellent in music.

33 Standards in the key skills of communication, use of number and ICT are all good. Students are well informed, articulate and confident in expressing their views. They write clearly and grammatically, and interpret grades and other data correctly. They use ICT as a natural part of their learning for research and presentations.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

34 Sixth form students have excellent attitudes to learning and are strongly committed to high achievement in everything they do. They relate very well to one another and to their teachers. Although many students have very good records of attendance, the overall picture is not as good as that in the main school.

35 Without exception, sixth formers have high aspirations and are keen to do well in their studies. They have a very positive approach to work. In lessons, they show their interest and enthusiasm by their excellent response to the challenges set by teachers. They have good listening skills, concentrate well and readily volunteer answers as well as confidently posing their own questions. They take their work very seriously and devote both time and effort to ensuring a good end result, for example in preparing coursework plans for history.

36 Students have very good relationships with their teachers. This means that many lessons take place in a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere, which is conducive to effective learning. The mutual respect that exists between staff and students is clearly evident and the vast majority of students respond to their teachers' high expectations by conducting themselves in a mature, sensible manner.

37 Relationships among sixth formers themselves are also very good. In lessons, they collaborate well, often working constructively in small groups. They show real consideration for the views of others; for example, the discussions of students in a business studies lesson took sensitive account of the different opinions being expressed, while in a psychology lesson, students listened attentively to the suggestions made by other groups before mounting their own thoughtful challenges.

38 Although in some subjects students are developing independent study skills, taking their own notes in lessons and using the library and Internet for research, many do not yet look beyond their immediate goal of passing an examination. There is little evidence that students are keen to widen their subject knowledge by exploring outside the set syllabus.

39 Students are encouraged to take up a wide range of responsibilities within the school and the local community, which results in an exceptionally high level of involvement in mutually beneficial activities. Sixth formers readily take on challenges, which demand strong personal commitment, such as mentoring younger pupils, serving on the school council or one of its many sub-groups, or taking part in some form of community service. By representing their peers at meetings of the various committees that discuss all aspects of school life, they are actively involved in important decision making on issues that directly affect both the sixth form and the whole school. For example, through their membership of the Safer Journeys to School Group, students are closely involved in the preparation of strategies to improve safety at the main gates, joining staff, governors and parents to meet local residents and councillors to plan improvements. They appreciate the value of these activities in helping them develop social and organisational skills, and in teaching them the principles of citizenship, but they also take pleasure in being of service to others.

40 The school is maintaining its good standards in the sixth form as a result of very effective teaching and the very positive attitudes of students towards their work.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41 Teaching in the sixth form is very good. All of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and over a third were very good or excellent. This consistency in the quality of teaching is an important factor in the way the students learn and the positive attitudes they have to their work. Teaching is very good in mathematics, economics, history and music and good in all of the other subjects inspected.

42 Teachers know their subjects well and prepare students for examination rigorously. Lessons are planned carefully with a strong focus on what the students need to cover in the particular syllabus they are following. Students respond to the teachers' very high expectations by maintaining a great deal of commitment and devoting considerable time and effort to their studies. Work is tackled at a high level with students expected to demonstrate solid understanding of the work rather than a simple knowledge of facts. For example, in a history lesson, students used their detailed knowledge of events during the 19th century to analyse the effect that wars during the period had in resolving conflicts. There was a very high level of discussion, with students expressing a range of valid interpretations clearly and persuasively, stimulated by the teacher's skilful use of questioning informed by his depth of

knowledge in the subject. Teaching methods are matched well to the needs of the students and involve them actively in their lessons.

43 Students' work is marked regularly and often very effectively. For example in physical education each piece of work receives a thorough review of its quality against agreed criteria followed by a summary of its strengths and specific points for improvement in the future. This practice results in the students having a firm grasp of their current performance, knowing how to do even better and being motivated to make the improvement.

44 In an excellent music lesson, the teacher led the students through a complex and highly demanding analysis of some of Purcell's vocal work, demanding very acute listening and reasoning skills as well as expressive performance. The balance between the teacher's and the students' involvement was very well judged and contributed significantly to the lesson's strengths. In some other lessons, this balance swings too far towards the teacher, with students becoming relatively passive. At its most pronounced, this involves students taking notes while the teacher lectures them. There are also many good lessons, which could be even better if the teacher gave more prominence to students' ideas. For example, in discussions in several English lessons, comments were always channelled through the teacher rather than exchanged directly between students. The teacher tended to evaluate each contribution and so reduced the students' own opportunities to develop skills of analysis and response in debate. The very few students, who have special needs or English as an additional language are supported effectively and make the same good progress as other students.

45 Specific lessons to cover the key skills of communication, use of number and ICT are provided only for a very few students. However, teachers place a strong emphasis on these skills in lessons and students respond well to the expectations placed upon them. Specialist vocabulary is used appropriately and students are expected to express themselves clearly in speech and writing. Numeracy has a high profile, with data being explored in many lessons and valid conclusions drawn. ICT is being used increasingly by students for research and presentation.

46 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Good quality teaching is seen as being very important and is valued highly by staff and students. Considerable importance is placed on the continuous improvement of teaching and there is lively debate amongst staff about the qualities of a good lesson. This high profile is contributing to continued improvements in an already strong area and reflects the school's drive for excellence.

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

47 A good range of courses is provided for the sixth form. A carefully chosen range of A level courses meets the needs of individual students well. All students take AS religious education, reflecting the Christian nature of the school. General studies is now an option from Year 12. The school's specialist status is reflected in the advanced vocational certificate of education offered in leisure and recreation. The school's decision to concentrate on A level courses fits in well with other local schools and colleges. This is shown by the considerable number of students who move into the sixth form from other schools.

48 Students appreciate the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. This includes sports, musical activities, school plays and working for charities. The school is rightly proud of the many ways in which students contribute to the community. Students can take the Duke

of Edinburgh Award. Sixth form students help younger pupils, for example by running a clinic for pupils having difficulty with mathematics.

49 The school has a well-planned policy and scheme of work for personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE), which is taught sometimes by specialist teams, but mainly by form tutors, who know the students well. The content and timing of the programme in the sixth form are flexible so that it is relevant to students, and staff constantly refine what is covered in response to the students' own expressed needs. One of the elements of the PHSCE programme is careers education. Following an awareness raising session shortly after students enter the sixth form, a range of topics is covered at appropriate times, including visits to university open days, talks by past pupils, individually arranged work experience or visits to industry, and personal interviews with the head of careers or the careers officer. The careers library is always available for private research. A very structured procedure exists to help students making applications to higher education. Students appreciate the help and advice they receive.

50 Through its Sports College status, the emphasis placed on community service in the sixth form and the school's Christian ethos, which encourages care and consideration for others, links with the local community are exceptionally strong. The sports college facilities are widely used by members of the community who enjoy a range of activities, including aerobics, fitness training, swimming and badminton. Sixth formers voluntarily devote time to such activities as helping with playgroups, working in hospitals or shopping for those who need help, while the whole school is regularly involved in raising substantial sums for local and national charities.

51 The school benefits from strong links with local businesses that provide work experience places, speakers to assist with the careers education programme and advisers for the Young Enterprise scheme, as well as sponsorship for the school calendar.

52 Sixth form students play a full part in escorting prospective pupils and their parents around the school. Because the school draws its pupils from over 50 primary schools and there are many more applicants than places, many students are involved. These arrangements for transition are well established and successful.

53 Overall, the school makes very good provision for students' spiritual and cultural development. Provision for their moral and social development is excellent. The basis for these very positive features is the school's strong commitment to the gospel values it espouses. More so than many schools, the principle of treating all people fairly, with equal respect and value, translates into very effective, if unwritten, policy and day-to-day practice. Staff demonstrate through their actions how to treat people with respect, as well as teaching what is acceptable and unacceptable. The fact that social, moral and spiritual development is so consistently promoted reflects well on the school's clear adherence to the values of its faith.

54 The school has explored the various meanings of spiritual development and provides many good opportunities for students to be reflective and develop their own beliefs and interpretations of events and issues. In music, for example, the spiritual music of Bach, particularly the *B Minor Mass*, touched the hearts of the students.

55 Provision for moral development is excellent. The school has clear expectations that students will develop a moral sense and recognise right from wrong, which they do very well. Sixth form students are very good role models for the rest of the school. They are involved in community service where there are many opportunities to develop and exercise moral responsibility. Sixth form students act as liaison officers for each year group, enabling

younger pupils to discuss their concerns. Assemblies focus effectively on moral dilemmas, and several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. For example, in history, discussion of democracy and citizenship provided a very good opportunity for students to explore and develop moral standpoints. Students have a strongly developed sense of conscience, reflect on the wider consequences of their choices and actions, and identify and discuss moral and ethical aspects of their personal behaviour.

56 Provision for social development is excellent. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and extend their social skills. The involvement of many sixth form students with pupils in the main school provides excellent opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and leadership, thus developing a greater awareness of the needs of others and respect for them. Residential opportunities enable sixth formers to enhance their team-building skills and provide further opportunities for social development. Students organise a party for senior citizens and contribute to the occasion. Other opportunities come through community service, which enables students to support others, especially those who have particular needs. Most subjects make a significant contribution to students' social development. In music, for example, taking part in bands, orchestras and in choirs enables students to work with others in extending their learning. The use of discussion in most subjects provides further opportunity for students to enhance interpersonal relationships.

57 Provision for students' cultural development is very good. Students are keenly aware of the variety of cultural backgrounds of their peers and how these can contribute to society as a whole. They perceptively recognise racism in their own and others' behaviour and act upon it. The sixth form students have many opportunities, mostly as part of their ongoing courses of study, to travel abroad. All these experiences greatly widen students' cultural awareness. However, some visits are particularly coveted. For example, students in their gap year, supported by governors' travel awards, are encouraged to spend a year involved in a project and in travel abroad. Three students used this provision to travel, work and study in Uganda. Such provision makes a significant contribution in enabling students to prepare for life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

58 A comprehensive policy, which is understood and meticulously observed, ensures the health and safety of students, staff and visitors. Regular risk assessments identify potential hazards and careful monitoring, overseen by a senior member of staff, ensures that any necessary remedial action is taken immediately if a problem is found. Staff take great care to follow safe procedures in lessons, particularly in areas of high risk, such as science and technology, and there is very good provision for routine first aid and medical care. Child protection procedures are appropriately in place.

59 The educational and personal support and guidance for students in the sixth form are very good. The quality of support and guidance for students' personal development is very good. Throughout their time in the sixth form, students are given responsibilities and are monitored in carrying out those responsibilities. Many are prefects, and their duties are effectively co-ordinated by a team of senior prefects. All must do community service or take part in a similar activity where they demonstrate responsibility. They take their responsibilities inside and outside school seriously. The head boy and girl organise the prefects. Other sixth form students also undertake significant tasks responsibly and very effectively, including organising and leading the school council with a maturity that belies their years, and acting as the link between the student body and school management. The head boy and girl have weekly meetings with the head of sixth form. The sixth form social committee organises a full programme of social activities, many of which fund new facilities in the common room.

Throughout their time in the sixth form, the importance of participation in this range of activities is stressed to students. Personal development is given a very high priority and is highly successful in producing students who are mature, articulate, cheerful and very positive.

60 Sixth form tutors have an important role in monitoring the students' work and progress. There are well-established systems for subject teachers to alert tutors if they feel that a student is under-performing and these situations are dealt with effectively and usually resolved. Tutors have regular meeting with students to discuss the progress they are making and these meetings are productive, largely because of the quality of relationships that exist. However, tutors do not have access to a sufficiently good range of assessment information to judge how well a student is doing, compared to their previous performance, and so these review meetings are not as productive as they could be.

61 There are very constructive and purposeful strategies in place to ensure high levels of attendance and low levels of unauthorised absence. All students are formally registered and there are effective guidelines to ensure their regular attendance. Absences are rigorously investigated and students are expected to explain these to the satisfaction of their tutor. Students are required to inform tutors when they are late and to notify staff when leaving the school premises. These procedures are fully observed and ensure consistent levels of very good attendance and the safety and well-being of all students. The head of sixth form systematically monitors all absences and ensures that the information is used effectively to pursue absentees and set targets for further improvement, particularly to reduce levels of unauthorised absence.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

62 Parents are overwhelmingly supportive in their views of the school and in the practical assistance, they give to school initiatives. The fact that the school is always oversubscribed indicates the satisfaction that both students and parents feel. Most parents are happy with the examination results that students achieve and think that the school gives good support to students to help them move forward. They are impressed with the good example that sixth formers set and the way they help younger pupils. The Parents' Association raises substantial funds to provide extra resources for the benefit of the whole school. The Home-School Links Working Party meets regularly each half term to discuss and review school developments. This is a very effective forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

63 The majority of students agree that they enjoy being members of the sixth form and would recommend it to others, many confirming that they would make the same choices of school and course if called upon to decide again. Most were able to choose the course they wanted and they appreciate the school's ethos, where hard work and ambition to succeed are the norm. Those who enter the sixth form after being educated in the main school see this as the culmination of their ambitions. They have admired the mature self-confidence of the sixth formers they knew, and want to emulate them. Those joining the school from outside were mainly swayed by its reputation for hard work and good results, and most say that they soon fitted into their new environment with the support of form tutors and the welcoming, friendly approach of existing students.

64 Students particularly appreciate the willingness of teachers to give their own time to helping with any problems that they may face, whether academic or personal. Relationships with staff are a major factor in their enjoyment of school life. Because most staff treat sixth

formers like responsible young adults, they are able to respond in kind and as a result, derive more benefit from their studies.

65 Students are also very pleased with the wide range of activities that can be undertaken in addition to lessons, which enrich their educational experiences and give them excellent opportunities for enhanced personal development. They say that the high profile given to the responsibilities undertaken by sixth formers contributes to a heightened sense of self-esteem and makes them feel valued.

66 A number of students indicated by their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they did not feel sufficiently well informed about courses before they entered the sixth form, that they were not told how well they were progressing with their studies and that information about future choices was inadequate. The inspection found that the school makes good provision for all these needs, and the negative views expressed in the questionnaire were strongly contradicted by students during the inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67 The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a clear management structure involving the school's senior leadership group in setting strategic goals for the development of the sixth form and evaluating its performance. The head of the sixth form is not a member of the senior leadership group but is closely in tune with its thinking as a result of frequent collaboration and consultation. He does much to establish the positive atmosphere with the students and his leadership of the tutor team.

68 Governors carry out their duties very well. They are very well informed about the performance of the sixth form, as they are of the rest of the school. They are highly committed to their role and bring an impressive range of skills and understanding to the decisions they make. They maintain a careful balance between the keen interest they feel in setting the strategic direction of the school and allowing the headteacher scope for initiatives and for daily management of the school.

69 Work in the sixth form is monitored as a part of the school's overall self-review. This includes an in-depth review of each subject in turn, including lesson observations, analysis of performance and review of documentation. These reviews have led to improved practice across the school as ideas have spread ahead of the reviews.

70 Students' performance is monitored carefully at subject level and there are a number of systems, involving the form tutors, for responding to particular strong or weak performance. The systems include a termly interview between each student and their tutor. These interviews are often effective because of the quality of the relationships between tutors and students but they are not supported by the sort of systematic information about students' past and present performance that would enable the tutor to see if a student was working at the right level. The school is beginning to make use of its assessment information in the lead up to GCSE but not yet in the sixth form.

71 Financial planning is very good, and systems to monitor the budget are excellent. Spending on the sixth form is very closely matched to the income derived from the students so there is no cross-subsidy with the rest of the school. Decisions about spending are considered carefully, taking account of a wide range of considerations to ensure that good value is achieved. Overall, the sixth form is very cost effective.

72 Financial planning is closely linked to the educational priorities identified in the school development plan. Income and expenditure in the sixth form match exactly, which means that sixth form provision in no way detracts from resources available for the rest of the school. Expenditure is carefully monitored to ensure that money is spent wisely and the principles of best value are clearly understood and rigorously applied. Given the successful outcomes in terms of examination results and personal development, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Resources

73 Resources and staffing levels are good in all subjects as a result of careful planning and spending. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is sufficient teaching space, including appropriate specialist accommodation for most subjects, but there is insufficient space for so many students to study privately, and some subjects, such as business studies, lack a proper base. The library provides a good resource but it is also used as a teaching room and so cannot also provide space for private study.

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

In the inspection, thirteen 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.

74 The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

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	3	67	62	67	15	3.00	1.51
Computer Studies	1	100	74	0	13	1.00	1.75
Geography	1	100	74	0	6	1.00	1.18
Religious Studies	35	57	85	3	26	1.26	2.38

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	36	94	87	87	58	6.89	5.80
Chemistry	13	85	90	62	43	6.31	5.90
Biology	26	88	88	27	34	4.92	5.25
Physics	20	65	88	30	40	4.00	5.67
Sports/PE Studies	1	100	92	100	25	10.00	5.09
Business Studies	31	87	92	42	32	5.23	5.50
Computer Studies	13	100	86	38	23	6.31	4.62
Art and Design	9	89	96	33	46	5.78	6.57
Music	8	100	93	63	35	7.00	5.74
Geography	24	96	92	50	38	6.92	5.74
History	18	100	88	67	35	7.67	5.45
Religious Studies	6	100	92	0	38	4.67	5.84
English Language	20	95	91	35	30	5.50	5.27
English Literature	19	100	95	32	37	6.21	5.91
French	8	100	89	13	38	5.50	5.59
Spanish	5	100	89	40	39	6.80	5.70

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and Tourism	9	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	16.0	10.06

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. Further mathematics and physics were also sampled.

The school entered students for further mathematics for the first time in several years in 2002. All students passed the examination. Over half were awarded grade A or B. There was no difference between the results of male and female students. One lesson was observed in the inspection. This was very good. Very good teaching ensured that students gained a very good understanding of how to calculate forces in springs. Well-chosen illustrations helped students learn. Students responded well to the rapid increase in challenge in this lesson.

In physics, the GCE A level results in 2001 were below the national averages. The department experienced problems with staff absence during the year and this is likely to have adversely affected performance. All of the students taking the GCE AS level examinations in 2002 gained at least a grade E. The results in the GCE A level examinations in 2002 were much better than the previous year. Numbers taking the subject have risen since the last inspection but the proportion of boys is higher than that found nationally. Two lessons were observed in physics, both of which were taught very well. In one, students quickly developed their practical skills using multimeters. In the other, students successfully assembled transformers to deliver a specified output. Many of them showed much initiative and confidently explained what they were doing. In both lessons, the very lively and enthusiastic approach by the teacher together with informative exposition ensured that learning was rapid. Students also developed very good techniques for answering examination questions as a result of the teachers' very good understanding of the examination board requirements.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students achieve standards well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers make sure students know exactly how well they are doing and what they should do next to improve even further.
- Students have very good, mature attitudes to the work. These attitudes help them succeed.

Area for improvement

- A few students do not achieve the standards they should reach.

75 Mathematics is a popular course. The vast majority of students who start the course gain an A level grade. In 2001, A level results were well above the national average. This has

been the case in all recent years. Students gained significantly higher grades than in their other subjects. Male and female students did equally well. Results in 2002 were higher than in 2001. These standards mean that students achieve very well on the course. Most students do better than would be expected based on their GCSE mathematics results, and only a few do not. The school should seek to enhance the provision for these students.

76 Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above the national average. Most students use their mathematics well and will try out new ideas. They understand the concepts well. This was seen when students in Year 12 learnt about forces. These students showed that they could combine the work they were learning with that they had done before. Students present their work very clearly and logically.

77 Teaching is very good. This is the main reason why students learn very well. All teachers have a very good knowledge of all the mathematics in the course. This means that each student can have the same teacher for all their lessons. Consequently, teacher and student know each other very well. Students are very appreciative of their teachers. They say that their teachers are “always available” and value this highly. Teachers write very detailed comments when they mark work. This makes sure that students know exactly how well they are doing and what they should concentrate upon next. Sometimes teachers do not encourage students to take charge of their own learning. One example is when teachers ask students to copy notes. When students make their own notes, they do this most effectively. Teachers select problems for students with great care. This makes sure that students are learning all the time and do not spend time repeating what they can already do. Very good use is made of homework to reinforce skills learnt in class. This develops students’ confidence and their ability to work on their own.

78 Another reason why students learn well is because they have very positive attitudes towards the subject. They concentrate very well in class and show perseverance with even the most difficult questions. Students appreciate the very good support they are given from the very first time they show an interest in taking mathematics in the sixth form. This support is just as good for those pupils entering the school at the age of 16 as it is for those who spent Year 11 at Davenant. Students also appreciate the help teachers give them to choose university courses.

79 The subject is very well led and managed. The acting head of department has held the post for less than a year. She has very detailed records of the progress made by students. She knows her teachers very well and provides them with good support. She places a strong emphasis on developing even further the skills and knowledge of her team.

Biology

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

Strengths

- GCE A level results have been in line with national averages and current students are attaining above average standards.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- A few students are reticent in class and are not always sufficiently questioned to check understanding.
- Not all students are fully aware of the grades that they are expected to achieve.

80 Since the previous inspection, the numbers taking the subject have increased and retention rates have improved. The GCE A level results in 2001 were in line with the national averages as they were in the previous two years. Girls performed better than boys did in 1998 and 1999, but in 2000 and 2001 the situation was reversed. The proportions of boys and girls taking the examinations in 2000 and 2001 were similar to those found nationally. Students did not perform as well in 2001 as they did in their other subjects. Almost one half of the students who entered the GCE AS level examinations in 2002 gained A or B grades and only one did not gain at least a grade E. The GCE A level results were similar to those of 2001 although a significant number of students, mainly those who did not study other sciences, did not achieve as expected in relation to prior attainment.

81 The standards achieved by the current students are above average. The vast majority are achieving as expected in relation to prior attainment and making progress which is at least satisfactory and mainly good. Recent work by Year 12 students indicates that they have a secure knowledge and understanding of enzymes. They apply this well when describing the commercial uses of enzymes. In one lesson, they skilfully assembled an immobilised enzyme column and showed that it was operating successfully. Year 13 students also applied their knowledge and understanding well when assembling a flow chart for the production of yoghurt. A few needed prompting when explaining terms such as homogenisation and optimum values. They interpret data well and experience no problems when handling the statistics.

82 In the four lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. The high quality of relationships between teachers and students, together with the very positive attitudes of students, are major factors in helping students learn well in lessons and make good progress. Teachers know their subject well and deliver it in a lively informative manner. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a brisk pace. Questioning is skilful and usually well focused on individuals. Occasionally, however, more is needed to check the understanding of a few reticent students. Teachers have a very good knowledge of examination board requirements. They frequently use past examination questions resulting in good development of examination techniques. Marking is good overall and much is detailed and helpful. The teachers are readily available to help students, in or out of lessons, with any problems or concerns they have. Students show a high level of commitment to their studies and in the main enjoy the work. They co-operate very well when working in groups. They arrive promptly for lessons and are alert and keen to achieve well. Written work and notes are organised well. Students' views about the subject are extremely positive and they are pleased that they chose the subject. They have ready access to ICT facilities, which have recently much improved.

83 The subject is well led and managed. The teachers are appropriately qualified and deployed effectively. All students are taught by two teachers. Support for the recently qualified teacher is good. There is much staff development and training. Assessment procedures are thorough and much analysis of the information is done. However, not all students in Year 12 are fully aware of the grades that they are expected eventually to achieve. The specialist accommodation and resources are of good quality. A few lessons are taught in rooms lacking laboratory facilities, resulting in some inefficiencies.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- GCE A level results in 2001 were above average and current students are attaining above average standards.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- The teaching is good and often very good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Not all students are aware of the grades which they are expected to achieve in examinations.
- A small but significant number of lessons are taught in rooms lacking laboratory facilities.

84 The numbers taking the subject have increased in the last two years. Retention rates are high. The proportion of boys taking the subject in 2001 was above that found nationally. The GCE A level results in 2001 were above the national averages and a significant improvement on those of 2000. Girls performed better than boys in 1998 and 1999 but the boys did better than the girls did in 2001. One third of students taking the GCE AS level examinations in 2002 gained A or B grades and three quarters gained at least a grade E. The GCE A level results in 2002 were not as good as those of 2001. At both levels, many students did not perform as well in chemistry as in their other subjects. During the year, there were staffing problems, which probably adversely affected the performances of students. These have now been resolved.

85 The standards of work observed are generally above average and students are making good progress. The Year 13 students have a good grasp of energy changes in chemical reactions and of equilibria. Higher attaining students competently calculate lattice enthalpies using the Born-Haber cycle. Most students readily identify functional groups in organic compounds and describe reactions of them. They can work out structural formulae of isomers. Year 12 students understand ionisation energies and the higher attaining students apply their knowledge well. When explaining trends in the periodic table lower attaining students are aware of the types of bonding occurring in water but do not always clearly explain the effects on the properties of it. In one lesson, Year 12 students gained a clear understanding of disproportionate reactions and they experienced few difficulties in calculating oxidation numbers. Practical skills are developed well. In one lesson, Year 13 students skilfully carried out a challenging practical exercise involving a titration.

86 Teaching is good overall and often very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and make it comprehensible in a lively and informative manner. They also know each student extremely well and establish relationships based on genuine mutual respect. This promotes confidence and eagerness to fulfil the teachers' high expectations. Lessons are planned well. Questioning is skilful and teachers draw out information and check understanding very well. They ensure full participation by all. In two lessons students were given a short challenging task. The teacher moved round, questioning individuals and making them think and apply their knowledge. The pace of lessons is brisk and time is used efficiently. Students benefit from the very good knowledge which teachers have of examination board requirements. Much effective use is made of previous examination questions in successfully developing examination techniques. Students appreciate the informative comments on marked work which help them to move forward. They also value the time given by teachers out of lessons to help them. Students learn well. Interest and concentration levels are always high. They willingly respond and put forward ideas and ask

questions. They co-operate very well in groups and help each other considerably. They carefully use apparatus and observe the necessary safety precautions well. Their files and course notes are well organised.

87 The recently appointed head of science is leading and managing the subject well. The teachers are well qualified with a good balance of experience and gender. All students have two teachers for the subject. The newly qualified teacher is most appreciative of the good support being given. Monitoring of teaching is done through classroom observations. Much professional development and training is taking place. The technicians work hard and provide high quality support. The assessment procedures are thorough and comprehensive. Much analysis is done on the information obtained. However, not all students are fully aware of the grades that they are expected to achieve. There are sufficient resources and the specialist accommodation is good. A few lessons are taught in rooms lacking laboratory facilities. As a consequence teachers have to transport resources and equipment. This is not an efficient use of their time.

BUSINESS

At post 16 the school offers business studies at AS and A levels. The school also offers economics at AS and A levels. The inspection concentrated on the AS and A level provision of both these subjects.

Business studies

Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in last four years were consistently above national averages.
- Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good.
- Student response is consistently very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use by students of ICT to enhance learning.
- The lack of appropriate accommodation has a negative impact on teaching, learning and standards.

88 In GCE A level business studies, attainment is above national averages. Indeed, the examination results have been above average for the three years to 2001. The results of 2002 show that 50 per cent of students achieved A or B grades. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above average for both male and female students. Students at AS level confidently and accurately use a wide range of business terminology and demonstrate clear understanding of the central ideas of the subject. For example, Year 12 students, in their studies of financial accounts, have a very secure grasp of appropriate terminology, such as fixed and variable costs. A few lower attaining students struggle, at first, with some of the complexities inherent in the figures. Higher attaining students can distinguish between such costs and use their knowledge and understanding effectively to interrogate a set of figures to draw up accurate financial accounts, including balance sheets. Students in Year 13 understand well the factors relating to the economic environment in which business operates. For example, in a marketing

project to promote milk, which was given to them as part of their practical studies of incorporating business theories into contextual examples, they applied, with great effect, marketing theories and strategies to produce a range of very good marketing techniques which displayed their academic knowledge and their ability to apply it.

89 The general high levels of attainment mask the fact that over 40 per cent of the students come into the sixth form without having done GCSE business studies and therefore their progress, particularly but not exclusively in Year 12, is good. There is also good progress in Year 13, as students' understanding of the business environment matures. Progress is best where students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work.

90 Overall, the quality of the teaching is good, and occasionally very good. The teachers' excellent rapport and expert subject knowledge underpin discussion and lend clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Students are very well supported academically. The teachers' methodical explanations promote considerable gains in the lower attaining students' comprehension. However, a tendency to over-provide such help for the students is partly at the expense of ensuring that they have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners and reach the higher levels of attainment.

91 Students respond very well in lessons. Their attitudes are mature and they sustain interest. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and they portray evidence of wider reading. Too often, however, some students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning. Students have very positive views of the subject. They particularly appreciate the very clear organisation and structure of their courses, and the clear feedback on their attainment and progress. They listen attentively to each other's presentations, and they are mature and mutually supportive.

92 Resources in the department are satisfactory. The subject has enough textbooks for all students, and students have opportunities to engage in activities, such as the European Conference for Business, which augment their business knowledge and understanding. This and the Financial Times Shares Project competition, where the winners, including the school's students, visited the *Financial Times* on the night of the budget, offer an effectively diverse and exciting range of learning resources. However, accommodation is insufficient in terms of both the geographical position of rooms and appropriately constituted business rooms. Currently, members of staff teach at various points about the school and they are sometimes removed from the full range of departmental resources. There is no suite of rooms and no specialist business studies room. The lack of immediate access to ICT facilities has an adverse effect on students' progress and attainment.

93 Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of business studies gives very effective and very efficient leadership to the subject. Under his supervision, the department has produced a range of informed and informative documents that deal with all aspects of the department's work. In all his work, he is very well supported by his senior colleague, the head of business, economics and vocational education. She has a clear vision for the future of the department which sensibly encompasses plans to strengthen both the academic and the vocational aspects of the department's provision, to meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future students. She provides an excellent role model for a department, which is committed to high standards and high achievement. In this she is well supported by her colleagues.

94 Business studies was not reported on in the last report, but the department has made good progress since the time of the last report.

Economics

Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Good results at A level and AS level; results at A level have been above national averages for the last three years.
- Good standards of students' written work.
- Good teaching. The teacher has expert subject knowledge and organises the courses well.
- Very good management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not take every opportunity to increase their reading.
- The recruitment of girls to the subject is far below the rate nationally.

95 Standards are above national levels. Results at A level have been strong over time. Over the three years to 2001, the results at A level have been above national norms. In 2001, 33 per cent of students achieved grade A in the subject. A particularly worrying feature, however, is the low number of girls who are recruited to the A level course, even though their success is relatively high. Boys, overall, achieve well in relation to their GCSE scores.

96 In work seen, standards are above average, and achievement is good. Students have a well-developed sense of the influence of economics on everyday life, such as the ways in which changing interest rates affect the whole economy. Standards of literacy are generally good. Students write well and use evidence to support their analysis of problems. Their numerical skills are sound, and they have a good grasp of key principles. The strength of the students' class work in both years is the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, and their basic understanding of economic theory. The quality of learning in Year 12 and students' response to the teaching is more variable, but it is good overall. In lessons, Year 12 students are not yet as confident as Year 13 in offering ideas in discussion.

97 Students have very positive views of the subject. They particularly appreciate the very clear organisation and structure of their courses, and the clear feedback on their attainment and progress. Students in Year 13 learn well in lessons. Their attitudes are mature and they sustain interest. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and they portray evidence of wider reading. From private study, they successfully deepen their understanding of the theory of economics. However, students generally are not making the most of their private study time to consolidate and develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject by wider and more in-depth reading. Students work productively and respond positively to the different styles of learning that are required. Many students play an active part in the Economics and Business Society, organising debates and considering issues which give them a deeper insight into society and the way it works.

98 Teaching and learning are very good, with expert knowledge of the subject and of the examination specifications and structure. Expositions are, therefore, very clear, reinforced by good diagrammatic explanations and use of overhead transparencies for giving information. The teaching is very well structured, dividing the course into units that clearly specify the learning that needs to occur. Teaching is particularly strong where the teacher encourages the students to become independent learners. This was particularly, but not exclusively, displayed in a Year 13 lesson on the measurement of income and wealth and the

interrogation and analysis of data. The teacher exhorted students not only to seek understanding of the economic issues but also to present their findings to the other students. They responded with intellectual rigour and produced work of a high level. Marking of work is mostly very detailed and helpful, using, where appropriate, criteria used by the examination board. Students are regularly tested and their notes and files checked, ensuring that they are kept in good order. Students work hard and recognise areas of weakness in which they need to improve. Relationships in classes are very good

99 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Overall, expectations are very high, and there is a strong commitment throughout the department to meet these expectations. The subject leader checks and analyses results carefully to identify areas of courses in which teaching and learning can be improved, and sets clear targets for action as a consequence. There is an insufficiently broad range of textbooks, and access to ICT is restricted. The subject leader's dedication, commitment and very hard work compensate considerably for the lack of these resources. In all her work, she is very well supported by her senior colleague, the head of business, economics and vocational education.

100 The subject was not reported on in the last inspection. This is a good department which continues to offer provision of a high standard.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The inspection focused on A level ICT. Overall, the provision for ICT is **good**.

Strengths

- New leadership is providing clear direction for the subject.
- The use of assessment information to inform teaching in the subject and to raise standards.
- The use of creative solutions, for example e-mail and the school Intranet.
- Drawing upon a variety of ICT experiences inside and outside school.

Areas for improvement

- Providing a wider range of appropriate courses for all students.
- Sharing ideas and teaching styles in ICT through the use of staff monitoring.

101 In 2002 results for AS level and A level ICT were some of the best in the school. Results are well above national averages at grades A-C and above national averages at grades A-B and A-E. Comparing 2000 GCSE results with the 2002 Year 13 A level, there was satisfactory progress for higher attaining students and good progress for the remainder. Since the prior attainment by most students is well above average, this represents good achievement. In 2001 a short course at GCSE ICT was introduced for all students and grades received are consistently above the national average. A distance learning GNVQ ICT course enhances the capability of around one third of pupils in Year 10 and the department is considering the introduction of an AVCE ICT course for the sixth form in the future. The subject was not available at the last inspection; results have improved since its introduction.

102 In Year 12, AS level ICT students are achieving as much as expected, including higher attaining students who are provided with extension activities in aspects of database analysis. Most students have built on their ICT courses since Year 9 when all achieved well above the national average in teacher assessments. Most students are tackling their sixth form courses with confidence, and can work independently and as members of a group, using presentation software, databases, word processing and desktop publishing. Currently, many students following the A level course are achieving well due to the match of teaching styles to students' needs. Average and higher attaining students can design sophisticated

planned systems and use clear routines. The work of lower attaining students lacks accuracy and detail in aspects of data flow. There are good achievements in mathematics, English and music where multiple uses of ICT are used to simulate, create, record and model situations.

103 Year 13 A level ICT are confident groups of students who deal with tasks in a variety of ways by relating ICT concepts in other subjects being studied in their courses, for example, the design of a prefects' rota, the allocation of tickets for school productions and rebuilding the school website. There is good achievement using research skills and in the interpretation of data. ICT rooms and the library are available throughout the week, at lunch time and after school.

104 Overall, teaching is good. All teachers in the department use e-mail effectively to set work, discuss homework with students, collate, mark and send corrections. A very high proportion of students have access to a computer at home. In one Year 12 group there is impressive command of the subject by the teacher and high expectations of the students. The teacher interacts well with a calm confidence supported by thorough preparation and knowledge of the course. A more informal style is adopted in another group that lends itself well to the writing of routines and solutions, for example, for an optician's booking system or a Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme project linked to individual student's needs. In both Years 12 and 13, the work for the course material and guidance can be found on the school Intranet where there is an impressive range of materials for the students to use and a large databank of student performance and assessment information. This is a strength of the department, unmatched by some areas in the school. In other subjects ICT is used to support, analyse, design and implement project activities, for example in music performance and composing.

105 There is a very good level of written work saved on the school Intranet from which it is clear that in Year 13 students are on target to complete the ICT course outlined in the support materials. A random sample of students' work shows a range of application use in English, geography, history, mathematics, religious education, music and careers and in connection with the destinations of Year 13 students. It also includes a topical investigation into the purpose and organisation of citizenship in the sixth form curriculum.

106 Students of ICT are conscientious. Female students, although stronger in interpretive and theoretical skills, are less outgoing in presentations or answering questions. All students achieve well when they prepare and organise tasks. In Year 12 some students use data decomposition and system processes with uncertainty. They lack focus on the end product until they begin to investigate outcomes while working in pairs or with the teachers. Students are confident in multi-tasking and keyboard skills but some find the work repetitive and are distracted by the Internet.

107 Since the last inspection leadership of the department has developed and is now very good. Staffing levels have remained constant for four terms. There is a shared willingness to succeed, and planning and assessment of ICT are robust. Schemes of work strongly underpin teaching. Resources are currently unavailable in some parts of the school but the combined use of mobile and fixed network systems are under discussion. A technician in training supports the network manager and together they provide a high level of support for subjects. The school has identified curriculum funding for ICT at around the national average.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Results on the A level course are sound and improving.
- Teaching is good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and their students promote very good learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' planning does not consider the full range of ability.
- Accommodation for theory lessons is unsatisfactory. Playing fields are poorly drained.

108 The A level course has its third group of students. The subject is becoming increasingly popular and results are improving. Results in examinations in 2001 were just below the national average but have improved in 2002, with all students gaining a pass, and are now likely to be above the national average. The numbers of girls studying in the current Years 12 and 13 have increased as have the overall number of students.

109 During the inspection, students produced work of average standards in all lessons seen. In Year 12, students know a range of teaching strategies and understand the range of styles according to Mosston. They discuss in depth the key factors of teaching a skill ranging from whole-part-whole to guided discovery. In a practical lesson, they demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the components of fitness and after performing a range of tests discussed in depth their reliability related to each component. In Year 13, students compare sport in New World countries when learning about global issues in sport. They learn the process of the Assimilation Policy in Australia and why the indigenous Aborigines were separated from their families. When planning a personal fitness plan, students had a sound grasp of the principles of training and discussed the difference between aerobic and anaerobic exercise, and the formation of lactic acid. Their use of fitness machines was effective in planning their programme.

110 The quality of students' written work is average, with evidence of above average presentation. Students show pride in their work and use a range of word processing skills to enhance their presentation. They demonstrate evidence in research skills, such as the use of drugs in sport, but there is little evidence of data handling, graphs and calculations. In discussion they use a wide range of relevant vocabulary and speak enthusiastically about their work. Their attitudes are very positive and most are confident to be involved in discussion, concentrate well and adopt a mature responsibility to their work. They work collaboratively in groups and form very good relationships with their teachers. Marking of work is consistent and students have a clear understanding of the progress they are making and of their predicted grades at examination level.

111 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' expertise is high and they possess very good subject knowledge. Planning includes learning objectives shared with students and the very good relationships they have with their students are a strength. Planning does not consider the full range of ability and some low ability students sometimes struggle. Marking of work is thorough but students do not always complete work which the teacher has identified as unfinished. Students appreciate the expertise of the staff who are committed to raising standards in the subject. Sports College status has increased the range of opportunities available to students and links with outside agencies are strong. School teams are

successful and a high number of students have gained representation at county and national level in a wide range of sports. The department is progressive and active due to very strong leadership and management of a strong team of teachers. Accommodation for theory lessons is unsatisfactory and playing fields are poorly drained, resulting in a lack of use during parts of the winter months.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus in this area was on drama and theatre studies and on music. Work was also sampled from the extensive range of extra-curricular music activities, instrumental lessons, concert preparation, and the involvement of the subject in Initial Teacher Training and as a Beacon school. Standards in all these areas are very high as a result of the excellent teaching and the tremendous level of commitment.

Drama and theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Results in theatre studies are above the national average.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage students well, and their questioning is both perceptive and inclusive.
- The attitude of students is very good. They enjoy the subject and work well with each other.
- Leadership and management are very good. Educational direction is clear, and the work is well organised.

Areas for improvement

- Some students need to develop voice projection skills.
- Accommodation needs further upgrading.

112 The provision in drama and theatre studies caters for some 25 students. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered. Standards in drama and theatre studies are above the national average. All students entered for examination at A level in 2001 attained grades A-E. Recent examination results have been consistent, although the number of students attaining the higher grades A or B in the AS examination in 2002 was below the national average. Overall, students attain well in relation to their other subjects. Retention rates and attendance are good.

113 Students act with imagination, are creative, and show sensitivity in their voice and movement skills. In their devised presentations, students exhibit good control of voice skills, using pause, pace and inflection, although voice projection is not consistent. Similarly, movement skills are appropriate to the roles undertaken. Where students are at ease with a role, they demonstrate their ability to use gesture, poise and stillness appropriately, and enhance the group's presentation. Higher attaining students are physically more at ease with the role they are developing, and are more consistent in the projection of their voice. All students show an awareness of each other's work in the group's devised performance. They each contribute to the creation of an integrated interpretation. In a devised performance of *Macbeth*, students demonstrated some originality to effectively create a creditable interpretation that they were able to communicate to an audience. They have an understanding of the relationship between the performer and an audience, and a satisfactory

understanding of the visual qualities of costume and lighting. There is good spatial awareness. In their writing, students analyse and evaluate plays in terms of plot, structure, direction and characterisation. There is evidence of individual research, and an understanding of the use and effect of language. They recognise symbolism, and the contribution to mood and atmosphere. Technical language is accurately used.

114 The progress of students in performance skills, and in the analysis and evaluation of theatre, is good. This is largely the result of good teaching, positive relationships, and the commitment of students to their work. Students were observed to make progress with their work immediately upon entering the drama studio, even if the teacher was not present. The inclusiveness of the teaching ensures that all students progress well. Students developing their understanding of Wertebaker's *Our Country's Good* actively explored the relationships of characters within the play, and identified the textual signals that gave meaning to the interpretation of performance. Students are encouraged to reflect on, and evaluate, both their own and others' work, which they do with increasing confidence. In the observed lessons, students remained focused, and worked with obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm. Students acquire skills in improvisation, performance and critical appraisal.

115 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, and effective class management skills. Lessons are planned sequentially to meet the needs of both the curriculum and those of the students, and the objectives are made clear. Teachers are very supportive of the students, encouraging in their comments, and perceptive and inclusive in their questioning. Consequently, students are familiar with, and confident about, the nature and quality of their work. Teaching is less effective when lessons become over-directed, the pace slows, and students are passive participants.

116 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. An experienced head of department ensures clear aims and planning for further development. The teachers work hard, and share the commitment to high standards. Schemes of work are detailed, develop sequentially, and are supported by suitable resources. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities made available to students for theatre visits, and productions. Since the last inspection accommodation has improved. There are two dedicated drama studios, though both have some disadvantages for the teachers and the students.

Music

Overall, the provision for music is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards of class, instrumental and vocal music.
- Achievement of students.
- Quality and range of opportunities in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities in the performing arts.
- Impact of music on spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' experience.
- Leadership and management in the subject.

Area for improvement

- Vocal experience for all students in the classroom and in some extra-curricular groups.

117 In 2001 results for AS and A level music were well above national averages and compared to similar schools. Most students achieved grades from A-C, among the best in the school. AS music shows a large improvement at grade A due to the match of course requirements to students' needs. Grades A-D at A level showed a more even distribution than

in previous years due to the increasing popularity of the subject for students with a wider range of abilities and interests. There is no overall difference in the attainment of male and female students. Comparing 2000 GCSE music, where all students achieved A*-C grades, with 2002 A level music, there has been very good achievement at A level. The department provides detailed value-added information on results from Year 9 over many years and identifies gifted and talented students early in their school career.

118 Achievement by students in the school in both examination and non-examination courses, is among the highest compared to all schools. Some 450 pupils and students, nearly half the school population, have instrumental or vocal lessons. In Year 12 AS students are achieving very well and higher attaining students increase their abilities by involvement in up to four additional examinations of the Associated Board. All music students are involved in between five and ten ensembles each week. In one class, the ability of students to name musical styles and identify instrumentation comparing Baroque and Romantic orchestras was perceptive. In other classes the impact of Bach's B Minor Mass and Trinidadian Calypso on spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of music was significant. Most students are tackling their sixth form courses with confidence, independently and as a member of a group. There was a powerful, cohesive effect on students when playing and singing examination set works by Purcell (*Dido and Aeneas*) and steel pans music (*Banana Boat Song* and *Yellow Bird*) at professional levels. Students use their prior knowledge of music very effectively and often predict answers. Students are able to understand music because of intense concentration and a range of skills based on prior learning. Students are set challenging targets and in Years 12 and 13 show a particularly good ability to grasp complex ideas in the harmonisation of Bach chorales. Music students achieve very well in the multiple use of ICT to simulate, create, record and playback compositions for AS or perform using keyboards in bands and orchestras. Of the Year 13 students who will study music at university or college, one is already selected as an organ scholar, another already teaches in a local primary school, and several intend to have careers in music, as teachers or working in the music industry.

119 Overall, teaching is very good and in many cases excellent, including extra-curricular activities. Teaching is very good for a Year 12 group where students are engaged in complex tasks of analysis which is supported by DVD recordings. Other creative solutions include the use of industry-standard keyboard and computer suites for techniques classes and the use of instruments such as steel pans, Gamelan and Djembe, temporarily on loan from the local education authority. The quality of singing is variable in assemblies, classroom and extra-curricular activities and some areas of the curriculum need the reinforcement of skills in pitch and vocal projection which are not currently given sufficient time to allow sufficient progress to be made. In Year 13 techniques and secular vocal music classes, the detailed, concentrated approach and brainstorming of ideas provide an excellent solution to complex and theoretical matters. Instrumental lessons for all students are very good because of the clear and appropriate advice given on the best use of time in order to learn physical skills.

120 Students' work shows competence in note taking, analysing scores, spotting errors and aural ability. Lower attaining students complete less work, have a lower aural ability, and miss the point of some examination questions, for example, identifying the rate of harmonic change in a piece of Gamelan or Fusion world music. Currently, higher attaining Year 13 students are more interested in performing than composing and the work seen shows a wider range in that area. Lower attaining students complete fewer accurate structural or harmonic analyses of set works.

121 Since the last inspection, music has continued to provide superb and challenging opportunities for students. There are foreign tours, large productions, CD recordings and school ensembles of professional standard and high quality. The ability of the department to

rise to any occasion was illustrated by a concert which ended with a piece of music for five pianos and ten hands. Signs of strong leadership include training of nearly 50 teachers to date and, through the Beacon school status, the department provides consultancy, professional development and support for several other primary and secondary schools. In a sense, music is the hub around which the school revolves because music is not only part of performing arts but of the school community as a whole.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and history.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve high standards.
- Teaching is thoughtfully planned and effective.
- The scheme of work is detailed, relevant and well written.
- The subject is well led and organised.

Areas for improvement

- Providing greater challenge for the highest attaining students.

122 The overall standard of work is well above average. GCE A2 level examination results in 2001 were well above those expected nationally and 2002 results were similarly high. All students gained a pass grade. Students generally achieved better results in this subject than in most of their other subjects. Results have improved markedly in the last four years. Very few students did not complete the course. Results in the AS level examination taken at the end of Year 12 were well above the national average. Throughout, students make good progress due to the good quality of the teaching. The department analyses examination results carefully and has implemented clear strategies to improve standards further.

123 Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of the subject and are quickly learning to use this knowledge to explain how landscapes, such as coastal cliffs and sand dunes, are formed and change. They understand clearly the relationship between people and the environment. One group, for example, correctly explained why river floods occur and how the damage they cause may be prevented. Work of lower attaining students lacks attention to detail in explanations. Students are also rapidly building up a good knowledge of geographical terms.

124 In Year 13, students have an above average knowledge of the subject. They use this knowledge effectively to understand the reasons for geographical patterns. In one lesson, for instance, students explained accurately why the differences in the growth of population and changes in the numbers of children being born may occur in a variety of different countries. Students understand how the major features of the earth's surface are formed and why they may change, for example the reasons for earthquakes, the complexities of measuring their strength, and predicting when and where they may occur. They have a good knowledge of a range of well-chosen examples of the features they are studying.

125 Throughout, students collect and extract information from resource material swiftly and effectively. Written work is generally of good quality and in Year 13 essays are well

structured and sufficiently detailed. Students speak well. Some students' notes, however, sometimes lack structure and examples do not contain enough detail. Coursework investigations are of a high standard and are very well written and illustrated. Students exhibit an excellent understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, collect and analyse data very effectively, fully understand the limitations of the methods used and reach appropriate conclusions.

126 Overall, the quality of teaching is good and some is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it effectively to gain students' interest with well-structured explanations and carefully chosen illustrations. The objectives of lessons are always made known to students but lessons rarely conclude with an assessment of whether they have been achieved. Lessons are very skilfully planned with a variety of suitable activities and methods carefully designed to involve students in the work, develop their knowledge and reinforce their understanding. In one lesson, for example, students in Year 13 were studying the influence of weather and climate on people. The teacher quickly outlined the lesson objectives and reviewed previous work, showed a relevant clip from a video and quickly organised the students into groups, where they rapidly and efficiently collected information from a range of appropriate resources. The students then clearly and confidently reported their results to the class and the lesson concluded with a review of the students' findings.

127 Relationships between staff and students are very good and students co-operate effectively with each other. Behaviour is excellent due to skilful management by teachers. Work is pitched at an appropriate level, but the highest attaining students are not stretched sufficiently with incisive questions or challenging materials. Marking is of good quality, comments are well directed, and essays are rigorously reviewed, using clear criteria and setting targets so that students know how they can improve. Students are well motivated, keen, attend lessons regularly and punctually, complete work diligently and maintain files in good order because teachers expect them to do so and set high standards. Lessons move at a swift pace so students maintain concentration throughout. Students are very positive about the progress they are making towards their targets and the quality of education in the subject.

128 The subject is very well led and managed. There is a clear sense of direction, and regular review and evaluation of the department's work result in clear and appropriate plans for improvement. The scheme of work is detailed, well planned and informative and provides a good basis for planning lessons. There is a well-ordered system of assessment, which enables teachers to provide well-focused information on how individual students may improve. Resources are of good quality, but there could be more books and materials for students to extend their research. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and work very effectively as a team. There has been a good improvement since the time of the previous inspection and the department has the capacity to improve standards still further.

History

Overall the quality of provision for history in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching which challenges students and promotes high standards.

- Very good promotion of personal learning skills and skills for examination success.
- Examination results which are well above average.
- Very positive student attitudes to work.
- Leadership with a clear focus on raising standards, which is shared by all staff.

Area for improvement

- Further development in the use of data to set targets and to monitor students' progress and achievement.

129 The department offers courses leading to GCE AS and A level. Both the take-up rates and retention rates for these courses are very good. Standards in public examinations are well above average. In 2001 at A level, results were well above the national standard. Girls' attainment was well above average and that of boys even higher. The most recent A and AS level results, in 2002, were a little lower. Over the last four years the department has achieved results well above average, with a 100 per cent pass rate each year. There is no consistent pattern of differing attainment between girls and boys.

130 Standards of work seen during the inspection were very good. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have a very good knowledge and understanding of the modules they have studied. Both boys and girls are confident and articulate in expressing their ideas. They can select and synthesise material and deploy it effectively in written work. The standard of analytical writing is good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13, reflecting the good progress which students make in this crucial area of work. Most students can draw and substantiate conclusions effectively. Students of below average ability sometimes revert to narrative rather than analytical writing; those of above average ability produce analytical essays of a very high standard, supported by comprehensive knowledge and understanding. Students are particularly good at using and evaluating different interpretations of history. They are well read and they can interpret and evaluate historical sources effectively; they perform particularly well in the source work module on Nazi Germany.

131 Progress in history is good, including that of the very small number of students with special educational needs. Achievement is good; students make good progress in relation to their previous attainment.

132 The standard of teaching and learning is very good. There are many consistent strengths. Teachers have high expectations and students are regularly challenged to think for themselves. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are explained, so students understand what they are doing and can make judgements about their own progress. Teachers have a very secure command of their material and they present it well so as to engage students' interest. They make very good use of questioning to check and develop students' understanding. There is a very clear focus on developing the skills which students need for examination success. The skills of writing in analytical form are particularly well taught. There is very good provision for induction at the start of the course and students receive guidance and practice in developing their study skills, including management of their time. The pace of lessons is brisk and students work hard. Classes are well managed, though occasionally a small minority of students can be rather passive in lessons. Students receive very good individual support. Work is marked regularly and assessed thoroughly and students receive detailed individual feedback. As a result, students have a clear understanding of their current performance, their progress and how to improve. They are not quite so clear about their targets and some teachers provide them with better feedback than others. Staff use books and reprographic resources effectively to support learning and students have good opportunities to use ICT to carry out research and to develop their presentation skills. Teaching in history ensures that students are active learners and, as a

result, students make steady progress in developing both their academic and their personal skills.

133 Leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. The head of department gives a clear lead, with a determined focus on raising standards. This commitment is shared by the other teachers of the subject and has proved successful. Departmental plans have appropriate priorities and clear targets for attainment each year. Resources are well managed. Examination results are analysed thoroughly to inform teaching but the use of data in monitoring student progress and achievement is under-developed. Staff development is used very effectively to improve teaching.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English and French. One Spanish lesson was also sampled. This lesson seen was effective and students are making satisfactory progress.

English

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

Strengths

- Recent results in the AS and A level courses have been consistently above the national average.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage students well, and their questioning is both perceptive and inclusive.
- The attitude of students is very good. They are committed, remain focused, and are good at working together.

Areas for improvement

- The opportunity in lessons for students to directly, and intellectually, challenge each other in discussion is limited.
- Some students need to develop their range of reading further.
- Financial planning needs to be integrated within the department's development planning.

134 The provision in English caters for some 110 students. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English language, English literature, and English language and literature combined. GCSE English is offered as a re-sit course for a very small number of students who wish to improve their grades.

135 The standards achieved in GCE AS and A level examinations are above average. They have been above the national average for the last three years. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades in English literature was below the national average in the 2001 examinations, but had been consistently above since the last inspection, and was above in the examination in 2002. Retention rates and attendance are good.

136 Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' writing confirm standards are above average. Students are knowledgeable and understand about features of language. They successfully employ linguistic concepts to analyse written language, and have a mature understanding of the strategies for effective communication. Critical writing is informed, and displays both sensitivity and perceptive insight. Students exhibit knowledge and understanding of the literature being studied. They are aware of the historical and social contexts, and recognise textual signals. By the second year, the students have established

an independent critical and personal voice in their writing. A feature of the writing of higher attaining students is sensitive and perceptive analysis, managed in a controlled and lively manner to interest the reader, for example, the comparative analysis by a Year 12 student of Olivier's and Loncraine's interpretation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Students illustrate their writing with well-chosen quotations. Reading skills are well developed.

137 The achievement of AS and A level students is good. Students of all abilities respond to the quality of teaching, and the positive relationships. There is no significant difference in achievement between male and female students. There is good progress in thinking and writing skills. Students are encouraged to work independently, to be creative, and to develop a personal viewpoint; for example, in their study of Tennyson's poetry, students considered the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and discussed its influence upon the poems they had studied. However, whilst there is development in the quality of students' writing and the range of reading they undertake, they do not read much beyond the requirements of the examination syllabus, nor make extensive use of textual criticism by other writers. This is more evident in the writing of higher attaining students. Students explore different styles of writing, and make good use of ICT for re-drafting and in the presentation of their work.

138 Overall, the teaching of A level English is good. Teachers know their subject well. Lessons are planned sequentially, and the questioning of students is both perceptive and inclusive. It draws out from students an increased understanding, and further challenges them to think for themselves. Intellectual inquiry is encouraged, as is the expectation that students should take responsibility for their own learning through independent study. In some lessons, planning is insufficient to fully meet the needs of students, the lessons lose pace and become over-directed, and opportunities are missed for students to challenge each other intellectually. Students' work is marked regularly, although the quality of marking is not consistent. In the best instances, students are able to understand how they are progressing and how they might improve further.

139 Students work effectively in pairs and in whole class seminars. They are focused in class, and have a personal commitment to do well, and are responsive to the questioning of teachers. Relationships are very good; students appreciate the accessibility and support of their teachers, as well as the praise and encouragement they receive. The curriculum is enriched by additional opportunities for students, such as visits to the theatre. The department has procedures for the assessment of students' work, and teachers are well informed of students' past and present attainment. The majority of students are clear about examination requirements, and can compare the level of their own performance with the known criteria. Teaching is accommodated in adjacent rooms. There are suitable resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum, although access to literary criticism and reference texts is limited.

140 Overall, the leadership and management of English are good. The acting head of department engenders good relationships and collaboration between colleagues. There is clear educational direction, and a shared commitment to high standards. The teachers are suitably qualified, work hard for the benefit of students, and meet regularly to give coherence to the work of the department. An analysis of the department's performance is undertaken, and there is an appropriate development plan.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge for work at this level.
- Assessment procedures are very good, leading to improvements in learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students who choose to study languages in the sixth form.
- The quality of students' written work.
- Pace and challenge of the work in some lessons.

141 The number of entries for AS level and A level GCE is small and care is needed over interpretation of results against national standards with such a small entry. A level results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average overall, but the number of students who gained passes at grades A and B was well below average. All students who took the examinations passed and this was above average compared to national results. In 2002 there were five entries at A level and all five students passed with grades A or B, clearly a significant improvement in higher grade results. Six students were entered at AS level in 2001. Four passed at grade A, one at grade B and one at grade D. In contrast there were no higher grade passes in the 2002 examinations.

142 Numbers who choose to study languages in the sixth form are small and have been declining steadily since the previous inspection. There are fewer male than female students. Evidence seen in lessons and in students' files suggests that standards in Year 12 are below average for the course and that standards at the end of Year 13 are broadly average. Students achieve satisfactorily in Year 12 and achieve well in Year 13. Male and female students achieve equally well and achievement overall is good in relation to performance at GCSE. Although numbers are low, retention rates between Year 12 and Year 13 are good. Students' spoken French is good and students are able to carry out extended discussions on such topics as the relative importance of sport in France and in England, and about the effects of tourism on the environment. Students can read authentic material from magazines and newspapers and are able to comment on it. In general, the quality of students' written work is below the standard expected. Work is often short and students make basic errors with agreement of adjectives, gender and verb endings. The department is aware of this and is examining what needs to be done, perhaps with younger pupils, to improve the quality and depth of writing.

143 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers prepare lessons carefully and ensure that relevant material is available for lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge, not only of the technicalities of the grammar needed for A level, but also of the useful hints for students about how to achieve their best levels in examinations. Students' work is regularly marked and corrected and teachers make very good use of this form of assessment to advise students about how well they are doing and to give useful advice about how to improve. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, this is because either the pace of the lesson or the level of challenge is not high enough. This is seen, for example, in some lessons where the teacher speaks too slowly for this level and this does not challenge students sufficiently to improve learning. In other lessons the level of work is too basic, for example where students are reciting the parts of verbs in the present tense, work that would have been covered at a much earlier age. There is a relaxed but businesslike atmosphere in lessons, and very good relationships between students and with their teachers are a strong feature of the subject. Students are attentive and show a high level of motivation about their work. They develop good individual and research skills and show sensible and mature attitudes to French. Help and advice are readily available when students need it and this is a significant factor in the good progress they make.

144 The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Teachers are constantly moving from room to room. This makes it very difficult to make full use of television or video, overhead projectors or tape recorders. Teaching and standards are adversely affected by this restriction. Students have good opportunities for work experience abroad. This adds considerably to their personal, social and cultural development as well as to their language skills and knowledge of the country. There are very good assessment procedures in place and these provide consistent data to inform students about how well they are achieving and to adjust the programmes of work if necessary. The management of the subject is good. There is a good scheme of work and clear priorities for improvement. The head of department leads a team of committed and hard-working teachers. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.