

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SHENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

Brentwood, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115383

Headteacher: Mr John Fairhurst

Reporting inspector: Mr Roger Holmes  
2632

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 249713

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shenfield High School Alexander Lane Shenfield Brentwood Essex
Postcode:	SM15 8RY
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Joe Swift
Date of previous inspection:	17 <sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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? What should the school do to improve further?
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, value and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3758	Anthony Barringer	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal opportunities	
30728	Phil Weston	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	
8873	Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Special educational needs	
7315	Geoffrey Kinder	Team inspector	Music	
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Geography	
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Psychology Physics	
15706	Roger Crocker	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education Citizenship	
21954	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Business education	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	

2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Shenfield High School is a mixed comprehensive taking boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. Boys and girls are taught separately throughout Years 7 to 9 and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11. With 1496 pupils and students on roll it is considerably larger than at the time of its last inspection in 1997. Overall it is much larger than most schools and the sixth form is now average sized.

The great majority of pupils on roll are white and all but one have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is much smaller than in most schools, as is the number with statements for their special needs. Fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than in most schools and other indicators of social and economic advantage in the areas served by the school are higher than the national average.

When they join the school in Year 7, pupils' average attainment in tests at the end of primary school is higher than in most schools, but there are relatively fewer pupils with very high or very low attainment at this stage.

The school is designated as a Training School by the government. It has achieved Investor in People status and several other awards and is currently bidding to become a Business Enterprise College.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Shenfield High School is a good school. Pupils make good progress and achieve results at GCSE that are well above the national average. Teaching is good and the great majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to work. Leadership and management are good and the school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils' results in tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are well above the national average.
- Progress is good throughout the school and in the sixth form.
- Teaching is good and pupils almost always respond well.
- Arrangements for supporting pupils and taking care of them are very good.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good and the quality of music and drama performances is particularly high.
- The school is led and managed well.
- Links with parents are strong.

#### **What could be improved**

- A small minority of pupils do not work hard enough in some lessons and occasionally misbehave.
- The unusually large number of new teachers in the school need extra support.
- There is not enough space for the growing sixth form and some areas of the school need refurbishing.

*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 improved well since it was last inspected in March 1997. The four key issues identified by the last inspection have all been tackled: the quality of learning has improved; more vocational courses have been offered in the sixth form, although not many students have taken up this option; the library has been improved dramatically so that it is now outstanding; and provision for religious education now comfortably meets requirements.

In addition the school has grown in size and popularity. Results at Year 9 and GCSE have remained well above average and continue to move up. The sixth form has grown considerably and results at A-level for 2002 have improved markedly.

## 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
Year 9	A	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	*	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

\* National comparisons for 2002 are not yet available.

Pupils have above average attainment when they come into the school at Year 7. They make good progress because of the school's effective teaching and their results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average. Results have been at this level for several years and are rising in line with the national trend, with boys and girls doing equally well. The good progress continues into Years 10 and 11 so that a much higher proportion of pupils than average achieve five or more passes at grade C or above, five or more passes at grade G or above and at least one pass at grade G. This uniformly strong picture reflects the school's determination to help all pupils succeed. Results dipped in 2000; otherwise they remain well above the national figures as they rise each year. Over the last five years girls' results have been higher than boys' but the difference is less than in most schools.

In the sixth form, most students make good progress and do better at A-level than their GCSE grades would predict. Considerably more students took A-level in 2002 than in 2001. Their results were also much higher, reflecting the school's success in developing the sixth form.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils work very well in lessons but a small minority sometimes do not try hard enough.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Behaviour around the school is generally very good. Pupils are almost always well behaved in lessons but some pupils are very intolerant of what they see as less successful teaching and occasionally their behaviour is poor.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are mostly very positive and pupils grow in maturity as they move through school.
Attendance	Very good. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English and mathematics throughout the school and satisfactory in science. It is good in almost all other subjects in the main school apart from in business studies where it is satisfactory and modern foreign languages where it is unsatisfactory at the moment, because most of the staff are still in training. Teaching is even better in the sixth form; it remains satisfactory in science and business studies, is good in most subjects inspected, and very good in geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and psychology.

Staffing problems had a particularly strong effect on English and science last year. They have recovered well but the school still has a large number of new teachers and their inexperience often affects their performance, as in the case of modern foreign languages. At the same time, some pupils have become unusually intolerant of teaching which they find uninspiring, sometimes showing poor attitudes to work and sometimes misbehaving in lessons. In the great majority of lessons in the main school, behaviour and attitudes to work are good and pupils learn well. In the sixth form behaviour and attitudes to work are very good.

Literacy and numeracy skills are covered in a number of subjects. They and ICT are taught satisfactorily across the curriculum and this is strengthening as teachers make more use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils meet a good range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. The choice in Years 10 and 11 is mainly based on GCSE courses. In the sixth form there are more vocational courses including business studies and law.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils receive well-focused support in the special needs base. Subject departments are not involved sufficiently in planning special work for the pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No pupils currently need this support. The school has provided effective support in the past.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Cultural development is good but pupils meet many more examples of their own cultural background than from others. Social development is good and moral development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school's pastoral system is strong and provides very effective support for its pupils.

Pupils and students benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment activities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's skilful and determined leadership has been instrumental in taking the school forward over several years. He is supported well by senior staff. Management systems are very thorough and effective so that the school runs smoothly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are knowledgeable, involved, well informed and effective. All statutory requirements, apart from collective worship, are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes good use of test and examination results to assess its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Plans for development are based on a careful analysis of performance and resources are allocated appropriately. Spending decisions are made wisely after careful consideration of alternatives.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School is approachable.</li><li>• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.</li><li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and they make good progress.</li><li>• They are well informed about pupils' progress.</li><li>• School is well led and managed.</li><li>• Pupils are helped to grow in maturity.</li><li>• Children like the school.</li><li>• School works closely with parents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of homework, some wanting more, others less.</li></ul>

Parents have overwhelmingly positive views of the school which inspectors support. Inspectors found that homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. The great majority of pupils enjoy the school and do well.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

There are now 246 students in the sixth form. This is considerably more than last year and brings it up to average size. About three fifths of the pupils in Year 11 now move into the sixth form. Others, including some who have been most successful at GCSE, move to other post-16 institutions and some pupils leave education altogether. Consequently the sixth form has a very similar social composition to the rest of the school and standards of attainment on entry are average. The school is very flexible with the requirements it sets for students to enter the sixth form, being more concerned with their potential to do well than their past performance. The school provides a wide range of A-level and AS courses together with some vocational courses at both intermediate and advanced level.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is good. It meets the needs of its students well. They make good progress and most achieve better results at the end of their course than their GCSE scores would predict. This is a result of the very good teaching and the students' own positive attitudes to work. The sixth form has improved considerably recently as a result of effective leadership and management within the sixth form and the emphasis that senior school management and governors have placed on its work. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

**Strengths**

- Students achieve well and do better than their previous examination results would predict.
- Teaching is very good and students respond well.
- Students are supported well and helped to grow in maturity.
- Management and leadership at whole-school level and directly in the sixth form are good.

**What could be improved**

- The punctuality of some students.

*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	<b>Good.</b> Students learn well because they are well taught. They gain examination results at least as good as, and often better than, those that they could expect from their GCSE results.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Results in A-level in 2002 were just above national averages and AS-level results were in line with the national averages. Teaching is good and often very good. Assessment, marking and the curriculum offered are all strengths, but the development of a scheme of work will further enhance the provision.
Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The most recent results show good achievement by a small number of students of all levels of attainment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Too few students complete the A-level course.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> The standard of work seen was good and meets the demands of the course requirements. The teaching is good and the students learn well as a result. The department is very well led and managed.
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students have a good choice of courses in this area. They make good progress overall. Teaching is satisfactory as is the management of the department.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> AVCE information technology is offered and taken by an increasing number of students. Results are currently above average. Teaching is good; students are motivated and make good gains in learning. A wider range of courses is needed in the sixth form.
Physical education	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils do well at A-level as a result of very good teaching and their positive attitudes to work.
Music	<b>Good.</b> Overall there is a rising trend in take-up. Teaching is good, with expert subject knowledge. Students have a very committed approach. Examination results are still below national averages.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Teaching in geography, combined with students' positive attitudes, promotes good learning. A-level results at high grades are well below national averages, but overall pass rates are high, and reflect students' prior attainment. Take-up of the subject at A-level by students has increased, and student retention from AS to A2 is good.
History	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is effective and promotes good learning. Students' attitudes are very good. Attainment overall is average.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are rising and the number of students taking the course has risen dramatically. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management within the subject are very good.
English	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average and rising. Teaching is good, setting high academic standards. The subject is recruiting well.
Modern foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Standards of work are above average in lessons. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils are progressing well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Good.</b> Students are supported well and feel there are people they can turn to for help. Tutors check to see that they are working well and arrange extra support if necessary. Good study habits are encouraged and students are prepared for their move on from sixth form. Attendance and punctuality are not promoted as effectively as in the main school.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Good.</b> The school leadership has recently placed more emphasis on developing the sixth form and this has been successful in raising both student numbers and performance. The new sixth form co-ordinator has continued to move things on. He is well supported by his team and is providing good, direct leadership and management.

## 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"> <li>• The quality of teaching and the support the teachers provide.</li> <li>• The range of courses on offer.</li> <li>• The support they received when settling into the sixth form.</li> <li>• Help and encouragement to study.</li> <li>• They like being in the sixth form generally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advice they receive on where to go after the sixth form.</li> <li>• The advice they had on what to study.</li> <li>• Information about how they are doing.</li> </ul>

Students tended to be more critical of the school in the questionnaires they completed than when interviewed by inspectors. In discussions, students had many more positive views of the school than criticisms. Inspectors agree with this more positive view and recognise that the sixth form has many more strengths than weaknesses. There is considerable information available to students about their next steps but some students clearly need more guidance in using it. Tutors hold regular meetings with students to discuss their progress and students' work is marked regularly but comments do not always tell the student if the work is good enough.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1 When pupils join the school in Year 7, their overall performance in the tests at the end of primary school is above average. This is confirmed by standardised tests that the pupils take during Year 7. The tests also show that while the average attainment of the pupils is a little higher than in most schools, there is also a smaller proportion of pupils at either end of the normal range of attainment.

2 Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average for all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This represents good progress from the pupils' starting points when they joined the school. The results overall are well above those in schools with a similarly small proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, although results in mathematics were not quite as strong in English and science. The school has maintained this strong position with results well above average and rising in line with the national trend for several years. Boys and girls have performed equally well in all three subjects, whereas girls get higher results than boys in most schools.

3 The work seen during the inspection of Years 7 to 9 generally reflects this picture. Most pupils are working at higher levels than usual for their age in English and science, and well above in mathematics. In other subjects, work is at the expected levels in art, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. It is above average in design and technology, geography, ICT and religious education. These levels of attainment represent good progress from pupils' starting points in almost all subjects including English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Pupils make satisfactory progress in art and music. Modern foreign languages are the only area where pupils do not make enough progress at this stage.

4 Results at GCSE for 2002 are also well above average, not only for those pupils who gain five or more passes at grades A\*-C, but also for those who achieve five or more passes at grades A\*-G and those who achieve at least one GCSE grade. The results are higher than those achieved in schools in similar circumstances and they represent very good progress from the pupils' strong performance at the end of Year 9. GCSE results dipped in 2000, but otherwise they have been consistently well above the national figures for some years although not rising quite so quickly. Boys have performed further above their averages than girls over the last three years.

5 Results for 2002 were higher than the national average in all subjects apart from art and design. They were significantly higher in science, design and technology, French, geography, history, mathematics and physical education. Comparing results within the school pupils did best in physical education, business studies, geography, history and English literature. Pupils did least well in French, German, science and mathematics. Work seen during the inspection at Years 10 and 11 broadly reflects those results. Standards were at least at the expected levels in all subjects and higher in English, science, design and technology, history, ICT and music. In mathematics and geography, they are well above average.

6 Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment and they make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. Standards in literacy and numeracy are generally good as a result of the consistent approach being developed. Pupils use ICT confidently and standards are good at the end of Year 9. However,

pupils have varying experiences of ICT later in the school so that overall standards are average by Year 11 and in the sixth form.

### **Sixth form**

7 Results at A-level in 2001 were in line with national averages, with female students getting higher results than males. Results for 2002 are significantly higher and many more students took the examination. Unfortunately, national figures are not yet available against which to measure this major improvement, but they comfortably exceed the school's realistic targets for performance and are likely to be at least above average. About two thirds of students do better at A-level than would be expected from their GCSE scores, representing good progress overall. This is reflected in the work seen during the inspection. Students are making satisfactory progress in business studies and physics. Progress is at least good in all of the other subjects inspected and very good in physical education.

8 Standards in the key skills are sound. Students communicate clearly, understand graphs and use numerical methods effectively when appropriate and make confident and effective use of ICT in their work.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9 Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, are keen and interested and want to do well at school. A significant minority can be disruptive, show little interest, and demonstrate a worrying indifference to their work. Behaviour around the school is good, but varies from good or very good in most lessons to unsatisfactory or even poor in some. On the whole, pupils relate well to one another and to their teachers, but sometimes pupils show little consideration for the needs of others, and can be unresponsive or rude in lessons. Attendance is very good, but punctuality to lessons is sometimes not as good as it should be.

10 The majority of pupils are well motivated. They concentrate on their work, play a full part in class activities and respond willingly and enthusiastically in lessons. They listen carefully to instructions and settle quickly and sensibly to practical tasks. They often show a high degree of self-discipline; for example, when preparing improvisations in a drama lesson, a group of Year 11 boys threw themselves into the activity with gusto and clear enjoyment, but never lost their focus or lapsed into silliness.

11 Conversely, a significant minority of pupils show little interest in school work. In some lessons there are constant interruptions, pupils call out or make irrelevant comments, and they can be restless, noisy and lacking in concentration. They are slow to respond to instructions and apathetic about becoming involved in class activities. At worst, they show scant respect for their teachers, or can be impolite and even rude. Their negative attitudes and disruptive behaviour significantly reduce their own learning and adversely affect that of other pupils.

12 This poor behaviour sometimes spills out of the classroom and can be seen around the school, where some pupils selfishly push through doors with no consideration for others. There can be a lack of urgency in moving to lessons, with groups of pupils sometimes seen lingering beside notice boards or in locker areas.

13 However, behaviour is, on the whole, satisfactory, and around the school it is mostly good. The rate of exclusions is low and falling, as a result of the measures put in place to provide support for those few pupils who do not respond to the school's usual disciplinary procedures. There are satisfactory support systems in place that enable pupils with special



educational needs to make satisfactory progress towards their targets where these involve improvements in behaviour.

14 Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers are satisfactory overall, and often good. Pupils agree that instances of bullying are rare, and there is no evidence of sexism or racism. Most pupils work well together and are comfortable about asking questions to improve their understanding. They support one another when working in pairs or groups; for example, Year 11 girls in a science lesson helped one another when some were unsure what to do, and in physical education and team games pupils co-operate well. When pupils enjoy good relationships with their teachers, their eagerness to please ensures a purposeful atmosphere in the classroom, which contributes to effective learning.

15 Many pupils are keen to take advantage of the opportunities the school provides for them to take on responsibility. Membership of the student council, prefect duties, organisation of inter-form sports events and helping at parents' evenings are some of the ways in which pupils develop a sense of personal involvement in the school community and which contribute to their understanding of the principles of citizenship.

16 Pupils' attendance is very good. In recent years, figures have been consistently higher than those found in most schools. Rates of unauthorised absence are low. Most pupils arrive at school on time, but punctuality to lessons could be better.

### **Sixth form**

17 Most of the sixth form have very positive attitudes to learning. They appreciate the importance of study to their future lives, so apply themselves well in order to achieve the best possible results in their examinations. The attendance of most students is good. They are ambitious and keen to do well. In lessons they are fully involved, enthusiastic and highly motivated. Their active engagement in lessons, together with their sustained concentration, makes learning effective.

18 Because they have very good relationships with their teachers they are able to take advantage of the relaxed, purposeful atmosphere in which most sixth form teaching takes place. The mutual respect and warmth evident between students and their teachers lead to excellent behaviour and co-operation, which in turn, contribute to good progress.

19 The mature approach that students bring to their academic work is mirrored in the part they play in the school community. All students undertake some form of activity which helps their own personal and social development, as well as making a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Students know that they are developing important life skills through their involvement in such activities as peer mentoring, paired reading and the organisation of fund-raising events, but they also gain pleasure from these duties. They undertake them willingly, in order to give back something to the school in recognition of what it has done for them.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

20 Teaching is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. It meets the needs of pupils of all abilities across the school, including those who have special abilities. Pupils respond well to the quality of teaching and make good progress as a result.

21 Teaching is better than it was at the time of the last inspection as a result of the school's programme of continuing professional development and the emphasis that is placed

on this aspect of its work. The school has, however, faced difficulties in recruiting appropriately skilled staff in some areas. This was a particular problem last year in English, science and modern foreign languages. Some pupils had lessons from a series of temporary teachers, some of whom were not effective enough and other pupils had relatively unsuccessful teaching all year.

22 The great majority of teaching in the school is much better than this, but problems with staffing have hindered some pupils' progress. The problems have also had the effect of making some pupils resentful of staffing changes at the school, so that they respond badly to new teachers who show any signs of being like the weak temporary teachers they had in the past. These negative attitudes were a feature of only a minority of lessons but nevertheless a surprising number considering the overall quality of teaching in the school and the progress that students of all abilities make.

23 Teaching is good in almost all subjects in the main school; it is very good in personal, social and health education lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in citizenship lessons for Years 10 and 11. Teaching in science and business studies is satisfactory, and modern foreign languages teaching in the main school is unsatisfactory, mainly because of the inexperience of several of the staff involved.

24 Teachers know their subjects well. Lessons are generally planned well so that pupils are interested and make good progress. The most effective lessons are lively and stimulating, with a good level of discussion about the work being covered. This helps to develop the pupils' depth of understanding as well as their ability to express themselves clearly. Teachers know their pupils well and often tailor work to match their interests and to provide a range of ways in which they can approach the subject. Many lessons are made more successful because they have been planned to provide the sort of learning which suits the pupils best. The school has developed an agreed approach to this and as a result, pupils know their own preferred style of learning and, particularly as they get older, adapt the way they work so that they learn more effectively.

25 About a fifth of lessons in the main school were very good or excellent. In these lessons pupils made substantial progress as a result of the teachers' skilful approach and their own positive approach and commitment. For example, in an ICT lesson for a Year 11 group of a very wide ability, the teacher had prepared a good range of stimulating material to introduce the lesson on website design. She involved pupils closely in her introduction, ensuring that they understood, built up their confidence in using the software and established a buzz of excitement about what they were going to achieve. Very skilful management of pupils and sensitive support for their learning ensured that everyone in the class grew in self-confidence and understanding of the work they covered.

26 A small number of lessons, about one in 16, were unsatisfactory. Of these, three or four were not successful because pupils' behaviour was not managed effectively enough and the progress of the whole group suffered. This happened, for example, in geography and in physical education. In other cases, pupils were managed at least satisfactorily but they did not make enough progress because the work was not at the right level. This was the case in a number of modern foreign language lessons.

27 In a number of lessons, which were otherwise satisfactory, groups of pupils were reluctant to become fully involved and worked with little enthusiasm. This happened in both boys' and girls' groups and in sets of different abilities but was slightly more prevalent in groups of middle ability boys in Year 10. This was surprising because these groups all make good progress in the school and achieve well in examinations. This attitude reduces the progress that pupils make in lessons; for example, in an upper set mathematics lesson for

Year 10, the slow pace of working of a group of girls reduced the amount of work that was covered. The teacher was not successful in speeding them up or involving them in answering questions about the lesson.

28 Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory rather than good. There are too many lessons where teachers do not give sufficient attention to the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. Work tailored to enable pupils to reach their targets is not always provided as a result. Individual education plans for those pupils to whom they apply are satisfactory. There is limited extension of individual education plans into those that are more subject specific. Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is generally good, but there are lessons where teaching assistants are not aware, beforehand, of what is being taught. Teaching assistants provide effective and caring support for their pupils.

### **Sixth form**

29 Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Teachers know their subjects well and most students have very good attitudes to their work. Of the subjects inspected, teaching is satisfactory in business studies and physics. It is good in English, mathematics, art, history, ICT, design and technology, music and chemistry. In geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and psychology it is very good.

30 Four out of ten lessons in the sixth form were very good or excellent, most of the rest were good and none were unsatisfactory. Teaching is even stronger in the sixth form than in the main school partly because the school deploys its most effective teachers to work with older pupils. The students respond very well to this strong teaching and there is none of the reluctance to work or lack of interest that mars a few lessons lower down the school.

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

31 The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good for Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory for Years 10 and 11. The curriculum overall reflects the school's aims and values, and effectively promotes students' development and progress. It prepares them successfully for their next stage of education. The time allocated to teaching, of 25 hours per week, is in line with national guidelines.

32 The curriculum offered in Years 7 to 9 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. All students are able to take two modern foreign languages throughout Years 7 to 9 if they wish to do so. The time allocated to subjects is satisfactory. There is now sufficient time for ICT, an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Religious education and personal, social and health education are taught as part of the citizenship course, and the time allotted to this course is adequate to deliver the curriculum satisfactorily.

33 The school's arrangements for Years 10 and 11 allow students to select, in addition to the compulsory core subjects, a group of subjects that most effectively meet their interests and needs. This provides most students with an appropriately balanced curriculum. The range of vocational courses has been extended since the time of the previous inspection. The school now offers ICT as a GNVQ course and a vocational GCSE, and leisure and tourism as a vocational GCSE course. All students continue to study religious education as part of their citizenship course. The school expects students to take the GCSE examination for short course religious education. It does not, however, offer students the opportunity to take a full GCSE in religious education, unless they study outside the normal lesson times.

34 The school does not meet the requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11, because not all students take one of the two courses offered, there is no ICT in the compulsory core of the curriculum, and the ICT taught across the curriculum does not meet the statutory requirements.

35 Approximately 45 students do not take a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. The alternative curriculum they are offered, which consolidates their basic skills, is appropriate. The school has not, however, disapplied them from the National Curriculum.

36 The very good range of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school. These include academic, artistic, cultural and sporting opportunities. Many subjects run clubs out of lesson time. Students have good opportunities to visit museums and galleries, and to travel, both for education and for pleasure, within this country and abroad. The school provides well for its gifted and talented students through the Saturday Club. The Sports' Night each Thursday, which opens sports to all, whatever their ability, is very popular with students. Students about to join Year 7 have the opportunity to join a Sports Camp. Students participate in community events as well as in national events and competitions. The activities offered reflect very well the inclusive nature of the school.

37 Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall. The legal requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship is still not being met, but since the previous inspection opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually in lessons have improved and are also good. In particular, there is no opportunity to develop ideas not otherwise provided on the school curriculum through reflection. Assemblies make a powerful contribution to pupils' moral and social development, not least because of the contribution of the headteacher. Pupils have opportunities to consider that diversity can be a strength, that achievement is important individually and as a member of a team, and that a multi-cultural way of life has always been and will always be a feature of living in Britain. Although some of these ideas are also planned to be a part of the daily form tutor meetings during the week, no connections were made in active tutorial sessions. There is a whole Year 7 plan to co-ordinate collective worship that would make an excellent starting point for the rest of the school. Several subjects make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' feelings, values and emotional sensitivity. In history they learn about the Holocaust by sensitive use of the film of *Schindler's List* and in music and in most assemblies the use of music is used to create an atmosphere of reflection. Religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship contribute a great deal to the spiritual development of the pupils.

38 Provision for moral development is very good. The 'Shenfield Code' provides a clear basis for behaviour, which is promoted through all aspects of school life, for example in physical education where students are taught to respect rules and accept decisions of umpires and referees. There is a clear sense of right and wrong, and making decisions 'for and against' features strongly in most subjects. Assemblies give significant support to a moral code and the recognition of role models in sport and the arts. Citizenship encourages pupils to think about crime and punishment, health and relationships and political issues; this is done in conjunction with religion and faith communities in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

39 Provision for pupils' social development is good. Diversity is a strength and shared responsibility and working in single sex classes are both features of school life. Sex education separately for boys and girls in Year 9 helps overcome much of the embarrassment at that stage of their lives. Mixed personal, social and health education classes in Year 10 and 11 benefit from this early grounding. Poor behaviour and lack of

respect for teachers and pupils in a few Year 10 and 11 classes gave rise to concern during the inspection. Pupils are encouraged to be active and take responsibility in the school council and the sixth form 'Team 12' mentoring scheme. Sixth form students take responsibility for choir groups in music and sessions in the fitness suite. The school is developing its role in the community and the expansion of activities in ICT, sport and the performing arts are part of the business enterprise development proposed for the school. The motto "Only positive attitudes beyond this point!" is generally reflected in the attitudes of pupils.

40 Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school maintains that it holds the spirit of inclusion high in its priorities and that activities always have a cultural stress. There is good provision in the arts which include drama and dance. In a number of subjects pupils are given the opportunity to study their own cultural inheritance and to learn about other cultural traditions. There have been school visits to Berlin, Krakow and Auschwitz concentration camp, to local faith communities and to some churches. Religious education lessons, for example, include the study of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism to develop an appreciation of religious beliefs and to value other cultures. However, not enough is done in assemblies or in lessons to counter the misunderstanding and mystery of cultures other than those experienced locally in the school or to ensure that pupils and students leave the school with sufficient depth of understanding to equip them fully for working in a multi-cultural environment. Good work is seen in the new and innovative school approach to citizenship which includes religious education, personal, social and health education, careers, work experience and an understanding of the full range of skills needed to contribute positively and actively to British society. However, instances of racial, political and religious misunderstanding in lessons are sometimes not challenged so that the reinforcement of bias and unbalanced opinion could occur. Displays around the school reflect a good understanding of the diversity of culture, and work on different faith communities and individuals such as Nicky Cruz provide role models for pupils to learn from.

41 Personal, social and health education provision is good overall. The course is included in the innovative whole-school policy for citizenship. It supports pupils' social development and includes sexual health, drugs, alcohol and tobacco education. Elements of these are also taught in science, physical education and citizenship. Each subject area contributes to the study of medical ethics, peace and justice, wealth and poverty, scientific issues and human relationships in a well thought-through programme of study which also ensures coverage of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, 'Open World'. This approach is effective and meaningful to the pupils; they enjoy attending lessons, develop a sense of humour and leave lessons confidently knowing that the key issues of life have been explained to them in a non-confrontational and thorough way. The citizenship department has developed a monitoring and assessment system based on a combination of the English assessments and the non-statutory levels of attainment in religious education for 14 year olds. Although in the early stages of development these inform planning and help develop the work of pupils and the subjects in the department.

42 Over three quarters of the personal, social and health education lessons are good or very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, the planning is comprehensive, pupils are engaged in challenging discussion and, except for the omission of ICT in most citizenship lessons, the department makes a significant contribution to learning skills, assemblies and the environment of the school as a whole. So effective were the visual reminders for boys to take appropriate precautions in sexual encounters that they will probably remember them for life. Both boys and girls have some gaps in knowledge and understanding in connection with contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, the law and the use of drugs, 'date-rape' and the implications of breaking the law. The already strong impact of personal, social and health education on pupils was supported by relevant outside speakers and community leaders

such as the Essex Fire Service Education Officer who provided an excellent presentation for Year 7. Displays on personal, social and health education topics are not sufficiently developed, although the “Drop in before you drop out” counselling provision is clearly visible around the school.

43 Careers advice for pupils in the main school is very good. The school has gained a quality award for its careers provision. A dedicated team provides a wealth of information, supported by a well-planned programme of activities which starts, formally, in Year 9. Prior to that, pupils’ introduction to careers has begun through their studies in drama and citizenship. The support from the school’s external advisor is good and includes input into assemblies, careers conventions and other activities which make pupils aware of options. Interviews are arranged which give pupils experience of presenting themselves in this forum. The school also benefits from the contribution of time and expertise from a governor which enhance provision significantly.

44 The school has some very fruitful links with local industry and commerce, which enhance pupils’ learning experiences and contribute very positively to their personal development. Extensive links with local employers support the careers education programme. In addition to the work experience placements that all pupils in Year 11 undertake, employers give their time to provide mock interviews during Year 10 and attend a major annual careers convention, where pupils and their parents can gain useful information about possible future opportunities.

45 Local employers have also made substantial contributions toward the school’s finances through sponsorship, while their involvement in consortium arrangements with other schools provides special work-related courses that are designed to meet the needs of those pupils who have become disenchanted with the standard curriculum.

46 Other useful links with the local community are seen through the expressive arts department, who invite local people to performances, and through the wide range of sporting activities which take place at the school and involve many local clubs.

47 Year 8 pupils organise a Christmas party for old people in the locality and the school tries to encourage good relationships with people living nearby, by seeing that streets around the school are free of litter and that pupils behave well on their way to and from school. A high proportion of pupils achieve the award for community involvement as a point of the Trident scheme.

48 Good relationships with feeder schools ensure a smooth transition between the primary and secondary phases. The pastoral element of this liaison is particularly strong, with both pupils and parents commenting on the effectiveness of induction arrangements for new pupils. Curricular links, especially in the core subjects, are developing, but are limited by time constraints. Local colleges of further education work with the school to provide special courses for disaffected pupils, and there are good links with other secondary schools and colleges of higher education in relation to the school’s commitment to initial teacher training.

49 Pupils with special educational needs have access to all areas of the school’s activities and to the same curriculum as other pupils.

## **Sixth form**

50 The curriculum for Year 12 and 13 provides overall good breadth and balance. It promotes students' development and progress well, and prepares them successfully for their next stage of education.

51 The curriculum provided for students in Years 12 and 13 is largely based around traditional AS and A2 courses. The range of subjects offered, which numbers over 20, is good. The school has recently introduced music technology to its range of courses. Students have a free choice as to which subjects they wish to study in the sixth form, and the timetable is constructed so that almost all have their choices met. There is enrichment to the curriculum through physical education, which is compulsory in Year 12.

52 Since the previous inspection, when the range of vocational courses was identified as a weakness, the school has expanded the number of vocational courses offered in Years 12 and 13. There is an intermediate GNVQ course which includes business studies and leisure and tourism, and ICT is offered as an AVCE course. The school has firm plans to offer an intermediate course in media studies from September 2003. This is still a relatively small range, and some parents have raised concerns about it. The school's recent experience has been, however, that take-up of vocational courses has generally been low. Many students who wish to take such courses choose to do so at one of the local colleges rather than in the sixth form.

53 There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities – academic, artistic and cultural. The sixth form students hold an annual Rock Concert, as well as taking a lead in other school performances. Students have good opportunities to travel abroad, to visit museums and galleries, and to attend lectures linked to their studies.

54 Provision of careers advice and information in the sixth form is good. Advice to help students into higher education is very good. All students benefit from the school's organisation of interviews, with the school's staff and with external representatives from the world of work and education. Advice for those wishing to move into vocational training is satisfactory. The careers library is good and includes sufficient information for these students but these areas have a lower profile in the school's provision.

55 A major contribution to students' personal development comes from the 'executive' work experience that is available for all first year sixth formers. These specially organised placements are individually tailored to students' requirements with a view to giving them an insight into the area of work for which they are aiming. Students themselves are encouraged to take a major part in arranging the placements. In so doing, they learn to polish and refine their skills of self-presentation. Many students successfully obtain part- or full-time jobs or sponsorship for higher education as a result of their involvement in this imaginative and worthwhile scheme.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

56 Provision for the health and safety of pupils, students, staff and visitors to the school is very good. A comprehensive health and safety policy, based on local authority guidelines but adapted to the school's specific circumstances, gives clear instructions on procedures that must be followed to ensure that the school is a safe environment for everyone. Regular checks are carried out in accordance with the policy, but, more importantly, daily vigilance by responsible staff encourages the reporting of any cause for concern, however minor, so that remedial action may be taken immediately. Formal risk assessments are carried out within departments, with special attention paid to those considered high risk, such as science, design and technology and physical education, and teachers are careful to follow safe

practices in lessons. Tight procedures exist for organising school trips, so that pupils, parents and staff can be sure that great care has been taken to ensure everyone's safety. There are clear guidelines for pupils and staff in relation to safe access to the internet.

57 The procedures for child protection are very good. Arrangements for first aid are in place and a nurse is available to care for pupils when necessary. Teachers are trained in first aid and this is a continual process as new teachers enter the school. The support from the education welfare officer and the social services is excellent.

58 The care and support for pupils and students are very good and take place through a well-structured tutor system where year co-ordinators have a key role. The school aims for tutors to remain with students as they move through the school and this provides good continuity. Liaison with feeder primary schools is very good and this helps new pupils to settle in well in their new school. Younger pupils feel secure in the school and report that incidents of bullying are few but the school deals effectively with them. Pupils and parents report favourably on the school's efforts. There are strong links with local colleges to support the smooth transfer to the next stage of education of students who do not remain in the sixth form.

59 Subject teachers and tutors monitor pupils and students work and progress assisted by year co-ordinators. Individual targets are set for students by tutors. The school places great emphasis on the students' own self-assessment of progress and expects them to complete their own action plan for improvement identify areas for improvement. There is continuous monitoring of performance and parents are pleased to be involved in the process. However, reports to parents are not consistent in all subjects; some targets not focusing on academic aspects but are more attitudinal. They have not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.

60 Tutors meet with their pupils on four occasions in the week and although there is a planned programme for this time it is not used effectively by all tutors. Pupils planners are used well in the lower school but their use by pupils in the upper school is limited and parents are not using them as an effective method of contact with the school. Pupils are motivated by a system of merits to encourage them in their work but these are not popular after the early years in the school. There is a clear code of conduct in the school and, although pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, the sanctions adopted by the school are not always effective. Most teachers manage their pupils effectively but the referral system for unsatisfactory behaviour and the on-call support for teachers are not always successful. A number of pupils, both boys and girls, are continual offenders and some pupils report that they have little faith in the sanctions, as pupils do not pass through the intended levels of referral. They also report that the continual disruption to lessons has a detrimental effect on their learning. These pupils do not match the expectations of the 'Shenfield Code'.

61 There are good procedures in place for identifying pupils and students with special educational needs. Arrangements for tracking attainment and progress for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall but are heavily dependent on assessment carried out by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and teaching assistants. There needs to be a more structured system for gaining assessment information from subject teachers. The data available for reviewing pupils' progress and for setting or adjusting individual targets is rather limited as a result.

62 Day-to-day marking of pupils' work is generally consistent. Most teachers follow the school's policy and credit pupils' effort as well as their attainment. Some teachers provide helpful comments, which give guidance on how to improve. The use of National Curriculum levels is good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are consistently given accurate information on



their attainment and progress. The regular use of National Curriculum levels is less well developed in Years 7 to 9. In some subjects, for example mathematics and science, the consistent assessment of work to these standards is a relatively recent development.

63 In Years 10 and 11, there is good use of target setting. The school uses pupils' prior attainment and other measures to set ambitious but realistic targets. As pupils move through the GCSE courses, they are kept fully informed on progress towards their targets and find this information helpful and motivating. When pupils enter the school, targets set for attainment at the end of Year 9 are given to teachers, but not shared with the pupils. The lack of interim targets and assessment based on these means that pupils are unable to monitor their own progress.

64 Assessment data is carefully used to place pupils in appropriate sets and the school has good procedures to monitor the accuracy of placement. A system designed to enable teachers to measure the achievement of their classes is in place and is well used in Years 10 and 11. The system works less well in Years 7 to 9, partly because the use of National Curriculum levels is not fully embedded. There is a need for further development of this potentially powerful tool.

### **Sixth form**

65 The care and support for students in the sixth form are very good. The sixth form co-ordinator and two assistant co-ordinators have an overview of individual students and offer effective support and guidance throughout the sixth form. There is a strong commitment of staff to students. The progress of students is monitored regularly through an academic review process and all students are aware of their predicted grades for the A-level examinations. Target setting is effective and students report favourably on the quality of this support. Reports to parents are regular and students are given the opportunity to discuss their progress with assistant co-ordinators who offer additional personal support. Most students attend regularly, but arrangements for monitoring their attendance are not as rigorous as in the main school.

66 The school provides opportunities for the personal development of its students. Students take responsibility as prefects, librarians, peer mentoring and the mentoring of younger pupils, especially in a paired reading scheme. The school also recognises students' academic achievements and the sports award evening and an evening of excellence in the arts, which took place during the inspection, demonstrate students' achievements of high quality. The procedures for monitoring attendance are very good and result in a high attendance rate from students.

67 Arrangements are in place to provide opportunities for personal study in the school. All students have access to computers to aid their study and responsibility is given to students to plan their time in terms of study leave. A head boy and girl have been appointed and personal development opportunities such as prefects and mentoring of younger students are worthwhile. The Community Sports Leaders Award continues to flourish and many students take the opportunity of working with primary schools.

68 Careers advice is available and opportunities exist for work experience. A popular careers convention takes place to help students choose future career pathways. Students report positive support for UCAS registration and strong links exist between the school and universities. Some students report that there is minimal support for those who do not transfer to higher education, especially in individual job opportunities and other specific careers.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

69 The school has a very fruitful relationship with parents, who strongly support its aims and are happy with its achievements. Most parents have very positive views of the school and take an active interest in pupils' learning. The fact that the school is heavily oversubscribed is an indication of parents' satisfaction and of the school's good standing in the local community.

70 The majority of parents agree that teaching is good, and that pupils enjoy school, are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They think that the pastoral system is particularly strong and that the school responds well to parental concerns. They find that staff are approachable and provide them with good information. Most think that behaviour is good and that the way the school promotes pupils' personal development is a strength. They believe that the school is well led and managed. The range of activities available to pupils outside lessons is described as very good. About a quarter of parents who expressed a view are not happy with amounts of homework set, some wanting more and others less.

71 Inspectors agree with most of the positive views expressed by parents. Homework is used satisfactorily, although not all teachers follow the agreed timetable consistently.

72 The school provides a good range of written information for parents, including separate booklets for different key stages and a handbook for parents of pupils new to the school. These are helpful and informative, and written in a friendly, welcoming style. The school website is very well presented and provides an easy means for parents to check the attendance of their sons or daughters. It will soon be expanded to cover academic progress. The school has also established a Parents Gateway through which parents with access to the Internet can send and receive information. This is proving very useful.

73 By their very good attendance at consultation meetings and other organised events, parents show their serious interest in supporting pupils' learning. The school organises Parents' Forums to gauge parental reaction to a range of issues, for example, school uniform and assessment procedures for pupils in Years 10 and 11. These are exceptionally well attended, since they give parents an opportunity to express their views directly to senior staff in small groups. Almost all parents come to meetings with teachers to review pupils' progress, and attendance at review meetings for pupils with special educational needs is usually 100 per cent. On the rare occasions when parents are asked to help the school with matters related to discipline, willing support is usually forthcoming.

74 There is a very active Parents' Association which organises social and fund-raising events to provide additional resources for the pupils, as well as contributing to the school's corporate image. The school, in its turn, shows its commitment to maintaining a purposeful partnership with parents by gathering information on parents' views, both formally and informally, so that they can be taken into account when developments are planned.

75 There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils who have special educational needs. Parents and pupils are now being involved in the review and target setting process in line with the 2002 Code of Practice for special educational needs. There are good contacts with local authority services for special educational needs.

### **Sixth form**

76 Views expressed by sixth formers in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire were mixed. A high percentage of replies were received, and showed a very

divergent picture of students' attitudes. Subsequent discussion with students showed mostly positive views and general satisfaction with the school.

77 Most students enjoy the sixth form and think they are well taught and challenged. They feel that the courses available fitted their requirements and they appreciate the accessibility of staff to help them with any difficulties that may arise. They think they were helped well to settle into the sixth form and are encouraged to study independently.

78 Over half of the questionnaire responses indicated that students do not feel that they are well advised by the school or by careers staff. Nearly 40 per cent say they were not given helpful advice on what to study and a similar number do not feel well informed about their progress. Many say that the school does not listen to or respond to their views and do not feel that they are treated as responsible young adults. A quarter do not think there is a good range of worthwhile activities available to them and nearly a third say that they could not rely on sensitive support from school.

79 The inspection team found little to justify or explain these negative views. Careers advice throughout the school is very good, with an exceptionally good system of providing relevant work experience for sixth formers. All students are given detailed information on the availability and demands of sixth form courses before they commit themselves, including one-to-one discussions with senior staff. The school acknowledges that much of the information and advice is geared to higher education, with less emphasis on alternative options or on the possible routes that exist beyond university. Assessment of sixth formers' work is good and involves reviews with tutors as well as feedback from subject teachers. Students are able to express their views via the school council and are expected to show high levels of personal responsibility in some aspect of service to the school community through the 'Team 12' system, in which most students willingly take part. There are some restrictions to the freedom of sixth formers, designed to ensure that they make best use of their time in school, which many see as a minor irritation. Staff are readily available to offer both academic and personal support.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

80 The school is led and managed well. The headteacher's strong and effective leadership has moved the school forward significantly and progress since the last inspection has been good. He has a very clear strategic vision of how the school should be, and has managed situations skilfully to achieve the aims. Over the years staffing appointments have been carefully matched to this vision and have been very largely successful. New appointments have contributed significantly to the strength of the school's Leadership Group, which works well, ensuring the school runs smoothly and supporting its development effectively.

81 Members of the Leadership Group have clearly defined roles and resources well matched to their responsibilities. The two deputy headteachers, in particular, support the headteacher in his overall leadership of the school, and provide appropriate strategic support and advice as well as carrying out their own specific roles successfully. The assistant headteachers are similarly supportive and effective. The Leadership Group together have a wide range of complementary skills, which are combined very effectively as a result of the professional relationships which have been built up between them. There is a very good balance of challenge and support for ideas so that school policies are robust and effective. The practice of including a member of the school's middle management on the Leadership Group for a year's term of office is effective in many ways, including providing further professional development and ensuring a flow of new ideas into the group,

82 The governing body is well informed and highly committed to the school, often as a result of governors' own experience as parents of pupils at school. They bring many skills to their work, which benefit the school significantly, including considerable financial and business expertise. The governors have helped steer the school through difficult financial circumstances and have managed the budget very skilfully so that the school has been able to continue improving. All statutory duties are met apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

83 Although the school attracts additional funding because of its status as a training establishment, its basic budget is tight and there is little room for flexibility when essential costs have been met. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's financial situation and care is taken to ensure that money is spent appropriately, in accordance with the educational priorities defined in the School Development Plan. The headteacher and senior staff, with the valuable support of knowledgeable governors, have had to show considerable imagination in making the budget balance following a very late claw-back of sixth form funding by the local authority. This has inevitably led to some unwelcome decisions, particularly on staffing and building improvements, but has meant that the school is not in deficit.

84 The budget is routinely monitored by the finance officer and responsible assistant head, and is scrutinised by governors to ensure that spending is on target. The minor recommendations of the most recent audit report have now been implemented and proper procedures are in place to ensure effective financial control. Principles of best value are understood and applied, particularly in relation to the purchase of supplies and services. The views of staff, parents and pupils are regularly sought and all spending proposals are thoroughly examined before they are agreed. The school is beginning to compare its performance with that of similar schools. Financial planning in the school is good and funds are used to the full, with very little carry-forward from one budget to the next. The school has been successful in securing specific grants and gaining sponsorship. These extra funds have been used imaginatively to improve the school. Spending decisions are considered carefully and made wisely. Procedures for financial control are secure and properly audited. The financial arrangements in the school benefit considerably from the governors' financial expertise, particularly the guidance provided by the chair of the finance committee. The governing body deal with the school's finances very effectively and have appointed a 'responsible officer' to oversee this part of their work. Taking into account the quality of education and the progress that pupils make, the school provides good value for money.

85 The school measures how well it is doing carefully and its plans for improvement are clear and realistic. Over the years, these development plans have been well focused. They have been an important tool in using limited resources effectively. Statistical information is used very well at senior management level and by many departments to analyse performance and to look for areas of strength and weakness. As a result, successful teaching practice, for example, has been shared widely in the school and standards have risen.

86 The effects of recent staffing problems and the relatively large number of temporary teachers which had to be employed have also been monitored by senior management, but the impact on some pupils' attitudes has been underestimated. The large number of new teachers in the school require more extensive support systems than are currently provided.

87 The majority of subjects are appropriately staffed with qualified teachers but recruitment difficulties, together with a high turnover of teachers during the last two years, have posed problems for the school. It has adopted highly pro-active and innovative approaches to address these difficulties, including becoming a recognised DfES Training

School in 2000. In this capacity it is actively involved in providing initial teacher training as a member of a local School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) consortium of schools, and more recently, in the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) which enables untrained graduates to become teachers. The training in both schemes is well planned and structured. The SCITT training benefits from close liaison with other schools, and the GTP from partnership with a local university. The GTP programme is being closely monitored by the school to ensure its effectiveness. At present staff shortages are resulting in the six trainees on the GTP having to be given the maximum teaching timetable allocation for untrained teachers, and therefore there is a high percentage of unqualified teaching.

88 Staffing difficulties have also been addressed through part-time appointments resulting currently in 17 part-time teachers, who provide the equivalent of just over 11 full-time posts. The timetabling complications which arise from these arrangements result in some subjects, mathematics for instance, having several classes being taught by more than one teacher.

89 There are adequate numbers of support staff for pupils with special educational needs. In general, the deployment of teaching assistants is flexible enough to gain maximum benefit from the hours available. The implementation of the 2002 Code of Practice is not sufficiently well developed. The management of the school needs to establish clear roles and responsibilities to meet the recommendations of the Code of Practice. This applies particularly to the role of the subject teachers, the designation of key teachers and the role of the co-ordinator for special educational needs. This will enable the school to utilise the skills and expertise of the co-ordinator in the wider role envisaged in the new arrangements. Statutory requirements for pupils with special educational needs are, however, fully met.

90 The programme for the induction and training of teachers new to the school is focused mainly on activities during the autumn term. That for newly qualified teachers and mentoring arrangements for all new teachers continue throughout the year together with optional twilight sessions on topics relating to teaching, learning and behaviour management. Support from department mentors is good in most cases, and much appreciated by new staff. The large number of teachers new to the school, however, is resulting in significant pressures on whole-school arrangements for support. The school is aware of this, and is planning to review the arrangements for the induction, training and ongoing support for new teachers as a matter of urgency.

91 Performance management is well organised. All teachers have regular performance management meetings, they agree objectives, their lessons are observed and they receive regular feedback. Performance management is very closely linked with school improvement and staff professional development. There is a parallel process for support staff who also receive training. Performance management procedures are monitored closely, and currently improvements are being made in lesson observation and in the level of challenge in teachers' objectives. The school is a certified Investor in People.

92 The school has a well-established system for appraising the work of curriculum areas and of its year groups. There is a clear timetable for these reviews and helpful reports are produced which highlight strengths and weaknesses. The outcomes of the reviews are used to inform staff development and identify areas for school development. This is a well-established and successful aspect of the school's work.

93 The school's programme for professional development is based on a clear view of the importance of enhancing teaching and learning, and the importance of effective behaviour management. The programme is well managed to provide opportunities for staff to attend regular school-based training, and also out-of-school courses and conferences which reflect training needs linked to individual teachers' performance management objectives. There are

good procedures for keeping the effectiveness of the provision for professional development under review which include an ongoing evaluation by teachers which is published regularly.

94 Accommodation overall is satisfactory for present purposes but there are some areas requiring refurbishment. As the school roll rises, space will be increasingly at a premium, especially in the sixth form area. The major areas for improvement noted in the previous report have been dealt with. Music accommodation was unsatisfactory, but the new expressive arts block now provides well-equipped teaching spaces for drama and dance as well as music. Nearly all classrooms are now appropriately grouped by subject, providing departmental suites. The science laboratories were in serious need of refurbishment but this has not been fully addressed. Four have been refurbished but three are still in urgent need of attention. Access for those with physical disabilities remains an issue for action.

95 Most subject classrooms satisfactorily support pupils' learning. The accommodation for history, art and special educational needs is good. The New Millennium Library is excellent. Most other classrooms are satisfactory but the food technology rooms are poorly equipped and hard to keep clean. The outside physical education areas suffer from poor drainage which restricts their use. A major bid is currently being made to rectify this situation. Boys' and girls' toilets need refurbishing and are not well treated by pupils. The external fabric of the school is in reasonable condition but metal window frames in some areas need replacement.

96 There is now insufficient space in the dining hall area, locker space is limited and many corridors are too narrow. Interior cleaning is done well by an outside contractor. The on-site cleaning team keeps the outside areas of the school free of litter and graffiti and carries out many valuable maintenance tasks.

97 Resources for learning are good overall. The library is an excellent learning environment and a very good resource for the whole school. It is in very regular use as classes book time in advance for projects and research lessons and it often fills to capacity during lunchtimes. The 18 computer stations are also in almost continuous use either through the booking system or by sixth form students in their private study periods. The books are well displayed and in very good condition, though some subjects are under-represented. The three helpful librarians are building effective links with subject departments to match new purchases to the future needs of their schemes of work.

98 Within departments, resources for subjects are good overall. There are very good book-stocks in art and design and geography while physical education has a good range of equipment for a full range of activities. There are insufficient books for business studies. Resources for ICT are satisfactory overall but there is some pressure on booking computer suites by subjects. The use of interactive whiteboards and other technology for teaching requires further development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM**

99 The sixth form is closely integrated into the rest of the school and benefits equally from the effective leadership and management of the headteacher and of the Leadership Group. Until some two years ago the sixth form was considerably smaller than usual for a school of this size and results at A-level were less impressive than for the rest of the school.

At this point the school decided to develop the sixth form. A new head of sixth form was appointed in 2001, who stayed for only one year. During that time student numbers rose significantly and examination results at the end of 2002 were much better than in previous years. The current head of sixth form was appointed in September 2002. He has continued to steer the growth of the sixth form and has introduced effective systems for measuring students' progress and providing support, which were missing in the past.

100 The head of sixth form is supported well by his deputy and assistant head of year. They form an effective team, bringing different skills and experience to the role. Between them, they cover a wide range of issues, including students' pastoral and academic support, assessment of progress, key skills, recruitment and liaison with subject departments. This work is extended well by the team of tutors and provides an effective support structure for the students, which is helping to raise their performance.

101 Governors see the development of the sixth form as a major aim. They have allocated resources appropriately and, together with senior management, coped very well with the significant reduction in funding for the sixth form, which occurred very late in the planning cycle. Governors are kept well informed about developments and are playing an effective part in strengthening the sixth form. Spending decisions are closely integrated to those made for the whole school and are made equally carefully. Funding allocated to the sixth form is closely matched to the income that the student numbers bring and financial control is at the same good level as the rest of the school.

102 Subjects taught in the sixth form are generally managed well but there is some unevenness in the use that different departments make of assessment information. While the school's senior management and the sixth form management make good use of data to see how students are performing and to compare the effectiveness of different subjects, some departments are only just beginning to use the wide range of information that is available.

103 The school works hard to match students to appropriate courses of study and generally succeeds. It does not set high entry requirements and is keen to accept all who can benefit from the largely academic programme it offers. Only a few vocational courses are available, but attempts to offer more have not been successful because very few students opt to take them. These students tend to move to other post 16 provision in the area. All students, including those with special educational needs, enjoy equal access to the curriculum and can benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities.

104 The sixth form accommodation within the new expressive arts block is very crowded. The common room barely has room for all students in year assemblies. Psychology is a notable growth area and accommodation for the subject is inadequate. Numbers in the sixth form are predicted to rise and the issue of their accommodation will need to be addressed urgently.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

105 In order to improve the quality of education even further, staff and governors should:

- (1) Address the issue of the small number of pupils who do not work well enough in some lessons and also those who occasionally misbehave when teaching is not effective enough.

(See paragraphs 11,12,27,111,128,137,167,182)

- (2) Strengthen the support provided for teachers new to the school, those undergoing training and the few others to whose lessons are sometimes unsuccessful. This support will also help to address the issue above.  
(See paragraphs 21,22,26,86,87,88,89,90,127,138,173,192)
- (3) Look for ways of refurbishing parts of the building such as the design and technology area and some of the science laboratories, and also provide more study and social space for the growing sixth form.  
(See paragraphs 95,103)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Strengthen arrangements for monitoring and improving students' attendance and particularly their punctuality, building on the very successful arrangements used in the main school.  
(See paragraphs 66,167)

In addition to these main points the school should also look for ways of meeting the requirements for collective worship.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	175
	Sixth form	65
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	4	35	70	55	11	0	0
Percentage	2	20	40	31	6	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	23	25	14	0	0	0
Percentage	5	35	38	22	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1250	246
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	54	17

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	118	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	43

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	117	139	256

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	100	100
	Girls	130	111	121
	Total	210	211	221
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (83)	82(84)	86 (86)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (49)	60 (61)	49 (56)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	105	97
	Girls	114	119	127
	Total	202	224	224
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (75)	88 (86)	88 (93)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (37)	55 (62)	44 (62)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	111	110	221

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	66	107	110
	Girls	74	107	109
	Total	140	214	219
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63 (71)	97 (99)	99 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.6
	National	39.8

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	28	21	49
	Average point score per candidate	15 (14.2)	17.9 (19.4)	16.2 (16.7)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	17.7 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		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	228	21	49	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	15	17.9	16.2	0	0	0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	0	0	0

Figures in brackets refer to 2000)

Figures in this table refer to results in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	632	27	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	2	1
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	18	0	0
Any other ethnic group	13	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	822	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	90
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

#### **Education support staff: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	126.75

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Key Stage 2	25.8
Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	22.4

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4,547,390
Total expenditure	4,552,114
Expenditure per pupil	3,337
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,276
Balance carried forward to next year	552

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	57.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	55.8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1368
Number of questionnaires returned	282

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	56	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	57	10	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	52	21	5	2
The teaching is good.	19	67	8	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	49	5	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	41	6	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	48	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	55	9	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	41	51	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	50	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	39	2	0	6

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above the national average.
- Boys' results in 2002 for both GCSE language and literature were well above the national average for boys.

#### Areas for improvement

- Progress of girls in Years 10 and 11.
- The attitude and behaviour of a minority of boys in Years 10 and 11.

106 The percentage of pupils achieving levels 5 and 6 in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was well above the national average. Girls did better than boys. Results were in line with schools in a similar context based upon prior attainment, but were above when compared with schools known to have a similar percentage taking free school meals. Over the last three years girls and boys have achieved very similar average points score compared with their respective national averages. Bearing in mind standards on entry to the school, which were above average, pupils make good progress by the age of 14.

107 In the GCSE in 2002 for both language and literature results were above the national average. Boys' performance was well above their own national average whereas girls' was just in line with theirs. Results were well below those of 2001. The GCSE year group in 2002 experienced significant staffing problems and changes throughout Years 10 and 11 which had an adverse effect upon their general performance. This was particularly so in the case of groups of average attaining girls who were predicted to do much better. Results in 2002 were untypical and not as good as in recent years.

108 The standard of speaking and listening in Years 7 to 9 is above that found nationally. Most pupils listen attentively and answer questions willingly and fluently. They work well together in pairs and small groups, exchanging ideas sensibly and learning effectively from each other. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils answer fully and justify opinions often elaborating upon them. Most pupils observe the classroom convention of raising hands if they wish to answer, but a minority call out noisily. By the age of 14, the great majority use Standard English. When talking to adults, pupils are articulate and courteous. Oral work in Years 10 and 11 is variable in quality. Higher attaining pupils are sensitive and mature in their discussion of literature. A class in Year 10, for example, talked perceptively about poems by Sylvia Plath and showed very good understanding of the poet's feelings and techniques. Very occasionally poor attitudes and behaviour detract from the standards of speaking and listening through interruption and unwillingness to give way to others.

109 The general standard of reading comprehension in Years 7 to 11 is above average. A comparatively small number of pupils join the school with a reading age below their actual age. They receive intensive specialist help and make rapid progress during Year 7. Students in the sixth form provide additional help by reading with individual pupils. Regular use is made of the very good fiction area of the library to encourage and broaden pupils' reading. By the

age of 14, pupils study a wide range of literature and develop the skills of critical readers. They identify accurately and describe such elements as plot, themes and the writer's style, as well as the interplay of characters and their motivation. A class of high attaining girls in Year 9, for example, stimulated by very good teaching, understood fully the complexities of relationships in *Twelfth Night* and set the play in its historical theatrical context. By the age of 16 pupils analyse in detail great works of literature and use relevantly and appropriately the language of literary criticism. Average attaining girls in Year 11, for example, recalled in some detail, during revision of the novel, key events in *Lord of the Flies* and remembered clearly the main characters and the parts they played in the novel. Thorough knowledge and understanding of set books are often the stimulus to some of pupils' best written work.

110 The standard of pupils' written work at the age of 14 is well above that found nationally. Work is, in the main, carefully and neatly presented. High attaining pupils in Year 7 already take great care with their writing which is mostly accurate in sentence structure and in details of spelling and punctuation. By the end of Year 9 the great majority of pupils write effectively for different audiences and purposes. They draft their work thoroughly and their best assignments are, on the whole, well planned, carefully crafted and accurate in detail. Lower attaining pupils tend to write more briefly and to make frequent errors with sentence structure, expression of ideas, spelling and punctuation. The best work of high attaining pupils in Year 11 matches the highest examination grades and often has an individual sense of style.

111 The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is always at least satisfactory and is good or better in two thirds of lessons. In Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory in almost all lessons and good or better in over half. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Set texts for tests and examinations are prepared very thoroughly, and much attention is given to developing appropriate skills for success. Most lessons are taught with great energy and at a brisk pace. Tasks are clearly explained and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers use questioning to draw the best out of pupils and to extend their knowledge. The great majority of pupils respond positively to good teaching. Occasionally, however, despite teachers' best efforts, a minority of pupils, mostly boys in Years 10 and 11, show poor attitudes and behave badly. In most lessons there is a positive relationship with mutual respect. Pupils with learning difficulties are managed with great sensitivity and there is close and effective collaboration with support assistants. Where necessary, separate work is set for such pupils and this is skilfully matched to their levels of attainment. Teachers use an imaginative range of teaching methods which help to interest and motivate pupils. Work is marked conscientiously and consistently with much advice to aid improvement.

112 The attitude and behaviour of the majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is positive and enthusiastic. In Years 10 and 11 attitudes are more variable and, in a significant minority of lessons, behaviour is poor with a lack of consideration for teachers and classmates by a handful of disaffected pupils, mostly, but not always, boys. In a few lessons this behaviour adversely affects the learning of others in the class. Generally, however, pupils respond well to good teaching and enjoy their work.

113 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. In much of its work, especially the study of literature, the department makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school. Recently the department has experienced significant staffing problems and changes in personnel which have had serious implications for some classes. Great efforts were made to compensate for difficulties by experienced staff providing support and assistance to pupils outside the school day. The present position is more settled with a strong team who share the same vision and aspirations. Management of the department is currently shared by three teachers during the absence of the head of department. Through a high level of collaboration and understanding the subject is well managed and effectively led.



114 There have been several important improvements since the last inspection. GCSE results have improved dramatically, even allowing for the dip in 2002. The comparative performance of boys is better. Teaching has improved significantly and the quality of marking is now consistent, with much constructive comment. Assessment is good and the department's effectiveness is constantly under review.

115 In other subjects across the curriculum, the quality of speaking and listening and the attention given to this aspect of literacy vary considerably. Pupils listen well in all departments, except modern foreign languages, but the quality of speaking is inconsistent. Group talk is planned into lessons in the majority of subjects but seldom in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. In subjects such as citizenship, geography, history, physical education and religious education, thorough attention is given to oracy and its importance as an essential aid to learning.

116 In all subjects pupils read well enough to understand fully textbooks and other printed materials. There is limited evidence that pupils develop strategies, such as annotation of texts, to help their reading. Only in the humanities does this happen to any extent. In almost all subjects pupils make regular use of the very good library to extend their knowledge through research. Key words are displayed in all departments but they are not uniformly well used.

117 Written work is, in the main, neatly and carefully presented. In business studies, geography, history, at GCSE in physical education and in religious education the quality of writing is satisfactory or better. Only in one or two departments is help given to pupils with writing frames to structure their work, and not much opportunity is provided in most subjects for extended writing. The marking of written work is very variable across the curriculum, with inconsistent quality of comment and target setting. Useful work is in progress to develop literacy across the curriculum, especially in Years 7 to 9. Some training has taken place but not all departments have yet integrated good practice into their schemes of work.

## DRAMA

Overall, provision for drama is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, showing great commitment and enthusiasm.
- Results in the GCSE in 2002 were above average.
- Accommodation and facilities are excellent.

### Area for improvement

- A small number of pupils achieved the highest grades in the GCSE in 2002.

118 In the GCSE in 2002 results were above average. By the age of 14, the overall standard of pupils' work is above expectation. Pupils' levels of attainment vary widely in different classes in Year 9. One group of high attaining girls, for example, stimulated by excellent teaching, listened attentively, worked effectively in small groups and responded outstandingly well to their assignment. By marked contrast, a lower attaining group of boys found difficulty in remaining on task and only through patient and skilful teaching did they make progress. The quality of written work is well above average throughout Years 7 to 9. Pupils make a very good start to their study of drama in Year 7. One large group of higher attaining boys, for example, responded positively to very good teaching and worked hard, sustaining concentration well and producing oral work of above average quality.

119 By the age of 16 pupils' attainment matches expectation. In lessons seen, oral work was average with pupils working well in groups. In both Years 10 and 11 there was a wide variation in the quality of skills as well as in levels of commitment. Despite energetic and imaginative teaching, pupils were slow to commit themselves. In some group presentations in Year 10 some pupils found difficulty in remaining in role and evaluation of the work of others was superficial.

120 The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they bring great creativity and enthusiasm to their work. Most pupils enjoy work in drama. Relationships are generally positive. Teachers show great resilience in managing some difficult classes with patience and professionalism.

121 Accommodation and facilities for drama are outstanding. The subject forms part of the expressive arts faculty and there is close co-operation with other subjects. Documentation for drama is very thorough with good schemes of work. The subject is very well managed and contributes strongly to the cultural life of the school. During the week of the inspection a very successful performance was given, organised by the faculty, in which drama made a strong contribution of high quality.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- The standard of pupils' work is well above the national average.
- There are good procedures for making sure that pupils reach the standards they should.
- The new head of department has taken good steps to develop his team of teachers so that they work well together

### **Areas for improvement**

- Some teaching is not good enough.
- A minority of pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes in their lessons so they, and others in the class, do not learn as well as they should.
- Pupils do not use ICT enough in mathematics lessons.

122 In 2002 results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. These results were also well above those in similar schools. In recent years, results have improved at the same rate as found nationally. Boys and girls achieved equally well in these tests. More pupils reached the highest levels in these tests than in English or science. However, overall, pupils did better in those subjects than they did in mathematics. The school has sustained the level of achievement at the previous inspection.

123 Work seen during the inspection from pupils in Year 9 reflects the standards of last year's tests. Achievement is good because these pupils entered the school with standards closer to the national average. Higher attaining pupils use algebra confidently and are beginning to use trigonometry. Pupils of average attainment can interpret statistical information and use ideas such as 'trial and improvement' but are not as confident with more abstract topics. Lower attaining pupils have sound arithmetical skills and can draw simple graphs.

124 GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average. This was also so at the time of the last inspection. In recent years, the proportion of pupils gaining a higher grade has improved faster than the national rate. Boys and girls achieved equally high results. Pupils achieve results in mathematics similar to those they gain in English and science.

125 The standard of work seen from pupils in Year 11 during the inspection was well above the national average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils maintain the standards they had reached at the end of Year 9. It is a good achievement to maintain these impressive standards. The highest achieving pupils in Year 11 are very competent with all topics on which they will be examined. Pupils of average attainment can apply many algebraic and statistical techniques but lack confidence to apply their learning to extended questions. Lower attaining pupils have a good understanding of three-dimensional shapes but have yet to learn trigonometry. At all ages, apart from in the highest set, girls are further through the course than boys are. This difference widens with the age of the pupils.

126 Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are taught in smaller groups. Their teachers know them well and make sure the work is appropriate to their needs. Occasionally, teaching assistants support these pupils. The presence of these assistants means that these pupils receive more teaching which also helps them learn.

127 Teaching is good overall. Pupils learn well because they are well taught. Teaching was good or better in one third of lessons seen in the inspection. One lesson was very good. In this lesson the teacher used new, computer-based resources very well to introduce algebra to pupils in Year 7. He was very familiar with the opportunities offered by this new resource. A short video clip gave pupils an understanding of why they would find algebra useful. Pupils learnt well because the teacher's expert use of his material made pupils very clear of each step. In good lessons, teachers make good use of time. They develop pupils' understanding by asking them to explain what they have done, either in writing or verbally. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. In less successful lessons, work is sometimes too easy for the pupils. In others, teachers do not spend enough time explaining the key point; so many pupils cannot do the work set. Some teachers set all the work to the same level. They do not provide work for the different groups of pupils in their class. Pupils do not use ICT enough in their mathematics lessons so they lose good chances to practise their skills and use computers.

128 Overall, pupils behave well and have good attitudes to mathematics. However, in some lessons, the behaviour of some pupils disturbs learning. Some teachers handle this well but others do not challenge unacceptable behaviour. A larger number of pupils have less than satisfactory attitudes to their work. This significant minority is not willing to listen to the teacher. They interrupt when the teacher is answering another pupil and they arrive at lessons without books and equipment. When not well managed, it is not just the minority with these attitudes who do not learn what they should in the lesson. The learning of others in the class is also held back because they do not get as much teaching as they should.

129 The subject is well led and managed. The head of department joined the school four terms before the inspection. He has led the writing of very useful teaching plans and introduced good procedures for recording the progress made by pupils. This means that teachers can evaluate the progress each pupil makes and he can monitor the work of teachers. Importantly, pupils are given high quality information on how well they are doing in mathematics. Pupils appreciate this information.

130 A high proportion of the teachers have been at the school for less than a year. The school has not found it easy to recruit mathematics teachers. There are several part-time

teachers. Two teachers are working in the English educational system for the first time, having trained abroad. Some mathematics teachers, although full-time, have other responsibilities. This makes the task of co-ordinating the work of the team more difficult for the head of the department. He has worked well to make resources known to all teachers and to share good practice. However, the task of supporting this extended team is very demanding, especially with so many teachers new to the school. Some pupils have more than one teacher of mathematics each week. This can slow their learning as they learn two topics each week. They would not do this if they had just one teacher. This means that they cannot practise the skills as frequently as those classes with a single mathematics teacher. They do not learn as effectively.

131 The head of the department has worked hard to develop his staff. The large number of teachers means it is not possible for the head of department to visit lessons of all his teachers as often as he needs to. Consequently, he cannot know the strengths or identify areas where teachers need support as effectively as he should. Further, the teaching of lower quality tends to be delivered by teachers new to the school or to those not teaching the subject as frequently. Learning in these classes is not as good as in other classes. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection and high standards have been maintained.

## SCIENCE

The overall provision for science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards in national tests and GCSE examinations have been maintained at well above the national average despite staffing difficulties.
- The curriculum offered by the department is well structured, provides continuity, is well supported by a good scheme of work, and meets the pupils' needs very well.
- The new management team has the potential and capacity to bring about further developments.

### Areas for improvement

- Stabilise the staffing team so that the department can continue to improve the provision it offers.
- Develop assessment and marking in the department so that they can fully support individual pupil target setting.
- Develop a wider range of teaching activities, to enable pupils to be able to develop the skills necessary for scientific enquiry, and to give pupils more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning.
- Improve the systems of monitoring and evaluation of the provision offered by this large department.

132 Pupils who joined the school in Year 7 in 2002 arrived with national test standards that were well above the national average. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards in the National Curriculum tests were also well above the national average. Standards have been maintained at this high level since the last inspection. When the Year 9 results are compared to similar schools they are well above the average. There is no significant difference in the test performance of boys and girls.

133 At the end of Year 11, pupils are entered for the GCSE examination in double award science. In 2002 the results obtained were well above the national averages, and represent

continuing strong performance since the last inspection. The girls obtained results slightly better than the boys overall; however, the difference matches national trends.

134 Observations of pupils' work during the inspection showed standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 to be above, and sometimes well above, the national expectation for their study of life processes and living things, materials and their properties, and physical processes. For example, by Year 9 pupils are aware of the common forms of energy and can describe the energy transitions of familiar devices, including stating whether the energy given out is useful or wasted. Pupils in lower ability sets, including some pupils with special educational needs, are able to carry out simple calculations to explain why levers balance. An extended writing exercise was well completed by more able pupils, in which they argued for and against genetic engineering. However, overall in both key stages there is a lack of variety in the styles of recording of pupils' notes; they tend to be prescriptive with the overuse of cloze exercises where pupils are asked to fill in missing words.

135 In Years 10 and 11 pupils are developing a good grasp of the scientific concepts contained within the GCSE syllabus and demonstrate attainment above the national expectation, and sometimes well above. For example, most pupils have a good understanding of the functions of the kidneys to control waste and regulate the water in the body. In a lesson introducing the Periodic Table to lower ability pupils, they quickly began to recognise patterns in the positions of the elements and used their knowledge of atomic structure to hypothesise as to the reasons why elements might have been placed in this order. This lesson was brought to life by the teacher's very good background knowledge of the different elements. More able pupils demonstrated developing knowledge and understanding of the structure of chromosomes and how sex is determined.

136 Overall attainment in scientific enquiry does not match that of the other attainment targets and is only in line with the national expectation. There are very few opportunities for pupils to develop the necessary skills. Practical activities are usually used to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, but not their investigative skills. For example, in a very effective demonstration testing different radioactive sources, pupils' understanding of a fair test was not sufficiently developed to allow them to understand fully how to compare the relative penetration of radioactive emissions through different materials.

137 Pupils have a good attitude to their learning throughout the school. Pupils are attentive and responsive, giving well-considered answers to teachers' questions. They are confident and are willing to ask their own questions and raise issues that need to be explored further. Pupils are supportive of each other, and were regularly seen providing advice and guidance to each other in their learning in science. Their behaviour in lessons is nearly always good and often very good. However, there are a small but significant number of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory. These are usually but not exclusively boys, from a range of abilities in Years 9 to 11, whose challenging behaviour shows little respect for their teachers or the learning of their peers. As in the other core subjects, science is taught in single-gender groups. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons, with teaching in half of lessons being good, very good or excellent. Teachers make prompt and purposeful starts to lessons. They take account of prior learning and make good use of 'recap' to consolidate and reinforce learning. The most successful lessons are well planned and structured to support learning, and the learning aims for the lesson are shared with the pupils. In these lessons the pace of teaching is stimulating, which along with skilled questioning promotes learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to challenge pupils' thinking and maintain their interest through clear exposition. Teachers manage their classes well; they use scientific vocabulary accurately, and use ICT and plenary sessions effectively to promote the learning of science. A particularly strong feature of many lessons is the good use of resources to develop teaching points so consolidating

pupils' understanding. As a consequence of good teaching, pupils' progress in gaining knowledge and understanding is at least as rapid as might be expected. However, as explained previously, their development of the skills of scientific enquiry is less secure. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

138 On the few occasions when teaching is less successful the late arrival of pupils often means that the start of lessons is disjointed. Learning plans for the lesson are not shared, and starter activities are ponderous and take the pace out of the learning. Often in these lessons, activities do not meet the learning needs of pupils, and demonstrations and practical work can be poorly prepared and organised. The inexperience of some teachers means that challenging behaviour is not appropriately challenged, and inaccuracies in their subject knowledge lead to the introduction of some misconceptions in pupils' understanding. Overall there is no difference in the quality of the teaching of the different gender groups. However the department should pay more attention to the preferred learning styles of boys and girls. In general the same approach to the teaching of a topic is used whatever the gender of the group, and this is not always successful. For example, a boys' set was unwilling to participate in a role-play activity whilst studying chemical bonding, and as a consequence their learning was not as rapid as if an alternative activity had been chosen. The pupils are given few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through independent work. They need more chances to show initiative and to make their own learning decisions in practical work, investigation and their ongoing studies in science. There are some examples of where this work is happening in this large department. This good practice should be shared and schemes of work annotated to include these successful teaching strategies.

139 In the past year the department has had a high turnover of staff and has experienced difficulties in recruiting suitably experienced teachers. At the time of the inspection the department was fully and adequately staffed. However, over half of the teachers in the department have been appointed in the last year, a number with little experience of the English education system. Induction procedures within the department are satisfactory but would benefit from more formal arrangements and more time being devoted to the monitoring and development of new teachers. Therefore, as a priority, the school should seek to stabilise the science team so that there can be continuity in the development of the department.

140 The curriculum offered by the science department is very good. It is well structured and designed to provide good progress in pupils' learning. Schemes of work are clear and contain the necessary elements to guide learning. In a time of considerable change these two elements have provided strong structure and guidance within the department and have allowed standards to be maintained.

141 The majority of assessment data is generated by tests at the end of each topic. Use of a wider range of assessment activities will better inform teachers as to the development of pupils in science. The department has begun to gain an understanding of how pupil performance can be described as National Curriculum levels rather than a test mark. This work should continue so that teachers gain a real understanding of the progression of National Curriculum levels. This will allow them to provide information on levels of performance for pupils and their parents, provide better feedback in day-to-day marking, set short and long-term targets that are based on what pupils should know, understand and do if they are to improve their performance, and provide teachers with direct information so that they can plan to fully meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

142 The leadership and management of the department are in the process of re-establishing themselves after this period of disruption. The new management team is becoming more proactive in leading the department forward and a strong team spirit has

been established. A strong development plan with appropriate priorities is in place. At present the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. In order to improve teaching and learning and so maintain high standards, the department must further develop effective and efficient systems to monitor and evaluate the provision for science to ensure there is a consistency of practice and that all policies are implemented.

143 Since the last inspection standards in national tests at both key stages have been maintained. Attainment in lessons in Years 7 to 9 has improved, and been maintained in Years 10 and 11. The standards of teaching have been maintained despite the considerable staffing changes. The department still needs to do further work on the range and strategies to provide more opportunities for scientific investigation and to give pupils more opportunities to plan and take responsibility for their own work. On the evidence seen in the inspection, the use of ICT as an issue has been addressed, and this area is becoming a strength in the department. The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection, but there are still laboratories in need of refurbishment. Overall the improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision for art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- The very good quality and range of the curriculum offered across all age groups.
- The teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of practical and historical aspects of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not identified in art and design and are not sufficiently challenged.
- ICT is insufficiently used as a creative medium.

144 Teachers' assessments for 2002 show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above average. However, judgements are not based on the National Curriculum assessment criteria and the levels awarded are unreliable. Scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that attainment is average overall. GCSE results in 2002 are overall in line with the national average for both the higher A\*-C and broader A\*-G grades. Within this, girls attain above the national average for girls while boys attain well below the national average for boys. In recent years GCSE results have shown no particular trend. They have varied considerably between average and well above average in close relationship to the changing proportion of girls in the groups.

145 The standards attained by Year 9 in the work seen are in line with expectations but encompass a wide range of attainment from well below to well above average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall, considering that the standard of attainment on entry in Year 7 was of a similar range for their age. Pupils develop competence in using a very good range of two- and three-dimensional materials and techniques rather than high level skills in a few. Growing strengths are evident in drawing with the majority of pupils showing a good control of line and tone in pictures based on the work of artists. Higher attainers make extensive, well-presented research notes to support their illustrations. Overall girls attain higher standards than boys. In Years 10 and 11, the standards seen in art and design are good. Pupils' achieve well as they consolidate earlier skills and extend their

knowledge of artists' works. There are strengths in printmaking where pupils combine high standards of technique and expression to produce colourful and textural block prints. Lower attainers are cautious with their choice of materials and develop skills in pencil and pastel while others experiment successfully with a wide and colourful range. A personal project on graffiti showed very good imagination and inventiveness in its planned outcomes. Sketchbooks are generally well presented and show a good development of ideas.

146 In the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in art and design are satisfactory overall. In one third of the boys' groups, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority significantly reduced opportunities for reflection and discussion of work. Behaviour is better in girls' groups, allowing ideas to be discussed more freely and more adventurous techniques to be explored. They listen attentively to instructions and co-operate very well when sharing materials. In Years 10 and 11, where the groups are mixed, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good with no significant difference between boys and girls. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good and the majority sustain concentration and a good work rate throughout lessons.

147 The quality of teaching and learning is good across the age range. Teachers have a very good understanding of the media they teach, particularly three-dimensional work and printmaking. Confident demonstrations of techniques instil confidence in pupils to try for themselves. The teachers' very wide knowledge of artists and their works enables them to direct pupils towards resources in the department's extensive library. The different teaching styles and specialisms of the staff enrich pupils' experience. Inconsistencies in marking and expectations of the use of sketchbooks and homework disrupt continuity as pupils move between teachers. Features of successful lessons include a good balance between very good instructions that clearly explain the work to be done in relation to previous lessons and very good individual support that allows pupils to make good progress at their own level. This is particularly effective in raising the achievement of lower attainers and pupils with special needs. In less successful lessons excessive attention to individual pupils allows others to become restless and the lesson loses pace and structure. A well-pitched introductory course is effective in establishing common ground for pupils from a large number of feeder schools. Further projects in Years 7 to 9 are well constructed to present pupils with a very good range of materials and contexts for their work with reference to a good range of artists and cultures. This creates a firm foundation for future art and design work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to follow and develop aspects of art and design that interest them and explore their chosen media in greater depth. Spiritual, moral and social aspects of pupils' development are adequately taught as they arise but they are not highlighted in planning, and opportunities are missed.

148 Procedures for assessing pupils' work are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils receive good verbal feedback and advice as their work progresses and they are given a National Curriculum level on completion of their projects. However, the assessments are not closely linked to the National Curriculum criteria for art and design so the levels recorded are unreliable. Pupils are not aware of the criteria used and so do not know how to improve on their levels. The department is in the early stages of compiling a folio of exemplar work for reference and illustration of standards. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, though there is scope for pupils to be more involved in assessing their own work against GCSE criteria.

149 Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory overall. Leadership is good. Throughout the department there is an ethos of care for the progress and well-being of all pupils as individuals. The well-established core of the staff have a very good breadth and depth of experience sufficient to maintain and improve on existing standards. Less experienced members would benefit from more support and the opportunity to observe



examples of good teaching. Resources for art and design are very good. Each of the rooms has a very good stock of art books and there is ample specialist equipment for ceramics and printmaking. Members of the department have been proactive in acquiring and installing a small suite of four computers and peripherals to improve facilities for ICT.

150 Improvement in art and design since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average, as they were at the last inspection. 2002 results were below this but reflect the inconsistent pattern of recent years. The working atmosphere in the department has improved in the majority of lessons. ICT has been introduced through Internet research and digital photography but, until recently, facilities have been inadequate to develop its use as a creative tool.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Overall, the provision for citizenship is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching.
- Understanding of the nature of citizenship by the pupils.
- The whole-school approach to citizenship, its monitoring and assessment and the positive effect on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils.
- The contribution of business education, careers, drama, English, history, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and science to citizenship.

### **Areas for improvement**

- More extensive use of ICT should be made.
- Some accommodation is shared with other subjects.
- Involvement of more external agencies, visiting speakers and parents.

151 Overall, pupils reach above average standards in citizenship at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are not only enthusiastic about the lessons, their variety and content but also prepared to become active, informed and responsible citizens of Britain in a multi-faith and multi-cultural environment. Religious education underpins much of what the department sets out to do and pupils regard citizenship as an important part of the curriculum. Pupils receive their entitlement in citizenship lessons and in other subjects, particularly drama, history and physical education. A system of monitoring and assessment is in place which combines features from English and non-statutory guidance in religious education. The department is building a collection of pupil exemplar material to inform and guide future planning. Achievement by pupils is good and often very good. Currently, Year 7 boys and girls do equally well and benefit from single-sex grouping. Boys, including some who are underachieving, take the opportunity to question a visiting fire officer about issues relating to hoax calls. Most pupils did not know that setting a fire may result in a custodial sentence. They also learn about self-preservation and how to react in an emergency. "If in doubt with a fire, 'Get Out!'" is the clear message received. In Year 9 boys are given a hard-hitting and totally open approach to sexual health, including the fact that unwanted pregnancies in Britain are the highest in Europe and highest in the county of Essex.

152 Currently, in Year 10 achievement is variable but this is more to do with pupils' attitudes towards some of the subject material chosen. For example, there is little discussion on charities so that the opportunity for understanding alternative points of view is limited. Most pupils have a good understanding of charities such as the Red Cross and Free Trade although pupils' range of knowledge is still limited. A video of 'Comic Relief in Africa' impacted

strongly on pupils who realised how little from the developed countries could achieve so much in the developing countries. Achievement is limited by a lack of differentiated tasks. In Year 11 a film about the hanging of a convicted murderer resulted in many pupils changing their views after seeing it. They empathised with the priest who was agonising while giving the final absolution. Another view was that "You cannot show remorse when you are dead!" Further impact was given to their decisions by hanging their results on paper, pegged on a 'washing line'. Pupils' workbooks show that the question "Can you have punishment and forgiveness?" was well answered.

153 Pupils understand many of their rights in a democratic society. Physical education contributes effectively to the understanding of rules and the need for umpires and referees. Most pupils, including those who are lower attainers and those with special educational needs, can articulate an argument orally but less constructively in written form, especially when keeping notes or writing up decisions made. History provides an opportunity for pupils to reflect on the horrors of genocide in the holocausts of Auschwitz, Rwanda or Bosnia. The school has organised a trip to Berlin, Krakow and Auschwitz. Pupils make less progress in issues on the environmental and European and 'Agenda 21' issues. Most pupils improve their skills of enquiry and the school council, 'Team 12' and the drop-in counselling sessions are effective ways of looking at the needs of the individual and society.

154 Teaching is very good. It is relevant, thoroughly prepared, provides many opportunities for reflection, and uses a range of challenging strategies. It is effective in single-sex groups in Year 9 although in sexual relationships education a review of prior learning reveals worrying gaps in knowledge by both boys and girls. Some pupils still do not understand the purpose of 'barriers' to prevent the transmission of disease but do understand that damage is being caused to the fertility of the population in the developing as well as the developed world. Teachers are assessing the achievement of pupils using a common scheme with religious education and personal, social and health education and the keeping of exemplar material is helping to define expectations lower down the school.

155 The leadership and management of citizenship are very good, improving and supported strongly by three qualified specialist religious education teachers and a teacher of history. This is an effective team that has developed an innovative course, a new method of assessment with monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department and the pupils, and believes in the underpinning of the curriculum through citizenship. The department development plan clearly identifies priorities in the subject but the use of ICT including Internet access is almost completely absent from work. The school does not currently have a parental agreement for the use of networked resources including the Internet. This is a department with huge potential for the future of the school and is an excellent example of hard work and careful planning which should be recognised more widely in the early stages of the implementation of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.
- The standards achieved are good at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The management of the department is very effective.

### Areas for improvement

- The structure of meetings and procedures.
- The use of assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- Accommodation for teaching food technology.

156 By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above the nationally expected standards and shows a substantial improvement over previous years. A significant number of pupils achieve higher levels. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the subject by the age of 14. They know how to use tools and equipment to a satisfactory standard and can work with various templates and jigs that help them to achieve a satisfactory level of consistency. Good standards were seen in their food technology products and in the resistant materials projects. Their application of the design process is secure and they have the necessary graphic skills to present their work clearly. Better use needs to be made of computers to ensure the full range of activities is covered by the end of Year 9.

157 GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national averages as were the results in the preceding year. The results in 2002 show an improvement over the previous year. Results in the resistant materials option are below those of other aspects of the department. The results achieved by the department are good when compared with other GCSE results in the school. Girls' performance is better than boys'.

158 Current groups in Year 11 are achieving high standards in their practical work and their folder work is at a good stage of completion for this time in the year. Year 11 pupils' attainment in lessons overall is good. They have mastered a range of skills in making products and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials are good. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs such as a trophy stand in Year 10 based on traditional designs which the students had sketched and developed to suit the materials and skills available. The use of ICT in the presentation of design folders and coverage of computer-aided design and manufacture in GCSE courses is developing. Pupils generally work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. Pupils help each other in their tasks, offering comment and criticism in a positive manner.

159 Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are mostly good. The teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and worksheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. There is good practice of individual mentoring and target setting. Each day's progress is reviewed effectively in the plenary session at the end of lessons. There is a sound stress on health and safety. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage pupils. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables pupils to be successful. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are

generally good. Pupils are pleased with what they achieve. In a Year 10 food technology lesson they were keen to share their success when experimenting with different types of starches used in food manufacture. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding as seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were designing and making a small lamp using an electronic circuit. In lessons there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages students to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of the lesson are sufficiently focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the pupils. There are good introductions to lessons which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their designing and making skills are sufficiently developed. Pupils with special education needs make good progress and the teachers provide extra support for learning. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words; they provide writing frames and design frames.

160 The display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department is representative of the good standards achieved by the department. It contributes to pupils' interest and the development of their ideas.

161 Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning. Classes are competently managed and pupils are attentive, co-operative and eager to learn. Pupils make best progress in the lessons where activities are practical and challenging and they have opportunities to discuss their ideas with others. There is ongoing marking and assessment to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Teachers have a wide understanding of pupils' individual needs and provide appropriately challenging tasks for the more able pupils and alternative ways for pupils with particular learning needs to understand.

162 The leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in both key stages in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. A greater emphasis should be given to the analysis and use of data to inform planning and teaching in Years 7 to 9. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. The present structure of meetings and procedures needs to be reviewed to ensure the effective and efficient contribution of all members of the department. The curriculum has been developed with the result that the activities are relevant to pupils. Schemes of work are in place giving detail of long-term planning to show what knowledge, skills and understanding it is intended that students of differing abilities should achieve. Data is used to make predictions of grades at GCSE. A sharper focus needs to be given to assigning National Curriculum levels and moderation of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. A common system of planning and assessment should be established across the department. The number of rooms available to teach the subject is adequate but the standard of accommodation needs some improvement. The standard of accommodation for teaching food technology is below that expected and impacts on health, safety and hygiene. The two technicians provide a good level of support and make an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

Provision for business studies in the main school is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The subject is popular, with a greater than average proportion of pupils taking GCSE, particularly boys.
- 2001 and 2002 GCSE results were above average.
- Pupils generally achieve well in business studies examinations compared with their other subjects.
- The majority of pupils display good attitudes and behaviour.
- Some good lessons present pupils with an interesting variety of activity and opportunities for interaction with other.

### Areas for improvement

- The subject attracts too few girls so classes are very unbalanced.
- ICT needs to be integrated more into pupils' everyday work.
- The poor attitudes of a minority of pupils spoil the learning of others in a few lessons.
- Assessment and marking do not identify sharply enough what pupils need to do to reach higher grades.
- Library provision for the subject is unsatisfactory.

163 Pupils follow the course in business studies GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' underlying attainment in core literacy and numeracy when they enter these courses is high. GCSE results in 2002 reflected this and were above average. Results were well above average in 2001 and average in 2000. The subject always attracts significantly more boys than girls in the school. Pupils have generally done better in business studies than in their other subjects.

164 Work seen in the current Year 11 covers the average range expected for the course. Boys admit that they are willing to work much harder towards the time of the examination and if they do so, middle attaining boys in particular could do better than their current performance suggests. Most pupils' current achievement is in line with their predictions, but some boys will have to do better if they are to fulfil their potential. Evidence shows that they usually do so later in the year. Written work varies significantly, with some very uneven script, incorrect spellings and weak arguments amongst the work of lower attaining pupils. Good work from higher attaining pupils shows their ability to understand and interpret data, to draw neat, accurate graphs and to present their written work accurately and tidily. Pupils rarely use ICT and oral competence varies widely. Sometimes pupils' interactions with teachers and peers show good understanding, for example when employing their mathematical knowledge in interpreting supply and demand statistics in Year 11. At other times, particularly where the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils spoil the learning environment, others do not get the opportunity to enter into discussions which enable them to develop these skills well, so they do not articulate their understanding effectively. Such behaviour prevented the teacher from discussing company finances with a Year 11 group as had been planned.

165 Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some good lessons were seen, particularly where an interesting variety of activities keep pupils motivated and engaged. Subject knowledge varies between members of the department, with a trainee teacher well supported by mentoring. Numeracy is well promoted through the mathematical aspects of the subject and key vocabulary is satisfactorily included. The department now has much better access to computers than at the time of the last inspection, but these are insufficiently used in the

curriculum. Planning covers the examination requirements satisfactorily, but requires sharp identification of how to cater for needs of pupils with special educational needs and those of potentially grade A\* standard. Where the department has the opportunity to 'band' pupils into higher and lower attaining groups, teachers can more easily provide work at different levels, but these arrangements are sometimes derailed by some pupils', especially boys, poor behaviour. Rudeness, calling out, resistance to working at all and unacceptable challenges to the teachers' authority too frequently spoil both teachers' good plans and the quality of learning for others. Where teachers are more experienced this does not occur, or where it does, can be channelled into useful debate. This is a minority, though, and most class management is good. Marking of work is satisfactory but could usefully be extended to include detailed targets of what pupils need to do to improve their grades.

166 Department management is satisfactory. The department improvement plan recognises staff's needs for training in the use of ICT in the curriculum and training is booked. Available data are not used well enough to monitor individuals' progress and use this information in planning. Improvement since the last report has been satisfactory, but some issues remain. Timetable difficulties have been removed and pupils now use data satisfactorily. Issues remaining include assessment, which still does not identify the specific needs of pupils of different abilities. Staff's ICT competence has not kept pace with the national expectation. A vocational curriculum has not been introduced into Year 10 and 11. Links with industry and employment are still areas to be developed. Library resources for the subject, not mentioned then, are unsatisfactory.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Well above average standards.
- The quality of teaching is good and much is very good.
- Excellent opportunities for investigative work and use of ICT.
- Very good support for pupils' personal development.
- Very good assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Support for behaviour management in a minority of lessons.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking which gives clear guidance on how to improve.

167 Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11. This is shown in the work seen during the inspection, and in Year 9 National Curriculum assessment and GCSE results. In 2002, 70 per cent of pupils reached level 5 or above in the Year 9 assessments in comparison with 65 per cent nationally. GCSE results have been consistently well above average over the last three years and continue to improve. In 2002, 74 per cent of pupils gained A\*-C grades in comparison with 56 per cent nationally, and all gained an A\*-G grade. In 2002 girls did better than boys in Year 9 assessments, but there is no significant difference in boys' and girls' standards at GCSE, or in the work seen during the inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well both in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11.

168 Pupils' knowledge and understanding are good, and in the case of higher attaining pupils, very good. Work in lessons shows a good grasp of the topics studied. In Years 7 to 9,

lower attaining Year 8 pupils showed a good understanding of the nature of rain forests, and were able to locate and name European countries and their capitals with confidence. Top set Year 9 pupils had a very good grasp of the economic and physical differences between India and Britain, and were able to discuss these from a well-informed base. All develop a very good range of geographical skills, learning to interpret and link factors, explain and make observations and comparisons. By the time pupils reach Years 10 and 11, investigative skills are very well developed. Year 11 pupils, for instance, worked confidently and independently in the analysis of statistics to identify differences between lesser and more economically developed countries. GCSE coursework is very well researched, showing high levels of independent investigation, and excellent use of ICT for research and presentation. Numeracy skills are used well in calculation, interpreting and presenting data. Literacy skills are well developed. Pupils are articulate orally and written work is detailed and well presented, and maps and diagrams are clear and accurate. It is only in the case of some lower attaining pupils that written work is insufficiently detailed, and sometimes reflects less secure knowledge and understanding.

169 Pupils are positive about their work in geography, responding well, in the great majority of instances, to the teachers' very good behaviour management and high expectations for their learning. Classroom relationships are good. They create a good working atmosphere and strongly support pupils' personal development.

170 Teaching is good with much that is very good and some that is excellent. One lesson seen was unsatisfactory. Learning is also good, benefiting from the skilful sharing of the teachers' good subject knowledge through clear introductions, explanation and reinforcement of key points. Brisk, purposeful introductions immediately engage the pupils' attention and interest, and set the pace for continued involvement and concentrated effort throughout the lesson. Activities are well planned, structured and timed to support incremental learning, and individual work is systematically monitored to ensure understanding and provide positive feedback. In most lessons any loss of concentration is promptly and unobtrusively checked. Pupils learn to work accurately as geographers through a constant emphasis on the need to work accurately in map work, measurement and the use of technical vocabulary. There is a very strong emphasis on independent investigation. The best teaching challenges pupils to contribute their ideas, and to extend their thinking through, for example, searching questioning. This was particularly effective in a Year 10 lesson on the comparison of land-use models enabling pupils to have a very good understanding of the economic factors influencing development. Where teaching is weaker, ineffective behaviour management and lack of clear explanation of key points result in a poor response from pupils and in learning being restricted, and in one instance, learning was severely disrupted.

171 Pupils' work is marked and formally assessed regularly. Much marking provides helpful detailed guidance for improvement but this is not consistent. Assessment procedures are well developed in Years 10 and 11, and results are used systematically to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement. Procedures are less well developed in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum provides good breadth, balance and relevance and fully meets statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9. Learning is significantly enhanced by the excellent opportunities for field work, and use of ICT. Pupils' personal development is very well supported.

172 The high standards achieved in geography are very strongly supported by the very good leadership and management of the department which provide a very clear direction for provision in geography. Teaching is very well guided, supported and monitored, and standards and provision are kept under close review. Planning reflects outcomes of teaching and assessment, and is clearly focused, ensuring very good support for teaching and longer-term development. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing all of the areas identified for improvement.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good overall and promotes effective learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes.
- GCSE results are well above average.

### Areas for improvement

- The comments on pupils' work do not always tell pupils how they can improve.
- The procedures for assessing to National Curriculum levels are unsatisfactory.

173 By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with that expected nationally. From 2000 to 2002 teachers assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as in line with the national average. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average. A significant proportion, however, reaches standards that are above average. Most pupils begin Year 7 in line with the national average and as a result of good teaching most make good progress in Years 7 to 9. In a very small proportion of lessons the progress is not as good as it should be because the teaching does not motivate well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, because the work set is usually appropriate to their capabilities.

174 The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations was well above the national average in 2002. An above average proportion of pupils gained an A or A\* grade. Over 90 per cent of girls gained an A\*-C grade, compared with the national average of 63 per cent. Boys' attainment was well above the boys' national average. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was above that expected nationally, and a significant proportion of pupils have the potential to gain the highest grades. These standards are a considerable improvement on those reported at the previous inspection. Most pupils make very good progress as they move through Years 10 and 11 because they are very well taught and because they have a very positive attitude to their work.

175 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good knowledge and understanding about the past. They see and explain well the reasons for actions taken in the past. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, explained the reasons for the murder of Thomas Becket, and the higher attainers successfully evaluated who was to blame for the event. In their work on the treatment of Jews in Germany in the 1930s, pupils in Year 9 showed good understanding of the issues. An upper set of girls and a lower set of boys both showed good understanding of the concept of human rights in work on the background to the Holocaust. The majority use sources satisfactorily to describe and explain past events. Pupils in Year 8 used an extract from a death register together with text and picture sources to help them explain the spread of cholera in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The highest attainers made the links between town conditions and the disease well. The standard of written work is largely good. The higher attainers write well at length. Some written work, however, including some from higher attainers, contains spelling errors.

176 Most pupils taking GCSE have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. They explain successfully the reasons behind events. Pupils in Year 10, for example, explained well the reasons for the differences in education of boys and girls in Nazi Germany. Most pupils use sources very well to build up a picture of the past. Pupils in Year 11, for instance, investigating the role of General Haig at the battle of the Somme, made valid deductions about Haig's character from a portrait, accurately using terms such as 'proud', 'dignified' and 'air of authority' in their descriptions. An upper set in Year 11 evaluated very



well Haig's tactics at the battle of the Somme, and argued confidently their own viewpoint about Haig's reputation as the 'Butcher of the Somme'.

177 The quality of teaching is good overall, and is never less than satisfactory. The teaching of the GCSE groups is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they pass on effectively to their pupils. Lessons are usually planned well, and include a variety of teaching and learning approaches, including group and paired work, individual work and whole-class teaching. Effective group work helped pupils in Year 11 to deepen their understanding about what went wrong at the battle of the Somme. Some very good whole-class teaching led pupils in Year 9 through the idea of human rights and genocide as an introduction to their work on the Holocaust. Teachers use a range of resources well. Extracts from the film *Schindler's List* were used sensitively by a teacher and led to pupils in Year 9 understanding that not all people felt the same way about the Jews. Lessons proceed at a good pace, so that pupils make good progress.

178 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but do not always provide pupils with comments which tell them how to improve their work in the future. In a minority of lessons the teaching does not motivate or involve the pupils sufficiently. These lessons are based too much around pupils reading extracts from the textbook and answering a set of questions. This was especially evident with a group of lower attaining girls in Year 9. Many were interested in the topic of concentration camps, but the work set did not maintain their interest.

179 The vast majority of pupils have a very positive approach to their work. The very good relationships mean that pupils respond well to the demands their teachers put on them. They show interest, concentrate, work hard and behave well, and these are important contributory factors to their usually good progress in lessons. This is especially true of pupils taking GCSE. Boys and girls work well in their separate groups in Years 7 to 9, but they also work well together in mixed gender groups in Years 10 and 11. There is some poor behaviour among a very small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teachers invariably deal with this quickly and appropriately, but on occasions it disrupts the lesson and prevents teachers from teaching and other pupils from learning.

180 The good leadership and management of the subject create an ethos of hard work and challenge for both pupils and staff. The performance of the department has been carefully evaluated, and teaching is monitored well. The commitment of staff has contributed to a significant improvement in attainment at GCSE. The system for assessing pupils' work to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because the method does not always give an accurate assessment of the level the work has reached.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are above average by Year 9 and for those pupils who follow ICT courses at Year 11.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well organised and managed.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Better coverage in Years 10 and 11 for all pupils.

181 When pupils join the school in Year 7 they have had a wide range of experiences of ICT in their primary schools and reached different levels of attainment. Some can do more than is usually expected for their age, and some have picked up considerable skills, often supported by activities on computers at home. However, others have fairly rudimentary knowledge of ICT and overall pupils are at average levels of attainment at the start of their course in ICT. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 as a result of the well-planned work they follow and the quality of teaching. By Year 9 the great majority of them are at the levels expected for their age and many are above. Overall, standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Some pupils continue to study ICT in Years 10 and 11, following the GCSE course. These pupils do well, with the most able achieving high grades, and overall performance in ICT is above the national average. Pupils who do not take the GCSE course continue to meet ICT through other subjects, but the extent of this experience and the level of work they meet varies considerably. Because of the good start they received in Years 7 to 9 and the way their independence has been developed, pupils take the full advantage of these opportunities and overall they are generally at the expected level in ICT by Year 11. However, they would make more progress if they had a planned programme of work to follow in their other subjects.

183 Teaching in ICT is good and often very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers know the subject well and make lessons lively and interesting. Consequently pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. The extent of the programme in Years 7 to 9 means that several staff are involved who normally teach other subjects. They are well prepared for the work and supported successfully by the full-time ICT teachers. As a result their pupils make equally good progress. Teaching in the department places particular emphasis on developing pupils' self-confidence in ICT so that they are equipped to deal with new programs and new situations. This also has the effect of encouraging the pupils to enjoy the subject and contributes to their success.

184 Pupils have positive attitudes to ICT. They behave well in lessons and respond well to the teacher, listening well, following instructions when appropriate and also showing independence. The organisation of lessons often encourages pupils to work collaboratively, sharing ideas or discussing how an effect is achieved. They do this as a matter of course and lessons are often made more successful by the support pupils provide for each other.

185 The subject is led and managed well. The well-planned scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 helps the pupils to achieve good levels of attainment and supports the contributions that non-specialist teachers can make to the department. Procedures for assessment in Years 7 to 9 and for those pupils following the GCSE course are effective but for other pupils in Years 10 and 11 arrangements depend on individual subjects and are patchy. New equipment has been bought wisely and the school now has good resources for ICT, with specialist suites as well as computers in subject departments and in the library. The subject overall is stronger than at the time of the last inspection; it has improved well.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The leadership of the temporary subject co-ordinators is very good.
- Teachers generally control pupils well.
- Pupils have opportunities to study two languages.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of monitoring and support for newly qualified and graduate trainee teachers.
- The quality of teaching in the department.
- Procedures for assessment to ensure that work provides a good challenge for pupils.

186 Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that attainment is in line with that expected of pupils of the same age nationally. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results at A\*-C in French were above average. Results in German were in line with the average. Results at A\*-G and average points scores were average in both languages. Boys do less well than girls in examinations. Both French and German are among the poorer performing subjects in the school at GCSE.

187 Inspection evidence indicates that standards are average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Because of the level of unsatisfactory teaching, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Boys achieve less well than girls. There are no major differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subjects or across different levels of attainment. Because of deficiencies in teaching, the subject does not make the contribution to literacy development that would normally be expected. Pupils make good use of computers to produce work for display, for editing and refining work and for research through websites. The school has had difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. The head of department is absent on long-term sick leave. Staff turbulence has had an adverse effect on standards.

188 By the end of Year 9, pupils answer questions about such topics as the human body, going to the doctor, healthy eating and buying food and drinks. When given sufficiently good opportunities, the majority of pupils can listen to and understand the language being taught. Pupils' development of listening skills in the foreign language is often restricted because teachers speak too much English in lessons. In some, up to half the lesson is conducted in English and this severely restricts learning. This is an issue which was raised at the previous inspection and which has not been corrected. Pupils answer questions in the foreign language and try hard with pronunciation. Progress is often limited because teachers do not challenge pupils well enough to develop their language into longer conversations with a variety of language and changes of tense. Where teaching is at its best, the teacher makes clever use of question and answer sessions to encourage pupils to use and vary their spoken language. This was clearly seen, for example, in a Year 8 French lesson where pupils were discussing their daily routine. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly through textbooks and authentic texts to find the answers to questions. A majority of pupils are confident readers and often read aloud in class. In their written work a majority can write short passages from memory. When given opportunities, higher attaining pupils use present, past and future tenses in their writing by the end of Year 9.

189 By the end of Year 11, pupils build on their understanding of the topics covered in earlier years and add others such as going on holiday, tourist information, the local area and opinions about school. The work covered in Years 7 to 9 does not provide a strong base for Years 10 and 11, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless, where teaching is at its

best, the teacher provides a high level of challenge in both spoken and written work and pupils achieve well. This was clearly seen in a very good German lesson with a Year 11 group where neither teacher nor pupils spoke English for most of the time. Pupils produced good quality coursework that indicated the high expectations of the teacher and their very good response.

190 The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. However, there is good, or very good teaching in one third of the lessons seen. Analysis of pupils' work also provides strong evidence that pupils' attainment and achievement are unsatisfactory over their time in school. This is mainly because many lessons do not challenge pupils at a sufficiently high level to raise standards. The low level of the foreign language that is taught in many lessons makes this worse. The less experienced teachers and the graduate trainees are not sufficiently well monitored or supported by the senior management of the school to check that they are teaching at an appropriate level for the various groups of pupils. In addition, the three temporary subject co-ordinators have neither the time available nor the training to be able to check that work is challenging enough. Although most pupils behave well in lessons there is a minority, mainly in Years 10 and 11 that have unsatisfactory attitudes to work. In some lessons the teacher does not have sufficiently well-developed strategies to deal with this and time is wasted as a result.

191 Although the department has good data available to analyse GCSE results, assessment procedures overall are unsatisfactory. The previous report drew attention to the lack of use of National Curriculum levels to check and assess pupils' progress. That is still the case. As a result teachers cannot be sure that work is at an appropriate level for pupils and this is a contributory factor in unsatisfactory teaching. The school provides a good range of languages. All pupils have opportunities to study two languages and a number study both languages in Years 10 and 11. A substantial minority of pupils do not study a foreign language in Years 10 and 11 and these have not been formally disapplied from the National Curriculum. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. In most lessons pupils are taught right from wrong and that it is good manners to listen to others when they are speaking. Pupils show respect for one another by not being rude when others make mistakes. There is a strong social and cultural element in trips abroad and in lessons where pupils work together in pairs and groups. The three temporary subject co-ordinators have shown very good leadership in leading a team of hard-working teachers through a period of considerable difficulty. Taking into account the failure to address issues from the previous inspection, and the level of unsatisfactory teaching, the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous report.

## MUSIC

The quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Singing in Years 7 to 9 (including boys) and instrumental playing in Years 7 to 11.
- Standards in GCSE groups and the big improvement in results since the last inspection.
- High standards in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular ensembles.

### Areas for improvement

- To revise the Years 7 to 9 curriculum in order to:
  - give more opportunities for composing;
  - ensure that lessons are largely practical in nature;
  - give pupils more opportunities to appraise the music they hear.

192 At the end of Year 9, the work of the majority of pupils meets average standards. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in practical activities. Singing in Years 7 to 9 is good and Year 9 boys sing with enthusiasm and mostly secure pitch. Instrumental performing on tuned percussion is accurate and electric keyboard work is competent, using suitable fingering. Pupils are developing good understanding of conventional music notation. Listening skills are progressing well and pupils can talk about music analytically. The quality of written work is generally satisfactory but some is carelessly done. Insufficient evidence of composing was available during the inspection on which to make a judgement.

193 GCSE results in the last four years have been well above national averages, the girls doing particularly well. This is a big improvement on the last inspection. Group sizes have been relatively small for the size of the school but are expected to rise significantly next year. In lessons observed, pupils' work was generally above average in relation to course requirements. Their composing makes competent use of music technology, and their responses in listening work are perceptive and musically well informed. Standards in their performing are often high, benefiting from the very good instrumental teaching.

194 Overall standards in instrumental music are high and pupils were making very good progress in the lessons observed. This enables the work in the extensive programme of vocal and instrumental ensembles, which are expertly directed, to be of high quality.

195 The quality of teaching and learning is generally good and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Teaching in instrumental lessons observed was very good overall and sometimes excellent. Planning is mostly good, providing lively pace. Practical activities are challenging and engage pupils' interest. Composing activities for Year 10 and 11 pupils are very well structured, enabling pupils to work confidently and to good musical effect. Teachers' methods are usually good, but in a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 there was an over-emphasis on written tasks. Some of these were low-level and inappropriate. Teachers generally manage classes well. Good use is made of music technology support staff in GCSE classes. On the spot feedback to pupils as they work is helpful and the more formal end-of-module assessment is well organised although the current system is under review, having been rightly judged as too complex. Pupils' differing musical needs are well met. Those with special educational needs experience success in music and the musically gifted and talented are well provided for. Learning is usually good. Pupils acquire both musical skills and understanding well. The attitudes and motivation of most pupils are good. In two Year 7 to 9 classes there was a lack of engagement with tasks and in one of them behaviour was unsatisfactory.

196 The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unbalanced giving insufficient emphasis to composing. There is too much written work and not enough opportunities are given for pupils verbally to appraise music heard. There should be more systematic audio recording of pupils' work to aid assessment. Departmental leadership is good ensuring that the many staff work well together as a team. The running of the instrumental teaching programme is a separate responsibility and is excellently done. The new accommodation is good although the success of the department puts pressure on space. Resources, especially for music technology, are good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Extra-curricular activities are wide ranging and of very good quality.
- Assessment is good.
- Leadership and management are strong.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers' planning is not linked to the programmes of study in the National Curriculum.
- Lessons do not always consider the full ability range of pupils.
- The amount of time in Year 11 lessons is too short.
- Accommodation for theory lessons at GCSE is unsatisfactory.

197 The results of the GCSE examinations taken by pupils in 2002 were well above average and have been consistently high over the past four years. All pupils obtained at least a pass (G grade). Teachers' assessments of pupils by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average but this was not matched by the standards observed in lessons.

198 By the end of Year 9 standards vary in the different activities taught but overall they are average. They are above average in basketball in Year 8 where pupils have a good knowledge of the game and play it to an above average level. They understand the tactics and strategies of defence and attack and know when to use a zone defence or a man-to-man defence. Shooting for accuracy is less successful. In Year 9 pupils have an above average knowledge of the effect of exercise on the body. They know the different methods of training the body for fitness, especially strength, speed and stamina, and can relate the methods to a range of different sports. In Year 7 pupils swim confidently in three strokes, many pupils demonstrating good technique. When learning the butterfly stroke, some pupils lacked strength to develop the arm action sufficiently in the lesson. The contribution of the technician, who is a qualified swimming coach, was good. Standards were below average in gymnastics sets; a low ability group of pupils in Year 9 lacked knowledge of sequence work and demonstrated a lack of control in balances. Some pupils linked movements together but their understanding of space and change of direction were weak. At the other extreme some pupils in Year 9 perform at National Championship level.

199 By the end of Year 11 standards are average. In the GCSE course standards are consistently in line with expectations supported by above average standards in written work. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their personal studies and demonstrate research skills in their work. In basketball, pupils in Year 11 dribble with good control of the ball in a game and they know the rules of the game. They have a good awareness of space and understand the need to be free to receive a pass. In rugby standards are below average in Year 10 where pupils lack skill to pass and receive a ball accurately and show below average understanding of the game. Pupils in Year 10 studying the dance course at GCSE have had no experience of dance in the early years. Standards are below average as some pupils lack the ability to develop a motif in their choreography and show limited understanding of the dynamics of dance in performance. Their lack of concentration and general immature attitude to their work affect the quality of their work. In GCSE theory lessons pupils in Year 11 increased their knowledge of safety in sport when considering the role of risk assessment. They know that rules in games are to prevent injury and protect the individual and can identify activities which have a high risk to the participant, such as rock climbing and water sports.

200 The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school with examples of very good teaching. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory and this was due to a lack of effective management strategies by an unqualified teacher, of pupils whose behaviour and attitude were unsatisfactory. There was a lack of co-operation from these pupils, many of who did not take part in the lesson, and who were disruptive and showed no respect for the teacher. In the best lessons, planning is good and indicates clear learning objectives, but arrangements are not planned for the teaching of the full ability range. Pupils with a special educational need make good progress in most lessons. Teachers challenge pupils to improve, and relationships between teachers and their pupils are often very good. Pace of lessons is often brisk and teachers manage classes effectively. All teachers are specialist teachers and possess good subject knowledge but their awareness of the National Curriculum is in need of refreshment. The appointment of a technician and the two newly qualified teachers make a positive contribution to the overall effectiveness of the department. The marking of pupils' work at GCSE is regular but does not include grades for work to help pupils understand their progress in line with their predicted grades for the examination.

201 The attitudes of pupils are often very good but they vary throughout the school. They are very positive in the lower school where pupils arrive enthusiastically for lessons and enjoy being with their teachers. Many are prepared to work hard and listen intently to instructions. Most co-operate well with a partner and in a group. They are less positive in Year 10 where pupils are often immature, particularly on the GCSE course. Pupils show little evidence of being able to take responsibility in their work and rely heavily on their teachers for guidance. In a theory lesson covering mental preparation and motivation in sport, pupils arrived at the lesson ill prepared, without the necessary text books. Pupils' responses in Year 11 are good.

202 The teacher/pupils ratio for swimming has improved since the last inspection and satisfies the recommended safety requirements. Accommodation is also in place for the administration of the department, which now complements the high standard that exists throughout the school. The school has obtained the Sportsmark award for the quality of its work. The curriculum is broad and balanced but dance is taught at GCSE only and is part of the expressive arts department. Some classes are taught by more than one teacher for a unit and this has an unsatisfactory effect on continuity and assessment at the end of the key stage. Assessment throughout the school is good and recognises pupils' achievements by the awarding of colours. The Sports' Awards evening is successful in promoting excellence.

203 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has clear skills of teaching and management. He supports the department well but opportunities for the monitoring of teaching are curtailed by a lack of delegated time. There are high expectations of pupils and the school provides a high quality extra-curricular programme for its pupils before, during and after school. School teams are successful at regional and national level – the under 14 gymnastics team are English champions – and a high proportion of pupils have achieved individual success at national level in a range of sports. This is testimony to the commitment of all teachers in the department. Accommodation overall is very good, although that for theory lessons for the GCSE course is scattered around the school, and this is unsatisfactory. There are extensive playing fields but there is poor drainage, which often results in a lack of use. This has a detrimental effect on the continuity and progress that pupils are able to make in their lessons.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Overall, the provision for religious education is **very good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching.
- Monitoring and assessment.
- Support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The provision and use of ICT.
- The size and location of accommodation.

204 Religious education is taught as part of the citizenship programme in Years 7 to 11. This innovative approach ensures that sufficient time is spent on religious education, personal, social and health education and other aspects of citizenship to meet statutory requirements.

205 Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with the expectations of the Essex Agreed Syllabus ('Open World') for religious education for 14 year olds and is often exceeded. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in the provision for religious education at Year 9 and at Year 11 where religious education (short course) is now offered to all pupils. Religious education (long course) is offered as an extra-curricular activity at lunchtimes and is growing in popularity, with 12 pupils in Year 11 and 30 in Year 10 taking the course. Around three quarters of pupils took the short course examination in 2002 but all pupils received an annual report on their progress in the subject. In 2002, the attainment for the first year of the short course was well above average for grades A\*-C and above the average for grades A\*-G. Results in the optional long course dipped in 2001 but in grades A\*-C attainment has mostly remained well above the average and at grades A\*-G attainment is consistently above average. The citizenship course also enables all pupils to commence their short course GCSE religious education in the summer term of Year 9.

206 Teacher assessments are now carried out in Year 9 and are beginning to influence planning for the subject. Attainment by more than half of 14 years olds is currently above average. Pupils keep a record of achievement, results and progress. In Year 7, girls show a good range of work helped by imaginative graphics and an understanding of family history and a topic on 'Who am I?' Year 8 boys are able to compare what makes them happy or sad, to reflect and question what motivates people and how this helps them think and learn for themselves. In this Year 8 lesson, high attaining pupils make the connection with Buddhism before the teacher has referred to it. In Year 9, pupils' work has personal reflections on ethical stances, for example on contraception. They understand that life, as part of creation, is regarded in a variety of ways in different faiths, teachings and lifestyles. Although taught separately, boys and girls perform more evenly than in Years 7 and 8. Support for literacy is good, particularly for average and lower attaining pupils.

207 Pupils build effectively on the knowledge, skills and understanding gained in Years 7 to 9. The Essex Agreed Syllabus requires understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic values of religious education in 'learning about religion' and the recommended third of the time is allocated for school-based aspects, for example the study of the sanctity of life or wealth and poverty. Pupils are challenged by the difference between 'miracle' and 'remarkable' and topics such as reincarnation and 'What sort of God?' exists. They learn that restraining the views of individuals leaves no room for belief. Year 11 pupils give very informed comments on human relationships, peace and justice. References are made to the film *Kes*, the local community police officer's visits and to the law of the Old Testament, which is difficult for some to grasp. Contemporary moral issues are investigated but show that some pupils do



not think outside their own culture and situation, for example in the case of the illegality of racism in the workplace.

208 Pupils' attitudes are good overall. Progress is very good in Year 9 where most pupils have gained self-discipline, do not suffer from excesses of peer pressure and think ahead. This makes them well suited to begin the short course GCSE. In Years 10 and 11 they behave well, except in the case of a few underachieving boys and a small number of girls who constantly interrupt the teacher. Pupils leave lessons confident that they have explored difficult and embarrassing personal and health issues and are now better-informed citizens.

209 Teaching is good or very good in all lessons. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject and show great confidence in dealing with assertive pupils in discussion. Lessons are structured well when aims and expectations are shared with pupils when a review takes place, and sufficient time is allowed for thought and discussion in smaller groups. Very good teaching occurs when the staff are non-confrontational, and have a crisp and open approach to pupils, who are regarded as individuals. Support for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is planned into the scheme of work and is always effective. Opportunities for a more challenging search for multi-cultural and universal values are sometimes missed but skills of observation, interpretation, reflection, enquiry and empathy are in line with the locally agreed syllabus and appear in planning. Monitoring is a strength of the department with a Shenfield devised system of assessment now in place.

210 Leadership and management in religious education are very good, improving and supported strongly through the citizenship team. There are three qualified teachers of religious education and the head of department works closely with colleagues who provide good support for new and inexperienced teachers. Priorities are identified in the development plan and, although there is an indication of the place for ICT, computers are almost completely missing from research, including the Internet and CD-ROMs, except in the sixth form. Pupils complete some work using ICT at home but there are problems booking rooms and finding computers that work in school. Accommodation is adequate but sometimes inconveniently located around the school. Currently four teachers use three rooms.

211 Since the last inspection the department has provided a consistent approach to the locally agreed syllabus. Although the school website provides good information about the department, parents and some faith communities are not involved as much as expected. Expansion of the courses available at Year 11 and in the sixth form is a strength on which the department intends to build. There is a strong commitment to succeed and a fundamental desire to improve standards of all pupils in the school.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, which is 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
Chemistry	1	100	43	0	5	1.0	0.8
Physics	1	100	52	0	4	2.0	0.9
Computer studies	2	50	74	0	13	0.5	1.8
Geography	1	100	74	0	6	1.0	1.2
General studies	32	81	77	6	19	1.8	1.9

### ***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	7	57	87	29	43	3.4	5.8
Chemistry	2	50	90	0	43	1.0	5.9
Design and technology	3	67	91	0	30	3.3	5.4
Graphical applications	9	56	88	11	22	3.1	4.7
Business studies	10	100	92	30	32	6.2	5.5
Computer studies	7	100	86	29	23	5.7	4.6
Sports studies	8	100	92	13	25	5.5	5.1
Art and design	8	100	96	50	46	6.0	6.6
Music	3	100	93	0	35	4.7	5.7
Geography	8	100	92	25	38	5.0	5.7
History	5	80	88	0	35	3.6	5.5
Sociology	20	90	86	10	35	4.5	5.3
English literature	24	100	95	29	37	5.8	5.9
Communication studies	10	50	93	10	31	3.0	5.5
French	2	100	89	100	38	8.0	5.6
German	3	100	91	67	40	7.3	5.8
General studies	12	92	85	17	30	4.8	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, chemistry and physics. In addition, biology was sampled. In recent years, numbers taking biology have been low. In 2002, six students took A-level, obtaining results above the national average. In 2001, no students were entered. At present, six students are taking A-level and 13 taking AS-level. These classes were observed and, in both, teaching and progress were satisfactory.

#### Mathematics

Overall, the provision for mathematics is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Students attain standards at least as good as, and often better than, those that they could expect from their GCSE results.
- Teaching is always good and often better.
- There is a very good system to inform students of the progress they are making.

#### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, students are not sufficiently encouraged to take charge of their own learning.
- The library does not have enough books to support students.

212 Until recently, only a small, and dwindling, number of students chose to study mathematics in the sixth form. The new head of department has taken good steps to reverse this decline. He has introduced a new course, which is well suited to the students' needs and they speak highly of the course. He has provided more information about mathematics to pupils in Year 11 so that they can make a more informed choice. Materials are now provided to help students prepare for the course in the summer before they enter Year 12. There are more than twice as many students taking the subject in Year 12, than in Year 13, showing the benefit from these changes. Early indications show that this growth in numbers will continue. In Year 12, 'drop-out' from the course, to date, is minimal. In Year 12, there are almost as many female as male students. That had not been the case previously.

213 In 2001, the last year for which national data is available, A-level results were below the national average. Students did less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. The school's results increased significantly in 2002. As only small numbers of students took the examination, it is not possible to comment on any difference in results by gender.

214 Standards of work seen during the inspection were above the national average. Students in Year 13 can competently integrate a wide range of functions and use statistical techniques well to test hypotheses. Students in Year 12 are taking the new course and they too are developing a good understanding of how to carry out statistical tests. They are learning to apply their mathematical thinking in order to structure complex commercial and industrial processes.

215 Another innovation of the new head of department has been the introduction of a system to identify how well students are doing. They take tests regularly and the results relate to A-level grades. Students very much appreciate this high quality information. For example, soon after starting a new topic, they can see that they are already at the level of gaining a grade. Teachers use this information well to make sure students achieve what they

should. Currently, every student is achieving at least as well as they could expect based upon their GCSE result. Many are doing better than this.

216 All teaching is good and half of the lessons seen were very good. This good teaching ensures that students learn well. The best teaching makes it very clear what students should achieve. This was seen to very good effect when a teacher told Year 12 students than he expected them to be able to test a hypothesis without any help by the end of the lesson. This was a challenging target because the students were fairly new to the topic. The students rose to this challenge and were successful. In the best lessons, students test out their own ideas. Another Year 12 group thoroughly enjoyed planning the complete production of a CD so that all processes were completed on time. In that lesson, students spoke with great satisfaction of how the course was more than meeting their expectations.

217 Students' learning is at its best when they develop their own ideas and take charge of their own learning. Students respond most maturely to such opportunities. In some lessons, these opportunities are overlooked and the teacher does too much for the students. In such lessons, the students master the skills but their understanding can be less. Students are fully capable of independently making good quality notes but not all teachers ask them to, preferring to provide notes themselves. Again, the opportunity to develop vital independence is lost.

218 Good teaching explores the implications of the work with students. One example was when Year 13 students considered the way in which the media present statistics. Teachers provide students with very helpful and detailed comments when work is marked. This explains to students what they have achieved, any point of error and the next steps for their learning. This is one key reason why students learn well.

219 Students have very good attitudes to their work. They respond well to challenges and do not give up when they find the work more difficult. They readily seek help from their teachers if they have any uncertainty. They work at a good rate and are well motivated. Students respond well when asked to research a topic for the next lesson. They use the Internet as a source of information. However, the library does not currently have books suitable for the student wishing to explore the subject more widely than the examination syllabus. This is important not only for research but to encourage students to continue with the study of mathematics or its applications after completing the A-level course. The library has good information on university courses in mathematics.

220 Leadership and management of sixth form mathematics are good for the reasons given above. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection because standards are rising and numbers increasing.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Marking is of a good standard that supports students learning.
- Assessment is helping teachers and students focus on their learning needs.
- The Salter chemistry course provides a very good curriculum that meets the needs of students studying advanced level chemistry.

### Areas for improvement

- The department's own scheme of work.
- Systems to ensure that all students have an appropriate set of course notes.
- Teaching, so that it is all of the highest quality.
- Promote the course in order to improve recruitment.

221 The GCE A-level examination results in 2002 were just above the national average and met predictions based on students' GCSE grades overall. In 2002, results in AS-level examinations were in line with the national average, but were below the students' predicted grades. Numbers of students studying the course have been fairly small, but with 13 well-qualified students currently in Year 12 there has been an improvement. Retention rates between Years 12 and 13 have tended to be good with only one student in each of the last two years choosing not to continue their studies beyond the AS-level examination.

222 The standards of work of current students in Year 13 are in line with the level expected from their GCSE performance. For example, in one lesson, students demonstrated that they are developing the appropriate level of understanding when conducting a practical investigation into the buffering effect of soil and are beginning to understand the part that different ion concentrations play in this. Careful guidance from the teacher meant that the ideas and concepts were successfully understood. In another lesson on colour chemistry, although students demonstrated appropriate practical skills, they were slow to understand the different functions of parts of the structure of an azo dye. However the teacher is aware of gaps in the students' understanding and is offering appropriate support.

223 Similarly, students in Year 12 are currently working at a level close to national averages. For example, in a study of the atmosphere, a range of attainment was demonstrated, with a small number of students still unsure of the gases present in the atmosphere, whilst others had a clear understanding of why free radicals are present in the atmosphere, how they react with the ozone layer, and the implications of this. These students are also developing good practical skills as was seen in a lesson to calculate the concentration of acid rain using a titration. The teacher's careful instructions on the required practical techniques and reasons why this level of accuracy was necessary were very effective and ensured that all the students made very good progress in this lesson.

224 A range of teaching was seen with the quality ranging from satisfactory to very good; overall teaching was judged as good. One particular strength is in the planning and structure of the lessons. Teachers deliver clear explanations that are testament to their very good subject knowledge. Teaching features regular 'recaps' on prior learning before rapidly building on this existing knowledge and understanding. Sheets containing learning outcomes for each topic are available, and along with good diagnostic marking, these allow the students to understand clearly how their learning is progressing, how they might improve their

understanding and what will be studied next. All these elements plus a crisp pace of delivery mean that teaching is allowing students to make good progress in their learning. Where teaching was less successful, the activities were delivered too swiftly to allow students the opportunity to consolidate their learning.

225 Three teachers deliver the AS and A2 chemistry courses, two teachers per group. Two of the teachers are very experienced. The other is new to this course and is being well supported by the teacher in charge of chemistry who provides regular discussion and feedback to ensure that improvements are made and teachers' development is rapid.

226 Students are very committed to their chemistry courses. They enjoy the courses and speak confidently and knowledgeably about how well they are doing. They are motivated and keen to make progress, and show genuine interest in the material being taught. They listen well and try hard to apply their learning. There are good interactions between teachers and students, which promotes their learning. Only when teaching is less engaging does the concentration of a few wane.

227 Chemistry teachers have a very good knowledge of individual students' strengths and development needs through both formal and informal assessment strategies. The progress of individuals is tracked and used to inform lesson planning. Day-to-day marking of students' work is good. It is focused on questions and problems set by their teachers. It is typified by clear indications of where students have been successful and the features that have contributed to that success, as well as highlighting students' mistakes and providing written corrective guidance. Scrutiny of students' course notes indicated that the detail and quality are not consistent. Since students are reliant on these notes during preparation for external examinations it is important that teachers develop systems to allow them to monitor the quality of these notes and provide further guidance to students when necessary.

228 The Salters chemistry course fully meets the needs of the students. It is set in real practical contexts with theory brought in as appropriate to allow students to understand better the complexities of the context. The majority of students report that this approach is a strength of the syllabus and adds to their enjoyment of it. The curriculum is supported by good textbooks, worksheets, and access to a website where students can obtain study guidance materials. Further development of the scheme of work is needed to customize the document used at present so that it matches the style of other schemes in the science department and provides considered teaching guidance that is relevant to the resources available in this school.

229 The chemistry area is firmly sited within the science department and draws strength from the systems and support available from this larger department. For example, the chemistry technician is currently absent, but appropriate technical support has been made available. The resourcing of chemistry is adequate and funding is allocated on a needs basis from the science budget. Improvement planning for chemistry is also incorporated in the whole department development planning system. The teacher in charge of chemistry is new to the school but is already having a positive impact on the work in chemistry. Informal monitoring of the subject area means he is well informed about the progress of the courses and has well thought-out plans for future developments. Overall leadership and management of chemistry are good.

230 Since the school's last inspection, standards in chemistry have been maintained but there have been fluctuations year on year. The quality of teaching has improved and student numbers have shown some increase. The introduction of a vocational post-16 course has been considered and, although there is interest in offering such a course to make post-16

chemistry more inclusive, at the present time there are insufficient numbers of interested candidates. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- The most recent results show good achievement by students, including the most able.
- Technical support is very good.
- Numbers choosing to take AS-level are rising.

### Areas for improvement

- Learning opportunities lack variety and do not inspire interest and long-term commitment in all students.
- Too many students start the AS-level course but do not continue on to A-level.

231 In 2002, six students took A-level, gaining results that were above the national averages. All passed and half obtained higher (A or B) grades. When results are compared to these same students' performance at GCSE, they show good achievement, with almost all matching or exceeding expectations. Boys and girls share this good achievement. In 2001, no students took A-level.

232 Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that larger numbers of students in both Year 12 and 13 are matching the progress evident in 2002. Year 12 students, studying astrophysics, derived the formula for 'flux' from that for 'luminosity' and used it to calculate the distance between a star and the earth. In Year 13, students independently researching topics reported their findings to the whole class. The presentation observed, given by one male and one female student, was on the theory and applications of electron guns. Their work was of a very high standard, based on effective learning and presented with admirable confidence. Students' files contain appropriate amounts of work set at a good standard, but not always very well organised.

233 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All lessons are carefully planned and meet the requirements of the syllabus. Experimental work is very well resourced. Each student is provided with individual sets of high quality apparatus. The actual practical work observed was, however, somewhat undemanding. Students were required to follow precise instructions that required some form of measurement and then use a given formula to calculate an answer. This work, which is practice for a future examination, made little demand on the students' knowledge and understanding of the underlying theory and allowed no room for independent decision making. The mechanical nature of the tasks and the teacher's unfamiliarity with the work resulted in somewhat sterile learning opportunities. To the students' credit, they all worked carefully with a very mature attitude. Students' work is accurately assessed and they are given good guidance on what they need to do to improve their performance.

234 At present there are seven students in Year 13 and 16 in Year 12. The number of girls is low, one taking A-level and four in the AS group. In recent years, the numbers carrying on from AS to A-level have been disappointing, as in September 2000 when none chose to continue. Partly because of the type of course taken, the teaching is often didactic and lacking in variety, resulting in passive learning rather than active involvement by students. This approach is failing to engender long-term commitment in many students and resulting in too many failing to complete the course.

235 The day-to-day organisation of the subject is good. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The most recent results are an improvement over the standards evident at the last inspection. Future improvement is dependent on management succeeding in raising the quality of learning opportunities and achieving a stable team of specialist teachers.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology.

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience.
- The quality of the teaching.

#### **Area for improvement**

- The numbers taking the examination in textiles.

236 The department offers courses at AS and A-level in graphics with materials, resistant materials and textiles. The numbers taking courses in product design are appropriate and the option is popular in Year 12 and Year 13. There are low numbers in the textiles option and in resistant materials. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination. There were only three entries at A-level in 2001. The number of entries is low.

237 The standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13. Students are achieving good standards in relation to predictions based on GCSE results when they came into Year 12. Students make good use of their research and investigation skills and their project folders show attention to detail in the presentation of detail. In product design lessons students demonstrate good levels of practical skills and can use tools, equipment and processes with confidence. Students produce good design folders and practical work to a higher specification.

238 Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are satisfactory for this stage in the AS course. This represents satisfactory achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were average for students taking AS. Students can produce practical work of good quality using different techniques and skills, and there is good use of creativity and imagination when developing their designs. They have a good level of knowledge and understanding of manufacturing processes.

239 Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have a good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and the tasks set. The lessons provide opportunities for students to practice what had been discussed and their skills and techniques improve as the lessons progress. In the lessons, students had opportunities to carry out detailed research, working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. The teacher drew together their ideas and provided explanations. Students responded confidently to the activities. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their



learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it. Their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.

240 Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In the practical lessons seen, pupils learnt skills and techniques of cutting, shaping, machining and joining different materials and fabrics. Their skills improved through practice. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. Good use is made of computer-aided design and manufacture in the development of their ideas. In the lessons time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion; this was seen in a lesson where they investigated the use and application of different manufacturing processes.

241 The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being very well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflects the course requirement and determines the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance through review, evaluation and assessment are well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.

242 The standard of students' work seen meets the demands of the course requirements. In the sessions observed, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In the lesson seen students drew well on their knowledge of design and meeting the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge well and apply it effectively.

## **BUSINESS**

## Business

243 The focus was on business studies. The business studies and vocational education department offers a range of courses at AS and A2 level in economics, law and business studies. Plans exist to extend this to include accounting. The school's plans to extend the range of vocational courses has met with a disappointing response, with a very small number of students taking GNVQ Intermediate courses in business studies and in leisure and recreation. Economics was sampled and teaching and learning were very good in the lesson seen. Take-up for the economics course is variable, so in some years the course does not run. One such year was 2001. Very few students took A-level in 2000 but results were good. They had been average prior to that.

Provision for business studies in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Take-up of business studies AS and A2 level courses is good.
- The range of the school's offer of vocational courses is better than at the last inspection.
- Some good teaching, especially of Year 13, offers opportunities for wider experience beyond examination-based objectives.
- Most students' attitudes are good and they work well together in groups when they have the opportunity.
- The availability of ICT in the department is better than at the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Students do not use ICT regularly enough in their work.
- Students' links with organisations, businesses and commerce are few and other enrichment opportunities such as Young Enterprise are not offered.
- Take-up of the school's provision of vocational courses in business studies is low.
- Some GNVQ students' frequent absence and late arrival at lessons detract from their achievement.

244 The school provides AS and A2 level business studies courses in Years 12 and 13 respectively and a GNVQ Intermediate business studies course in Year 12. As in the main school, more boys than girls choose the courses. A-level results in 2001 were just above average but they were well below average in 2000. Numbers in 2002 were small so comparisons are statistically insignificant, but A and B grades were above average. A large number of students took AS-level in 2002 with results distributed averagely across the whole range of attainment. Students usually do well in business studies, judged against their previous performance. There were no GNVQ students in the last year, but some from the previous year group have gone on to study AS and A2 level and have achieved well.

245 Students' attainment when they enter sixth form courses is average. Very small numbers have entered the GNVQ courses, including very low attaining students, for whom special support has been arranged. These students are taught together with another vocational course, with teaching from the geography, ICT and business studies departments. Attainment on this course is average, although some are not achieving as well as they might because of problems with their attendance.

246 The AS-level and A2 level business studies courses are larger, with two groups in each year. Year 12 AS-level groups currently contain the full range of attainment expected. The two Year 13 A2 groups differ in attainment, but again include the full range, with one group higher than the other. Higher attaining students can make the expected links between various aspects such as marketing, finance and human resources management. For

example, in a Year 12 class a higher attaining student could offer ideas about how to measure productivity with consideration to a variety of these elements, but lower attaining students found this very difficult. More opportunities to place business studies theory in the context of outside organisations would greatly assist middle and lower attaining students with these skills. Achievement varies, with some students currently under-performing against predictions and some doing well. Competence varies between students' performance in different units of coursework, but on balance, current achievement is in line with individuals' potential overall. As is the case with boys lower in the school, sixth form boys admit to working harder later in their courses and are therefore likely to achieve better in examinations than some are doing currently.

247 Teaching is satisfactory. All business studies staff teach the sixth form and some good lessons were seen, especially in Year 13. Staffing changes have interrupted the continuity of students' learning, but all current staff have good relationships with them and lessons are often characterised by good humour. Students' unpunctuality often spoils the start of lessons and the rooms, for example in science laboratories, do not provide an appropriate environment for the work planned. Group work on a case study about human resources management, for example, although managed pragmatically, was made more difficult because students were perched at science benches. When such group work allows for students to interact with others, learning is often good. In a good Year 13 lesson about company accounts, for example, students worked in similar ability groups, then in mixed ability groups to combine their knowledge, and learning was good. Higher attaining students are stretched, for example in their understanding of the implications of a large 'extraordinary item' in the accounts, while lower attaining students can support each other in doing their financial calculations. These lessons offer students wider opportunities than simply examination-targeted study. Where teaching is satisfactory, these wider opportunities are missing. ICT is used too little. The department now has more computers than at the last inspection. Staff training in ICT is planned, but teachers have not kept pace with the applications commonly found in business studies teaching.

248 Department management is satisfactory. Recruitment into the vocational courses offered has been disappointing for the department and for the school. Both experienced teachers have other whole-school and faculty responsibility, one currently involved in the specialist college bid, but the lack of co-operation over monitoring and planning mentioned in the last report is not evident now. Although business studies students have recently been on an educational visit to Disneyland Paris and have visited one local company, the department's links with businesses and commerce are very limited. More enrichment opportunities such as Young Enterprise would greatly enhance students' quality of learning and help to contextualise the curriculum. There were few references to the sixth form in the last report, but improvement has been satisfactory.

## **Information and communication technology (ICT)**

The focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology. The school also teaches media studies within the ICT facility but this is not a part of the curriculum area as defined by the inspection framework and was not inspected.

Overall, the provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good
- The AVCE IT course is well structured and matches the needs and aspirations of the students
- There are good relationships between staff and students

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Providing additional non-examination courses in the sixth form and computer studies for higher attaining students
- The small number of female students taking information communication technology.

249 Numbers in A-level ICT have been too small to make valid statistical comparisons and, although group sizes were small, Grades A-E were consistently above average and A or B grades had begun to fall. Standards in the sixth form are now well above national averages in AVCE IT. Using national AVCE data from 2001, comparison of Year 13 students' grades from three of the six units already predict above average outcome. Most of these students have achieved GCSE ICT grades A\*-C although a minority were accepted in the sixth form with a lower grade. Recent work seen during the inspection indicates further improvement and the department is right to be confident about the predictions for numbers attaining A or B grades in 2003 as above the national average. Taking into account the value-added information prior to the start of the course, this represents good achievement for the lower attaining students and satisfactory attainment for higher attaining students.

250 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and often very good. Lessons are very well planned and teachers are well organised. This is mainly due to the good match of the course to the needs of the students. Students are informed about their progress and detailed grading is recorded against national standards for each student. In Year 12 students are committed to the principle of ICT serving other organisations and provide robust answers to questions about the nature of the AVCE course. They examine pyramidal and flat structures of organisations using the school structure as an example. They are able to see the next steps in the process of designing and using an embedded object. Some students find that modelling the graphical outline is difficult because they have not established exactly who the end user is. Literacy is supported by the use of abbreviations, reading aloud to the group, taking notes and drawing up graphical interfaces. An imaginative approach using one of the students as teacher and presenter raised the humour level and was very effective. Using the school website as a model also fits in well with the individual needs of students who have chosen a unit on website design as part of their course. Prior work on websites has left some students unsure about the use of Internet browsers. Students are experienced in the use of databases and presentation software and are now studying the advanced use of spreadsheets. The network server shows that students less frequently use graphic design and desktop publishing. Good contributions are made to students' progress in ICT in geography, religious studies, business education and music and there is good evidence of spreadsheets and the use of graphical objects in word processing in displays around the school. Physical education is using a wrist-mounted wireless computer interface to record performance data.

251 In Year 13, students make significant progress in lessons when investigating the human and computer interface because of good teaching jointly by the trainee and class

teacher. The trainee has excellent subject knowledge and brings considerable experience to the psychological and memory theory aspects of this area. This in turn raises the expectations of the group who respond individually with perceptive observations on the use of colour on screen and types of language expected in some parts of the world. For example, students appreciate that the colour red is used to show good luck instead of white, which is unlucky in some Asiatic countries. A high attaining student used ICT in other subjects and confidently discussed the use of presentation and spreadsheet work in a mini-portfolio for AVCE in redesigning a poor interactive presentation. The new design proposal required is challenging and requires some decomposition of the original process used. A low attaining disaffected student admitted that ICT will have limited use for him in the world of work. After a long absence he was quickly brought up to speed, helped by another student. This shows that a good grounding in basic skills has been effective in the first year of the course. Students refer to the effectiveness of communicating with their teachers using e-mail. Most students develop adequate skills in numeracy to enable them to deal with spreadsheets and concepts of magic numbers and number theory.

252 Management of the subject is very good and integrated with the work of the main school. One of the teachers is about to take over the work of ICT in the sixth form, working in partnership with teachers for Years 7 to 11. The AVCE course is now well established and well positioned for extension to the double award. Teachers work very well together and future plans for the department include a more appropriate preparation for some students on entry to the sixth form. This may include other vocational options and non-examination courses. Good monitoring of the students and teachers now takes place and this is having a positive impact on standards. The development plan is detailed and targets are being met. Expenditure on ICT for the school is well above the national average but resources need updating to provide for all students. The new library and sixth form study areas provide very good opportunities for students to research using the Internet although some facilities are not yet installed and the school is growing in size. A parental agreement for the use of networked resources including the Internet and other sources is under consideration by the department. A good feeling and culture for ICT exists in the sixth form and it is ready to move forward rapidly.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus of the inspection was physical education.

## Physical education

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

### Strengths

- Results on the A-level course are above average.
- Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
- Excellent attitudes of students and very good relationships between teachers and their students promote very good learning.
- An enrichment programme is available for students. The Community Sports Leaders Award is successful in Year 12.

### Areas for improvement

- Marking of students' work should include comments for improvement and grades to support progress.
- Accommodation for theory lessons is unsatisfactory.

253 Results in the A-level examinations in 2002 were above average and have been so over the past three years. Half of the students gained an A or B grade.

254 During the inspection students produced written and theory work of above average standard in most lessons. They take pride in their work and their individual studies projects include a range of word processing skills to enhance their presentation. They demonstrate evidence of research skills in individual fitness programmes and interpret data through graphs and calculations. Students use a wide range of vocabulary relevant to their course and speak enthusiastically about all aspects of their work. Their attitudes are excellent; they are confident to be involved in discussion, work collaboratively in groups and form very good relationships with their teachers.

255 In Year 12 students discuss the theories of Pavlov and Skinner when comparing classical and operant conditioning. They discuss how rewards and response to punishment can help to motivate performers in sport. Students studying the contemporary aspects of sport learned that although the colonisation of some societies influenced their sport, some ethnic and tribal aspects remained, such as the Haka war dance in Samoan and Maori culture. They know that some present-day traditional sports take place on festival days in England and Scotland and encourage tourism, for example Highland Games. When tracing the history of physical education through the last century, students in Year 13 compared the syllabuses of 1902 and 1904 appreciating the military nature of activity and the physical training aspect resulting from Britain's poor performance in the Boer War. Role-play was used effectively in groups so that students could appreciate the formal nature of the training.

256 The quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to excellent. Teachers have a very good grasp of the topics taught and students speak highly of the quality of teaching and their respect for their teachers. Teachers have high expectations and they share learning objectives with students in their planning, which is thorough. Appropriate use is made of the expertise of teachers and the newly qualified teacher makes a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching. There is an enrichment programme of recreation for students, which is compulsory for students in Year 12. The Community Sports Leaders Award continues to thrive and provide opportunities for students to take responsibility. They demonstrate leadership skills and improve their organisational ability. Their work in primary schools has received commendation in planning and managing swimming galas and sports days.

257 Students have a good grasp of how they are progressing but marking of their work lacks grades so that they can chart their progress through the course. They work independently and take their homework seriously and their effort and concentration typify the very good learning.

258 Leadership and management are very good and teachers work well together. The accommodation for theoretical lessons varies but is unsatisfactory overall. Students are taught in a variety of rooms and equipment has to be transported around the school.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not teach any subjects in this area.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on music and music technology.

### Music

The focus of the inspection was on both music and music technology courses. They are taught concurrently and so are reported on together within the one section.

The quality of provision in them is **good** and is greatly enhanced by the high quality of the instrumental music support.

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching.
- Provision for the gifted and talented, especially in the instrumental teaching programme. The commitment of the students to their musical education.
- Departmental leadership.
- Resources for music technology.

### Areas for improvement

- Bring AS and A2 examination results up to national averages.
- Improve learning by making more suitable arrangements for the teaching of the two discrete courses.
- Increase group sizes (as is anticipated will happen).
- Ensure that students' role in lessons is as active as possible.
- Clarify the role of music technology support staff in class lessons.

259 A-level music and music technology are taught to combined groups. Lessons are either designed to be appropriate for both courses, where there are common elements in the syllabus, or one group receives direct teaching whilst the other group's members work on individual projects, sometimes with teaching support. The introduction of the music technology course has led to a significantly increased take-up for A-level music. The drop in take-up for the current Year 12 is a knock-on effect of the small GCSE group in Year 11 in the preceding year. There is no discernable gender pattern to the way students select their course and some have elected to study both. Retention rates are good.

260 Results were somewhat below national averages from 1998 to 2001, but group sizes have been too small for viable comparison to be made. All candidates gained at least a grade

E pass. Given the combined grouping and the size of the present Year 12 cohort it is not possible to detect trends. Future take-up is expected to reflect that for GCSE where numbers are rising. The standard of work seen in lessons meets expectations for both courses. The achievement of the gifted and talented performers in Year 12 music is very good. Year 13 students work well at their individual levels of accomplishment and their theoretical knowledge is developing well. Students working unsupported were observed experiencing some difficulties completing a Bach chorale harmonisation. Music technology students in both years use equipment and computer programs with confidence and thorough understanding. The behaviour of the students is impeccable and they show great commitment to the subject. They use every opportunity to practise and continue their technology work during free periods, breaks and lunchtimes and a few even assist the teaching staff in directing younger pupils' ensembles.

261 The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and the instrumental teaching is very good. Teacher's planning is good. A carefully structured approach to composing enables students to develop their individual ideas successfully within a clear framework. Where possible, lessons cover the needs of both courses as, for example, in a lesson on film music where an *Inspector Morse* video was studied to determine the very subtle changes in the background music. Pace and expectations in lessons are usually good but in some aural analysis lessons the students' role is too passive which limits learning. Support staff are used effectively. The instrumental music teachers make a significant contribution to teaching and learning. The music technology support is targeted mainly at individual students where it is very effective. When that support is for the whole class the teacher's role is occasionally unclear. The teaching meets the needs of the whole range of ability well except where the combined course arrangement leaves students unsupported and needing help. This reduces learning. Students are enabled to develop well their knowledge of musical styles and their understanding of how musical effects are created. On the spot feedback to them as they work is accurate and supportive. In most lessons, students are encouraged to contribute well to discussions in lessons but in the Year 13 group some musically or technically less able are reluctant to participate. The instrumental teaching has a very good balance between technique and musicality and a Year 13 lesson devoted to preparation for the performance examination showed the great care and expertise the instrumental teaching staff bring to their rewarding job.

262 The joint teaching arrangement for A-level music and music technology is not ideal. In Year 12 where the AS group is small this does not necessarily disadvantage students' learning although the one music technology student often has to work alone. In the larger Year 13, A2 group students do not always receive the support they need because of this arrangement. As take-up for the two courses increases the school will have to consider separate teaching provision for them. The love and enthusiasm that many sixth formers show for music have a spiritual dimension, and the involvement of those working with younger pupils strongly benefits their social education. Assessment procedures are good and useful comparative analysis is made of examination data which informs teaching and learning. The subject is well led by the head of department and the close teamwork he engenders strongly supports the quality of teaching and learning. He has considerable expertise in the field of music technology and is well supported by the part-time technology specialist. The requirements of the more traditional music course are well met by the teaching staff.

263 Resources for both courses are good and those for music technology are extensive although they currently lack a hard disk recording facility.

264 Comparison with the last inspection must be limited as there was then no music technology course running. A-level results, which were below average then, have yet to



improve, but the teaching is now more challenging. The analysis of set works, criticised in the last report, has improved.

## HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, history and psychology. Religious studies (philosophy and ethics) was sampled. The lesson was taught well and students made good progress.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The experienced teachers work well as a team.
- Teachers are willing to take on and develop new ideas.
- Teachers use ICT very effectively to help students learn.

#### Area for improvement

- Investigate ways of increasing the numbers of students getting higher grades.

265 The GCE A-level examination results at the end of the sixth form in 2001 were below the national average. The results for 2002 were similar to those of 2001. Whilst almost all students passed the examination, the proportion achieving A or B grades was well below the national average. In 2002 the proportion of boys gaining higher grades increased slightly; although no girls gained high grades, over half achieved grade C. Over the last three years overall pass rates have been maintained at a high level. Where students have taken the AS examination, the majority have achieved a pass, but have not gained high grades. Retention rates from AS to A2 level are good, and in 2002 the number taking AS has doubled.

266 The standard of work seen from the majority of students currently taking geography in Years 12 and 13 was in line with that expected nationally, and is mainly in line with their prior attainment. A small proportion are working at higher levels, and a small proportion are below national averages. All students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. In Year 13, students showed a good knowledge of the geography of retailing, and were able to relate this to theories of urban form and models of the central business district. They were all also able to apply their knowledge and understanding effectively to the new topic (central business district revitalisation) which they were investigating, and to their local area which they had previously investigated through fieldwork. Students also showed a very good knowledge of sand dunes and in both areas of study they used correct geographical terminology well. They make good use of a wide variety of appropriate resource material in their work, and use ICT effectively in research, and for report writing. Students are competent in using statistical techniques, with high attaining students able to use a test of significance. The highest attainers write essays which are well structured and make detailed use of case study material; lower attainers are able to structure essays well, but are less effective in using detailed support for their ideas. Students' own notes are thorough and well organised.

267 Students in Year 12 show sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. In studying ecosystems, students across the ability range had a clear understanding of concepts of succession, both over time and space, and were able to use

appropriate and correct terminology, such as biotic and abiotic factors, and pioneer species in relation to the ecosystems they are studying. They worked effectively on their individual research using an appropriate website, selecting and discarding information as they built up their investigative report on the nature of sand dunes.

268 Teaching is very good, and contributes significantly to students' good progress in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively and with great clarity. Their diligent checking of students' understanding ensures consolidation of knowledge and concepts before moving students forward. They plan well, making use of appropriate resources and methods, including providing students with good fieldwork opportunities. Lessons seen involved a mixture of whole-class teaching, paired and individual work, each well suited to the respective task being undertaken. Teachers make good use of practice examination questions to give students a secure grounding in examination technique. These are marked to examination criteria and comments and oral feedback are helpful in guiding students towards improvement.

269 Students work hard, are attentive and concentrate well. They are interested and willing participants and contributors in lessons. Their independent learning is encouraged by work which involves research for essays and investigative reports, and is helped by the good library resource and access to the Internet.

270 This department of experienced teachers is well led and has a clear picture of its own strengths. There is a recognition of the need to continue to develop their own skills, and the head of department is able to make good use of teachers' individual areas of expertise through delegation and mutual support.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and as a result most students make good progress.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Strategies to ensure that high attaining students obtain the top grades in examinations.
- Activities which guide students more clearly through their work.

271 The A2 examination results in 2001 were below the national average at grades A-E. In 2002 the attainment of grades A-E was a little above average. In both 2001 and 2002 no students gained an A or B grade. In the 2002 AS examination the one student gained a grade C. Although results have generally been below average, they have represented, for the majority of students, at least satisfactory progress from the standards they reached in their GCSE examinations. Some students have, however, underachieved. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress overall from their GCSE work as a result of good teaching and their own hard work. The numbers taking history are rising; the number of students in Year 12 is double that of Year 13.

272 The standard of work seen from students in Year 12 is overall in line with that expected nationally. A small proportion is on target to reach the top grades. Most students have good knowledge and understanding of the periods of history they are studying. They successfully select, collate and present evidence to support a view of the past. Students in Year 12, for example, successfully identified the various groups who might be held

responsible for the crisis in Ulster in 1914. Their oral presentations of their findings varied from the confident and competent to the very hesitant. A small proportion is working at the highest standards, as seen in their well-structured and analytical essays showing good depth of understanding and presenting a valid viewpoint, backed up by relevant evidence. The essays from the lower attainers are largely narrative, with little analysis.

273 The work seen from students in Year 13 was, overall, average. They demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of aspects of British Imperialism and foreign policy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In answering a question about how successful the policy was in the Middle East and Africa, however, only the small number of higher attainers identified the need to consider Britain's aims in order to evaluate her success. The lower attainers provided a summary of events. The higher attainers write essays which are well researched, and present valid evidence to argue a point of view. This was seen, for instance, in work on the depression of the 1930s. Their use and evaluation of historical sources are of a high standard.

274 Teaching is good overall, and is a major contributory factor in the students' good progress in both Years 12 and 13. There is clear mutual respect between teachers and students, which leads to a good working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately demanding. The helpful comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance on how to improve their answers. The strategy of occasionally asking students to mark one another's work in class helps them to understand what makes a good answer.

275 Teaching methods ensure that students have a variety of ways in which to learn. For some tasks, teachers ask students to work in groups, a strategy which allows students to support one another. Teachers use questioning well, but do not always ask students to develop their initial answers further. This restricts the development of deeper understanding for the highest attainers. Good information sheets provided by teachers eliminate the need for students to spend time in lessons simply taking notes. Teachers use good resources, which interest and motivate the students. A short extract from a film created much interest in the Easter Rising of 1916, and led to some lively discussion about the impact of the event.

276 Most students have a very strong commitment to their studies, and clearly want to learn and improve. They participate well in discussions. As a result, they make good progress. A small proportion have a less-committed approach and this is reflected in their more limited progress.

277 The good leadership and management of the department ensure that the ethos of hard work is maintained. The experienced teachers work well together and have a strong commitment to raising attainment for all students, but especially for those who have the potential to reach the top grades. Teaching is good, and promotes good learning. Students' attitudes are very good. Attainment overall is average.

## **Psychology**

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

**Strengths**

- Standards are rising.
- The number of students taking the subject at AS-level and continuing on to A-level has risen significantly.
- Teaching and learning are now very good.
- Leadership and management are now very good.

**Areas for improvement**

- Accommodation for both teaching and administration are unsatisfactory.
- Class sizes in Year 12 are too big.
- The position of the subject in the school's curricular and management structure is inappropriate.

278 In 2002, ten students took A-level in this relatively new subject and all passed. However, not many obtained higher grades (A or B). Comparison of these students' results with their performance at GCSE shows satisfactory achievement, which is shared by both boys and girls.

279 Observation of lessons, examination of students' files and the records of tests undertaken indicate a significant rise in standards. Problems, directly attributable to recent staffing difficulties, have now been successfully addressed and students are making good progress. Of the 51 students who started AS-level in 2001, 46 have carried on to take A-level. The re-teaching and re-examination of much of the work undertaken in 2001 to 2002 have resulted in these students having a very secure base for the future examinations. The 45 students in Year 12 are all making good progress. Students' files contain very well organised records of topics studied. Handwritten notes are supplemented by interesting and relevant printed material which students have annotated or highlighted. Year 12 students starting work on the physiological approach to psychology had no difficulties in distinguishing the differences between this and contrasting theories based on learning. Year 13 students have made a very good start to acquiring the knowledge of statistics that will be an important part of their coursework. All have a secure knowledge and understanding of the significance of probability when deciding whether to accept or reject the 'null hypothesis'. If this level of progress is maintained, results in 2003 will be better than those of previous years and will at least match national averages.

280 Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are planned meticulously. Learning objectives are clear and the methods employed always engage the students in active participation. All these features were evident in a very good lesson for Year 12 students learning about two contrasting theories of cognitive development. They were required to read several pieces of original research, seeking evidence for one or other of the two theories. The lesson ended with students role-playing an application of the ideas in an educational context. The skill with which students responded to this challenge demonstrated clearly their secure understanding of difficult concepts. This approach to learning is providing students with skills that will be of great value in higher education. Teachers have a very exact knowledge of the demands of the syllabus and ensure that work covered enables students to maximise their examination performance. Relationships with students are excellent. Students recognise the commitment given by teachers, most evident in the out-of-hours tutorial work which has rectified previous teaching inadequacies, and are responding with confident enthusiasm.

281 The accommodation for teaching and administration is inadequate. Most lessons are taught in a very old and decrepit laboratory, which acts as a storage space for rarely used science equipment. The climate for learning would be greatly improved by the provision of a dedicated room of suitable design for the adventurous teaching methods being used.

Difficulties are exacerbated by the over-large teaching groups in Year 12. The size of these groups limits the teachers' ability to provide personal support and tuition.

282 At present, the school has linked psychology to the science department. Although psychology has an obvious basis in science, the inexact nature of the subject dictates that the teaching methods have more in common with humanities subjects such as sociology. Students need to learn how to evaluate evidence in a way that is rare in the sciences where the factual basis is much stronger. The course structure and examination requirements for psychology are quite different from those of the traditional sciences. These differences make it difficult for the science department to provide appropriate professional support for the teaching of psychology.

283 Leadership and management within the subject are now very good. The two teachers work very closely together, sharing responsibility for all aspects of the course. The very high subject expertise of one is well complemented by the teaching experience of the other; they are a most effective combination. The assessment of students' essay work is outstanding, providing constructive criticism that forms an excellent basis for improvement. Schemes of work for the entire course are now well organised and supported by a rich variety of learning resources – many written by the teachers themselves.

284 Psychology is now a popular and increasingly successful part of the school's post-16 provision. Standards are rising and the present team of teachers has every potential to maintain this positive trend.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English, French and German.

### **English**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good, with high academic standards.
- Students are well motivated in this popular subject.
- Performance in GCE A-level is on an upward trend.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Too few students achieve the highest grades at A-level.

285 In the GCE A-level examination in 2002 the percentage of students achieving pass grades was above the national average, as was their average points score. The percentage reaching the highest grades was below average but results show a continuing upward trend.

286 The overall standard of work seen is above average, particularly in written assignments. Students in Years 12 and 13 make thorough notes and put together very useful files of work. The quality of essay writing varies but the best examples in Year 13 show sensitive and mature understanding of texts expressed in well-structured and largely accurate work. Oral response in lessons is variable with some students reticent in answering but the majority are eager to engage in well-informed discussion. One group of higher attaining students in Year 13, stimulated by excellent teaching, commented on the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, showing perceptive grasp of the poet's intentions and technique.

287 The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers set very high academic standards and students respond positively to the challenge. In one very successful lesson in Year 12, students were encouraged to pursue different strands of research, working independently, to broaden their background knowledge to Jane Austen's work and, in particular, Emma. The best teaching uses a range of different methods to engage students' interest and moves lessons on at pace. Questioning is rigorous, forcing students to justify ideas and support comments by detailed reference to texts. Students' work is conscientiously marked with much constructive comment and advice. Very positive working relationships are created.

288 During the absence, on maternity leave, of the head of department, management of the subject remains efficient and effective. The teaching of groups is shared by different members of the department. Students benefit from the range of expertise and interests which this offers them. Teaching in the sixth form is very skilfully co-ordinated. Good recruitment and retention of students demonstrate the popularity of the subject and its high reputation amongst students.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge for work at this level.
- Assessment procedures are good, leading to improvements in learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to work.

#### **Area for improvement**

- The number of students, especially males, who choose to study languages in the sixth form.

289 The number of entries for AS and A-level GCE is small and interpretation against national statistics is unreliable. In the 2002 examinations at AS-level there were three entries in French and three in German and all students passed. At A-level, there were three entries in French and one in German and all students passed. The school's analysis of results suggests that students did not do as well as they might in relation to GCSE grades obtained.

290 Evidence seen in lessons and in students' files indicates that standards are above average at the end of Year 12 and the end of Year 13. There is an encouraging increase in numbers studying in the sixth form and in the number of students who carry on to study at A-level in Year 13. There are still fewer male students. Students achieve well and achievement is good in relation to performance at GCSE. Male and female students achieve equally well. Students are competent and confident speakers. Students in Year 12, for example, discuss issues relating to using animals for testing products and to violent and non-violent protests. Students understand the detail, from authentic sources such as magazines, newspapers and extracts from news broadcasts. Students in both years write accurately, for example about the feelings of characters in their set books. Lower attaining students tend to make mistakes with participles in verbs and often translate too literally.

291 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, particularly of the technicalities of grammar required for examination success at this level. Teachers' spoken language is very good and they are very capable of taking the lead in any discussions. As a result students learn their languages well and use very little English in lessons. Students' work is regularly marked and corrected and the use of marking to give hints on how to improve is good. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly to provide a range

of challenging activities. There is a happy, relaxed atmosphere in lessons and very good relationships between students and with their teachers are strengths of the subject. Students work very hard and show sensible and mature attitudes to the subject. They develop good individual study and research skills.

292 Curriculum provision is good and students have good equality of opportunity in the choices of languages to study. They can study two languages if they wish. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual development by providing opportunities to reflect on the lives of other people and by discussion of a number of moral and social issues. Provision for social and cultural development is good. Students have a range of opportunities including trips abroad, visits to the theatre and attendance at language conferences. The leadership of the subject is good and a committed team of teachers is in place. The subject is also well managed and there are good procedures in place for assessing students' progress and for providing support and guidance where necessary.