

INSPECTION REPORT

BACUP AND RAWTENSTALL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Rossendale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119809

Headteacher: Mr M R Morris OBE

Reporting inspector: Mr C Sander
4151

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 March 2003

Inspection number: 249726

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Glen Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr David Heap

Date of previous inspection: 17 March 1997

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23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
12016	Catherine O'Leary	Team inspector	Science	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3827	John Knight	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
21822	Helen Maskew	Team inspector	Citizenship Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme History	
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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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24063	Michael Ryder	Team inspector	Latin	
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12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Chemistry (6 th Form) Biology (6 th Form)	
2741	Christopher Glynn	Team inspector	English (6 th Form)	
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REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

8

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

13

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

17

The school's results and pupils' achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22

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

25

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

27

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

30

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

36

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

39

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

45

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

69

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School (BRGS) is a foundation, selective grammar school for boys and girls, situated in the village of Waterfoot, between Rawtenstall and Bacup. It has specialist school status as a technology college. The school is larger than average with 1227 pupils on roll, of whom 451 are in the sixth form. Numbers have risen since the last inspection, and greatly so in the sixth form. Entry to the school is by examination. It is heavily oversubscribed. The pupils are predominantly of white British background with less than five per cent from several ethnic minority groups, the largest of which is Pakistani. The proportion whose mother tongue is believed not to be English, approximately three per cent, is higher than in most schools but all use English with a high degree of fluency. Standards on entry to the school are well above average. Just under four per cent are known to be eligible for free school meals, well below average and lower than at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, one per cent, is well below the average for schools nationally. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs, two of whom are in the sixth form. More than ninety per cent continue their full time education at the school beyond the age of 16, much higher than is the case in most schools nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school that provides very well for all its pupils. Standards are well above those found in most schools nationally and compare favourably with similar schools. The pupils achieve very well in national tests and public examinations. Their personal development is impressive. The school is particularly successful in combining high academic achievement with well-managed care for all its pupils and students. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The very good leadership and management skills of the headteacher and his senior staff set high standards and enable all to fulfil very well the academic and social aims of the school. When all these strong features are measured against the school's above average level of income it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well at Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- National test results and GCSE public examination results are very high.
- The pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are very good.
- Excellent subject knowledge and high expectations contribute much to the very good teaching.
- The pupils' attitudes and involvement in the life of the school are excellent.
- Provision for pupils' social development is excellent and includes very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- The contribution of the governors to the school's development is very good.
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and his senior staff set a tone of high expectations and achievement across the school.
- The school has very good links with its local community.

What could be improved

- Opportunities for pupils to reflect upon, talk about and make their own assessment of their work.
- The role of heads of subject in monitoring and evaluating the performance of their departments.
- The amount of time allocated in the timetable to citizenship and personal, social and health education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. It has addressed well the issues identified at that time. The range of teaching and learning styles is now more varied in most subjects and further improvement remains a priority in the school's own development planning. There has been very good improvement over the last three years in the provision of computers and these are now well used in several subjects, particularly in English and in several practical subjects. It remains an area for improvement in a small number of subjects. The buildings are well cared for and every effort is made to maximise their effective use. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has sustained its very high standards, improved still further its very good results and increased the proportion of very good teaching.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	n/a	

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The trend of improvement in the school's results at Year 9 and Year 11 has been ahead of the trend nationally, meeting the challenging targets in 2002 at Year 9 and exceeding them at Year 11. National test results at Year 9 in 2002 were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally and above average for grammar schools. The best performance was in mathematics where the boys did particularly well. More than one fifth of the pupils obtained Level 8 in English and mathematics, an indication of outstanding achievement. Overall, the boys and the girls performed equally well. Results have been consistently high with a rising trend over the last four years. GCSE results in 2002 were also very high, in the top five per cent of all schools nationally and broadly in line with other grammar schools. Caution should be exercised when interpreting the comparison with other grammar schools because it does not accurately reflect the very good progress made since Year 7. The standards on entry to the school are not as high as in many other grammar schools. No validated data are currently yet available to compare results in the sixth form with those achieved nationally in 2002. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with these results and well above average overall at both Year 9 and 11. Achievement is very good because the pupils are very highly motivated and their standards of literacy and numeracy are high. Standards are highest when skills are as well taught as knowledge, pupils are given frequent opportunity to think for themselves, engage in discussion and organise work for themselves. The pupils' excellent attitudes also contribute to these high standards. Many are intellectually curious and academically ambitious. There needs to be more opportunity for pupils to speak the language they are learning in modern languages, to practise their singing in music in all years before Year 9 and to apply and develop their ICT skills more frequently and especially in mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The pupils are keen to learn and to take part in school activities. They want to work hard and succeed, and they do. They are also very thoughtful about the needs of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Movement around the school is orderly. The pupils show a high level of self-discipline. They concentrate very well in lessons. Mutual respect is a strong feature in many lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils gain much from the school's consistently high expectations and value and appreciate the success of others. Many are keen to take responsibility.
Attendance	Excellent. Attendance rates are very high compared with those in other schools nationally. Punctuality is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching was very good or better in more than half of the lessons seen, a particularly high proportion. In the best teaching and learning very high expectations and excellent subject knowledge are matched by the pupils' excellent attitudes, sustained concentration and determination to succeed. Many show confidence in planning their own work and are highly articulate. Their research skills are good. They learn particularly well when these strengths are encouraged in lessons. Sometimes, there are more limited opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative and organise things for themselves. Consequently, the range and depth of their learning is more narrow, emphasising knowledge rather than understanding and skills. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills in mathematics and ICT and their speaking skills in modern languages. The most significant improvement since the last inspection has been in Years 7-9 where the strong impact of the National Strategy has resulted in high expectations and a broadening of teaching methods, including the effective use of questions. The skills of literacy and numeracy are very well taught. The quality of teaching is very good in mathematics and science and good in English across all years. The regular setting of homework establishes very good study habits. The key features of the very good teaching in the sixth form are the opportunities students have for collaborative activities and independent learning and the high level of challenging questions. Overall, the school meets very well the needs of all pupils, providing a consistently high level of challenging work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The well-planned provision meets the pupils' needs very well and provides a broadly similar provision for all. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. Statutory requirements are not fully met for singing in Years 7-9, for ICT in Years 10 and 11 and for religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are well defined within their individual education plans. Assessment procedures are good. The review of pupils' progress is thorough and regular.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Excellent provision for social development promotes a very strong sense of community. Moral values are very well taught in many lessons. Very good provision for spiritual development in lessons and assemblies results in very good self-awareness and self-esteem. Cultural development is very good because pupils have many opportunities through visits and activities to learn about their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are excellent induction arrangements in Year 7 and very good continuity of care thereafter. Procedures of monitoring academic progress are thorough and increasingly well linked to target setting. Assessment procedures in the sixth form are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The commitment to excellence is accompanied by a readiness to challenge the school community to do even better. The headteacher leads his highly effective senior management team with consummate skill.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors demonstrate a very high level of commitment and expertise. They monitor the school's work most diligently and hold the school to account rigorously but helpfully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Results are evaluated rigorously and the quality of teaching is monitored regularly by the senior management team. The principles of best value are applied very well.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is fully staffed with experienced and well-qualified teachers. There are satisfactory learning resources overall. Accommodation is sufficient to meet essential requirements but specialist facilities for science, physical education and design technology are below the recommended levels.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The progress made by pupils.• The leadership and management of the school.• The high quality of the teaching.• How the school helps its pupils to become mature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The timing of reports at the end of the school year.

A large number of parents completed the questionnaire prior to the inspection. They expressed very strong appreciation of the school's provision and performance. There were no major concerns expressed on any feature by a significant number of parents. The partnership with parents is a strength of the school. Many wrote additionally to express their high level of satisfaction. They share the values for which the school stands and appreciate the impact that it has on their children's personal growth as well as their academic progress. The school has responded promptly to the concerns expressed about the timing of the annual school report and is currently reviewing the calendar.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 451 students in the sixth form. It is much larger than the average size of sixth forms nationally and has nearly tripled in size since the last inspection. Nearly all who complete Year 11 at this school then enter the sixth form. Over one third have joined from other schools. There are slightly more female than male students. Standards on entry are above average. The entry requirements include suitability for the chosen course and a minimum of five or more GCSE grades C or above. Twenty-nine GCE courses are provided at AS and Advanced levels. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, approximately four per cent, has risen over the last three years but remains just below the national average. Just over two per cent speak English as an additional language, but all use English fluently. Just over one per cent of the students have special educational needs. Approximately four-fifths enter higher education, a well-above-average proportion.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and cost effective. There has been a rising trend in results since 1998. Standards are high and students achieve very well because of very good teaching. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of what their students can do. Moreover, target setting is well established and educational and personal support and guidance for students are very effective. The sixth form caters well for the needs and aspirations of its students and offers a broad and balanced range of academic subjects. Leadership and management are very good and the director of the sixth form, ably assisted by a talented team of heads of year and form tutors, works hard to strike a balance between emphasising academic success and the students' personal and social development. Students respond very well and demonstrate excellent attitudes to the sixth form.

Strengths

- Standards and results have improved consistently since 1998 and are now well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall and enables students to achieve very well.
- Teachers demonstrate excellent knowledge of their subjects.
- Leadership and management are very good, provide a clear vision for future development and are very well supported by governors, the senior management team and staff.
- Personal development and relationships are very good and students' attitudes to the sixth form are excellent.
- The sixth form offers a wide range of academic courses, which are well matched to students' aspirations and needs.
- Educational and personal support and guidance are very good and students speak highly of their teachers' readiness to help and support them.

What could be improved

- Accommodation and resources, including the library, to support students' personal research and independent study.
- Opportunities to develop further and apply ICT skills.
- The provision for religious education, to meet statutory requirements.

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	Good. Results are well above average and standards are very high. Students make good progress as a result of very good teaching. This, coupled with their very positive attitudes, ensures learning of high quality. Leadership and management are good.
Biology	Very good. Results in A-level examinations are consistently well above average. Teaching is very good and teachers provide their students with very effective advice and support. Students work hard and demonstrate very positive attitudes to their studies.
Chemistry	Very good. Results in A-level examinations have improved steadily and are now well above average. Teaching is very good and teachers explain difficult concepts very clearly to their students. Students are highly motivated and show interest in the subject.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are average in Year 13 but good in Year 12. Teaching is very good and demands much of the students. Leadership and management are good and careful analysis of students' performance is well established.
Business Studies	Good. Examination results are above average and students are achieving a range of skills and competencies relevant to business. Teaching is effective, with well-planned methodologies suited to students' needs. This ensures that they develop a variety of transferable skills.
Economics	Very good. Examination results are above average. Through a critical consideration of current economic issues, students are developing a good understanding of relevant economic concepts and issues. Teaching is very good and covers well the analysis of economic information from different sources.
Computing	Very good. Results in AS and A-level examinations are high and students have very good attitudes to learning. Teaching is very good and the progress of individual students is tracked effectively. Leadership and management are very good and the department has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
Physical education	Very good. Standards are very high. Students demonstrate very good levels of performance skills in practical activities. Teaching is very good and there is a good range of strategies to promote independent learning.
Art	Very good. Standards of work are well above average and results at A-level improved sharply in 2002. Teaching is very good and teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Leadership is excellent and has created a supportive environment where students can develop as creative individuals.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Geography	Very good. Leadership and management are very good and lead to well above average standards in external examinations. Teaching is very good and teachers give their students very effective advice on examination technique and coursework methodology.
History	Very good. Results at A-level are well above average. Teaching is very good and teachers demonstrate a profound knowledge of their subject. Leadership and management are very good and evaluate the performance of the department accurately. Students adopt a most mature approach to their work.
Sociology	Good. A-level results are above average and students achieve well. Teaching is consistently good and teachers have considerable expertise in the subject. Leadership and management are good and plans for future development are appropriate. Students respond very positively to the opportunities open to them.
Psychology	Excellent. Examination results are well above average. The very good teaching is professional and scholarly. Students achieve a critical understanding of their studies and demonstrate enthusiasm for research. Leadership and management are very good.
English	Very good. Students' results are well above average and they have very positive attitudes to the subject. Teaching is consistently good and teachers have a genuine enthusiasm for their subject. Students make good progress but there is a need for a greater proportion to become more independent learners.
French	Satisfactory. A-level results were well above average in 2001 but fell substantially in 2002. Teaching is good overall but its impact is reduced because of the absence of organised out-of-school activities. Leadership is unsatisfactory and there is no clear view on how to improve provision.

Work was also sampled in other subjects. In physics, teaching was good and students displayed very positive attitudes to their studies. In music, teaching was good also and there was effective use of ICT to support learning. Teaching was very good overall in religious studies and an excellent lesson was seen, in which pace, challenge and an emphasis on study skills were the key characteristics. In media studies, teaching was good and students made rapid progress in their understanding of media effects because resources and support materials provided them with the language and framework to evaluate critically the short action extract from 'Crouching Tiger'. Teaching was satisfactory in Spanish but, although students worked hard, they were too dependent on their teacher.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The quality of support and guidance is very good and is maintained throughout Years 12 and 13. Students receive very good advice on what is needed for a successful two years in the sixth form and are supported very well in their search for relevant courses in the higher education sector. Careers advice offered by the school is good, but there are shortcomings in that offered by outside agencies. Students' academic progress is monitored and supported very well and target setting is very well established.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are very good. There is clear direction from the director of sixth form, and the talented team of heads of year and form tutors have established an effective pastoral programme, which includes an emphasis on students examining their preferred learning styles. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted. Performance is carefully evaluated and quality assurance procedures are fully in place. There is a well-founded vision for future development and the governing body is very effective in fulfilling its specific responsibilities for the sixth form. Social accommodation for students is good, but facilities for private study, including access to ICT facilities, are unsatisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others. • They are well taught and teachers are accessible, giving willingly of their own time to offer advice. • Printed information about sixth form courses is clear and helpful. • There are good arrangements to help them settle in when they first enter the sixth form. • The courses on offer suit their talents and aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of advice from the careers advisory service could be improved • The range of extra-curricular activities. • How their work is assessed and information about the progress they are making • Some students feel they could be treated more like adults. • The lack of areas for private study, the library and access to ICT facilities.

The vast majority of students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of opportunities it offers them and the high quality of teaching, guidance and support that they receive. They value very highly the positive atmosphere in the sixth form and the strong community spirit generated by its leadership. Moreover, they are grateful for the support they receive when they are applying for entry to higher education and they value highly the opportunities they have to exercise personal initiative and responsibility. The inspection team found little evidence to support their criticisms of how their work is assessed nor that they were treated other than as young adults. However, inspectors do agree that accommodation for private study is unsatisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

- *An entrance examination conducted annually in the autumn term forms part of the school's admission arrangements.*
- *In this report the phrase 'more competent' refers to those pupils and students whose standard of work is higher than is usually found nationally. On entry to the school this comprises approximately four fifths of the year group.*
- *The word 'competent' refers to those whose standard of work is broadly in line with those usually found nationally. On entry to the school this comprises approximately one-fifth of the year group.*
- *The word 'results' refers to how well the students do in National Tests and GCSE, AS-level and A-level examinations. Occasionally, the word 'performance' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'standards' is used to define how well the students do when their work is compared with what others nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11, 14, 16 and 18. Occasionally the term 'work' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards usually found, or expected nationally.*
- *The word 'level' refers to a particular standard of work described in the National Curriculum. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'grade' refers to the public examination grading systems for GCSE and GCE. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'achievement' defines how much progress and improvement has been made over time. It indicates whether the pupils and students are doing as well as might reasonably be expected and whether they are working hard enough. It usually refers to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do at age 11, at age 16 compared with what they could do at age 14 and at age 18 when compared with what they could do at age 16. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as 'very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory'.*

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, standards were well above those usually found nationally. Results, standards and achievement have risen still further and are consistently high. In 2002 the school met its challenging National Tests targets at Year 9 and exceeded them in the GCSE examinations at Year 11.
2. A very high proportion of the large number of parents who completed the questionnaire, as well as the much smaller number who attended the meeting before the inspection, expressed a very high level of satisfaction about the standards that the school achieves. The findings of this inspection confirm those views.
3. Standards on entry to this school are well above those usually found nationally. Results in the National Tests prior to entry to this school are very high. However, the results of standardised tests and the school's admission arrangements indicate that the proportion who achieve very high standards on entry, less than three per cent in all years except the current Year 7, is lower than is usually the case in selective grammar schools. Considerable caution should therefore be exercised when comparing the school's performance with other grammar schools nationally.

4. National Test results at Year 9 in English, mathematics and science in 2002 were very high and in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. They were above average for grammar schools. Teacher assessments in these three subjects were broadly in line with the National Test results. The best performance was in mathematics where the boys did particularly well. Results have been consistently very high over the last four years. The rate of improvement has been above the national trend. In the statutory teacher assessments in the pupils' other subjects, results in 2002 were consistently well above the national average.
5. Pupils nationally are expected to reach Level 5 at Year 9. Nearly all at this school achieve Level 6, a standard that is approximately two years ahead of the standards usually found nationally. More than one-fifth achieved Level 8 in mathematics and English in 2002 and one-tenth did so in science. This indicates very good achievement.
6. A strong feature in the National Test results is the consistently very high performance and very good achievement by both the boys and the girls in English, mathematics and science. The school has been particularly successful in responding promptly to any indication of under-achievement by the boys.
7. GCSE results in 2002 at age 16 were also very high compared to the national average and broadly in line with those for grammar schools. All but two of the 150 candidates obtained 5+ A*-C grades. Nationally, approximately half of all pupils did so. The strongest features in these excellent results were the very high number of pupils obtaining the highest grades A*/A and the consistently very good achievement by both the boys and the girls.
8. The GCSE results of both the boys and the girls have improved over the last five years and at a rate that is above the trend nationally. Both performed ahead of their age groups nationally in 2002. A significant feature has been the rapid rise in the number achieving grades A*/A and particularly so amongst the boys. Decisive intervention to address any hint of under-achievement, consistently high levels of expectation, regular, well planned homework, very thorough preparation for public examinations and the pupils' very high levels of motivation contribute to these excellent results.
9. Statistical analysis confirms that these results represent very good achievement by both the boys and the girls. The level of achievement, expressed in terms of 'value added' has also risen over the last five years and very significantly so over the last two years. In 2002 it was particularly high in English.
10. When compared with National Test results previously at Year 9 and also with similar schools, achievement is satisfactory. However, this evaluation should be treated with considerable caution because the very high results at Year 9 provide limited scope for further 'added value'. To have sustained excellent performance is also an indication of very good achievement. The comparison with other grammar schools should also be treated with caution because at this school there are fewer very highly competent pupils and the overall range of competence is wider than is often the case in grammar schools nationally. When the 2002 results are compared with standards on entry to the school they represent very good achievement with the proportion obtaining grades A*/A much higher than might have reasonably been expected.
11. Standards in work seen are well above average overall at both Year 9 and Year 11. High standards of literacy and numeracy provide the foundation for the very good achievement across nearly all subjects. The judicious interpretation and application of

the principles of the National Strategy contribute much to the very good progress made by pupils in Years 7-9.

12. Standards are highest when skills are as well taught as knowledge, pupils are given frequent opportunities to think, engage in discussion and organise their work for themselves and there are well planned opportunities for them to develop and apply their ICT skills. These were particularly strong features contributing to the very good standards in art and design and design and technology at Year 9 and Year 11.
13. Standards are high because nearly all the pupils are intellectually curious and academically ambitious. As a result they gain greatly from their teachers' very good specialist subject knowledge and very high expectations. Because they concentrate well in lessons, they recall promptly what they have learned previously and build upon it confidently. As a result, they frequently make very good progress in lessons and sustain it over time.
14. Standards are high in English because nearly all pupils combine very good analytical skills in their reading with high levels of skill in a wide range of different types of writing. They are high in mathematics because nearly all gain a very thorough grasp of all aspects of the subject. However, most have insufficient opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations and to organise for themselves how they might approach a particular problem. There are plenty of opportunities to do this in science where standards are high because many use their numeracy and literacy skills very well to develop accurate understanding and well-considered interpretation. The standard of investigative skills is a particularly strong feature. The very successful application of high standards of numeracy and literacy together with the confident demonstration of the specialist skills of the subject provide the very strong foundations for the pupils' overall high levels of success in geography, history and religious education at Year 9 and Year 11.
15. Within this profile of consistently high standards there are one or two areas for improvement. Standards in ICT at Year 11 are broadly in line with those found nationally but could be higher. This is because currently there is no timetabled provision for all pupils in Year 11. Standards in music at Year 9 are higher than usually found nationally but the provision to teach singing is not a consistent feature in all years. Standards overall in modern languages are higher than those usually found nationally but there are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop and demonstrate their speaking skills.
16. The very small number of pupils with special educational needs all achieve very well and make very good progress over time. They gain above average results in National Tests and at GCSE. Those who are gifted and talented achieve very well also, gaining a very high proportion of grades A*/A at GCSE. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than in most schools but all are highly articulate and write confidently, fluently and accurately. They achieve no less well than other pupils. Overall, different groups of pupils achieve consistently well. The consistent features of high expectations and very good achievement confirm that the school provides very well for all its pupils.

Sixth Form

17. There has been a rising trend in A-level results since 1998 and they are now well above average. In 2002, for example, nearly half of the grades recorded were A and B. The range of attainment on entry to the sixth form is broader than at Year 7 and students

make very good progress in the majority of their subjects. Their achievement is well above expectations. Overall, approximately two-thirds of the students met or exceeded their individual targets. In terms of 'value-added data', male students perform better than females, but the difference is not significant. The small number of students with special educational needs in the sixth form all achieve very well and make very good progress over time. Students with hearing impairment gained higher than expected grades at AS level in 2002.

18. Results are high for several reasons. Teachers demonstrate excellent knowledge of their subjects, have very high expectations of what their students can achieve and target setting and the regular evaluation of progress are well established. Moreover, students respond very positively to the provision and their standards are enhanced because they are willing to work very hard and to take responsibility for their own learning.
19. In lessons observed and work scrutinised, standards mirror examination performance and students are achieving very well overall. Standards are well above average in mathematics, chemistry, biology, computing, physical education, art, geography, history, psychology and English. Standards are above average in business studies, economics, sociology and French and they are average in design and technology.
20. The school does not provide timetabled tuition for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT but there is no indication that any weaknesses in literacy or numeracy are impeding the progress or limiting the standards achieved. Students' ICT skills are insufficiently developed in several subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes to school generally and in lessons in particular are excellent. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Parents consider this aspect to be a very good feature of the school.
22. Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about school life. They are self-motivated learners, arrive at school cheerfully and soon settle to the various routines within classrooms. The warm and caring relationships between most staff and pupils are clearly evident and this means that pupils take part willingly and want to work hard. They move around the school very sensibly and with an awareness of the needs of others, showing this by opening doors and helping to carry things.
23. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, behaviour is very good. Despite the sometimes cramped conditions, there is a purposeful but calm atmosphere within the school, with numerous examples of pupils who listen to what they are told and follow instructions well. The pupils' high standards of self-discipline contribute much to its overall orderly atmosphere. They also show great respect to others, especially their teachers. They listen to others and respect others' points of views when they are different from their own. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour and racial harmony is very good.
24. There were 29 fixed term exclusions during the previous academic year, significantly more than at the time of the last inspection, but below the national average. All involved the boys. There were no repeated exclusions, confirming that the action taken was appropriate and effective. There were no permanent exclusions.

25. Pupils' personal development and the quality of relationships across the school are very good. They show interest in one another's achievements and really appreciate the success of others. The pupils build up trust and knowledge of routines and systems through the consistent way they are treated. This is evident at breaktimes, lunchtimes and at the end of the school day. In lessons pupils are trusted with their use of equipment but some teachers rely on mainly teacher led activities and do not encourage pupils often enough to take responsibility for their own learning. The pupils take pride in their work and look after property well. The levels of litter are much reduced since the last inspection.
26. Attendance is excellent. It is very much higher than the national average. Punctuality is very good. Medical reasons and sickness account for most of the authorised absence. Pupils arrive punctually and lessons start and finish on time. Regular attendance and the rare loss of time during the school day contribute well to the high standards and good continuity of pupils' learning.

Sixth Form

27. The attitude of students in the sixth form towards learning is excellent. They apply themselves with great enthusiasm to their studies. The students' relationships with each other and staff are very good. Their personal development is enhanced by the opportunities, through their committee, to arrange social events and raise money for various charities.
28. Students are able to discuss matters of concern with the respective heads of department, both personally and through the head boy and girl, who meet with staff at regular intervals. Students' views are regularly taken into account by way of a questionnaire. Most students develop good self-discipline in their studies, are able to undertake independent study and work co-operatively with others. Students have a great appreciation of equal opportunity issues and promote good personal, community and race relations. The sixth form is a racially harmonious community.
29. A number of students contribute to the wider life of the school and act as form prefects, assisting in ensuring homework and coursework are completed by the younger pupils. Students participate in a number of extra-curricular sporting activities such as basketball, football and netball. They also attend the debating society and Christian union as well as visiting countries abroad to extend their cultural and social development.
30. The opportunity for students to work in the library or other private study facilities is limited and adversely affected by the lack of space.
31. Attendance overall in the sixth form is good. There are no data available to make comparisons nationally. A small number of students have poor attendance records and this adversely affects the progress they make in business studies and physical education. Most are punctual and sessions start and finish on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This confirms the overall view expressed by the parents prior to the inspection.
33. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The frequency of good and very good teaching has increased. The occasions when the quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was less than satisfactory, one per cent, were fewer than at the time of the last inspection. The most significant improvement has been in Years 7-9 where the impact of the National Strategy has been good, confirming the school's commitment to sustaining high expectations and extending further the range of teaching methods, including the effective use of questions in several subjects. In the best teaching seen during the inspection very high expectations and excellent subject knowledge were matched by a very positive response from all the pupils. This was frequently evident in excellent attitudes, sustained concentration and a very strong commitment to succeed. The high quality of learning is further enhanced by the school's success in appointing and retaining teachers of very high calibre and the very good management of provision that ensures specialist teaching continues on the rare occasions of staff absence.
34. The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in almost half of the lessons seen, a particularly high proportion, and good or better in more than four-fifths. The proportion of very good teaching was slightly greater in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11, confirming that the school has made a good response to the findings of the last inspection. In just two of the 215 lessons seen was the quality of teaching and learning less than satisfactory. On those occasions time was not well managed and the pace of learning was slower because there were too few opportunities for the pupils to participate in the lesson. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is more consistent than at the time of the last inspection.
35. The very good teaching results in learning that is frequently rigorous, detailed and accurate. Nearly all pupils invariably demonstrate very good levels of concentration in lessons. They listen very well and record their work accurately. A particularly strong feature is their ability to recall and use what they have learned from earlier lessons. Many have very good memories and this contributes greatly to their very good progress. References at the start of lessons to earlier learning are picked up quickly and well used to consolidate and then extend knowledge and understanding. This was a strong feature, for example, of many geography lessons. The ability to sustain pupils' interest, not only throughout a lesson but over more extended periods of time contributes much to their very good achievement over time. This is well illustrated in the very high quality of their GCSE coursework.
36. The range of teaching methods is good. The planning of lessons is thorough. This means that the pupils invariably make very good gains in knowledge. The imaginative organisation of lessons characterises the most effective teaching methods and most successful learning. Its strongest features are the very skilful use of questions and planned opportunities for pupils to work together in organising tasks for themselves. On such occasions, very good gains are also made in understanding and skills and this contributes very well to pupils' personal development. They learn to think for themselves and apply their understanding with confidence. This was a strong feature of the learning in science, art and design, history, geography and design technology. There were fewer opportunities to do so in mathematics and ICT. Sometimes the limited classroom space restricts the possibility for pupils to work in groups or undertake a range of different activities.

37. The teaching of basic skills is very good. Overall, standards of literacy and numeracy are very high. Many pupils demonstrate very good skills in note taking and in the organisation of their written work. They undertake research work confidently. Learning is still more effective when, in addition to promoting these skills, the teachers also make best use of the pupils' very good speaking skills. The high quality of debate and discussion seen in history lessons contributes much to the pupils' depth and range of understanding. These features are much less evident in mathematics and ICT and in some lessons in English. Progress in speaking skills is slower in modern languages because there are too few opportunities for pupils to speak the language they are learning. The teaching of practical skills in music, art and design and design technology is very good. Many pupils make very rapid gains in these subjects in Years 7-9.
38. The very small number of pupils with special educational needs are very well taught. In most lessons, where additional needs have been identified these are generally very well met. However, in a very small number of lessons pupils' difficulties with writing that have not been identified on entry to the school are not always recognised by the teacher. Those pupils consequently made slower progress. The needs of the gifted and talented pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are very well met. Overall, work is well matched to the needs of all pupils but this remains an area for continuing improvement in geography.
39. The regular setting of well-planned homework is a consistently very good feature. It provides a very good range of activities, including particularly good opportunities for independent research using the Internet. Very good study habits are established from Year 7 and this contributes to the high commitment to completing coursework in Year 11. The well co-ordinated calendar for the completion of coursework further illustrates how carefully the school helps its pupils to meet important deadlines in their studies. Nearly all who regularly attend the homework club after school do so because they want to, demonstrating a high level of commitment. Expectations are rigorous and arrangements for its prompt collection on a daily basis are particularly effective.
40. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the use of ICT skills in different subjects, particularly in art and design, design technology and music. It remains an area for improvement in several subjects, and particularly in mathematics, where pupils need more frequent opportunities to apply and develop their ICT skills.
41. Two significant areas for further improvement remain: more opportunities for pupils to reflect upon, discuss and assess the quality of their work and more emphasis on letting them organise and make decisions about their learning in lessons. Lessons are very well organised in terms of meeting the assessment requirements of the examination syllabi and National Tests but learning is sometimes too strongly directed. Consequently, some pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to show initiative. Overall, the quality of marking is regular and rigorous but it does not always give clear guidance on how standards might be further improved. As a result, it does not encourage the pupils to reflect upon and evaluate their own work or that of others. This was the case in much of the marking in both mathematics and English. In art and design, physical education and design technology the link between the assessment of work and the setting of targets is tenuous. There remain occasions, for example in both English and mathematics, where the pupils have very limited opportunity to express or develop their own views and ideas or reflect critically upon what they have learned.

Sixth Form

42. The high quality of teaching is a major strength of sixth form provision. It is very good overall and is valued highly by the students, who find their teachers particularly keen to advise when they need help. Students achieve very well in lessons because their teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and because they are given many opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, students respond very positively to the teaching and they are willing to work very hard. The school recognises that teaching methods may not yet be providing for the full range of learning opportunities in some subjects and is, therefore, placing great emphasis on identifying the individual learning styles of the students. The sixth-form tutorial programme comprises relevant modules to consider this issue and to encourage students to think carefully about just how they may learn in the most effective manner.
43. Teaching is very good in mathematics, chemistry, biology, design and technology, business studies, economics, physical education, art, geography, history and psychology. It is good in computing, sociology, English and French. In addition, excellent lessons were seen in chemistry, geography, history, physical education and Religious Education.
44. The key features of the very good and excellent teaching are the opportunities students have for collaborative activities and independent learning and the high level of challenge inherent in teachers' questioning. In a geography lesson on glaciation, for example, groups were required to complete a most exacting task in only twenty-five minutes and were required to report back to the rest of the class and also defend their ideas. Similarly, in an excellent Year 12 history lesson on the standard of living debate students took part in intellectual discussion of the highest standard and the teacher's challenge was relentless.
45. Rapid pace and expert knowledge of examination requirements are also key features of the very good teaching in most subject areas. Furthermore, teachers have very high expectations of what their students can achieve. In chemistry, for example, students are fully engaged in the subject matter because teachers foster curiosity and encourage interest. In biology, demanding tasks and effective use of ICT ensure that students make impressive progress in learning about genetic engineering. In most lessons, students are encouraged to share their ideas with others and debate and discussion are fostered. Teachers' planning is also very good and students benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities which capture their interest and make them very highly motivated to learn.
46. The very high quality of relationships between students and between students and teachers is a common thread in all subject areas. There is a very warm rapport between teachers and students and positive attitudes and a mature approach to study are significant factors in the quality of learning. Teachers are approachable, know their students well and are always willing to offer guidance and to celebrate success. Teachers care deeply for the welfare of their students in all areas of school life.
47. Some teaching has features, which require improvement. On occasions, the overall quality would be improved if teachers displayed a greater range of methodologies and allowed their students to take more of a lead and extend their knowledge through more personal research, particularly in mathematics, sociology and geography.

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

48. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall. The school successfully fulfils its commitment to the 'total development of pupils' intellectual, academic, personal, spiritual, moral, physical and social development'. Consequently, the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are good, providing equally for all pupils. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, including adjustments to the time allocated for particular subjects within a two-week planning cycle.
49. The taught week of 25 hours is in line with national recommendations. In addition several lessons, including provision for Latin after Year 7, are taught outside this time. The school day extends considerably beyond five hours for the many pupils who participate in a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including additional support for their studies. The daily homework club has a powerful positive impact on standards, attitudes and learning. A recent audit of this enrichment provision revealed over 30 different well-supported activities. In addition, several subject departments organise visits and excursions to a variety of venues, both in Britain and overseas.
50. The curriculum for Years 7-9 includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. It meets statutory requirements in nearly all respects but in music the provision for singing is not a feature in all years. All pupils in Year 7 learn French and then choose either German or Spanish as a second modern foreign language. The opportunity to take a GCSE qualification in ICT in Year 9 presents a good level of challenge.
51. The principles of breadth and balance are well maintained in Years 10 and 11 with all pupils following a broadly similar curriculum that provides for one additional subject of choice. Further flexibility is provided in the number of subjects studied. Most study ten examination subjects, although several study more. The options system ensures that all pupils follow a balanced set of courses. Fewer pupils than in many selective schools choose to study more than one modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11.
52. Although the overall curriculum in Years 7 to 11 provides good breadth and balance, there are some shortcomings. Provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 does not currently meet fully statutory requirements. Plans are in place to improve provision at the start of the next academic year. Opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their computer skills in other subjects are good in some but not all subjects. There has been very good improvement in the quality of provision for PSHE over the last two years. A highly skilled team of specialists ensures consistently high quality of provision. The very well planned programme includes aspects of citizenship but has insufficient time allocated to it over the two-week cycle of the timetable. Pupils value their PSHE lessons very highly and would like to see more time allocated to them. Some aspects of citizenship are also well taught in religious education and several other subjects. There is good provision for sex education and drugs education within PSHE, science and religious education.
53. Careers education and guidance within the school is good and has improved in recent years. Its status within the school has been raised in the perception of staff, pupils and parents. Pupils benefit considerably from personal interviews and a wealth of available information. However, the time allocated to it, entirely within the PSHE programme, is limited to less than four hours in each of Years 10 and 11. The work experience programme, which consists of a two-week block in the second term of Year 10, is very

good. Pupils, who are well received in the community, enjoy the experience. Overall, there are very good links with the local community.

54. The governors make a very effective contribution, in partnership with the headteacher and his senior colleagues, to the setting of priorities and objectives in curricular planning. They have produced a third phase development plan in accordance with the school's status as a technology college. This plan includes detailed aims to expand curricular provision, especially for the more competent pupils, and raise standards still further for all. There are specific aims for design and technology, science, mathematics and ICT, with more general aims for other subjects. One part of the third phase plan deals with links with partner institutions. Links with its 65 feeder primary schools are already strong and include 'master classes' for primary school pupils in a range of subjects. The development plan envisages strengthening links with a special school and other secondary schools.
55. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. In assemblies and in some lessons, pupils are frequently given opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and significant events in history, for example the Holocaust. Their thoughtful understanding is well promoted in very effective assemblies. In religious studies, pupils benefit from learning about other religions to further establish shared values and explore the quality of human experiences and moral dilemmas in a range of subjects.
56. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school successfully fulfils its aim to develop a strong sense of justice in its pupils. The issue of racist language is well addressed in English and ethical issues are well covered in geography. The principles of fair play are strongly emphasised in physical education.
57. The provision for pupils' social development is excellent. The school successfully promotes a strong sense of community and respect for others in the ways pupils listen, volunteer and care for others. This is also manifest in their respect for the buildings and facilities. Pupils formulated the code of conduct that provides the foundation for the very good relationships in the school. They are given opportunities to participate in a wide range of social activities that include assemblies, visits, workshops, productions and extra-curricular activities including residential experiences and trips abroad. The school recognises the value of leisure activities that include the discos for Years 7 to 11 and events such as the staff Nativity play where pupils see staff in a different light.
58. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. This gives pupils ample opportunity to appreciate a variety of cultural traditions through visits and activities. These include visits to the school, for example from a Muslim teacher, visits to art galleries, theatres in Manchester, Leeds, Stratford and Canterbury and musical events in Bridgewater Hall and London. The junior choir visits Wales for a singing weekend. These experiences are aimed at providing pupils with opportunities to celebrate the achievements of each other, explore issues, acknowledge difference and diversity and develop respect for each other's ideas.

Sixth form

59. The school provides a good curriculum, offering very good learning opportunities in A-level courses that provide a good level of challenge to all its students. The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students well. The additional lessons provided at lunchtime for the sixth form are a very good feature. No vocational courses are offered, but these are readily available at a local tertiary college. With its academic bias, the curriculum meets local needs, as expressed by parents and local employers.

60. While the curriculum offers a broad and balanced programme of academic subjects, there are some shortcomings. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are met only for those 40 students who are taking examination courses in the subject. Some aspects of religious education are covered in the tutorial programme. There are currently no timetabled lessons in key skills. The school takes the view that these are not necessary, having reviewed the situation after being involved in two pilot programmes. There is timetabled provision to continue courses in GCSE English and mathematics for those who need to improve their skills in these areas. The provision for them to do so in ICT is unsatisfactory.
61. Some students express dissatisfaction with that part of careers advice offered by external agencies. They do, however, have a high regard for the quality of advice offered by the school, particularly in connection with entry to higher education. The simulation interview evening held in November of Year 13 gives students valuable experience. This is well supported by local employers and professional people, many of whom are governors. In addition, several Year 12 students take part in a well-planned work placement scheme that is run during half term holidays or during the school enrichment week.
62. In general, the enrichment programme is very good. However, a minority of students express some dissatisfaction with the enrichment opportunities on offer. They assert that while many of the activities are very good, the range of activities is rather limited. They feel that there are too few sporting activities. The school is aware of this, but in the absence of a sports hall and no nearby suitable facilities there is little it can do to remedy the situation in the short term. The school is actively searching for a solution.
63. There is no joint provision of courses with other institutions currently. Discussions are in progress with a nearby school on this issue. There are good relationships with a number of universities. The school is a subscriber to a technology college programme under the auspices of a university within the region.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

64. The school provides a very caring, happy and supportive environment. Parents are pleased with this and say their children like school.
65. The very good provision for the welfare and guidance of pupils is a strength of the school. The high quality of provision reported at the last inspection has been maintained. The vast majority of parents agree that the school is helping their child become mature and responsible. There are sound systems for safeguarding pupils' health and safety. There are regular safety inspections and appropriate action is taken where necessary. Effective first aid arrangements are in place for dealing with accidents and illness.
66. There are good arrangements for dealing with child protection issues. Welfare assistants are kept well informed when there are concerns about a child. There has been additional recent training. Supervision during the lunch period is good. Links with outside agencies such as the school nurse are effective.
67. There are very good procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality. Registers meet statutory requirements but unexplained absences are not always followed up quickly enough. There is effective liaison with the educational welfare service.

68. Very good arrangements for promoting very high standards of behaviour, including measures to prevent bullying, have been developed after consultation with parents, staff and pupils. There is a simple code of conduct and rules for pupils. There are clear sanctions, in stages, for dealing with misbehaviour. Most pupils are very well self-disciplined and there is very little need for staff intervention in applying these procedures.
69. The school has good procedures in place to track pupils' personal and social development. Staff know the children well and the school is effective in the manner by which it sets targets for improvement. Whilst this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, it does not always actively involve the pupils in the understanding of their own learning through self-assessment and evaluation.
70. There are good policies and procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress and performance. The senior management team uses the results of standardised tests to set targets for pupils' achievement in National Tests at Year 9 and in public examinations at Year 11. For pupils aged 14 to 16 the school records their typical grades on a centralised record keeping system. Each individual's performance is assessed regularly, and progress recorded centrally.
71. The progress of pupils aged 14 to 16, is also monitored carefully through the pastoral system and by individual subject teachers. Individual teachers identify those who are making unsatisfactory progress and support their improvement. These arrangements have addressed very successfully issues of underachievement, particularly amongst a small number of the boys. Arrangements to record the progress of pupils aged 11 to 14 are less well developed with a greater reliance on individual teachers monitoring pupils' progress
72. The effectiveness of schemes of work is reviewed within the meetings of subject departments but the link between such assessments and the adaptation of units of work is not always sufficiently rigorous across all subjects. Few departments maintain up-to-date and comprehensive portfolios of work to illustrate what could be expected of pupils who are working at particular National Curriculum levels, or GCSE or A-level grades.

Sixth Form

Assessment

73. The assessment of standards and procedures for monitoring and supporting students' progress are very good. Senior managers determine the typical grades that students in the sixth form are expected to achieve at A-level, and students regularly review these with their teachers. Most teachers assess students' work regularly and write comments on individual students' work that show them the errors they have made and how they can improve. Teachers are good at modifying their day-to-day and long-term curriculum plans as a result of what they know about students' abilities.

Advice, support and guidance

74. The school achieves very successfully its aim to strike a balance between emphasising academic success and the personal and social development of its students. The tutorial programme is a strong feature and students speak positively of the support they receive when they are applying for courses in higher education. Tutors play an important role in monitoring progress towards university entrance and write detailed references on the achievements of their charges.
75. The educational and personal support of students in the sixth form is very good. They have access to very good information, advice and guidance from sixth form staff and this enables them to make very good progress in their chosen subjects. Information before students start courses is clear and fair and backed by clear impartial advice.
76. Staff know the students very well and ensure help is available, as they need it. Students confirm that support is effectively given when personal problems arise. The support given to students whose results fall below expectations is thorough and sensitive.
77. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good overall. However unexplained absences are not always followed up quickly enough.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

78. Parents consider this a very good school. They are very pleased, overall, with what the school provides and achieves. Students enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it.
79. Most of the concerns raised by a minority of students in the questionnaire are not supported by inspection findings. The students value the advice and guidance offered within school concerning future career and study options. Their concerns relate to aspects of provision that lie beyond the school and were not part of this inspection.
80. The concerns raised by parents in the previous inspection report on the issue of homework have been successfully addressed. Those relating to the lack of sports facilities have not, although it continues to be identified in the school development plan and the governors are working closely with the headteacher to bring about improvements.
81. The vast majority of parents attend consultation evenings and a good number help with school trips. There is a home-school agreement which all parents sign prior to admission to the school. The vast majority of parents support very effectively their child's learning at home.
82. The quality and frequency of information provided for parents are very good. Heads of year are in regular contact with parents and act as focal points for any concerns they may have. The school has, however, identified the need to survey parents for their views more frequently than at present.
83. There are regular newsletters, a governors' annual report and a prospectus, all of which are of high quality and meet fully the statutory requirements. The end-of-year academic reports are very good and helpful to parents in identifying their child's strengths and weaknesses. The reports also contain realistic future targets for pupils to aspire to. A small number of parents, however, are not happy with the present arrangements of having to wait until the following term to be able to discuss the contents of the report with staff. The school is addressing this concern.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

84. A shared commitment to high standards is the hallmark of the school's very successful leadership and management. The headteacher provides very good leadership, maintaining high standards, further improving examination results and managing change most prudently. The strengths and values of the school's long-standing and successful traditions are in this way combined with a readiness to adapt and implement successfully local and national initiatives. The commitment to excellence is accompanied by a readiness to challenge the school community to do even better. The headteacher communicates very clearly the school's priorities and future direction and leads his senior management team with consummate skill and highly effective delegation. The very thorough procedures and policies to manage the school are defined very precisely in the staff handbook. This provides a very clear framework to support consistent practice and expectations. There is a strong emphasis on promoting the school in the wider community. This has further contributed to the growth in the size of the school since the last inspection.
85. The senior management committee provides very good leadership. Its membership has remained constant since the last inspection and this has ensured a good degree of continuity in the management of change and in setting a consistent level of expectation. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and the quality of teamwork is high, particularly in combining the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of academic standards with the very well led and managed arrangements for pastoral care, including those for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs.
86. The school development plan (SDP) provides a sound framework to monitor the quality of current provision and to improve it further. Priorities are well defined and of a manageable number. The governors have determined that the Technology College Plan remains a separate planning document but in practice its implementation is well integrated with the broader SDP. Progress is monitored rigorously and governors are kept fully informed of any objectives that are not being met. This provides governors with a very clear picture of where the school is succeeding and where it needs to improve further. Subject development planning is generally less well documented and does not yet provide a sufficiently thorough means by which to measure performance and quality of provision.
87. The quality of leadership and management of subject departments is good. It ranges from excellent to satisfactory. Excellent leadership over the last two years has transformed provision in religious education and managed most successfully the introduction of citizenship. The strongest leadership feature is the very high level of subject expertise that has a considerable impact on the consistently high standards achieved in nearly all subjects and the generally good quality of day-to-day organisation and communication within departments. This provides a good balance of informal communication and regular, minuted meetings. There are also very well established arrangements for each subject leader to present an annual report to governors. These contribute well to the school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance. The links between related subjects, particularly in the sciences and modern languages, are not as strong as they should be. The quality of the curriculum is generally well monitored through regular departmental meetings but some heads of subject are reluctant to monitor and evaluate the teaching of their colleagues. Overall, this responsibility relies too heavily on the leadership of the headteacher and his deputies.

88. The provision for pastoral care is very well managed, including exemplary arrangements to introduce pupils to their new school in Year 7. Heads of year provide very good leadership to their teams of form tutors, most of whom provide very good continuity of care between Years 8 and 11. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils who are gifted and talented is very good.
89. The partnership between the headteacher and his governors is very strong. The governors' very high level of professional expertise and long-standing commitment provide a powerful additional resource to the school. Their commitment to shaping its future direction is exemplary. A very well informed, mutual understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses ensures that the school community is regularly challenged to do still better. The governors fulfil well many of their major statutory responsibilities, particularly in financial matters and in monitoring the school's performance. However, statutory responsibilities are not fully met in the provision for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, the provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11, religious education in the sixth form and for aspects of the music curriculum in Years 7-9. Through its very well managed committees the governors contribute very effectively to the school's strategic development. Their foresight and skilful financial management have enabled the school to achieve considerable improvements to its facilities.
90. The quality of financial planning is very good. Financial controls are secure and there has been a prompt response to the small number of technical issues raised in the most recent auditor's report. The governing body provides a high level of additional expertise to the school's financial management. The balances carried forward at the end of the last financial year, almost five per cent of the total budget, were higher than is usually recommended but they were part of planned longer-term expenditure. The age and condition of the school's buildings warrant such longer-term prudent financial management. The organisation of the budget defines clearly how specific funds, including those linked to its technology college status, are allocated. The Technology College plan provides a very clear link between objectives, funding and intended results. Financial planning is generally well linked to the priorities of the SDP but is not documented with the same degree of detail.
91. The school applies the principles of best value very well. It consults regularly with parents about how well it is doing, has most thorough arrangements to evaluate achievement in examinations and National tests by each subject, including the monitoring of the results of each teaching group and is competitively alert to its position in national performance league tables. The school sets particularly challenging targets to achieve progress within the national threshold arrangements. The principles of best value are applied equally carefully to financial expenditure decisions.
92. The school deploys its resources very well. It is fully staffed with experienced and well-qualified teachers. There is a very good match between teachers' subject expertise and the needs of the curriculum. The school has no difficulty recruiting staff, many of whom spend many years at the school. Stability and continuity are therefore strengths but the school also seeks to widen the range of expertise when vacancies arise. Newly appointed staff are well supported and there is an appropriate system in place to induct those who have just qualified as teachers. Arrangements for performance management are good overall but heads of subject need to be more fully involved in the evaluation of performance within their departments. The arrangements are improving individuals' confidence to evaluate performance with a strong emphasis on 'value-added' measures. The links with the school's strategy for professional development are increasingly well defined with a shift towards extending the range of teaching and learning methods and improving skills in self-evaluation. The contribution made by the

school's support staff is very good overall, including highly efficient administrative support that ensures the smooth day-to-day running of the school, and very good technical support in science.

93. The expenditure on learning resources is lower than in many schools and the library facilities remain far too small for a school of this size. The quality of books and materials is generally good and these resources are well looked after. The much improved provision for ICT is starting to have a significant impact on standards in several subjects.
94. The accommodation is well maintained and sufficient to meet the essential requirements of the National Curriculum. The quality of displayed work is better than is often seen in secondary schools nationally. However, some unsatisfactory aspects of provision that are outside the direct control of the school create significant pressures. Storage space for resources is severely limited, particularly in art and design. The specialist facilities for physical education, science and technology are below the recommended level. The number of classrooms is broadly in line with the recommended level but many are significantly smaller than those found in most secondary schools. Despite these significant disadvantages, standards remain high and pupils are highly motivated. Teachers manage the pupils' learning very well despite the difficulties that are created by such lack of space.

Sixth Form

Leadership and management

95. Leadership and management are very good. The work of the director of the sixth form is valued highly by teachers, students and parents. Governors are very much involved in the life and development of the sixth form and they play an important role in the annual evening of simulation interviews. Pastoral and academic oversight of students' performance are very well managed. The referral system, comprising liaison between the director of sixth form, the two heads of year, form tutors and subject teachers, ensures that areas for concern are confronted on a regular basis and that students' success in all its forms is recognised and celebrated.
96. Performance management procedures are good and are used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is a detailed analysis of examination results and the reasons for differences in performance are examined. Moreover, the professional development of staff is a strong feature and has played a seminal role in improving students' attainment since the last inspection.
97. The sixth form is cost effective and is not only popular with its own students, but is becoming increasingly attractive to those in other schools. The school is not afraid to challenge its provision and is keenly aware of its performance against similar institutions. Strategic planning is a strength and there is a clear vision for future development. Reflection on performance is implicit and the school recognises that accommodation for students' private study is at a premium. Furthermore, it is aware that closer consideration of the different ways in which students learn and the delivery of teaching methods to meet their individual learning styles are essential if improvement is to be continued and high standards are to be maintained.

Resources

98. Overall, there is good provision of books and equipment and many students make good use of the Internet to supplement their learning. However, the very limited space for private study and research within school, particularly involving the use of computers, remains a significant area for further improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

99. Bacup and Rawtenstall is a very good school that achieves very high standards. To improve the quality of its provision still further the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Increase the range and frequency of opportunities for pupils to reflect upon, talk about and make their own assessment of their work by:
 - sharing learning objectives fully at the start of lessons;
 - encouraging pupils to talk about their work, in particular how they overcome difficulties in their learning;
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to identify for themselves what they do well and where they need to improve;
 - using marking to establish a dialogue with the pupil about how their work might improve.(Paragraphs: 25, 34, 36, 41, 69, 121, 133, 134, 178, 182, 183, 202)
- (2) Improve the role of heads of subjects in monitoring and evaluating the performance of their department by:
 - setting measurable targets in subject development plans;
 - defining the criteria for success more explicitly in terms of standards and quality;
 - increasing their involvement in the analysis of departmental data in order to identify areas for further improvements in performance;
 - providing more opportunities for heads of subject to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through direct observation of lessons.(Paragraphs: 86, 87, 92, 122, 136, 147, 179, 187, 192)
- (3) Increase the amount of time allocated for lessons in citizenship and personal social and health education by:
 - reviewing the current allocation of time to each subject in Years 10 and 11;
 - identifying an opportunity for such lessons each week within the timetable cycle.(Paragraphs: 52, 53, 160)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve accommodation and resources, including the library, to support students' personal research and independent study by:
 - reviewing current facilities;
 - further developing facilities within subject areas;
 - further developing computerised research facilities.(Paragraphs: 30, 97, 98, 280)
- (2) Further improve opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills by:
 - identifying the need and opportunities to teach these skills in each course;
 - identifying clearly in schemes of work when, how and at what level particular skills will be taught;
 - monitoring individual students' levels of skill and progress in the development of their ICT skills.(Paragraphs: 20, 216, 218, 223, 228, 274, 276, 283, 286)

- (3) Improve the provision for religious education, to meet statutory requirements by:
- identifying timetabled and planned provision to meet fully the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus;
 - comparing planned arrangements with schools in similar circumstances.

(Paragraph 60)

In addition, the inspection team recommends that the governors, headteacher and senior staff give consideration to the following when drawing up their action plan:

- opportunity for all pupils on a daily basis to participate in a collective act of worship;
- the development of investigative skills in the teaching of mathematics and ICT;
- the numbers of pupils who continue the study of two modern languages after Year 9;
- assessment procedures to record pupils' overall progress in Years 7-9;
- provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11;
- provision for the teaching of singing in all of Years 7-9;
- the timing of the annual school reports in the summer term.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Latin

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership of the department
- Very good teaching leading to very good learning
- The teacher has a very good relationship with the pupils, who are interested, committed to the subject and have excellent attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

The school needs to consider:

- Greater continuity of the study of Latin through Key Stage 3, and
- The provision of a course on Classical Civilisation for AS/A2 sixth form students.

100. Pupils study Latin for one year in Year 7 as part of their introduction to the study of languages. They can continue their study with lessons after the school day in Years 10 and 11. Students in the sixth form can attend these lessons.
101. Standards at Year 7 are broadly in line with those found in the small number of schools nationally that offer Latin. Pupils achieve well because they are very well taught and they show excellent attitudes in lessons. In the GCSE results 2002, the percentage of A*-C grades and of A*/A grades were both in line with national averages. Achievement is good with most pupils reaching or exceeding their target grades.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Very good subject knowledge ensures that lessons are well planned, develop at a brisk pace and have a good variety of teaching and learning styles. Pupils are very well motivated and a large amount of work is completed in the time available. They enjoy their work with each other and with their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Effective questioning towards the end of the lesson shows that the pupils meet individual outcomes set at the beginning of the lesson and therefore make good progress.
103. Homework is regularly set and used as an opportunity for further research and investigation, reinforcing learning.
104. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are generally very good and at times excellent. They show a strong interest in the subject and maintain a very good level of concentration in their lessons. The relationship between the teacher and pupils is excellent.
105. Leadership and management are very good overall. There is a very good ethos for learning. The rooms used for Latin are enhanced in appearance by displays of pupils' work. There is some evidence of a growing use of ICT.

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

106. This voluntary activity makes a very good contribution to pupils' and students' personal and social development. The popularity of the scheme is evident from the large proportion of older pupils in the school who participate. One third of Year 10 pupils are

embarking on their Bronze Award, 16 have progressed to the Silver Award this year and a further 16 students are working towards their Gold Award.

107. Pupils report that they feel an increased sense of independence and confidence as they move through the scheme. They recognise the generous, voluntary contribution of their teachers and parents and feel it is a positive addition to the school's range of extra-curricular activities. It boosts their confidence and encourages co-operative working, particularly in expedition work. The Scheme gives pupils a wider perspective of life and society when they are working with other groups outside the school. Pupils with special needs participate fully and are particularly successful in the expedition activity, where they are greatly supported by their friends. Others are equally successful in the skills element, improving and increasing their skills and interest.
108. The four activities, which are the basis of the Award, are designed to show that pupils can participate in and sustain enthusiasm and interest over time. All pupils take part in an expedition which not only improves their practical skills, but also encourages teamwork. They choose an activity which supports a section of their local community. This broadens their perspective of different groups in society. Some pupils and students work with senior citizens, others support young children or those with disabilities. They participate in a physical activity and improve their skills and fitness. One student is improving his orienteering skills. They show that they can select and pursue an interest or hobby. Participants have an eclectic mix of interests from music, ICT and specialised hobbies.
109. The scheme is managed voluntarily and there is a great deal of good will shown by staff and parents in their support of pupils and students taking part. A teacher, who is the designated expedition manager, gives up a substantial amount of his time out of school, not only in training pupils and students for their expedition assessment, but administering the scheme; making sure parents are fully informed about all activities, timetabling events and organising transport. This is particularly true of the expedition element, which takes a good deal of organising with the large numbers of pupils involved. Staff and parents provide transport and accompany expedition groups. The time factor poses problems for the organisers, as all activities must take place after school. The expeditions are very tightly organised to take account of the examination timetable.
110. Considering the very wide range of extra-curricular and sporting activities on offer to pupils and students at the school, it is clear from the number who participate that the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is a popular activity, highly valued by all who participate and an important part of the school's provision for the personal and social development of its pupils.

Links in the community

111. The contribution of the community to pupils' and students' learning is very good. It impacts directly on their personal development as well as their learning and appreciation of the wider world outside of school.
112. The school has continued to be an integral part of the local community and highly regarded by the residents since the last inspection. Pupils from Years 10 and 11 are actively involved in visiting the elderly and a large number of pupils from Year 10 are responsible for finding their own work experience placements. Sixth Form students gain valuable work experience in local primary schools on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

113. Pupils help at a local Church mission for the elderly and the unemployed in the area. Some sixth form students help as mentors at a local primary school with pupils who are experiencing difficulty with literacy skills. The school is engaged with the North East Lancashire Business Partnership and through its master classes helps develop design and technology, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum at local primary schools. The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme results in a number of links with the community such as the police, lifeguards, charity shops and environmental work with the Rossendale Groundwork Trust.
114. Effective links have been developed with a number of higher education institutions across the country including the University of Manchester for English, Manchester Metropolitan University for history and Huddersfield University for music.
115. The recent appointment of a Development Director has secured the interest of over 60 businesses to help the school and its pupils. Work experience is successfully arranged for all Year 10 pupils. Local businesses give valuable advice on interviewing techniques to the sixth form and are very successful in advising the Year 10 young enterprise company who are currently involved in some very innovative business ventures. The school offers short ICT evening classes to employees from local companies and a large number have attended.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	138
	Sixth form	77
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	8	54	53	21	2	0	0
Percentage	6	39	38	16	1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	5	42	25	5	0	0	0
Percentage	9	54	31	6	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	777	451
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30	12

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	6

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	4.5
National comparative data	7.8

School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	95	85	180

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	94	94
	Girls	83	85	85
	Total	178	179	179
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	93 (93)	99 (99)	99 (97)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	95	95
	Girls	85	85	85
	Total	180	180	180
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	96 (93)	100 (100)	99 (93)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	87	63	150

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	86	87	87
	Girls	62	63	63
	Total	148	150	150
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	99 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	62.8
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13) 2002

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	90	98	188
	Average point score per candidate	332 (334)	344 (303)	338 (318)
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	N/A	N/A

		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	90	98	188	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	332	344	338	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate				N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1175	29	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
31	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.23

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	279

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28.7
Key Stage 4	24.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year 2001-2002	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3,543,618
Total expenditure	3,372,331
Expenditure per pupil	2,780
Balance brought forward from previous year	86,808
Balance carried forward to next year	258,089

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1228
Number of questionnaires returned	476

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	38	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	45	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	51	12	2	1
The teaching is good.	49	46	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	45	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	35	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	14	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	53	11	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	58	36	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	36	3	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	43	7	2	7

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

- Results in the National tests at Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at Year 11 are very high.
- Achievement is very good because the pupils' attitudes are very positive and their behaviour exemplary.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and to form independent judgements on what they read, hear and see.
- Opportunities for pupils to comment on and evaluate each other's work.

116. Standards on entry to the school are very much higher than those usually found in most schools nationally. Results in the National tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high, as they had been for the last four years, and broadly in line with those for grammar schools. They were broadly similar to those obtained in mathematics and science. Nearly all pupils achieved Level 6 and more than one fifth achieved Level 8. This represents very good achievement and a significant improvement on the results at the time of the last inspection. The boys did particularly well, improving still further on their performance in recent years.
117. The proportion of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in the 2002 GCSE English Language examination was very much higher than the national average, with approaching three-quarters of the pupils achieving grades A*/A. The girls did better than the boys at the highest grade, but overall there was no significant difference in the overall results. These represented very good achievement in terms of the progress made over the two years of the course. They are also an improvement on the standards attained at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils performed equally well in the English Literature examinations, attaining very high standards. Although the girls outperformed the boys, the gap was less than the national difference.
118. The high standards of work seen during the course of the inspection reflect the high standards attained in the national tests and examinations. Pupils make significant learning gains and their levels of achievement in the subject at Year 9 and Year 11 are very good. They are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are able to write in a range of styles for varied purposes and their extended writing is well organised, fluent and accurate. They have an extensive vocabulary and a good command of sentence grammar. By the end of Year 11 pupils' analytical skills and literary appreciation are well developed and this is reflected in their writing on the set texts. In the work they did on John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men', pupils were able to track and explain the complexities of the human relationships and the interplay of emotions. They displayed a mature approach to the issues of prejudice and isolation explored in the novel. Good use is made of computers to improve the quality of writing by drafting and revising work before presenting it in varied forms. Year 7 pupils made good use of such technology to write about characterisation in Philippa Pearce's novel 'Tom's Midnight Garden' and then to illustrate their work using computer graphics. The use of such technology was an issue at the last inspection and pupils are now far more proficient in using computers in their learning.

119. Pupils have very good reading skills. These are much higher than found in most schools nationally. They are quick to understand and can infer meaning from what they read. When reading aloud they do so fluently and with good expression and they enjoy the challenge of the increasingly difficult range of texts they encounter. Standards of speaking and listening are also well above the national average. Pupils have a good command of Standard English and know when to use it. Virtually all pupils are confident speakers and can discuss a range of topics with perception and good regard for the opinions of others. There are occasions, however, when their answers to questions are cursory and lacking in depth. Pupils have an understanding of basic drama techniques and use them well when the subject is taught through the medium of English. The progress pupils make throughout the main school in developing the skills of reading, speaking and listening is very good.
120. Pupils learn well and attain high standards because they are intellectually curious and academically ambitious. They are able to assimilate information and tailor it to the requirements of examination questions and because they are schooled in such techniques they perform well at GCSE.
121. The standard of teaching overall is good. All teachers have a secure command of their subject and classes are managed to high standards of discipline. The lessons seen during the course of the inspection were well planned and sequenced and relevant homework was set at appropriate times. Marking is regular and supportive but insufficient guidance is given to pupils on how to improve the standard of their written work. In a minority of the lessons seen, the teaching would have been more effective if greater demands had been made of the pupils. On those few occasions, teachers' questioning was limited to testing recall and failed to challenge pupils to justify their thinking and reflect in depth on their work. The result was that pupils did not answer at length. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, a pupil stated that humour was being used in a piece of persuasive writing but he was not asked to explain its use or the impact of the device on the reader. Teachers do exploit the learning opportunities of allowing pupils to evaluate each other's work and they are asked to respond to the contributions of individuals and make a judgement on the quality of their work. Pupils of high competency respond well to the rigour of such an approach. There were times, however, when teachers did too much of the work themselves and did not encourage pupils to become more independent in their learning. This is an issue for the department to address.
122. The leadership and management of the subject are good. In leadership terms, the newly appointed head of department rightly has as a developmental priority the improvement of pupils' learning through raising the standards of teaching. The challenge he faces is to build on the work of his predecessor and create within the department an open, self-critical but mutually supportive culture where colleagues are willing to share good practice. It is too early as yet for him to have achieved that unity of purpose. There has been marked improvement since the last inspection in the standards attained in national tests and examinations and in pupils' levels of achievement. Further improvements need to be made in on-going assessment, particularly in marking and the information given to pupils on how to improve the quality of their work. The curriculum is well planned and meets statutory requirements. Pupils' spiritual and moral awareness is raised by the nature of the issues they encounter in their reading and discussions. The department has in place an extensive programme of theatre trips and school productions, visiting theatre companies and speakers, and a number of clubs. This provision is extending pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the subject and making a significant contribution to their social and cultural development. Accommodation is inadequate because the small rooms restrict

the range of learning activities teachers can use. Resources, however, are adequate and well managed and the department makes very good use of computer technology in its work.

Literacy

123. Standards of literacy throughout the main school are high. Pupils and students write fluently and accurately and are able to adapt their writing to the demands of different subjects. In the main school pupils were forming their own opinions on scientific issues and then expressing them clearly in writing. This was seen in the Year 8 pupils' writing. It was well researched and presented. The descriptive and evaluative writing done in art and in design technology was of a very high quality and was well above the standard expected nationally.
124. Reading skills are highly developed and in all subjects pupils and students make good use of a wide range of increasingly difficult texts. Standards of speaking and listening are also well above average and contribute significantly to how well pupils and students learn. Listening, in particular, is highly developed and pupils are able to make inferences. All are confident and articulate when speaking and in design technology pupils are able to give formal presentations on their work to others in the class. The only time when pupils were less assured when speaking was when they were answering the teacher's questions in lessons and there were occasions when they were reticent and failed to express themselves at length.
125. Pupils enter the school with good levels of literacy but improve further because of the school's very good provision. Subject areas have taken account of the school's literacy policy when developing their schemes of work and there is a commitment from all teachers to address literacy issues in their teaching and marking. In mathematics, for example, teachers spend time explaining the meanings and spellings of unfamiliar words. Such good practice was also seen in design technology when spelling and grammar were corrected when work was marked. The school has organised training for all staff on developing literacy skills and this will be ongoing. The National Strategy is well led and effectively overseen by a senior member of staff.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve standards well above national averages in the National Tests at Year 9 and GCSE examinations at Year 11.
- Achievement in lessons is very high.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- Very good teaching develops a thorough understanding of the subject.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, pupils have to listen and take notes for too long, and have too few opportunities to work independently and reflect on the quality of their work.
- Opportunities for pupils to review and reflect upon their work within procedures for assessment.
- Opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

126. Standards in mathematics on entry to the school are well above the national average.
127. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were very high and broadly in line with those for grammar schools. They have improved slightly in recent years. There were no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls.
128. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002 were very high compared with the national average. There were no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls.
129. The standard of work seen during the inspection was very high in number and algebra; shape, space and measure; and handling data, and in line with the most recent results in the National Tests and GCSE examinations. There was little evidence of investigative approaches to using and applying mathematics except where this was a requirement for the GCSE examinations.
130. The majority of pupils achieve well above national expectations at Year 9. They can multiply two linear expressions, and solve simultaneous linear equations with two variables. They can calculate the volume and surface area of right prisms, cuboids and compound shapes, and use tree diagrams to calculate the probabilities arising from a combination of two events. There was very little evidence of pupils using investigative methods when using and applying mathematics.
131. The majority achieve high standards at Year 11. Most use algebra with confidence, for example to find the points of intersection of a circle which does not have its centre at the origin. They draw accurately the graphs of trigonometric functions of the form $y=f(ax)+b$, and use vectors and Pythagoras' theorem to solve problems. The standard of coursework that Year 11 pupils submitted for GCSE assessment was in line with results in previous years, but there was very little other evidence of pupils using investigative methods when using and applying mathematics.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Very good subject knowledge and high expectations help pupils to gain very strong foundations of knowledge and understanding at Year 9, upon which they build well thereafter. Much of the work in lessons is challenging, well paced and well planned with clear explanations of mathematical principles and methods. As a result the pupils make very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are excellent. They are highly motivated and nearly all sustain their concentration very well. Relationships with their teachers are very good and they are well supported in lessons. Nearly all concentrate well. Good standards of presentation help most to communicate their understanding clearly. Consequently, they achieve very well. When teachers asked pupils questions they did so in a systematic way that helped pupils understand, and they often asked pupils to explain the reasons for their answers. In the best lessons the pupils were actively involved, there were several changes of pace and activity, and individuals were helped to overcome any difficulty in their understanding.
133. All mathematics teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and review errors with the whole class, but most do not write comments on individual pupils' work to show them how to improve. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to reflect upon and review their own work within the procedures for assessment. Most pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to evaluate the mathematical methods they use. When teachers review with the class whether pupils have answered mathematical problems successfully,

most pupils do not note errors in their mathematical thinking. Only a very few pupils noted their errors and attempted the problem again.

134. In some lessons, pupils' opportunities to work independently were limited because they had to listen to the teacher and take notes for almost the whole lesson. In a few of these lessons, pupils had opportunities for independent work, but this was on subtasks as teachers guided them step by step through whole problems. There were too few opportunities for pupils to tackle whole problems independently.
135. Leadership and management are good. The department's development plans are appropriate. Long term planning for teaching the mathematics curriculum is thorough and sufficiently detailed, and the National Strategy to develop the numeracy of pupils aged 11 to 14 has been adapted effectively to meet the needs of pupils at the school. However, investigative approaches to mathematics are not well integrated into the department's long term plans for teaching. The department has organised attractive displays in mathematics classrooms which include word walls and pupils' work.
136. Overall, monitoring and evaluation of the department's work is satisfactory. The department meets regularly and frequently, and this provides opportunities to discuss day-to-day and longer-term developments. Mathematics teachers monitor the achievements of pupils in the classes they teach, and check that this is satisfactory, so that pupils can be given individual support when this is needed. However, the department does not have a consistent approach to monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils as a whole across each year group in mathematics.
137. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory but the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in mathematics remains underdeveloped.

Numeracy

138. Standards in numeracy are high. Good progress has been made in developing numeracy throughout the curriculum in response to the National Strategy. A staff training day has been held and the school has a numeracy policy which forms a good basis for future development. Its impact is not monitored with sufficient rigour across the school. Not all subject departments make explicit in their schemes of work where mathematical skills might be applied.
139. Pupils apply their numeracy skills in many subjects. This helps them to work with a high degree of accuracy when measuring speed and volume, drawing graphs and interpreting results. In biology, Year 11 pupils confidently explain the probability of children inheriting cystic fibrosis, and in chemistry use their knowledge of algebra to manipulate formulae. In design technology, pupils measure length, time, weight, temperature and angles, and calculate the area of circles and electrical resistance. They use graphs and charts to present information. In geography, pupils are taught the most appropriate graphical methods of presenting statistics and fieldwork findings, and students are taught to use Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, and to test hypotheses using Chi squared.
140. In some subjects, opportunities for pupils to enrich their numeracy skills are not fully developed. For example, in ICT, pupils in years 7 to 9 can use a spreadsheet to generate several types of graphs comparing the number of visitors to the UK and the reasons for their visit, but some of these graphs were not appropriate for discrete data.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- High standards of work at Year 9 and Year 11.
- Excellent subject knowledge and expertise in the very good teaching.
- High expectations that result in very good achievement.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are very positive and contribute much to the very good climate for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements to monitor teaching and learning to identify and disseminate good practice in a more structured way.
- The identification of planned opportunities for literacy and numeracy in schemes of work.
- The wider use of ICT by all teachers and for all year groups.

141. Results in the National Tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high and above average when compared with both other grammar schools nationally and with the pupils' results at Year 6 of primary school. The great majority of pupils achieve above national expectations and about one in six pupils achieved an exceptional performance grade. GCSE results in 2002 were very high. Nearly all gained a grade in the range A*-C, of whom approaching two-thirds achieved grades A*/A: an impressive performance.
142. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with those results at Year 9 and at Year 11. Nearly all pupils articulate their scientific knowledge clearly and apply it confidently and accurately. They are able to seek clarification to ensure confidence in their interpretation and understanding of the material being studied. For example in a Year 11 lesson on food chains pupils were able to explain in some detail their understanding of energy transfer. They took the debate beyond what was required by the syllabus and through debate accepted or rejected argument, thus gaining a clearer insight into the problem of energy loss. In a Year 7 lesson pupils carried out an investigation of a crime scene to identify the perpetrator. They designed an investigation, applied the concept of a fair test and recorded the outcomes accurately.
143. Achievement by both the boys and the girls is very good at Year 9 and Year 11 because nearly all pupils are very attentive. They contribute well to discussions, interpret information logically and use prior learning and their own knowledge gained from research to enhance their understanding and the quality of the debate. Good opportunities are provided to all pupils to develop the skills of using a variety of writing styles to record and illustrate their learning.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Almost all teaching was good or better and in around two thirds of lessons it was very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lesson plans are well linked to the scheme of work and include a clear set of challenging objectives. The pace of lessons is invariably good. Although the teaching styles used in most lessons did not vary a lot the quality of delivery maintained pupils' interest well. Pupils' concentration was at least good and often very good in virtually all lessons. Very good teaching resulted from matching the approaches used to the needs of the pupils and encouraged them to think beyond the basic objectives. They were encouraged to formulate their own ideas and hypotheses and to explain them. The use of accurate measuring, observation and recording of results was expected as a matter of course. Group work was a positive feature as were high expectations and a brisk pace. This was well illustrated in a

lesson investigating a healthy diet where very good use of multimedia science enhanced pupils' opportunity to analyse their own diet and to draw a range of conclusions from their results. Pupils in a Year 11 chemistry lesson had to explain how the empirical formulae from practical results could be obtained and in a physics lesson pupils consolidated their understanding of how to present information obtained in graphical form.

145. The marking of work including homework is consistent with the departmental policy. It is of very good quality being meticulous in both correcting misunderstandings and giving praise. The marks awarded are informative to pupils and together with the teacher comments provide very effective feedback.
146. The provision for gifted and talented pupils, as well as for those with special educational needs is very good. The more competent pupils in Years 7-9 apply their knowledge with a high degree of sophistication and at a very much higher standard than is usually found nationally at Year 9. They are able to formulate hypotheses and conduct a debate of good quality to explore them. They understand the concept of variables and can apply this to a variety of situations. Lower attaining pupils are achieving at least in line with and often above national expectations and their attainment is good.
147. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department together with the teachers in charge of chemistry and physics provide clear leadership and direction to the department. Together they have identified the key areas for development and encourage other members of the department to take on areas of responsibility. This they do well. The management of provision is satisfactory. Day-to-day administration is good and the deployment of specialist teachers is very good. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the three subject departments require still greater co-ordination. Good practice is not yet shared sufficiently. The links between the departmental development plan and the school plan are insufficiently clear. Schemes of work do not make sufficiently explicit reference to the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy. Provision for ICT is good. However, as at the time of the last inspection, its use is inconsistent across different teaching groups.
148. Procedures to monitor the work of the department, including regular departmental meetings, are satisfactory. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' work are well established. The link between assessment and planning needs to be more explicit to ensure clear differentiation in terms of learning objectives.
149. Learning resources are generally good. However teaching space is cramped for the large number of pupils in some classes. The teaching of classes in ordinary classrooms plus one laboratory, which is at some distance from the rest of the department, puts pressure on teachers and technicians and is unsatisfactory. The laboratory technicians are well qualified and provide very good support. The cleanliness of the laboratories and the efficiency of equipment maintenance and delivery are very good and support the department very well.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- High standards and results well above the national average at Year 9 and Year 11.
- Very good teaching which includes the excellent teaching of skills and the very effective use of exemplar material.
- The pupils' excellent creative and intellectual curiosity which results in much thoughtful and original work at Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessing, recording and tracking pupils' progress.
- Greater use of ICT within the art and design area.
- The available space in art rooms.

150. Standards on entry to the school are broadly in line with those usually found nationally at Year 7. Achievement is very good at Year 9 with standards well above average in the statutory teacher assessments in 2002. The girls did significantly better than the boys. Attainment by girls at Level 6 and above was much better than boys in these years. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. Almost all pupils obtained grades A*-C, nearly half achieving A*/A grades. These results represent very good achievement.
151. Pupils achieve very well because they make rapid improvements in their drawing skills and in their ability to use line and tone to produce good observational drawings of ordinary everyday objects. The teaching of these basic skills is excellent. Pupils learn very well how to be both methodical and imaginative, making very good initial research studies in their visual diaries and then using them confidently to develop their own ideas. In one Year 7 lesson observed, pupils were exploring their own ideas about the environment through three-dimensional models that they were making. These models were then decorated using natural, organic shapes. The pupils were very interested in this task, worked extremely hard and at a very good pace. Many achieve well because they develop very good levels of sustained concentration as they get older. At Year 9 the majority show that they have acquired the capacity to think and learn for themselves and are beginning to work with some degree of independence. They demonstrate real understanding of the design process with a very good understanding of colour theory. In one lesson pupils made excellent use of line, tone and colour to produce very good designs for small box containers.
152. Standards at Year 11 are well above those usually found nationally. Approximately one third choose to study the subject at GCSE. They achieve very well as they build further on the very good levels of skill reached at Year 9. Many of the more competent pupils bring more personal interpretations and insights that give a highly original quality to their visual diaries. Nearly all are highly motivated to organise their own working arrangements in lessons. The two-dimensional studies in their visual diaries show clearly that they are developing the self-confidence to explore their own ideas and concepts. Basic skills in drawing, painting and in the manipulation of various craft materials are very good. Many pupils demonstrate a high level of technical skill as they experiment with a wide range of media and materials such as pencils. Some are beginning to produce interesting images using computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good or better. Very good subject knowledge contributes to the excellent teaching of basic skills across a range

of art, craft and design specialisms. Planning before lessons is very good. This ensures that clear objectives are set for pupils at the start of each lesson. Very good use is made of exemplar material, such as photographic images and paintings by a variety of artists and photographers. They are very well used to engage pupils' interest and set challenging levels of high expectation. Tasks set usually made high demands upon pupils' creative and intellectual abilities. It is the strong link between teaching skills and promoting thoughtful responses that provides the strong foundations for pupils' very good achievement. Teaching methods enable pupils to learn quickly and effectively. These range from whole group work to helpful support for individual pupils. Learning is very good and pupils respond positively to very good teaching. They enjoy the subject and are prepared to persevere and work with sustained concentration over time to acquire those skills that will enable them to communicate effectively.

154. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a very clear view of how she would like to see the department develop. She has created a very positive working environment for both teachers and pupils. Schemes of work have been improved recently and greater effort has been made to relate these directly to lesson plans. The need to identify more accurately the pupils' standards on entry to the school has been acknowledged. Assessment procedures need to provide more regular feedback to pupils so that they are fully aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve and meet their targets. The head of department recognises the importance of ICT within the teaching of art and design skills and is making every effort to encourage more pupils to make use of the facilities that are currently available in the art rooms.
155. Accommodation is unsatisfactory at present. There are two multipurpose art and design studios but these are inadequate to serve the needs of large groups of thirty pupils. This inevitably is having an impact on the range, diversity and scale of work that pupils can produce in such cramped conditions.
156. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching overall is now very good. The quality and range of the curriculum is much improved with good opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas across a wide range of media and activities.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management is excellent.
- Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress is very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in practical aspects of citizenship both inside the school and in the local community are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The timetabling of citizenship within the PSHE curriculum gives very limited time for the subject for all pupils.

157. Standards at Year 9 and at Year 11 are well above those that pupils nationally are expected to reach. In lessons seen on rights and responsibilities, pupils express their views on the UN Charter of Human Rights, showing good understanding and the ability to appreciate a balanced view. The analysis of written work shows more competent

pupils are beginning to write clearly and precisely on a range of issues. They write thoughtful pieces on crime and punishment, environmental and political issues. They are building up good portfolios of work. Outside the classroom the system of year councils allows them to participate in elections of form representatives and contribute to agendas for meetings. Pupils are involved in a wide variety of events which provide the opportunity for them to take or show responsibility: teambuilding events, senior citizens' Christmas party, participating in tutor group assemblies and fund raising activities.

158. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow a GCSE course of study on 'religion and society'. This includes the key elements of citizenship. In lessons they are beginning to show a keen awareness of political issues and current affairs. In one lesson there was a lively debate on whether we live in a democracy or a benign dictatorship. Discussion moved on to the merits of giving the vote to sixteen-year-olds. Some sophisticated arguments were presented, the majority for, but some against. Older pupils show good knowledge and understanding of political language. They are very able in describing the electoral process, the differences between general elections and referenda. Some of them have very strong views on the responsibility of people in a democracy to vote. This was backed up by the assertion that we have no right to complain if we do not participate in the democratic process.
159. Teaching and learning are good overall and in one lesson they were very good. Lessons are mostly well planned to allow pupils to express their views to the teacher and each other. Good opportunities are provided for them to balance evidence and argue their case and to be challenged to make very difficult choices about real situations. In a very good lesson, the subject matter, although new to them, was well received by the pupils who were immediately engaged and well motivated. Because the teacher treated the views pupils expressed with appropriate respect, they responded with confidence and assurance. In good lessons the management of discussion is effective because teachers ensure that all pupils are included, and their views listened to with consideration. Well planned teaching methods enable pupils to work well in groups, taking notes and feeding back their ideas to the class, confident that they will be listened to. In less successful lessons, resources were not explored in sufficient detail and pupils did not develop their ideas fully or in significant depth.
160. The leadership and management for the subject are excellent. The head of department for religious education and PSHE has taken on the new element of citizenship in the curriculum with total commitment and enthusiasm. She has an excellent vision of how the subject should support pupils' personal and social development and how they may become even better informed citizens. She ensures, through very good subject planning, that aspects of citizenship are presented imaginatively and in stimulating ways. Assessment is particularly thorough and well thought through. She provides every pupil with the opportunity to evaluate each lesson at its end. The information gathered provides excellent data for future planning of the curriculum. Citizenship shares the PSHE curriculum and is taught as a discrete subject. However, limited provision is given to the subject on the timetable. Time allocated is insufficient to cover in depth the full range of topics which will help pupils to become better informed citizens.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Teaching is consistently very good; lessons are structured well and proceed at a good pace.
- Standards at Year 9 and at Year 11 are very high when compared to national averages.

Areas for improvement

- A sharper focus needs to be given to the moderation of pupils' work in each year.
- Analysis of internal/external data to set targets to inform planning, teaching and to raise standards further.
- The management procedures for the department.
- The quality of the accommodation.

161. GCSE examination results in 2002 were very high when compared to the national average. The results were lower in systems and control. A number of pupils achieved outstanding results in food technology. Overall, GCSE results in 2002 indicated satisfactory achievement at Year 11. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show that standards are very high when compared to the national average. Girls achieve higher standards than boys.
162. Standards at Year 9 are well above those found in most schools nationally. A high proportion achieve standards that are very much higher than those that pupils nationally are expected to reach. Many are very enthusiastic and well motivated by the activities provided because learning is relevant. They enjoy their work and want to be successful. They learn about a wide range of materials and they use a good range of small and large equipment competently and safely, for example, when making a mechanical toy in Year 8. They demonstrate good graphical skills in Year 8 when designing packaging for food products. They are proud of new products they have developed in food technology lessons and in resistant materials. Pupils plan their work and evaluate it objectively against specific criteria and carefully evaluate how well they have worked. Higher levels of attainment are achieved by girls because they manage their learning better, setting themselves targets and priorities, taking more care with their work and producing better quality outcomes.
163. At Year 11, standards are well above those usually found nationally. Pupils have sufficient confidence, knowledge and understanding to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs and specifications. Pupils work very well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. They use ICT very well, particularly to present their work but also when they are designing and manufacturing products. Pupils' design work and practical work show very good planning skills and a very good level of craftsmanship in their execution. They critically analyse their work well. Pupils, regardless of gender, achieve well because teachers expect them to learn well.
164. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage pupils very well. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are always good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. Lessons are well

planned and the well designed worksheets contribute to a clear record of pupils' individual progress. Pupils are very proud of what they achieve. 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 pupils can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In lessons there is a collaborative approach to learning that encourages pupils 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. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames. The use of computers is written into schemes of work and teachers use ICT effectively during lessons. There is an emphasis on health and safety during lessons. There is a very good level of display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas.

165. Leadership and management are satisfactory. This has resulted in satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is a clear view of how the department should be developed but documented development planning is sketchy and departmental meetings are not used sufficiently well to discuss standards and the quality of provision. The head of department is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. Currently, the overall management of assessment is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient feedback to the pupils about how their work relates to standards nationally and what they need to do improve them further. The use of ICT is well managed, particularly in the provision for computer-aided design and manufacture. The number of rooms available is below that recommended for a school of this size. Some of the rooms available to teach resistant materials are small and the quality of accommodation is poor and sometimes untidy. The food technology room is a very well managed working environment.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average for several years.
- Overall standards of teaching are very good; guidance on coursework methodology is outstanding.
- Pupils achieve very well; their coursework submissions are very good.
- Fieldwork arrangements are excellent.
- Very good leadership and management result in high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistent matching of tasks to the needs of individual pupils.
- Further opportunities to develop pupils' computer skills.

166. Standards are well above those that pupils nationally are expected to reach and achievement is very good at Year 9 and Year 11. The high standards achieved at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. These standards are in line with

both the National Curriculum teacher assessments and performance in the GCSE examinations over the last three years. These have been well above the national average. Relative performance data show that geography is one of the strongest subjects in the school in GCSE examinations. The boys and the girls have performed similarly.

167. Standards at Year 9 are high because the pupils have good map reading skills and produce clearly annotated maps and diagrams. They have, for example, a thorough understanding of models of urban structure, and can test those models against reality, as seen when a Year 9 class were learning about living conditions in Bristol. They use technical vocabulary confidently, have good factual knowledge and a well-developed sense of place. All pupils express themselves clearly, both orally and in writing. Their very good skills in literacy and numeracy help them to communicate accurately and in detail their very good geographical knowledge and understanding.
168. Those who choose to study geography at GCSE maintain high standards at Year 11. All pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. They have, for example, a detailed knowledge of river processes. They apply this knowledge when carrying out their coursework on a local river. In their high quality coursework they test hypotheses and use statistical methods to analyse their gathered fieldwork data. A small number of comparatively less competent pupils can draw accurate graphs of their data, but are less sure in analysing their findings. Nevertheless, the overall standards are well above expectation. As a result of challenging teaching, all pupils are develop good thinking skills.
169. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Occasionally it is excellent. It is better in Years 10 to 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. Pupils' response to this very good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. They behave well in lessons and stay on task. The use of such aids as interactive whiteboards shows pupils the advantages of using ICT to communicate information. Teachers' guidance in the use of a range of resources has a positive effect on learning.
170. An example of excellent teaching, in which pupils were given responsibility for their own learning, was seen in a Year 10 lesson. The teacher set pupils the task of preparing an itinerary for a forthcoming field trip on which the pupils will guide the teachers around an upland area in North Wales. Guidance in fieldwork methodology is a particular strength of the department's teaching.
171. Lessons always start with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling pupils to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. In comparatively less successful lessons, which are still satisfactory or good, there is insufficient matching of tasks to individual pupils' capability. In a small number of lessons, insecure time management results in over long introductions, leaving insufficient time for some pupils to complete tasks before the end of the lesson.
172. Homework is set regularly, providing valuable reinforcement to classroom learning. The marking of work is very thorough and includes helpful comments pointing the way forward for pupils. Teachers are generous in the time they give to helping pupils with their learning outside normal lesson times
173. Leadership and management are very good because the commitment to sustaining high standards is very strong. Many pupils respond very well to the very high expectations and high levels of teaching expertise within the department. Consequently,

it is a very popular subject choice after Year 9. Well-organised fieldwork gives pupils opportunities to enjoy the practical aspects of the subject and to work independently both individually and in small groups. Displayed work illustrates to the pupils the high expectations of their teachers and the standards to which they should strive. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The GCSE results are amongst the best in the school, particularly the proportion achieving A* and A grades.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge has a very positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are highly motivated to learn and have a wide range of skills, in particular their ability to analyse critical sources of evidence.
- Extra-curricular activities are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing, particularly through assessing their work for themselves.
- The cramped conditions in some classrooms.

174. Standards overall are very high and have remained consistently so over time. The statutory teacher assessments in 2002 show that standards are well above those that pupils are expected to reach at Year 9. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 the proportion gaining grades A* to C was very high compared with the national average for all schools and in line with that for grammar schools. Two thirds of pupils achieved A* /A grades, a very high proportion. These results are amongst the best in the school and represent a very good level of achievement.

175. Standards in work at Year 9 are well above those expected nationally. This is because pupils are well motivated to learn and succeed, showing very good retention of knowledge and the ability to apply it to new areas of work. While pupils' attainment levels are high on entry, standards improve still further by the end of Year 9 because pupils have significant confidence in their teachers and are strongly motivated to learn. In a Year 7 lesson the most competent pupils examined sources from the Middle Ages and showed an intelligent approach to a range of tasks, using prior knowledge to decipher contemporary pictures of medieval activities. At Year 9 pupils are extending their research skills in individual studies. Working independently, they use the Internet and library to select appropriate materials for a study on life in the trenches in the First World War. The most competent pupils are producing a very good standard of written work, extending their writing to explain more complex issues of history. They are improving their note-taking skills and use a good range of historical vocabulary.

176. At Year 11 standards are well above those that are expected nationally. The subject is a popular choice at GCSE. Achievement is very good because nearly all pupils have developed the capacity to express themselves fluently in their written work, drawing very effectively on their prior learning. They are well motivated, enthusiastic to learn and make effective efforts to improve their analytical skills. The most competent achieve very high standards of logical analysis in both essays and debate. In a lesson on Lister and the early use of antiseptics, pupils debated the issues surrounding its

introduction. They argued and counter-argued on the basis of their research. They showed a very good understanding of the issues and were able to express themselves cogently and persuasively. Standards of coursework are high. A project on local history showed a very high standard of research, analysis and presentation of a final paper.

177. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has successfully addressed the issues of the need for improved use of ICT for research and the lack of time for delivery of programmes of study in Year 9. Schemes of work are well planned and include all the programmes of study required by the National Curriculum.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The key features are the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, both of which are passed on to the pupils. Planning is very good and the pace of lessons never falters. In very good lessons teachers actively engage in discussion and debate with pupils, drawing out what they know and understand. They challenge and question well, insisting that pupils extend their answers and increase their confidence in articulating their views. In one excellent lesson the teacher used a 'light touch' technique to facilitate a debate. As a result, pupils were able to argue and counter-argue fluently and at length, with minimal intervention. In a few lessons, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge and extend pupils' responses to questions. Relationships within the classroom are very good. Pupils are polite, attentive, listen very well and are very co-operative. They work well together and in debate, respect each other's points of view, whilst rigorously defending their own. Older pupils work well independently on in-depth studies, using the library and ICT effectively to research their work. Homework is used very effectively to extend learning and encourage independent research.
179. Leadership and management are good. Marking of individual pieces of work is effective in informing pupils how they are progressing. Pupils at Years 10 and 11 are all aware of their anticipated grades for GCSE, but some younger pupils are less certain of the levels at which they are working. As yet the department is in the early stages of managing pupils' self-assessment of their work and this needs to be developed more fully. Monitoring of teaching and learning is also an area for development. The department holds regular meetings at which pupils' achievement, standards of work and development of the curriculum are fully discussed. However, the extra dimensions of more frequent observation and sharing of good classroom practice would provide a wider perspective for planning the curriculum and evaluation of pupils' response to teaching styles. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are excellent and very effectively support the work of the department. Resources are good. In some classrooms accommodation is very cramped and this restricts the range of possible teaching styles.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The ambitious, exciting and innovative programme and future plans for Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' high expectations and determination to support individuals.
- The pupils' fluency with a range of applications and their capacity to work independently.
- Improvements in staffing, resources and leadership since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The unsatisfactory provision for and achievement by Years 10 and 11.
- The limited range of teaching methods and styles.
- Opportunities for pupils to collaborate, develop speaking skills and take on responsibilities.
- Setting targets to raise further individual pupils' achievements.

180. On entry at age 11, standards are above national expectations. Over the next three years, pupils make good progress because of an ambitious and well-executed programme of study that prepares them to take a GCSE short course qualification at Year 9. In 2002, three-quarters of them achieved grades A*-C. At Year 9 all pupils can use ICT to structure, refine and present information in different forms and styles for specific purposes and audiences. Their knowledge and skills are well above average and they are very familiar with a wide range of ICT applications. The most competent can set themselves imaginative though realistic problems, such as modelling the effect of fluctuations in currency conversion for a business planning to expand into exporting, and design solutions that combine elements and techniques creatively.
181. At Year 11 standards are broadly in line with those found nationally. Many pupils do not make as much progress as they should after Year 9 because there is no timetabled provision for all in Year 11. Their achievement is, therefore, unsatisfactory. Although they learn valuable new skills in some subjects, the provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 is not coherently planned and does not yet meet statutory requirements. All are competent in word processing and in using the world wide web for research but Year 11 pupils and one quarter of Year 10 pupils have not been taught the elementary skills of creating and manipulating databases. The minority of pupils, mainly boys, who have chosen to take the two-year GCSE short course after school make good progress, and their results are well above average: almost all achieved a half-GCSE grade A*-C in 2002.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In about three-fifths of lessons it was good or better. Although only one member of the team of six teachers is an ICT specialist, all have good subject knowledge to the level at which they are teaching. Good features include good relationships, high expectations, use of electronic whiteboards, pace and support for individuals. For instance, in a single Year 7 lesson on databases, through fast-paced, challenging teaching, pupils learned how to create look-up tables and queries based on varied criteria including Boolean AND and OR functions and to apply them to the databases they had chosen to design. However, there is a limited range of teaching methods and styles, and lesson planning is often sketchy. The use of questioning does not provide effectively for all levels of aptitude; it is rarely targeted at individuals, and opportunities for pupils to experiment and to collaborate, for instance through pair work, group work and whole-class discussion, are rare.

183. In a Year 9 lesson on health precautions, pupils creatively volunteered varied examples of repetitive strain injury in response to the teacher's well-illustrated PowerPoint introduction using the electronic whiteboard. Learning was more limited where teaching was undemanding and the pace was slow. For instance, one Year 7 lesson was devoted almost entirely to pupils painstakingly copying a sheet of data into their computers. In general, pupils have insufficient opportunities to exercise responsibility and initiative, or to practise speaking in a variety of contexts.
184. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good, and they learn how to work independently. They are fluent in negotiating the network and using the space reserved for their own work. They are also experienced in Internet research and the intelligent use of search engines, and the girls especially have note-taking skills of a high order.
185. Teachers assess and monitor pupils' work effectively, but pupils' long-term targets are generally too low, and they do not have short-term goals or regular opportunities to assess the quality of their own and each other's work in order to improve specific aspects for improvement.
186. The teachers are well supported by the two ICT technicians, and the department is well resourced apart from a shortage of printers. Elsewhere in the school, teachers have ready access to computers and software to develop skills for other applications. These opportunities are well used in design technology, particularly for computer-aided design and manufacture, control systems, printed circuit boards and desk top publishing, but are least effectively used in mathematics.
187. Overall, the leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a growing awareness of the department's main strengths and weaknesses, and members of the department collaborate in sharing resources and reviewing effectiveness of the schemes of work at the end of each unit. However, procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are at an early stage of development; there is no departmental handbook to secure consistency across the diverse team, nor a departmental development plan to underpin further improvement. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably the ambitious, exciting and innovative improvements in the programme available to Years 7 to 9 and in standards achieved; the improvement in staffing and leadership, and the greater availability of hardware and software. Pupils' learning of ICT skills in Years 10 and 11 is still not monitored however, even though this was noted in the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very experienced teachers who have very good subject knowledge.
- The well-motivated pupils.
- GCSE results in French.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of overall departmental co-ordination.
- The continuing lack of a coherent suite of teaching rooms.
- Lack of opportunities for pupils to express themselves in the target language.

188. Standards are well above those that pupils are expected to reach nationally at Year 9 and Year 11. The statutory assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average, with virtually every pupil attaining Level 5 and above and substantial numbers gaining levels 6 and 7. GCSE results in modern languages in 2002 were well above average. Those in French were very high with two thirds obtaining grades A*/A. Results in German were also well above the national average but the proportion obtaining grades A*/A was significantly smaller, just over one fifth of the candidates. The results of the small number of those who took GCSE Spanish was above the national average but the range of performance was wider than in the other two languages with almost three-quarters of the candidates obtaining grades A*-C, approximately half of whom obtained grades A*/A.
189. Achievement is good. At Year 9 most pupils have acquired a good foundation of knowledge and skills. They use both past and future tenses well with considerable assurance and accuracy. Standards in German and Spanish are slightly lower at this point because pupils start their study of these languages after the end of Year 7. Many listen accurately to the spoken word when studying a range of simple topics. They write fluently and at length. Teaching methods afford more limited opportunities to speak the language in French and German. As a result, standards and achievement in spoken fluency are lower than in the skills of listening, reading and writing. Those who study Spanish are given challenging opportunities to listen and respond orally to rapid speech.
190. Many pupils make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. This is particularly so in French where very well planned and highly paced, rigorous teaching drives up the number of top grades. Standards in German are lower than they could be because of a lack of rigour in the classroom. No measurable differences were observed between the standards of the boys and the girls. Overall, achievement is good.
191. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The most consistently good feature was the good planning and the high level of the teachers' linguistic knowledge. In many lessons too much of the communication was in English, as was the case at the last inspection. Pupils often had restricted opportunities to express themselves in the target language. Opportunities were missed to follow up the teaching of grammar with classroom dialogue. Pupils generally approach their language learning with enthusiasm and, even when they know they are to drop a language at the end of Year 9, they continue to benefit from their studies.

192. The individual leadership and management of each of the three modern languages is satisfactory. No steps have yet been taken to provide overall leadership and management for the provision of modern languages nor to establish suited accommodation. This restricts opportunities for teamwork, collaborative development of teaching and learning styles and the opportunities to raise standards still further. The monitoring of teaching and learning within the department remains unsatisfactory and there is no consistent set of priorities for the overall further development of modern languages as a whole. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory in terms of improved standards and results but unsatisfactory in terms of the issues raised at the last inspection.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good** in classroom and instrumental tuition work and **very good** in extra-curricular work.

Strengths

- Teaching and pupils' achievement are mainly good and often very good.
- Most pupils show positive attitudes and behaviour is very good.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental tuition is good.
- Teaching and the standards reached in extra-curricular work are very good and bring credit to the school.
- The very good accommodation and good level of resources support learning well.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection in standards, teaching, the curriculum and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils sing insufficiently and irregularly across Year 7 to 9 so that the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met.
- Learning is too keyboard based; pupils make insufficient use of their own or other instruments in classroom work.

193. Standards on entry to the school are very wide ranging. About a quarter of the pupils have not received music lessons in Year 6 but a large majority enters with experience of instrumental tuition and involvement in extra-curricular work in the primary schools. By Year 9 standards have improved and are above average, across a range from Levels 4 to 8 with the majority of pupils working at Levels 5 to 6. A few gifted and talented pupils obtain even higher standards.
194. Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well. They sing appropriately in parts and in tune in Year 7 but sing insufficiently and irregularly after that so that the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met. Instrumental performing skills are suitably developed. Pupils make good use of keyboards but have insufficient opportunity to use their own instruments in class work. Music-reading skills are good and pupils know how to use devices such as sequences and ostinatos and how to improvise in composing. Pupils listen respectfully to recordings and to each other when performing and their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well-known pieces of music, is good. They use technical vocabulary well in appraising.
195. In GCSE work pupils achieve well. Results in recent years have been above average and the 2002 results were above average when compared with all schools Standards in the current Year 10 groups are above average but in Year 11 standards are well above average. Pupils' instrumental skills average over grade 4 in Year 10 and grade 5

in Year 11. Pupils sing accurately with a sense of enjoyment. They show a secure understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative pieces showing good understanding of musical theory. Pupils use ICT well to develop and notate their compositions. Many listen respectfully and appraise accurately, using appropriate terminology. Their general musical knowledge is above average.

196. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is often very good in GCSE lessons. Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to teach confidently when demonstrating, accompanying, directing or conducting. Instructions are clear; pupils understand the objectives and how to achieve them. Planning ensures that learning is well organised, musical and mainly practical. On such occasions the quality of learning is very good. In the best lessons, expectations are high and pupils are provided with a good level of challenge. Occasionally, more could be expected from the most musical pupils. Pupils' learning is very well managed; lessons are orderly and time well used. As a result, relationships are usually very good. Many pupils work productively, and maintain their effort and concentration. Lessons start and proceed briskly but OHP, illustrations and classroom display are not used enough to reinforce learning. However, excellent use is made of the facilities and specialist support to help pupils develop their skills in using musical technology. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' musical vocabulary, literacy and ICT skills. Teachers show pupils clearly how they can improve, as seen when pupils performed variations or blues compositions to the class. Homework is set regularly to extend pupils' learning. Most pupils enjoy music and are very supportive of each other in group work. They are keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school. In GCSE work, attitudes are mature and almost all pupils take advantage of the opportunities in instrumental or voice tuition and extra-curricular work; this strengthens their achievement.
197. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Schemes of work, systems for monitoring and evaluating the subject's performance, planning for the future, assessment and strategies to raise standards are all in place. However, these are under review with a view to developing further pupils' basic musical skills in performing by linking them more closely to their work in composing and listening. Curricular links with primary schools are under-developed and need strengthening to build on their work. The very good music accommodation supports learning well but desks in the main room hamper activities. There is a need for additional computers, stools for keyboard work, larger classroom instruments to enhance creative work, as well as music for the library, OHP and mini-disc facilities. There is insufficient technical support in music, which imposes pressures on the staff, and insufficient time is given to the head of department to organise music and monitor lessons. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in standards, resourcing, teaching, the curriculum and accommodation.
198. Ninety-three girls and sixty-one boys, almost double the national average, receive instrumental or voice lessons from nine visiting teachers. Standards are above average and individual pupils achieve very well in Associated Board and Guildhall examinations up to grade 8. The progress and achievement of pupils are good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. However, most pupils do not have practice books to encourage more regular practice and the individual twenty-minute lessons are too short and waste valuable teacher time when pupils, too often, are absent. Teaching is mainly good and some very good teaching was observed in guitar and brass tuition. The keyboard-focused curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition and tuition makes insufficient impact on classroom work, a weakness the department intends to address. Not all pupils who receive instrumental

tuition support the instrumental activities to develop their ensemble skills. This is a weakness the department intends to address.

199. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is good and includes junior orchestra, junior and senior choirs, string, wind, record and brass ensembles. Standards, achievement and the quality of teaching are very good although the recently reduced lunchtimes are severely affecting these. Attendance by senior pupils not involved in examination work is disappointing. The school promotes regular concerts and other musical events involving large numbers of pupils as heard on CD and seen on video. Groups perform for special events but the use of recorded music in assembly is underdeveloped. Composing and performing workshops in school, visits to musicals and to concerts, for example at Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, and the annual trip to Wales, enhance the curriculum. There has been no staged musical in recent years. Music makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their social and cultural development. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes bring much credit to the school and the department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The physical ability of pupils is effectively developed as the result of very good teachers' knowledge.
- The examination curriculum, procedures and the setting of individual targets are well established.
- The extra-curricular activities programme allows pupils to attain very high standards.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies to ensure all pupils develop a greater understanding of the sporting activities in which they are involved.
- Further development of the assessment procedures and the involvement of pupils in their own assessment.
- The embedding of curriculum policies into the schemes of work.
- The indoor teaching facilities enabling the programmes of study to be balanced more effectively.

200. There are no data available to confirm standards in physical education on entry to the school. Evidence from the inspection indicates they are broadly similar to those usually seen nationally. In statutory assessments at Year 9 standards are well above those usually found nationally. Nearly all pupils achieve the national expectation, Level 5. Approaching three-quarters of pupils nationally do so. At Year 11 approximately one fifth of the year group completed the GCSE course in 2002. Nearly all obtained grades A*-C and well over one third achieved grades A*/A. Results were well above the national average. Standards in lessons are broadly in line with these results. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

201. Achievement at Year 9 and at Year 11 is good. In Year 7 standards in football, basketball and dance are in line with those usually found nationally. As pupils move through the school the standard of games playing ability in basketball and hockey are above national expectations. During Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to make good progress in their practical activities, such as basketball and football, and produce written work that is of a good standard, frequently producing extended answers to

questions set. During extra-curricular activities pupils demonstrate very high standards in netball and high standards in basketball.

202. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and use this to provide pupils with a variety of challenging activities. The pace of teaching in lessons is good and pupils are given time to consolidate their learning and improve their skills. Pupils' learning is often reinforced through the effective review of learning objectives at the end of the lesson. Pupils are not however, involved in their own assessment and they are not set personal targets for their learning. The range of teaching styles does not always fully promote independence or improve pupils' understanding. Opportunities for the observation and evaluation of performances, where pupils give constructive feedback are also restricted. The behaviour of pupils is always very good. They demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, responding well to their teachers and peers. Those with special educational needs also learn and progress well.
203. Leadership and management are good. In particular the examination procedures, programme and resources are very well organised. The extra-curricular provision provides extensive opportunities for all pupils to engage in a range of activities, and very high standards are often attained. All pupils are effectively encouraged and go on to achieve a very high standard, with many teams and individuals reaching regional and national finals. Some aspects of the curriculum need to be developed further, including the planned provision of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT. The indoor teaching accommodation is very limited.
204. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. The time allocation for lessons has increased. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are now being met and the development of an artificial playing surface has significantly improved the outdoor playing facilities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The aims of the locally agreed syllabus are very well met so that pupils use knowledge and understanding of religions to prepare them for dealing with the human issues in adult life.
- The high standards achieved in the GCSE examination at Year 11.
- The very good quality of teaching and learning that develops very good understanding about the shared values of world religions.
- The very positive attitudes of pupils, leading to increasing numbers of those who study A level in the sixth form.
- Excellent leadership and management within the department promoting best practice in teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Consistent quality of learning and planning of tasks to match, challenge and improve the skills of all pupils.
- Pupils using targets for levels of attainment which describe what they need to do.
- Pupils identifying, collecting and using first hand evidence of religions.

205. Standards at Year 9 are much higher than those usually found nationally. Most pupils can consider from a religious, non-religious and personal standpoint the reasons for commemorating the Holocaust, or the Last Supper and debate what lessons people learn from reliving past experiences. At Year 11 standards are very high, with pupils showing awareness of the range of views and practices within religions. Pupils demonstrate an inclusive and mature approach when exploring ethical dilemmas, conflicting views, and competing priorities in human and religious decision making, at the level of exceptional performance in the agreed syllabus. This was reflected in results in 2002 for the short course GCSE completed in one year, when nearly all obtained grades A*-C with approaching two-thirds achieving grades A*/A. These results were well above the national average.
206. On entry to the school standards are broadly in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils are aware of the main religions people can belong to and what this commitment might mean. They make very good progress so that at Year 9 they understand how religions provide shared and differing insights into the nature of human experience. Their developing knowledge of individual religions is not as secure as it should be. They see the value of their studies, and benefit from excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress. All pupils follow a full GCSE course. They draw out particularly well the key points of different beliefs about creation or the sanctity of life but have weaker knowledge and understanding of the distinguishing features and shared traditions of different religions, particularly Islam, Judaism and Christianity.
207. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning in the majority of lessons were very good or excellent. The quality of learning was highest when pupils were given opportunities to use their existing knowledge and suggested web-sites to investigate the significance of baptism in people's lives today. Evidence about Jesus from different sources enabled pupils to talk about their perceptions of his importance in terms of divine and human. Very good specialist knowledge focused pupil discussions about the Holocaust into good use of craftwork to express and articulate ideas. Appropriate tasks and challenging questions highlighted the optimistic and pessimistic nature of pupils' answers about present and past conflict in the world and invited them to evaluate the role of religion in helping people to interpret and reconcile the past. Expected outcomes are not related closely enough to expected levels of attainment to provide pupils with a framework for their progress in learning about religions. Pupils do not collect or identify first hand evidence of religions in the community although their awareness of topical events is very good.
208. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are mainly very good. Learning was best when pupils worked together to debate whether circumstances and a choice of consequences could change the way they applied their moral values. When they were given a range of beliefs to compare and contrast from well-documented sources they could identify questions which were difficult to answer, such as whether to respect the environment if it prevented alleviating human poverty. Weaker learning was seen in lessons dominated by the teacher, requiring all pupils to be passive and to work at the same pace. Pupils' contributions were limited, with the teacher providing any explanations, not moving on when understanding was clear, and requiring all pupils to record the same work in their books. Relationships and the management of pupils were always good and are reflected in the very positive attitudes of pupils. Marking and monitoring are done regularly and data used very well.

209. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department promotes high standards, is increasing numbers in the sixth form, and has introduced a full GCSE course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, although the teaching time for this is now less than for other subjects. She leads by example in modelling good teaching based on planning for pupil outcomes, and providing good practice in assessment. Achievement of pupils is monitored through their own work linked to the quality of the teaching they receive. Courses have been changed to make them more relevant to all pupils in preparing them for the adult world, to boys and girls, and to pupils of different religious backgrounds, who achieve equally well. Textbooks are up to date, but more are needed in the sixth form. Artefacts, videos and other first hand evidence of religions are insufficient and impact on the quality of pupils' understanding. Outings and the use of visitors are not used to enrich pupils' experience of religions. The head of department is a recent appointment and the situation she inherited was one with significantly weak features. Compared with the last inspection when the school had good features in religious education, improvement has been good.

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

In the inspection 15 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 2002. No validated data is currently available nationally to make comparisons with other sixth forms.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	63	86	N/A	49	N/A	39.36	N/A
Biology	69	91	N/A	29	N/A	36.52	N/A
Chemistry	61	85	N/A	33	N/A	34.09	N/A
Physics	20	75	N/A	20	N/A	31.5	N/A
Technology Food	14	57	N/A	26	N/A	22.14	N/A
Technology Graphics	15	73	N/A	7	N/A	21.33	N/A
Business Studies	38	84	N/A	16	N/A	29.47	N/A
Economics	21	95	N/A	43	N/A	40.95	N/A
Computing	42	64	N/A	24	N/A	26.66	N/A
Physical Education	19	100	N/A	37	N/A	39.47	N/A
Art	32	99	N/A	66	N/A	49.37	N/A
Music	11	73	N/A	27	N/A	30.00	N/A
Drama	28	100	N/A	36	N/A	40.71	N/A
Geography	70	93	N/A	51	N/A	42.14	N/A
History	53	96	N/A	53	N/A	42.45	N/A
Religious Studies	19	89	N/A	47	N/A	38.94	N/A
Sociology	39	95	N/A	38	N/A	38.20	N/A
Psychology	110	95	N/A	54	N/A	43.72	N/A
English Language	58	95	N/A	45	N/A	40.00	N/A
English Literature	22	100	N/A	73	N/A	51.36	N/A
English Language and Literature	32	100	N/A	19	N/A	38.75	N/A
French	14	100	N/A	86	N/A	52.14	N/A
German	8	100	N/A	63	N/A	48.75	N/A

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	10	100	N/A	61	N/A	92	N/A
Biology	36	100	N/A	50	N/A	90	N/A
Chemistry	29	100	N/A	52	N/A	88	N/A
Physics	24	100	N/A	58	N/A	92	N/A
Technology	1	100	N/A	0	N/A	60	N/A
Business Studies	34	100	N/A	21	N/A	72	N/A
Economics	10	90	N/A	40	N/A	78	N/A
Computing	11	100	N/A	55	N/A	89	N/A
Physical Education	20	100	N/A	55	N/A	91	N/A
Art	18	100	N/A	50	N/A	94	N/A
Music	3	100	N/A	66	N/A	93	N/A
Drama	17	100	N/A	35	N/A	80	N/A
Geography	57	100	N/A	61	N/A	94	N/A
History	41	98	N/A	51	N/A	87	N/A
Religious Studies	6	83	N/A	50	N/A	77	N/A
Sociology	46	100	N/A	65	N/A	94	N/A
Psychology	71	99	N/A	58	N/A	92	N/A
English Language	33	97	N/A	27	N/A	76	N/A
English Literature	9	100	N/A	44	N/A	89	N/A
English Language and Literature	29	100	N/A	62	N/A	96	N/A
French	9	56	N/A	11	N/A	40	N/A
German	4	100	N/A	50	N/A	75	N/A
Spanish	3	100	N/A	66	N/A	100	N/A
General Studies	110	97	N/A	36	N/A	79	N/A

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered AS and A-level mathematics courses, biology and chemistry. Physics was sampled and teaching was good, with students displaying very positive attitudes to their studies.

AS mathematics is popular in Year 12 and many students use it to support the mathematical content in their other courses. As a result, not all students choose to continue mathematics into Year 13. The most competent mathematicians have the opportunity to take the challenging further mathematics course. A small number of students retake GCSE mathematics in Year 12.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The very positive attitudes of students and their relationships with teachers.
- AS and A-level examination results are well above average.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Widen and extend openings for students to become active independent learners.
- Increase and formalise the opportunities for teachers to exchange ideas.

210. The verified results for AS and A-level examinations have been well above the national average for the last two years. This represents good progress for students who begin the course with high standards of prior attainment. Results, especially those for A/S level, have improved since the last inspection at a rate greater than the national trend. There are no significant differences in standards achieved in the different modules contributing to the A/S and A-level results.
211. For both AS and A-level examinations, female students regularly, but not always, achieve higher standards than male students. This is slightly different from the national picture where female students repeatedly achieve higher standards. Male students tend to make marginally greater progress than female students. Male students' increasingly mature attitudes, rather than any decline in female students' learning, probably account for this. There is no statistical evidence of any significant differences in progress between students of differing competencies.
212. The standards of work seen confirm the AS and A-level examination results of recent years. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, work on projectiles was reviewed using past examination questions. Students were secure in their knowledge about the key mathematical ideas and sufficiently confident to contribute to whole-class discussion. These students had a very good attitude to their studies and this, together with humorous exchanges with the teacher, ensured that they made very good progress.
213. Similarly, students in a Year 13 group studying calculus were able to build on some of the ideas put forward by the teacher, to the extent of asking questions of their own. The very good quality of learning was supported by a good recall of previous work coupled

with very clear exposition and challenging questions by the teacher. A small group of very capable Year 13 students best described as 'realistically confident mathematicians' was able to solve complex problems involving conic sections and, in a spirit of respect and humour, corrected a slip made by their teacher. Very good learning was a result of very good teaching and well-above-average student attitudes to the subject. The lesson resembled a university tutorial.

214. Students enjoy the subject and feel secure in their knowledge of their own levels of attainment and progress. Their work files are well organised and form useful sources of reference. Several instances of effective note taking were observed.
215. Teaching is very good overall. Students value the commitment of their teachers and their readiness to provide support at any time. The very good quality teaching is a result of challenge, a high degree of active participation by students, very good relationships and very secure knowledge of the subject and examination requirements. The positive work ethos apparent in lessons cannot but ensure that very good learning takes place. Students' work is diligently marked, and they act upon the comments, so improving their work.
216. Assessment information is used to support learning. Effective use is made of the resources, including assessment items, accompanying the commercial course followed. Use of ICT is underdeveloped and so useful learning and teaching chances can be lost. However, students do make good use of ICT in the presentation of coursework. Opportunities to allow students to become more active, independent learners are occasionally missed when topics are initially presented to the whole class. Good teaching could become very good teaching by involving students more actively in lessons. The overall quality of teaching would also benefit from teachers sharing ideas on a more regular, systematic basis, especially those involving innovative teaching or alternative approaches to modules in the scheme of work.
217. Leadership and management are good. There is a commitment to improving standards. There is also a very good match of teachers and parts of the course taught. A good range of written support materials is available, although the library is barely satisfactory as a vehicle to expand students' knowledge of the subject.
218. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have improved, but further development of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is needed.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Results in examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and ensures that students learn very well.
- Target setting, the assessment of progress and the support provided to students are very good and students feel confident about their studies.
- Relationships between all in the classroom are very good; students' attitudes to chemistry are very positive and they work hard.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT by students during lessons needs to be improved, in order that their learning may be enhanced.
- The notes and records of a small number of students are incomplete and poorly organised.
- Visits, to universities, for example, are needed to enrich the students' experience of chemistry.

219. In the A-level examinations in 2001, the proportion of students gaining grades A to B was well above average and results have improved markedly since 1998. They were well above average in 2000 and students perform as well in chemistry as in their other subjects. In 2002, although results declined a little, the proportion reaching the higher grades was very similar to 2001. Too few students choose to have an award at AS-level for comparisons with national data to be valid, but school records show that most gain high grades and all pass the examination. Students' attainment on entry to sixth form courses is generally above average and, because their results are well above average, achievement by the end of their course is, therefore, good. The completion rate for both AS and A-level courses is high.
220. In lessons and in students' records, standards of work are well above average in both Years 12 and 13. In a Year 12 lesson about alcohols and aldehydes, for example, students' understanding of the difference between them, and of the chemical tests that identify them, was very clear. In Year 13, their understanding of the energy changes that occur when chemicals react was well above average. Calculations of reaction masses are accurate and detailed work about isomerism relates the structure of molecules to their properties.
221. Teaching is very good and sometimes it is excellent. In a revision lesson in Year 12, excellent use was made of problem-solving tasks in which students consulted their notes, demonstrations of reactions were provided and students provided explanations of their work. In this and in other lessons about energy changes during a reaction between sodium and chlorine, teachers' knowledge of their subject was very good and their explanations were very clear, so that very good progress was made. Teachers have high expectations and provide demanding tasks, such as the sequencing of the reactions and energy changes which happen when sodium chloride is made. Teaching about naming of organic chemicals is thorough and demanding homework about chemical bonds is set. As a result, students' learning is very secure. Questions from past papers are used very well to prepare students thoroughly for examinations. Sometimes, however, teachers lead for most of the lesson and there is no opportunity for students to extend their knowledge through research.

222. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They are very willing to ask and answer questions because teachers foster curiosity and encourage interest. Students are highly motivated and are not deterred by challenging questions. Moreover, they are more than willing to assist each other. Most organise their work very well, although some notes are poorly organised, incomplete and of little use for further study and revision.
223. Leadership and management are good. Teaching programmes and coursework are well organised. Target setting for students is very good and they receive regular feedback about their progress. Optional extra classes, in which students can get help with difficulties or take their studies further, provide students with excellent support, which they clearly appreciate. Monitoring of teaching is confined to the performance management programme and, although teachers discuss issues of teaching and learning, there is no policy for developing teaching methodology. ICT is not used sufficiently in lessons and students do not have sufficient experience of using spreadsheets, databases or dataloggers. Visits, to universities for example, are not used to extend students' understanding of chemistry or of their awareness of courses in higher education. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection in relation to progress in lessons and performance in external examinations.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Results in examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and explanations are particularly clear, so that students make very good progress in their lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' achievements and of their commitment to their studies.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students are always encouraged and, as a result, work hard and are keen to learn.
- Target setting, the assessment of progress and the support provided to students are very good and students feel confident about their studies.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching and the facility to share teaching materials need to be improved.
- The use of ICT as a learning tool is under-developed.
- The notes and records of a small number of students are incomplete and poorly organised.
- There need to be more visits to higher education establishments and more field trips to widen students' experience of biology.

224. Results have improved since 1998 and students generally do better in biology than in their other subjects. In the A-level examinations in 2001, for example, the proportion of students gaining grades A and B was well above average. In 2002, results declined a little but a similar proportion reached these higher grades. Too few students choose to have an award at AS-level for comparisons with national data to be valid, but school records show that a significant majority gain high grades, all pass the examination and achievement is very good. The numbers completing both AS and A-level courses are very high.

225. Standards achieved by students in lessons are well above average and confirm the standards in the A-level examinations. They achieve very well because they develop good understanding and practical skills. In Year 12, when students use a graticule to count stoma and estimate their size, their practical skills are very good. Moreover, in a lesson about genetic engineering, a lower-attaining group reached a degree of understanding that is about average. Other work on cells and organelles or enzymes is well above average. In Year 13, students' written work about El Nino and about twins and inheritance is well above average and their practical skills in a lesson, in which they used a haemocytometer to count yeast cells, were very secure.
226. Teaching is very good and students make very good progress during lessons. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very secure, their explanations are very clear and their expectations of students are high. Students make very good progress in learning about genetic engineering because demanding tasks are provided, because teachers make very good use of ICT to show how DNA can be transferred between organisms and because scientific terms and processes are explained very carefully. Similarly, in a lesson about cell growth in Year 13, all students succeeded in counting the number of cells in yeast suspensions because a difficult practical procedure was explained very clearly. However, quicker progress is sometimes hindered when students are not asked questions to check on their understanding and when demonstrations of practical tasks do not occur. A plenary session at the end of lessons is not always used to reinforce learning.
227. Students' attitudes to biology are very good. They are very willing to contribute ideas to lessons and readily use a mathematical approach to work out answers to complex problems themselves. They treat school equipment with respect and they are polite and co-operative, particularly during practical activities. Most are very interested in learning but a small number of girls are less well motivated. A minority of students does not organise their work well and notes about kidney tubules are incomplete and of little use for revision. For these students, the requirements of A-level study need to be made clearer.
228. Leadership and management are good. Coursework arrangements and the teaching programme are shared amongst teachers and are well organised. Extra classes provide students with excellent support and enable them to follow up ideas that they have found to be difficult or to pursue their work in greater depth. Target setting is effective and students regularly receive information about their progress. Discussions about moral and ethical issues such as cloning, pollution and conservation contribute well to students' moral development. The monitoring of teaching is confined to the performance management system and poor storage facilities prevent storage and sharing of teaching strategies to improve teaching. ICT is not used by students during lessons and, therefore, they do not benefit from the learning opportunities provided by this equipment. Field trips and visits to universities are not used to broaden students' experience of the subject. The department has made very good improvements in examination performance and in students' achievement since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focus was on design and technology. The department offers courses at AS and A-level in product design, systems and food technology. The numbers taking courses are appropriate and the option is popular in Year 12. There are low numbers in the food technology course.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students work productively and respond very well to their teachers' support.
- Teaching is very good and is characterised by a wide range of strategies to meet individual learning needs.
- Leadership and management are good and there is a real commitment to improve standards.

Areas for improvement

- The numbers taking the examination at A-level.
- The standards attained at AS-level and A-level.

229. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are above average and students achieve well. They make good use of their research and investigation skills and their project folders demonstrate attention to detail and good presentation. In product design lessons, students demonstrate good levels of practical skill and can use tools, equipment and processes with confidence. Students produce good design folders and can complete practical work to a high specification.
230. Students in Year 12 are achieving good standards for this stage in the AS course. They produce practical work of good quality using different techniques and skills. There is good use of creativity and imagination when developing their designs. They have a secure level of knowledge and understanding of manufacturing processes.
231. The standard of students' work seen meets the demands of the course requirements. In the sessions observed, students performed well as a result of very effective and challenging teaching, which demanded much of them. Lesson structure and activities directed students to the tasks in hand and students drew well on their knowledge of design and how to meet the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge and understanding well and apply it effectively to their work.
232. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very positively to the supportive teaching and different methods they experience. In practical lessons students learn the techniques of cutting, shaping, machining, joining different materials and mixing ingredients and their skills improve with practice. They rise to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. Very good use is made of computer-aided design and manufacture in the development of their ideas and time is used well. Students support and help each other effectively and collaborate with each other in a mature fashion. They are always confident when offering ideas during discussion and this was much in evidence during a lesson where they investigated the use and application of different manufacturing processes.
233. Teaching is very good and the principal features are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to meet individual learning needs.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and in the setting of appropriate tasks. Lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and skills and techniques improve as the sessions progress. Moreover, students are given opportunities to carry out detailed research, working individually to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. Teachers then draw together their findings and provide relevant explanations. Students respond confidently to the activities and show the same confidence in their project work as in their class work.

234. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear commitment to build on what has been achieved, to increase the numbers entered for the A-level examinations and to improve the only average standards in Year 13. Planning is good and target setting, based on careful analysis of student performance through marking, review and evaluation, is well established.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies courses at AS and A-level. In addition there was a focus on economics, which was also inspected in detail.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and they provide their students with clear explanations to aid their learning.
- The quality of teaching, which is lively and informed.
- Internet research is used to secure relevant knowledge.
- The use of case studies to aid the execution and organisation of tasks.
- The emphasis on study skills, which allows students to display personal initiative.

Areas for improvement

- The research and planning of reports and essays.
- The lack of differentiated opportunities to allow students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are underdeveloped and do not always allow students to explore and convey their ideas.

235. Standards of work seen in business studies are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' knowledge of business and economics leads to secure learning. As a result, students' achievement overall is good. Retention rates from AS to A-level are satisfactory.

236. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business enterprise in relation to current business theory and practice. They are able, for example, to explore lean production systems such as just in time and multi-skilling. Most students make effective use of relevant business terminology, concepts and computing methods to select up-to-date data. Students appreciate the views of different stakeholders in relation to business and economic trends and are fully aware of the significance of inflation and recessionary trends. Good discussions were observed on the ownership and control of business, the management of people in business and the several functional areas of marketing,

finance and production. Students gain a good understanding of the moral, ethical, social and cultural issues that influence modern business activities such as, for example, equal pay and unfair dismissal. Case study work is used to develop communication and computing skills. Students can undertake research both individually and in groups. Coursework assignments encourage key skills development. However, essay-writing skills are weak. There is little differentiation based on the outcomes of student performance, both orally and in written work.

237. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students have a good awareness of business theory and practice in their everyday life. The power of advertising is a part of that awareness and the influence that fashion has on their spending power is one example of that perception. They can recognise that different people are involved in business transactions and they are familiar with the different sectors of the UK and European economies. Students know and can talk about the variety of businesses within each sector, the significance of a multinational company, for example, such as the Ford Motor Company whose turnover is greater than many small nations' buying or spending power. Higher-attaining students quickly see the value of a case study approach to business studies, because it develops their ability to seek and verify evidence. Most students understand and can see the value of electronic data sources to gather current information. A greater amount of independent learning needs to be developed to prepare students for higher education. Students focus on relevant theories and concepts related to the UK's position with regard to Europe. All students can use case studies, stimulus materials, textbooks and well-prepared teacher notes to enhance their writing and ensure that it is factually accurate. Students are encouraged to organise their time and develop their study skills, but not all do so. Self-motivation and discipline could be improved even amongst the able students, particularly with regard to regular attendance at classes. Clear, constructive teacher guidance plays an equally important role in the standards achieved.
238. A-level results in 2001 were average for the A-B grade but percentages of students attaining in the A to E range were above average and the results were similar in 2002. Girls and boys perform equally well. Over the last four years, results have been well above average overall.
239. The quality of teaching is very good, but the poor attendance of some students hinders their learning. The teachers provide a suitable learning environment, present business knowledge clearly and act as a resource to the students. Teachers give ideas for areas of investigation to students but leave them to work as individuals. They give help with the presentation of results and guide students in their use of electronic sources where appropriate. Learning is assured both as a result of investigating business in the classroom and in its true environment by visits to local firms. Equally important are the economic theory inputs from knowledgeable teachers. Students with exceptional ability are able to demonstrate their talents by using their initiative and enterprise in their research work. Much of their writing has depth. Those students with learning difficulties find teachers supportive and assistance is provided when necessary. Learning is monitored and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss teaching strategies and student progress. The issues currently under investigation are records of attendance and the punctual submission of work.
240. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge monitors all policies. A variety of strategies is well used to monitor the quality of learning in the classroom. Teachers are aware of the frequent developments taking place in business education and planning is effective. Teachers exchange materials and ideas on a regular basis and this encourages the development of business education. A

management goal is to improve and upgrade the range and quality of resources whenever possible. At present, students' access to good materials is satisfactory and improving.

241. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Students are more actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of business and economic resources, including the Internet. Much time is spent helping students prepare for examinations. Additional learning experiences are obtained by visits to local firms and also research work. Where appropriate, the cross-curricular themes of careers, equal opportunities and citizenship are followed.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' comprehensive knowledge of the subject.
- The very good quality of teaching enables students to make good progress relative to their abilities.
- The increased variety of learning resources to improve the quality of investigations.
- Student participation in lessons, demonstrating that they can apply economic theory to a range of practical problems.

Areas for improvement

- The punctual completion of homework tasks.
- Literacy skills to extend learning experiences.
- Students do not plan their assignments in enough detail and this prevents them reaching higher marks.

242. Standards of work seen are above average and, because of very good teaching and students' knowledge of economic reasoning, students achieve very well. Most students can discuss leading economic rules and conventions with confidence. They perform better than their indicated potential. Some grades are in excess of those gained in their other subjects. Retention rates from AS to A level are good.

243. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students show an interest in economic argument and have a positive attitude to their subject. All students listen attentively to their teacher and to each other. They answer questions willingly, using the specific language of economists. For example, students are able to recall previous knowledge on the advantages and disadvantages of the free market. The majority of work presented by female students is written neatly with a clear focus on the accuracy of terms and economic reasoning. Male students can manage the arguments as well as female students but much of their work lacks organisation. The lack of preliminary work in the planning of writing to allow sufficient depth of analysis needs to be addressed. Students know how to access the most current economic research via the Internet. Most students show initiative in their own research. They can plan and organise their use of all electronic sources to search for case studies.

244. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students demonstrate a depth and breadth of current economic knowledge. Most learners can make use of relevant sources, citations and examples to reinforce an economic argument. Teachers attach importance to the essential elements of dialectic in order to help students recognise the truth of propositions. Writing improves across the year, but some lower-attaining

students continue to struggle with spelling, grammar and punctuation. Good use is made by most students of electronic sources to select up-to-date examples. The more competent students can appreciate the importance of number in economics and show good skills in building their arguments. They can engage in debate and argument on a particular aspect of finance and most are able to support their reasoning with examples. This was illustrated in a class evaluating policies to stabilise the UK economy. All students are gaining an insight into the many social, moral and ethical aspects of economic rules and procedures. In this way economics is an inclusive study. For example, students are aware of the plethora of economic changes made in the last ten years to ensure that the UK is a more balanced economy. A Year 13 class studied the position of the UK as an international trading nation and the role of the Bank of England. Economic arguments and the demand for reasons are effectively developing communication skills.

245. Examination results in 2001 at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 are above national averages for all grades and the results in 2002 are very similar, representing very good achievement in relation to prior attainment. Female students and male students performed as predicted.
246. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher plans well, sets demanding tasks and creates a positive and intellectually stimulating working environment in which students are actively involved. As a result of this very good teaching the quality of learning is very secure. The teacher has good subject knowledge that helps to explain economic concepts clearly and develops students' skills and understanding. The teacher makes good, if limited, use of computers to develop students' ICT skills and to support learning in lessons. Questioning of students is challenging. Effective use is made of homework to build upon students' learning. However, not all the work set is completed on time. The marking of students' work is consistently good.
247. Leadership and management are very good. Detailed schemes of work ensure progression for all groups of students. More attention to the key skills of computing and literacy would raise standards even higher. A formal approach to the monitoring of teaching is in place and is having an impact on improving standards in economics. Arrangements for assessing students' performance are good and tracking information is used effectively to enhance their progress.
248. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection and examination results have risen, with most students meeting or exceeding their personal targets. Good use is made of assessment information when planning work. The tracking of students' progress has improved. Marking is diligently executed and shows students how they can reach higher standards. In addition, the use of ICT as a learning tool is now more evident.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

GCE Computing was inspected in detail, including both AS and A Level. No other courses or qualifications in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) are offered in the sixth form.

Computing

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

Strengths

- The high standards achieved in AS and A-Level computing.
- The development of independence and individual programming skills.
- Improvement since the last inspection and priorities for further development.
- The leadership and management provided by the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for setting and reviewing individuals' targets.
- Quality assurance procedures.

249. On entry at age 16, students' previous standards of attainment are varied and wide ranging, but only a small minority of students have completed a recognised qualification in computing or ICT previously. More than half are drawn from other schools and they tend to have lower levels of prior attainment. Students make very good progress on AS and A-level computing courses so that overall, their levels of attainment at the end of Year 12 are above average and, by the end of Year 13, are well above average. Examination results in A-Level computing have risen rapidly in recent years and, between 1999 and 2002, the proportion gaining grades A-B at A-Level rose from no students to over half of those entered.
250. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection was well above average, and students achieve very well. About three-fifths of AS-Level students and almost all A-Level students are producing work of a standard expected for grades A-C.
251. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The well-qualified staff have good subject knowledge. Strengths of the teaching include high expectations, skilled questioning, support for a wide range of individual choices for in-depth projects and a very effective homework policy. However, areas for development include the range of teaching methods used, opportunities for discussion, and attention to the individual needs of less competent students during fast-paced questioning.
252. The quality of learning generally follows that of teaching, but is sometimes higher because of students' very good attitudes to learning and the department's cultivation of self-confidence and problem-solving skills among students with differing levels of aptitude for the subject. The students speak highly of their teachers and the support they receive from them.
253. Arrangements for supporting students experiencing difficulties are very good, though the long-term targets issued to students are generally too low, not reviewed consistently, and lack a short-term focus to help students appreciate how to meet them. However, assessment is accurate and the progress of individuals is tracked effectively. The

limited range of ICT courses available in the sixth form results in some students joining computing who could be better served by an alternative course.

254. Overall, the leadership and management of the department are very good, although the efficiency of management is better than the effectiveness of leadership. The department has an accurate perception of its strengths and weaknesses and of priorities for development. The department had experienced difficulties retaining the students who began the AS course to its conclusion, but this problem has disappeared this year. Data from examination results are analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in course provision and the quality of teaching. Although grades are compared with the original targets, a more sophisticated value-added analysis comparing groups within the subject area has yet to be developed. Quality assurance is at a rudimentary stage and there is no departmental development and action plan.
255. The department has improved dramatically since the last inspection, as a result of the appointment of a new and effective staff team, swift response to syllabus changes, and the introduction of a wide range of optional programming languages.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focus was on physical education. No other subjects in this curriculum area are offered.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and there is a wide range of strategies to promote independent learning.
- Standards are very high and students demonstrate very good skills in practical activities.
- Students display very positive attitudes to their studies.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching accommodation sometimes restricts the variety of activities and teaching approaches.

256. Standards are very high and students of all abilities make very good progress. The examination courses provide them with very good learning opportunities. In exercise physiology, for example, students make very good gains in knowledge and understanding and are able to predict accurately how the heart will respond to different forms of sporting activity. They are also able to identify the complex processes, sequences and effects of exercise on the heart. In practical activities, particularly netball, students are able to demonstrate very high levels of performance skills. Achievement is very good.
257. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and offer very good advice on examination techniques. They also make good use of a range of teaching strategies to promote independent learning. The examination procedures and course organisation are also very good. In particular the procedures for setting individual targets and monitoring students' progress are well established. Activities that initiate learning are very effective with students making very good progress due to their involvement in group activities and discussions. However, more effective use could be made of questioning to ensure understanding and to develop students' communication skills. In practical activities such as netball, the teacher intervenes very well to ensure that students make gains in

their skill levels. Opportunities to promote independent learning are also effectively included within lessons. The pace of teaching in all lessons and the relationship of theory to the practical context are very well addressed. Overall the quality of the students' coursework is very good with some producing portfolios of extremely high quality. Appropriate use of homework ensures students are able to apply their knowledge in their own sport.

258. Students' attitudes to their studies are very positive. They are well organised and have very warm relationships with each other. They also focus their attention and sustain their efforts very well. In some isolated cases, prolonged absenteeism is preventing even higher standards being achieved.
259. The leadership and management of the department are good. Students are well supported and provided with good guidance and direction. The examination procedures and course organisation are very good. In particular, the procedures for setting individual targets and monitoring students' progress are well established. Teaching resources and curriculum planning are good. The limitation of indoor teaching accommodation restricts some aspects of the curricular provision, although adequate alternative arrangements are made.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No examination courses are offered currently in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

260. The main focus of the inspection was art. Lessons in music and media studies were also sampled. A very small number of students study music. At AS and A level in 2002 all achieved a grade in the range A-E. Two of the three candidates at A level obtained the higher grades A-B. One candidate of the three entered at AS level did so. Students achieve well in this subject and appreciate the support given to them, particularly through instrumental tuition and performance opportunities. Media studies is a newly introduced course in Year 12. It is a popular subject. In the lesson observed the students achieved well because the good teaching encouraged them to look critically at media techniques and required them to use technical vocabulary accurately. Standards are higher than those usually found nationally. Timetabling arrangements did not make it possible to observe drama and theatre studies. At A level in 2002 approximately a third of the seventeen candidates obtained the higher grades A-B and all obtained grades in the range A-E.

ART

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

Strengths

- The teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of art and design at this level.
- The very good use of ICT as a teaching aid and as a creative tool.
- The excellent leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement

- The limited availability of workspace restricts the curriculum offered.

261. Standards on entry to the sixth form are above average. By Year 13 standards in work seen are well above average representing good achievement over the sixth form years.

A significant proportion of students enter the sixth form from other schools bringing a broad range of skills and experience. The very well structured sixth form courses are very effective in nurturing the individual creativity of the students. Ideas are developed through handmade project journals and large, high-quality study sheets. These are very well presented and successfully combine vigorous use of materials with precise graphic techniques. Students make very good reference to a broad range of art styles in their studies and final pieces using a wide variety of materials and formats. They make very effective use of ICT as an additional creative medium. Text and images are scanned and printed directly onto textiles and tissues creating very interesting effects in students' collage work. There is no significant difference in the range of attainment between different groups of students. In recent years, A-level results have been below the national average although the 2002 results showed a sharp rise with half of the students gaining the higher A-B grades.

262. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject that enable them to meet students' changing needs from induction to the course through to college and university very effectively. Students show a growing independence and individuality in their work resulting from the well-structured course and the very good individual guidance. Teachers introduce projects through very well designed PowerPoint presentations that are accessible to students at any time via the department's web-site, as a constant point of reference and stimulus. Excellent resource books are compiled from teachers' and students' contributions; they are very effective for reference and set the very high standards for presentation and inventiveness seen in students' work. Students know how well they are doing through personal tutorials and they are clear about their targets for improvement. The particular needs of gifted and talented students are effectively met through flexible teaching arrangements that allow for more individual attention.
263. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They take great care with and pride in their work. They show a mature attitude, work well together and their relationships with the teachers are relaxed and constructive. The majority of students make additional use of the art rooms at lunchtimes and in private study periods to extend their work though often there is insufficient space for them to work alongside the large classes in lower years.
264. Leadership and management are very good. There is excellent leadership that successfully creates a supportive environment where students can develop as creative individuals. The well-established staff have embraced the potential of ICT and they are looking to extend their own skills in this area. Opportunities for professional development and support are limited and the staff feel isolated from contact with other, similar schools. Resources for the subject are very good. Accommodation is satisfactory. The art rooms are a good size for the sixth form groups but the lack of a dedicated sixth form studio limits the space available for ongoing work. This, and the single one hour lessons, disrupts the continuity of the students' work and restricts opportunities for large-scale three-dimensional work and printmaking.
265. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards at A-level have been maintained and the range of media used has been broadened. Visits to galleries and museums are now a regular feature of the department's calendar.

HUMANITIES

Four subjects were inspected in detail. Provision for religious education was also sampled. Two of the three students who took AS level in 2002 obtained the higher grades A-B and all obtained a grade in the range A-E. At A level half of the six candidates obtained the higher grades A-B. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. One excellent lesson was observed. The quality of coursework and the students' study skills are high.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on the A-level course are well above average.
- Students achieve very well and their practical and fieldwork assignments are of an exceptionally high standard.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and lessons have a clear structure.
- Good leadership and management result in high standards overall.
- The high retention rate on the AS course, which indicates students' liking for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for students to become independent learners.
- Some students' notes lack the coherence necessary for a useful revision source.

266. Standards overall are well above national expectations. The very high standards in the GCSE A-level examinations, noted at the time of the previous inspection, have been maintained. Results are well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining the highest two pass grades is very high, and has never fallen below half the entry in the past five years.

267. Inspection evidence, based mainly on lesson observations and scrutiny of students' files and coursework submissions, shows standards of work to be well above average, and in line with recent examination results. These standards represent very good progress since Year 11. In both Years 12 and 13, students compile comprehensive notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources. In a minority of cases, the work in students' files is poorly organised, lacking the coherence necessary for a source for revision. Their map work and their ability to make use of photographic evidence are very good. Students have a very good grasp of concepts in both human and physical geography. In Year 12, they cope well with the complexities of landforms associated with melting glaciers and ice sheets. Year 13 students discuss in depth how membership of the European Union might affect the economies and life styles of those countries currently seeking entry. Students' coursework is of an exceptionally high standard. Students erect hypotheses and test them by using advanced statistical methods to analyse their gathered fieldwork data. They use computers to enhance the presentation of both text and graphs and to assist them in statistical analysis. Even the coursework of the least competent students is above average. A minority of students has yet to achieve that fluency in extended passages of writing that would assist them to gain the highest examination grades.

268. Teaching is never less than good, is very good overall and is sometimes excellent. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons have a clear structure. A range of learning resources is used very effectively. Teachers display

very good subject knowledge, not only in what they say, but also in the way they give effective guidance in the use of resources. Students learn very well, responding positively to this very good teaching. They use resources well and enjoy practical and fieldwork assignments and related activities, benefiting greatly from them. There is a steady improvement in geographical maturity, both in oral work and in writing between Years 12 and 13. The large numbers choosing it and continuing with it into Year 13 illustrate students' enthusiasm for the subject.

269. The expert teaching of coursework skills and examination technique has a direct bearing on the high quality of work produced by the students. Extended pieces of writing are marked regularly and students are given clear and accurate judgements on the quality of their work, which help them to improve it. However, some lessons are very teacher-centred and do not give students sufficient opportunities to carry out independent research. Teachers could also carry out occasional spot checks on students' notes to ensure coherence.
270. Work in the subject is led and managed very well. The good sequencing of topics and themes in the newly-revised schemes of work and the topicality of case studies contribute significantly to teaching and learning. The recent introduction of self-assessment for students is having beneficial effects. The department holds good stocks of reference materials. Regular meetings enable teachers to share experiences of A-level units and help them share best practice in teaching. The department is not resting on its laurels and realises that further development of independent learning is needed. Under current leadership the subject will continue to thrive if the developments envisaged in its forward planning are put into effect.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards of both written and oral work are well above average and students make very good progress in the acquisition of historical skills.
- Teaching is very good and is characterised by profound subject knowledge of teachers and a range of opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and to evaluate their own performance.
- Leadership and management are very good and are leading to a well-founded evaluation of the work of the department.
- Students demonstrate a very mature approach to their studies and speak highly of their teachers' detailed advice on how they may improve their standards.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT as a tool for learning is under-developed.

271. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. Because teachers encourage their students to express their own opinions and because they offer them many opportunities to pursue personal research, students are making very good progress in the acquisition of historical skills and in the ability to present their work to their peers. Students are very articulate, are aware of the views of major historians and are adept at analysing and evaluating increasingly complex source material. The comment made by a Year 12 student, for example, about how, when confronted by directly opposing views which were supported by the same historical source, one should examine the historians not the evidence, would not have gone amiss in an

advanced level session or even a university seminar. Moreover, students in Year 13 are writing essays of a very high standard and take part in extensive historical debate, on whether the coal industry was the most significant factor in Britain's economic development from 1830 to 1870, for example. Furthermore, the quality of their personal studies on a range of aspects of British and international history demonstrates their wide reading and their real interest in the subject matter.

272. Attainment at A-level has been consistently well above average for over three years, for percentages in the A to E grade range and also for the proportion of students reaching grades A and B. In 2001, for example, and from a large entry, over 70 per cent of students scored at these higher grades, with males outperforming females, but not significantly so.
273. Students' learning is enriched because their teachers demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the subject matter. Challenge is relentless and students are offered a plethora of opportunities to learn from and with each other. Intellectual argument and discussion are key features of the teaching and learning in history and students are, therefore, becoming very adept at defending their views and in challenging the opinions of their classmates. As early as Year 12, they are expected to research some quite complex material on nationalism before the outbreak of the First World War and are required to empathise with the views of Russians, Turks, Serbians and Austro-Hungarians. Because they are encouraged to pit their wits against each other, they think well on their feet, express their views with confidence and support their arguments most convincingly. Teachers know their students very well and are able to intervene at just the right moments to ensure that difficult concepts have been understood and that all students are fully aware of the important issues. In an excellent Year 12 lesson, for example, on the standard of living debate, students' questions of the teacher were actually answered by the students themselves: they were confronted by counter questions, which served to focus their minds on how sources can sometimes appear to be contradictory. Students display a most mature approach to their studies and pay tribute to the detailed advice they receive from their teachers on how, for example, to write effective and convincing historical essays. They go further and make positive comments on the many opportunities they have to take responsibility for their own learning and to evaluate their personal performance. Teaching is, therefore, very good overall and in a quarter of lessons, it is excellent.
274. Leadership and management are very good and ensure that students' performance is monitored regularly and that the needs of individuals are fully met. Marking of students' work is often outstanding and teachers work long and hard to provide their charges with thought-provoking resources to support their personal research and to challenge them to even higher levels of understanding. The use of ICT beyond the use of the Internet is, however, underdeveloped as a learning tool. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has maintained the high standards of achievement. Teachers care deeply for the welfare, both academic and social, of their students and the department is, therefore, well placed for continued success.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and often better.
- Students are very well supported and achieve well in external examinations.
- The subject attracts and retains good numbers of students.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching and learning strategies does not develop students' independence in learning.
- Students' numeracy and ICT skills are underdeveloped.
- Resources are inadequate.

275. The overall pass rate in external examinations has been consistently above the national average and for the last four years all A-level candidates have gained pass grades. The proportion of students gaining grades A and B has fluctuated but in the last two years has been well above national expectations. These results reflect good achievement.
276. Attainment in lessons and in work seen is also above the national average and students achieve well. By the end of Year 13, students demonstrate a convincing knowledge and understanding of sociological theories and concepts, which they apply well in answering examination style questions. They understand and can explain the justifications behind conflicting sociological perspectives and are familiar with the main studies on selected topics. Written work is completed to a good standard in technically accurate English, but limited opportunities in lessons for the interrogation and interpretation of statistical data or the use of computers mean that their attainment in these areas is below average. As the school does not currently pursue the coursework option, students' independence in learning and individual research skills are less well developed than they might otherwise be. However, students apply their sociological knowledge to contemporary social issues well.
277. The quality of teaching is never less than good and often better. In a Year 13 lesson on the interactionist approach to crime and deviance, students learned very well because of the teacher's meticulous planning, high expectations, explicit objectives, rapid pace and energetic classroom presence. Teachers' considerable subject expertise is evident in the well-structured, clear and accessible supporting notes on differential educational achievement. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students expressed and supported their views convincingly because the teacher asked open questions that allowed students to draw on their own experience in coming to conclusions about the impact of the home environment. Students' attitudes are a significant factor in the quality of learning. They respond very positively to the opportunities presented to them and the good-humoured classroom relationships are instrumental in enhancing their confidence and in breaking down barriers to learning. They value the support offered to them through detailed marking, regular extra lessons and the accessibility of staff when help is needed. The school's emphasis on a target-setting approach sometimes results in strongly directed teaching and learning. Such strategies reduce opportunities for independent learning.

278. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department is an experienced teacher and, despite significant other responsibilities, has sustained well what was, until recently, a single-person department. The recent additional staffing has made a valuable contribution by enabling teachers to share ideas and approaches. Examination results are carefully analysed and evaluated and reflect good achievement, although there has been no cumulative monitoring of the subject. There are insufficient textbooks to issue to students for home use. Plans for future development are appropriate and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Psychology

Overall, the provision of psychology is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching and the many and varied opportunities for independent learning and research.
- Students' highly skilful research methods to extract information and use statistical data.
- Pastoral and academic support in innovative learning situations.
- Positive working relationships to enhance students' educational experience.

Areas for improvement

- Library provision and access to ICT.
- Personal development of students through seminar work in order to secure recall of knowledge.

279. Standards of work seen in psychology are well above average and achievement is very good. Achievement is very good with many students gaining much higher grades than might reasonably be expected at the start of the course. Retention rates from AS to A-level are good.
280. Standards in Year 12 are well above average. Both genders perform equally well in class. Students gain a critical understanding of the terms 'obedience' and 'conformity'. They understand why human behaviour is influenced by a person's need to fulfil his or her potential and that human development is a dynamic process. All students are aware of the work of Maslow, Freud and Hobson. The teachers use good, social influence research studies to illustrate lessons. The more competent students can write well and produce elaborate descriptions of a study or a theory. Some others occasionally run out of ideas but are well supported to think of correct explanations of the key approaches to psychology. All students can collect data empirically and rationally. However, library provision is less than satisfactory.
281. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and students use a scientific process to learning. They handle a capsule summary on the psychosexual stages, fixation and regression, with considerable confidence. The terms involved such as *Oedipus* and *Electra* absorb students' interest. They make good observations and produce relevant facts about psychology. They can construct a theory to account for a set of related facts and progress to generating hypotheses from the theory. Male and female students are equally competent in collecting data to test expectations. Females in both years are better at spelling, punctuation and grammar. All students can write about cognitive psychology and analyse and evaluate a range of psychological theories and studies. The more competent communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology in a clear and effective manner. Students, for example, examined the work

of Robert Hobson, a psychodynamic therapist, working with a troubled 15 year old boy and their written and oral responses were searching and well informed.

282. More than half of the candidates obtained the higher grades A-B at AS and A level in 2002. These results represented very good achievement. Examination results at AS-level in 2001 were well above average. Female students perform slightly better than males over all grades but not significantly so. Students make good progress from Year 12 to Year 13. A-level results in 2001 were well above average for grades A-B and students achieved very well. Results in 2000 were similar to those a year earlier.
283. The quality of teaching is very good and teachers show an appropriate interest in the core areas of cognitive, social, developmental and individual differences and physiological psychology. Lessons are planned effectively to develop an understanding of psychology as a scientific study of behaviour and experience. Students learn to argue and hold their points of view about the developmental, gender and socio-cultural factors in health. A greater amount of seminar work is required to prepare students for higher education. Students are well advised that psychology differs from common sense insofar as it seeks to collect objective and verifiable facts about behaviour and constructs empirically-based theories. Teachers assist students to understand the logic or important concepts of psychology effectively. There is some limited use of ICT during lessons. Students increase their understanding of psychology by discussing their writing or research with their teacher or fellow students. They can explain, for example, psychological research into acute and chronic schizophrenia in a scientific manner.
284. The strength of teaching is the informed commentary and thorough analysis of relevant psychological studies and methods. Students are, therefore, fully aware, that neuro-biological issues are caused by allergies, chemical imbalances and genetic disorders. Students are provided with a sound basis of factual knowledge of psychology. Memory is improved by the organisation of material. The quality of written communication is assessed accurately. The teachers can organise relevant information clearly and coherently using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
285. Leadership and management are very good. The support and environment provided enable students to feel confident, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities. Psychology has clear aims and these are relevant to their stated purpose. There are valuable contacts with further and higher education.
286. The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection in teaching, learning and assessment. Students are now actively encouraged to study outside class time and to research widely. They have Internet access, although more would be beneficial. The cross-curricular themes of health, careers, equal opportunities and citizenship are followed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on English and French. Provision in Spanish was also sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory and the students were very well motivated in their studies. Of the very small number who took the GCE A level examination in 2002, two-thirds obtained the higher grades A-B. Of the small number who took the GCE A level examination in German, half obtained the higher grades A-B.

English

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well-above-average results in external examinations.
- They make good progress and have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- There is sometimes an over-reliance on photocopied worksheets, which reduces the development of students' personal research-skills.
- The quality of marking.
- The library provision for sixth form work.

287. No national comparative data for the 2002 A-level results are yet available. Results compare well with previous years when they were well above the national average. They represent good achievement. The best results were in the English language and literature course. A high percentage obtain the higher grades A-B and the retention rates of these students across the two years of the course are very good. The AS results in 2002 were similar to the A-level results.

288. The subject recruits high numbers of students, including many who enter Year 12 from other schools. These students achieve particularly well and they make very good progress. Students have a detailed knowledge of a wide range of set texts. Their work folders contain an extensive exploration of such works as those of Blake, Mary Shelley and Aphra Behn. They research nineteenth-century literature, including the Gothic, Augustan, romantic, realistic and philosophical traditions, in Rousseau's links with Plutarch and Milton, for example

289. The students' work reveals a very detailed analysis of the texts and teachers provide good background material to set these in their historical contexts. Guidance from teachers is a strong element of the provision, and they prepare their students for the rigour of examinations very effectively. Much of this support is photocopied or in the form of worksheets. For some students this support reduces the need and the willingness to develop their own critical response and results in an over-dependence on direction by their teacher, when, for example, interpreting the meaning of an author's intention or understanding the literary techniques employed. This was why the standards of some students' work did not reach the higher grades A/B. However, in some classes, such as in the Year 13 group investigating young children's early acquisition of language and early reading skills, standards of personal research are very high. This strengthens students' security of knowledge in the subject and gives them good opportunities to develop their oral presentational skills, as they explain to other students the results of their research. Some students demonstrate a reluctance to contribute to class discussions, relying on others to ask their own questions or to answer those posed by the teacher.

290. Writing skills are superior to spoken skills and students are capable of producing imaginative, sensitive and mature language to express their feelings. There are examples of very good descriptive writing. A Year 12 student's short story, for example, revealed a very good sense of audience, unusual vocabulary and a well-developed visual quality. She wrote: 'Like funerary statues at the entrance of a tomb, they stood by the door frames and gazed ahead impassively'. Later, she describes a particularly tense happening as 'It's the moment of silence between two beats'. This piece was followed by a very good personal critique of the work and also exemplified the good use of ICT in the presentation and redrafting of extended writing tasks.
291. Students achieve well because teaching is consistently good. Often it is very good, as revealed in the comments found in students' files and the very good subject knowledge the teachers demonstrate. Their high levels of expertise are matched by a genuine enthusiasm for the subject and a deep commitment to see their students achieve well. Teachers handle their classes well and have high expectations of them. They are very generous with their time and the support they offer their students and students speak highly of them. They offer a broad programme of work and enrich it well with many extra-curricular activities, particularly theatrical events.
292. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. This has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision of future development of the subject. He has identified appropriate priorities and has already revised key documentation. He is energetic and authoritative in his analysis of the strengths and areas for development and his very good interpersonal skills complement his enthusiasm for his subject. These qualities are crucial in helping him establish a committed team of teachers to ensure consistency and shared good practice through professional development.
293. The subject makes a good contribution to the students' personal development as exemplified in work on Poe's 'The Gold Bug' in a Year 12 class, which enabled exploration of a range of issues relating to cultural differences, racism, the abuse of power, complex relationships and the concept of political correctness.
294. Accommodation is sometimes cramped, and resources in the library are inadequate. However, the department has good capacity for further improvement because of the quality of its intake, the skill, insight and commitment of the teachers and the effectiveness of the leadership.

French

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

Strengths

- A-level results were well above average in 2001.
- The students' attitudes to learning French are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership is unsatisfactory.
- Students are not given enough scope to make their own presentations and to be critical of their own and their peers' performances.
- There are no organised visits to develop students' wider interests in languages learning.
- The sharing of good practice through consistent evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is insufficient.

295. The numbers of students electing to follow a sixth form course in French have grown and satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The high GCSE grades and the greater breadth which AS examinations provide encourage more students to continue with the subject. Examination results, since the inception of AS examinations, have proved much less secure. A-level results were well above average in 2001, but there was a substantial fall in 2002. No national figures are available for comparison at this time. Low retention rates and results that did not match the students' expected grades characterised a weak year, the challenges of which have not been resolved by the current leadership. The six students who relinquished their study of French after completing AS examinations all obtained the lowest pass grade. Compared with other subjects, the 2002 A-level results were the worst in the school.
296. Current standards suggest the 2002 results were an anomaly, as students' attainment in both Years 12 and 13 is now above average in both written and oral work. Their achievement is good. However, there is still room for improvement in accuracy, fluency and an appreciation of how the study of French adds to students' personal development. The most competent Year 12 students have a very good fluency and vocabulary, which they use well in easily-understood French, although their oral precision does not quite match the strong emphasis the teaching places upon grammatical accuracy. In written work they consider interesting social issues and their writing has improved satisfactorily in depth and quality over time. Less competent students also write at length with good ideas, but they express themselves less precisely. Overall, boys' attainment is higher than that of girls in Year 12. Students in both years do not have enough opportunities in class to express themselves at length or to criticise constructively each other's work. As a result, many are quite hesitant when required to speak the language, doing so in small parcels and as a direct response to a teacher's question.
297. Although the themes studied in both years are potentially very strong contributors to the students' personal development, covering areas of common social concern, students tend to see them in isolation without reference to their own personal situations. Most Year 13 students, where the girls are slightly stronger, have very good vocabularies, satisfactory accents and demonstrate the potential to achieve at least above-average examination results. The students' preference is towards the study of linguistics rather than the use of language to explore others' ways of thinking. They are able to identify the personalities of each character in a novelette, which promotes social and moral awareness very well. The most competent, who border on full fluency, speak engagingly and with good insight using complex constructions as a matter of course. The written work of the most competent is fluent, deeply argued and of outstanding quality. That of other very competent students is also well above average, but there are errors of phraseology and lack of grammatical precision. The girls do slightly better than the boys in Year 13.
298. The quality of teaching in class is good, as it ensures above-average attainment. However, the absence of organised out-of-school activities, such as attendance at languages-related lectures, films, work experiences or visits abroad reduces the wider impact of teaching to no more than satisfactory because its focus is narrow. The teacher's very good use of French in class is a spur to pace and reveal very high expectations, to which the students respond very well. However, the teaching lacks the confidence to require the students to conduct personal research and to speak at length from their findings. Lessons follow a common format of input from the teacher with questions to develop the students' understanding. Homework reinforces work in class well. Some fundamentals of good teaching practice are not applied rigorously enough.

For example, the purposes of each lesson are not shared with the students at the outset and there is no standardised practice of reaching conclusions that help reveal how much progress has been made or how successfully learning has been.

299. The quality of learning is good and students' levels of motivation are high. Many are not afraid to use their initiative; they discuss their work closely with their classmates and thus increase their skills and understanding most effectively. Their interest and concentration are very good, but their independence is restricted by the format of the teaching and they are not made fully aware of how well they perform in lessons. However, teachers' marking of written work is helpful, with good suggestions on how to improve.
300. Leadership is unsatisfactory, as there is no overall direction and no clear view on how to improve provision or to raise the appeal of A-level languages further. Professional dialogue is informal, planning is sparse and related only to the provision of resources. At present, there is not enough sharing of good practice through mutually-helpful criticism of teaching, as a means of establishing training needs and of celebrating success. There is an imbalance between the philosophy outlined in the French section of the sixth form prospectus and current provision, which only partially meets the in-depth study rationale.