

INSPECTION REPORT

PRINCE HENRY'S HIGH SCHOOL

Evesham, Worcestershire

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 117000

Headteacher: Mr B S Roberts

Reporting inspector: Dr R Wallace
OIN: 1050

Dates of inspection:
4th – 6th November 2002

Inspection number: 249734

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	13 – 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Victoria Avenue Evesham Worcestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr R Shaw
Date of previous inspection:	17 th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
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9588	A West	Lay inspector		
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Business studies Health and social care	
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	English Theatre studies	
30911	J Barton	Team inspector	French German	
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Information technology	
4922	M Driver	Team inspector	Biology	
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	History	
15127	B Goodall	Team inspector	Art and design	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
26210	K Bland	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11913	M Howard	Team inspector	Psychology	
20533	D Rodgers	Team inspector		

On the final day of the inspection the Registered Inspector, Dr Wallace, was taken ill. The inspection was completed by the contracted team and managed by another Registered Inspector from *PkR*'s pool. The report was completed by the team but in particular by Keith Bland, David Rogers, Andrew Marfleet and Tony West with support from within *PkR*'s senior management team.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Prince Henry's is a large school situated in Evesham. It serves a mixed residential area of the town and many of the surrounding villages. It has 1199 students aged 13-19 on roll, including a large sixth form of 284. Its students are admitted from local middle schools and cover the full range of ability; overall, the intake is above average. There are very few students from ethnic minorities and only one student requiring help in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below the national average and fewer students have statements of special educational needs than in most schools. The school has recently gained language college status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Its governors, headteacher and senior managers set high standards in both academic and personal development. The quality of students' learning is very good because of the high overall quality of teaching. Nearly all students achieve well above average standards. Attitudes to learning are uniformly very good. Relationships between students are exemplary. The school is effective and gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Its headteacher and senior managers provide strong leadership to both staff and students.
- Standards are high because the quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Very good provision for students' personal development results in very good attitudes to school and excellent behaviour and relationships.
- Parents and students have highly positive views of the school.
- Students participate in a wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Attainment and achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 4, although above average, do not match the high standards achieved in other subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in March 1997 there has been a significant investment in improving the library resources which has led to more effective learning opportunities for students. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning has significantly improved. Statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship are not met. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B

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

A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A		
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The above table is based on the typical GCSE points scored by the students in Year 11, and the typical A level and AS level points scored by sixth form students. The percentage of students who achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C and the percentage of students who achieved five or more GCSE passes were also well above average in 2001. Results compared to similar schools are above average. Overall, this reflects the care the school takes to meet the needs of all students. 2002 results were better than 2001, at both GCSE and A level, but at the time of the inspection there were no national results for comparison. Standards seen during the inspection for Year 11 were well above average, reflecting recent examination results. GCSE mathematics results are not as high as in English and science. The school exceeded its targets for GCSE results last year and looks set to meet those for 2003. In the sixth form, examination results in all subjects except in general studies in GCE A level examinations were well above average.

The 2001 results of national tests taken by Year 9 students in English, mathematics and science were similarly high and 2002 results were a further improvement. The teachers' assessments of standards in most of the other subjects in 2001 and 2002 also show that standards are high. The standards of the current Year 9 are high and largely match the 2002 results and assessments.

Students' achievement is very good, both in Year 9 and in Years 10 to 11. Students enter with standards that are above average and leave with standards that are well above average. Achievement is very good in Years 12 and 13. This judgement is further explained in the sixth form summary annex to the report.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students work hard and have a high level of respect for the feelings of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Students are invariably friendly and courteous to one another, staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students strive to do well and achieve targets. They make the most of the many varied opportunities provided, and are involved in the life of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Learning is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 to 13. Teachers are able subject specialists who interpret their subjects well and explain lesson content very clearly so students gain a good depth of knowledge. Students of all abilities respond well to the high expectations placed on them by teachers and are effective learners. They work hard and are highly motivated to do well. However, lessons are not always well structured to allow students to think through their ideas before setting them down on paper. Information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills are well taught. The school meets the needs of individuals very well at all levels. A high proportion of lessons are taught very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad and balanced curriculum.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The caring and positive environment underpins and enriches all aspects of school life. The cultural element is enriched in the school through study and performance of music, the performing arts, art, drama, school visits and travel abroad. However, during the inspection there was little evidence of the students being exposed or encouraged to consider life today in multi-cultural Britain.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. Students are well cared for, their welfare is assured and their working environment is safe. The school works very well with parents. There are good links with the local community. The parents are very positive about the school and its management, they support the many different functions that are well attended. Parents have been very supportive in their funding of developments in the school. Child protection procedures are effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher leads the school well and, with the support of senior managers, has maintained the school's high standards since the last inspection. The sixth form is very well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are also very clear about their own role. They primarily set strategy and hold managers to account for what the school achieves.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school constantly evaluates its practice and its cost effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The principles of best value are applied in an exemplary way. Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children like school • The very good relationships and behaviour in school • The high standards expected and achieved • Good pastoral care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school to work more closely with them • The amount of homework set • Information on students' progress

One hundred and sixty six responses were received from parents and 24 parents attended their meeting, both these numbers are quite low. The majority of written comments received were positive about the standards achieved, the quality of teaching and learning and the general management of the school. Inspection evidence confirms the parents' positive view of the school. The school has the usual number of meetings for parents and endeavours to keep in close contact with them. Parents receive very good quality information on the school's activities and about students' progress. The inspection judgement is that homework is provided appropriately and is used well to support students' learning.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PRINCE HENRY'S HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The number of students in the sixth form is above average. There are currently more male students than female students, 284 students altogether. The roll has risen since the last inspection. The students come predominantly from White British backgrounds. The minimum entry requirements for the sixth form A-level courses are 5 A* to C grades at GCSE. Overall, standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are above average. Six are identified as having special educational needs including four who have Statements of Special Needs. The school provides a very wide range of two-year courses leading to A-level or advanced vocational qualifications.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form that gives very good value for money. It has improved well since the last inspection thanks to a reflective approach to leadership and management that gives careful attention to detail. Standards are rising. Teaching is very good and achievement, already good, looks set to improve further. The wide curriculum meets the needs of students very well.

Strengths

- Standards are high because teaching is good.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and achieve very well.
- Educational and personal support are very good.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and their personal development are very good.
- Attendance is good.

What could be improved

- Accommodation for all students.
- Access to ICT in some subject areas.
- Provision for independent learning in some subject areas.

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 A level	Good. Examination results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Teaching is good and achievement is good. The subject is very well led.
Biology A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001 and similar in 2002: these standards are being maintained. Teaching is very good and achievement is good. The subject is very well managed.
Business studies A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001, and raw results were broadly similar in 2002. Current standards are well above average. Teaching, achievement and management are very good.
Design and technology	Good. Examination results were average in 2001, but raw results show an improvement in 2002. Current standards are above average. Teaching

A level	is good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Art and design A level	Good. Examination results were above average in 2001 with the 2002 results showing further improvement. Current standards are above average. Teaching is very good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Information and communication technology VCE	Good. The VCE is a new course so national comparisons of results are not yet possible. Standards of the current students are above average. Teaching is very good and achievement is very good. Management is very good.
Health and social care VCE	Good. Examination results in the GNVQ health and social care in 2001 were above average and similar high standards were obtained for the VCE examination in 2002. Current standards are above average. Teaching is good and achievement is good. Management of the course is good.
Theatre studies A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001, and levels were maintained in 2002. Current standards are also well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is very well managed.
History A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001 and in 2002 continued an upward trend. Current standards are well above average. Teaching is very good and achievement is very good. The subject is very well managed.
English A level	Very good. Examination results were above average in 2001; they were maintained in 2002, and current standards are also above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is well led and managed.
French A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001; they follow the same pattern in 2002, and current standards are above average. Teaching and achievement are good. The subject is very well managed.
German A level	Very good. Examination results were well above average in 2001; they follow the same pattern in 2002, and current standards are above average. Teaching and achievement are good. Subject management is very good.
Psychology A level	Very good with some excellent features. Examination results were above average in 2001; they follow the same pattern in 2002. Teaching and achievement are very good. The subject is very well managed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school's provision for the educational and personal support of sixth form students is very good. Students are supported well through the tutorial system. Students greatly appreciate both the effort put in to this aspect by the teachers and the high quality of advice that they provide. The assessment system and target setting used to identify students' attainment and progress are good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very effective leadership. Financial arrangements are very good. Organisation and analysis of test and examination results are strengths, and demonstrate the concern to raise standards. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted, and everyone is consulted. Monitoring of teaching is very good, but the best practice is not spread quickly enough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality advice and support received from teachers and members of staff. Note 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation. Facilities for students on GNVQ/vocational subjects.

Students are very positive about the school in all its aspects. They confirm that they are given good support and guidance about examination courses and requirements. They also confirm that teachers are friendly and very helpful and gave them very useful information about how to improve the quality of their work. The school is addressing weaknesses in accommodation.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Its headteacher and senior managers provide strong leadership to both staff and students.

1. The headteacher provides good leadership. The headteacher and his senior colleagues manage the school well. Subject leaders provide high quality, purposeful leadership and support other staff well. These have all contributed to the maintenance of very good standards. In the sixth form, attainment has been consistently high over time and exceptionally good in 2002. The headteacher gives a very clear sense of direction in a secure and relaxed manner. This has been translated into very effective management that ensures a match with whole school priorities and has resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection. Governors and senior managers work together as an effective team, providing the school with a sense of direction and creativity, a climate in which high achievement can thrive. The governing body feel part of the school team; governors' relationships with staff are based on mutual respect and on a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
2. The school has benefited significantly from successful bids for additional funding. This has been used very successfully to improve buildings and accommodation over the years. The school makes effective use of its funds through careful financial planning and monitoring. Teachers are well supported by a team of good quality ancillary staff and learning resources are well maintained.
3. An effective performance management programme is in place which helps teachers to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The related professional development programme contributes to the high quality of teaching and learning. Throughout the inspection a willingness to engage in professional dialogue was apparent from all staff involved and what emerged was a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed in this endeavour.

Standards are high because the quality of teaching and learning is very good.

4. Teaching was highlighted as effective and predominantly good throughout the school in the last inspection report; it remains a strength. In Years 9 to 11, teaching was never less than satisfactory; it was very good or excellent in 37 per cent and good in 42 per cent of lessons. Teaching in the sixth form was very good in half the lessons observed and good in a further 40 per cent. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. The high quality of students' learning is a reflection of the very good teaching that they generally receive. The school meets the needs of its students well, including those with special educational needs.
5. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding, thorough planning and high expectations underpin most teaching. Teachers manage students very well and, as a result, relationships in class are generally very good. Teachers are rigorous in their teaching and expect students to do their best. Teachers very effectively guide students in their learning because of good, often very good, explanation and demonstration followed by very focused and productive student enquiry work. This is particularly the case in the sixth form where a very strong work ethos enables students to learn well and strive to match the high expectations of their teachers.

6. In a Year 11 English class, the teacher's skilful and probing exploration of textual analysis enabled students to summarise concisely the complexity and diversity of characterisation. In a Year 12 ICT lesson, the teacher's very good use of exemplar work on the previous year's case study made clear to students the elements of preparation needed for examination success. Teachers prepare their students well for the demands of public examinations without reducing enjoyment of the subject or limiting the range of experience. Lessons are well structured with activities that are varied and interesting. For example, teachers in art lessons present challenging ideas in their teaching, make good use of information computer technology as a teaching aid and expect students to take responsibility for their own work. Students respond well to the purposeful atmosphere for learning that many teachers create. They are keen to learn and make progress. Good use is made of lesson time and regular homework provides additional and valuable learning opportunities. Not all teachers pay sufficient attention to the pace and focus of lessons. On a few occasions, learning objectives are not clarified and the pace of the lesson is slow because work is not pitched well enough to the needs of students. ICT is used well to support teachers in their work.

Very good provision for students' personal development results in very good attitudes to school and excellent behaviour and relationships.

7. The school makes sensitive provision for the needs of individuals. A very strong feature of the school is the way that the social development of students is managed and nurtured. There are many opportunities for students to work together in school and on external visits. Members of staff give freely of their expertise and time in supporting students who may have experienced difficulties with their work. Students and parents were fulsome in their praise for the commitment staff made in helping students and as a result there are very strong bonds between them. Students confirmed that they felt the school to be a 'friendly' place.
8. Students' mutual respect for each other and for members of staff results in excellent relationships. This in turn encourages students throughout the school to make extra effort, take pride in what they achieve and to make considerable progress. [Inspectors made very positive comments of lessons seen in all year groups, highlighting the effort put into learning by students, their interest, that they were fully engaged, enthusiastic, motivated, that they contributed well when asked and that they concentrated very well throughout lessons.] When lessons are interrupted or if equipment malfunctions, the excellent team spirit and the mutual desire to succeed enable learning to continue and progress to be made at an undiminished pace.
9. The provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding, with most members of staff contributing to the wide range of sporting, cultural, adventure and social activities. There is a strong school ethos for providing students with good opportunities for their social, moral and cultural development. The students learn about different cultures through the curriculum and through the wide range of activities open to them that include work experience, visitors, visits and trips to a variety of destinations around the world.
10. Students are given many opportunities to enrich these aspects within the school, through their own efforts. Through the school council and the prefect system they are encouraged to influence and play their part in the management of the school.

Parents and students have highly positive views of the school.

11. Parents' responses indicate a high level of satisfaction with the school. They, like their children, are proud of the school and its achievements. A very high proportion of parents in their questionnaires said that their children like school and that they are satisfied with their children's progress. Almost all judged the teaching and students' behaviour to be good. There were concerns expressed by a minority that parents did not receive sufficient information about students' progress. However, inspection evidence indicates that this provision is very good. As well as receiving information on progress and school activities, parents are regularly invited to attend open evenings and school productions.
12. In the most recent survey of students' views of the school, a high proportion would advise others to attend the school. They also confirm that the learning atmosphere is good and that they like the teachers. The area that did not fully satisfy the students' needs was in the accommodation, which the school is committed to improve. Arrangements for pastoral care are good and the tutorial system for sixth form students is very good. The quality of information and the time devoted to students by their tutors is greatly valued by the sixth formers. When interviewed, students appreciated the respect with which teachers treated them and the friendliness of the school. Students show very positive attitudes to their work, to members of staff and to their peers.

Students participate in a wide range of high quality extra curricular activities.

13. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enrich learning opportunities for students by broadening their experience and raising their self-confidence. Students participate in many sports and represent the school both in the local area and at national level. Music and drama feature strongly; choirs and orchestras perform at a high standard in public concerts. Students participate in foreign exchanges and visit a variety of countries for both curriculum enhancement and extra-curricular activities. Students gain awards in the Duke of Edinburgh's scheme, and support local and national charities. Many are involved in a local army cadet unit and in four young enterprise schemes. A Year 13 student recently attended an Institute of Directors' conference in London as a result of writing about one of the young enterprise schemes. Many students are able to take up a wide variety of well-attended activities and clubs at lunch-times and after school, including classes in the Japanese language. Students produce and publish a high quality 'year book' as well as arrange and organise social events including an end of year ball.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Attainment and achievement in GCSE mathematics at Key Stage 4, although above average, do not match the high standards achieved in other subjects.

14. The standard of work seen in students' books and during lessons is good and there is effective use of mathematical language. However, much of the work is structured by the teacher and opportunities for independent learning are limited. Students show a positive attitude to their learning and good relationships between the teachers and the students are a particular strength. Students express the view that given clearly defined objectives in mathematics, as in other subjects, they could improve their learning.
15. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The pace of lessons is compromised because lesson objectives are not always shared with students. Work set does not always match students' prior level of attainment and this has a negative impact on the progress of individual students. Plenary sessions often reinforces students' learning but are not used effectively in all lessons.
16. A new management structure for the department has recently been put in place. The department has a sound development plan to build on the high standards achieved in Year 9. Many students do not achieve as high a standard in GCSE mathematics as they do in their other subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Further raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 4 by:
 - Sharing lesson objectives more fully with students;
 - Maximising students' progress by ensuring the tasks set match students' prior level of attainment;
 - Using the plenary sessions more consistently to secure students' learning even more effectively.Paragraphs: 14, 15 and 16.

Sixth form

- (1) Improve accommodation for all students, and particularly those undertaking more vocational studies.
Paragraphs: 41, 45, 71 and 87.
- (2) Develop further access to ICT in all subject areas.
Paragraphs: 29, 45, 55, 70, 73, 84, 87, 106 and 112.
- (3) Encourage more independent learning in all subject areas.
Paragraphs: 27, 64, 132 and 134.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	94
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	34	39	20	0	0	0
Percentage	1	36	42	22	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	0	27	22	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	50	40	10	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 students

Students on the school's roll

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	915	284
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	47	0

Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	5	6
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	62	4

English as an additional language

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

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	157	139	296

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	124	131
	Girls	127	116	118
	Total	248	240	249
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (80)	81 (79)	84 (81)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	54 (53)	61 (50)	63 (47)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	129	135
	Girls	130	119	126
	Total	239	248	261
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (84)	84 (82)	88 (83)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	55 (42)	56 (53)	61 (44)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	144	135	279

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	89	136	141
	Girls	95	128	134
	Total	184	264	275
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	66 (68)	95 (96)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	45.7
	National	39.0

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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	78	64	142
	Average point score per candidate	20.0	22.2	21.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

		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	78	64	142	2	4	6
	Average point score per candidate	20	22.2	21	6	12	10
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National		0

Ethnic background of students

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 students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1178	43	1
0	0	0
9	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	9	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76
Number of students per qualified teacher	16

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	392

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,692,857
Total expenditure	3,686,125
Expenditure per student	3,054

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	0
Key Stage 4	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance brought forward from previous year	324,589
Balance carried forward to next year	331,321

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.3
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	1199
Number of questionnaires returned	166

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	51	03	01	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	43	02	0	02
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	51	01	0	80
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	61	11	01	01
The teaching is good.	42	51	01	0	06
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	51	09	02	06
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	05	01	02
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	01	0	01
The school works closely with parents.	30	50	01	02	07
The school is well led and managed.	53	40	01	0	05
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	04	0	04
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	44	05	0	07

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were very positive about the way the school helps students achieve well and teachers' support for them. Suggestions were made by a very small number of parents about improving activities outside lessons and arranging meetings at the beginning of the year to inform parents of what is expected.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

17. Students' results at the end of their GCE A-level courses are well above average overall. In comparison with results nationally in 2001, the results were well above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, economics, French, German, history, religious studies, physical education and theatre studies. They were above average in computer studies, English literature, mathematics, physics and psychology. They were average in all the other subjects where the entries were sufficient to be statistically significant. The number of entries for AS and vocational qualifications in 2001 was insufficient to make any national comparisons.
18. An analysis of provisional results for 2002 shows an improvement on the 2001 results; students were very successful in achieving not only passes but high grades: almost half the pass grades were at A or B. Results were particularly impressive in art, biology, design technology, English literature, French, history, geography and psychology. Above average pass rates were achieved in nearly all subjects – students gained grades A to E in 21 of the 26 subjects that they were entered for at A-level. There were also good results in the 2002 AS examinations, with chemistry, English literature and history faring particularly well.
19. A comparison of the average points scores of students who took A2 and AS examinations in 2002 with their average total points scores in GCSE examinations shows that they made good progress in the sixth form. Most subjects add value to what students might be expected to achieve. These subjects include mathematics, art, physical education and – most notably – biology, design technology and psychology.
20. In the 13 subjects inspected, standards were above average overall. They were well above average in biology, business studies and psychology, average in ICT, French and German and above average in the other subjects inspected. Standards seen in the other subjects that were sampled during the inspection, including general studies, were average overall.
21. Overall, students achieve well. Satisfactory achievement is made in art and very good achievement in biology, business studies and psychology. Achievement is good in all the other subjects inspected

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Sixth form students' attitudes to the school are very good. They work hard in a pleasant yet purposeful atmosphere that reflects the high esteem the students and staff have for one another. Relationships between all students and staff are very good. The students are mature and they act responsibly, yet they display an air of enjoyment that supports a very effective work ethos. Their behaviour is very good. Students use their study time effectively and follow up assessments and teachers' advice. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and the management of their time.
23. Sixth form students are involved in the life of the school by supporting younger students, by acting as prefects and senior prefects, head boy/girl deputies, and through their involvement in sporting activities, music and drama. Students readily accept responsibilities, involve themselves in social activities, the young enterprise schemes,

fund-raising, mentoring younger students and compiling and editing the high quality school yearbook. Students take opportunities to extend their understanding and knowledge through debate and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Attendance of sixth formers is good and there are good procedures in place to monitor students' absences.

24. Sixth formers make a significant contribution to the rich social and cultural activities of the school, yet they are able to work independently towards challenging targets. They have well developed attitudes and skills that will enable them to engage in society and continue to learn in adult life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are planned very well and appropriate tasks and activities are set, helping students to a better knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Students are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive; recent results indicate that they are very well prepared for examinations. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in biology, business studies, art and design, ICT, theatre studies, history, English and psychology, and good in all other subjects. Good lessons were also seen in the other subjects sampled.
26. A significant strength of teaching is the very good specialist subject knowledge of the staff. Teachers are also well versed in the various examination specifications and prepare their students very well for public examinations. Lessons are very well planned and are characterised by the very high expectations of what students could or should achieve. Teachers communicate enthusiasm and many lessons move at a fast pace. In history, for example, much ground is covered in the space of one lesson. The best teaching involves a variety of methods and approaches: some very imaginative activities were employed in theatre studies and psychology, for example. Clear and appropriate objectives are usually set at the beginning of lessons, and a range of learning opportunities is provided. These range from purposeful whole class and small group discussion to formal instruction. Students of different abilities, male and female, are equally involved in classroom activities and contribute willingly. The very good relationships that exist between teachers and students enable very good learning to take place for much of the time.
27. Students are expected to work hard and participate in lessons. In most subjects, there is good provision for independent learning, although a few lessons were seen in which students did not have time to develop individual learning skills as planned. This happened in design and technology, for example. In other areas, lower attaining students are hindered by a lack of basic knowledge and need more teacher support for them to work more effectively on their own. This was noticed in some modern foreign language lessons. But the overall picture is one of students who take responsibility for their own learning. There is a danger in most subjects that their trust in and respect for their teachers could lead to an over-dependence on the teachers' expertise, but teachers are, by and large, wise to this and set tasks that prevent learning from being teacher-dominated. However, there is need for vigilance in this whole area. Students who have come up through this school are willing recipients of knowledge, eager to learn, and need constant reminders of the need for personal initiative. Where this happens, it is extremely successful, whether in small group activities in psychology, in improvised work in the drama studio or in the thorough background research that English students do as homework.
28. Students' work is marked thoroughly and regularly and they are given good feedback and support in most subjects, although there are some inconsistencies. For example,

modern foreign language and biology students receive insufficient feedback about their level of performance in relation to examination grades. Self assessment and the use of exemplar material as a support to learning could be further developed in design and technology. Marks and comments are often brief in business studies and health and social care. Some ICT students need help in identifying what they must do to improve their marks. But the overall picture is one of students receiving useful feedback orally and in writing that is helping them to make good progress.

29. Many teachers make good use of ICT to promote students' learning. English language students were expected to arrive at a lesson in an ICT room with disks they had been working on. Mathematics, design technology, art and design, and modern foreign languages use ICT well. But access to computers is limited in other subjects, including biology, business studies, health and social care, history and psychology. Students often use ICT to prepare coursework, but it is not systematically used as a teaching tool in all subjects. Key skills are not taught in any formal courses which means that literacy and numeracy, like ICT, are taught incidentally across the curriculum. Some provision is made in tutorial time for key skills, and all students take general studies in Year 12, but, inevitably, some students receive a more balanced training in key skills than do others.

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

30. The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of courses towards AS and A-levels, with some provision for Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and Intermediate GNVQ qualifications. All the courses offered at GCSE can be continued in the sixth form, with the exception of child development, and several subjects are added. There is a good range of the more traditional academic subjects, but limited scope for vocational qualifications to be taken. Apart from ICT, there is only an AVCE course in health and social care that attracts a small number of students and an Intermediate GNVQ course in leisure and tourism. The curriculum reflects the interests of the students who stay on into the sixth form: they have a choice of 28 different subjects in Year 12, including general studies. They are able to continue with almost all the subjects studied for AS at A-level level in Year 13. Religious studies, although a relatively popular A-level option, is not provided for the majority of students.
31. The school works hard at tailoring the curriculum to benefit those students who may be at particular risk, or have special educational needs. The quality and range of this provision is very good. The school aims to broaden students' experiences and engage them in school and makes efforts to boost their self-esteem and feelings of self worth. To ensure that students continue to attend and succeed, the school works with outside agencies and the local authority. The school makes full use of students' pastoral support plans, individual educational plans and students' statements, in arranging their provision.
32. The curriculum is considerably enriched by a very good range of extra-curriculum activities. These include activities to develop leadership skills; Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, adventure and team building exercises for prefects and the young enterprise schemes.
33. Students have opportunities to take on responsibilities within the school. They work with younger students, undertake overseas travel, support many cultural and sporting links, are involved with the school council, and are elected as head boy/girl and deputies, or as prefects and senior prefects. During the year there are many visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum and support students' personal development.

34. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is evident in the school's positive and caring ethos. Spirituality is presented through the once per week year group assemblies, students' work, the celebration of others' achievements, art, drama, music and other performances, the element of discovery in learning and the acquisition of knowledge. Moral aspects are the focus in assemblies, student discussion and coursework, relationships with younger members of school and the staff, themes such as remembrance and the effects of war. Social provision includes enabling students to accept responsibilities, to help in generating a sense of community, witnessing the good role models provided by staff, by the introduction to the world of work, the understanding of citizenship and their individual responsibility for their work. The cultural element is enriched in the school through study and performance of music, the performing arts, art, drama, school visits and travel abroad. However, during the inspection there was little evidence of the students being encouraged to consider life today in multi-cultural Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

35. There are good procedures for assessment in the sixth form. The school makes very good use of value-added data, which undoubtedly helps students to achieve well. As well as using detailed performance data to assess and monitor students' progress, teachers set targets for under-performing students and provide extra support where needed – this happens, for example, in history and in psychology. Examination results are carefully scrutinised in various subjects and strategies for improvement are developed. Good guidance is given to students. Self evaluation is a strong feature of theatre studies lessons, although self assessment could be better used in other areas, such as design and technology. Overall, it is clear that most students are given an accurate picture of what they are achieving and of what they need to do to improve further.

Advice, support and guidance

36. The school's provision for the educational and personal support for students is very good. Groups of about 20 students are organised into tutorial groups and students confirm that this system works very well. Tutors provide contact and advice for students in groups and on a one to one basis. Students greatly appreciate the quality of the advice they receive and the high levels of commitment and effort provided by teachers. From the head of the sixth form, heads of year down to individual tutors, members of staff know their students very well indeed and they are able to tailor the help they provide accordingly. Arrangements have been made by the school to tailor coursework and examination arrangements to suit individual student needs. Members of staff support students and advise on careers and application submissions and liaise with outside bodies and educational institutions, but are at pains to ensure students bear the responsibility for making their own choices and decisions.
37. Students greatly appreciate the advice, support and guidance provided by the staff on personal matters. As in the rest of the school, students are well cared for, their welfare is assured and the safety of their working environment is a priority for the school. Provision for students with special needs is good.

38. The school has a good system for the monitoring of attendance. Tutors and subject teachers complete registers respectively at the beginning of each day and at each lesson. Any reported absences are followed up promptly.
39. Careers guidance is good for those students embarking on courses of higher or further education and for those students entering the world of work. As students will have completed work experience in the main school, all sixth form students are encouraged to each arrange and undertake a work-shadowing assignment. This has proved highly successful. The school enjoys a good working relationship with the local careers education provider, there are resources in the library that will be further enhanced by the addition of a dedicated careers computer, and if students require, the school will organise interview training for them. A variety of organisations, industries and businesses have supported the school in further enhancing and enriching students' experiences of the world of work.

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

40. Parents and students are very positive in their praise of the school. They agree that the sixth form provision is very good. The school is challenging, it provides a wide range of academic courses and extra-curricular activities. Students and parents are left in no doubt of the school's aim and how they can be part of the life of the school. Students are fully involved in the school, they enjoy the experience and contribute in a number of ways to the richness of the school and its ethos.
41. Students confirm that the school is very supportive and that their teachers and tutors provide very good quality advice whatever their intended destination or course of study. Students on vocational courses expressed their concern that they lack an area dedicated to their specific needs. All students are concerned that their accommodation does not provide them with adequate quality space for their private studies. The school recognises this and the building of new accommodation for the sixth form is about to begin.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

42. There is very effective leadership of the sixth form. There is a head of sixth form who monitors attendance and is responsible for health and safety amongst his other duties. Much care is taken over developing a sixth form prospectus and in monitoring the curriculum to ensure that the needs of students are met. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted and everyone is consulted. New courses are introduced when appropriate, for example, English language is now offered in Year 12 as an AS subject.
43. One of the strengths is the constant concern to raise standards: the analysis of results and target setting are taken very seriously, and are clearly having an effect. Much attention is given to detail. Teaching, however, is not subjected to a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation, apart from the observation necessary for performance management. Senior staff are aware of the quality of the teachers they have and can see the results they are getting. Consequently, a 'light touch' approach is adopted, and departments are often left to monitor themselves. By and large, this is effective, but there is evidence that standards in some departments, notably mathematics, could be higher than they are, given a more thorough programme of observation. The good practice that exists within most departments could be extended to all, and standards raised even further. Development planning is good and focuses on

maintaining high standards in all aspects of the sixth form provision. It is effective because there is good subject leadership and an efficient management system that enable teachers to create a good environment for learning.

Resources

44. Financial arrangements for the sixth form are very good. The last audit report judged reporting structure to be strong, with good controls and procedures, although made some qualifications, for instance about the way orders are sometimes initiated by departments without going through the financial management system. Principles of best value are applied and the sixth form gives good value for money.
45. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced to teach the sixth form curriculum, and receive good support from technical, administrative and clerical staff. Accommodation is very good overall, and excellent for theatre studies and physical education. Facilities for some vocational subjects are less than adequate, however. Learning resources are generally good. There is a good ratio of computers to students, although ICT may not be being used as much as is possible. Library stock is very low, largely because of a policy to reduce obsolete stock and build up again.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001/2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	3	100	83	0	23	1.00	2.27
Biology	3	67	52	0	2	0.67	0.79
Chemistry	1	100	43	100	5	5.00	0.77
Computer Studies	2	0	74	0	13	0	1.75
Mathematics	1	0	62	0	15	0	1.51
Other Sciences	1	100	78	0	27	1.00	2.27
Religious Studies	1	100	85	100	26	4.00	2.38
Business	3	0	0	0	0	6.00	10.45
Health and Social Care	2	0	0	0	0	0	10.79

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	14	100	96	36	46	6.43	6.57
Biology	49	100	88	55	34	7.06	5.25
Business studies	23	100	92	52	32	6.96	5.50
Chemistry	13	100	90	85	43	8.77	5.90
Theatre studies	8	100	93	75	31	8.00	5.53
Computer studies	26	96	86	31	23	5.46	4.62
Economics	14	100	89	64	36	7.29	5.52
English Literature	32	100	95	38	37	6.50	5.91
French	6	100	89	67	38	7.33	5.59
Full Design and Technology	17	100	91	35	30	5.88	5.38
General Studies	74	78	85	23	30	4.35	4.91
Geography	18	89	92	44	38	5.89	5.74
German	6	100	91	67	40	8.00	5.81

History	32	100	88	59	35	7.13	5.45
Home Economics	2	100	83	50	28	6.00	4.73
Mathematics	42	93	87	52	43	6.43	5.80
Music	2	100	93	50	35	6.00	5.74
Other Sciences	41	100	90	44	30	6.20	5.16
Physics	15	93	88	47	40	6.00	5.67
Religious Studies	10	100	92	60	38	7.80	5.84
Sports/PE Studies	19	100	92	42	25	6.11	5.09

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Leisure and Tourism	9	77.8	0	0	0	0	0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

46. The focus was on mathematics and biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. In chemistry results in 2001 were well above average; provisional results for 2002, though not as high, show a good standard, with a continuing 100 percent pass rate. One lesson was observed: this was good. Students, at the start of a new topic, were able to write equations for oxidation products of alcohols and used bond energies to calculate the bond energies of the pi-bonds in alkenes and carbonyl compounds. The lesson was well-structured. In physics the results were above average in 2001; most of the 2002 candidates also did well. One lesson was observed which was good. The teacher's explanation of Newton's Law of Gravitation was clear, and the principle of an inverse square law was effectively exemplified using the example of light. Students were able to apply their understanding successfully to solve problems which tested Newton's hypothesis of an inverse square law for gravity.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work very effectively as a team.
- Teachers and students have high expectations.
- Students have very positive attitudes to mathematics and a high regard for their teachers.
- There are well developed assessment procedures support students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of ICT would enhance the teaching of mathematics.
- More girls should be encouraged to study mathematics.

47. The school offers AS and A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics. The courses cover pure mathematics, decision and discrete mathematics and either

mechanics or statistics. In mathematics there are currently 34 students in Year 12 and 29 in Year 13. Further mathematics is taught in a separate class and there are currently 2 students in Year 12 and 4 in Year 13.

48. In 2002 the A-level results in mathematics and further mathematics were similar to those in 2001. In 2001 the A-level results were above average and were well above average in the three preceding years. The further mathematics students' results have been consistently good over the last four years with a high proportion of the small cohort achieving the highest grades, A or B. Male and female students have performed equally well. However, the number of boys currently studying mathematics is significantly higher than the number of girls. Students' performance in 2001 was in line with expectations based on prior attainment at GCSE.
49. The standard of A-level work seen in students' books and during lessons is above average. The work is presented to a high standard and is accurate in the use of mathematical language. The students work hard and respond well to very good teaching. In one Year 13 lesson highly skilled questioning by the teacher allowed students to derive the general formula for the Newton-Raphson method of solving equations. Students wrote a program for their graphical calculators to find solutions using the formula.
50. Students in Year 12 are not very far into their course and are still acquiring the skills for independent problem solving. Students were seen practising critical path analysis skills and were drafting the investigation for their examination coursework.
51. Teaching is good overall with many very good features. In the best lessons the work was very well planned and presented students with a good pace and a high level of challenge. Skilful questioning techniques allow students the opportunity to extend their learning and strengthen their understanding. In a Year 13 lesson a well structured and challenging task on odd, even and periodic functions allowed students to use "autograph" to develop independent learning skills.
52. Students learn well and have full confidence in their teachers. They appreciate the support that teachers offer outside lesson time. The assessment of students' work is well developed by the department. Students' work is regularly checked and end of unit tests are used to inform students of their level of attainment. Teachers discuss with students on a one to one basis the actions necessary to effect improvement. Preparation of students for module examinations is well planned and rigorous. Students have a clear picture of the structure of the course and how well they are doing. Students share the high expectations of their teachers.
53. The department is very well led. The head of department is seeking to build on the current standards and to further develop the good team approach to the teaching of mathematics in the sixth form. The enthusiasm of the teachers has resulted in the numbers of students studying mathematics more than doubling since the last inspection. Students receive enrichment through participation in the UK Senior Mathematics Challenge. The department has a firm commitment to the use of ICT and this is having a positive effect on students' learning.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Standards in 2001 were well above average.
- Results in biology in recent years have been consistently higher than predictions based on prior attainment.
- Standards of teaching are very good.
- A good variety of learning activities are used to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Subject leadership and management have been very good.

Areas for improvement

- Learning activities need to be further developed, as planned, to provide more opportunities for independent study, presentations and debate.
- Students need more feedback in terms of their performance in relation to examination criteria.

54. Standards at GCE A-level were well above the national average in 2001. All students entered obtained a pass grade and the proportion obtaining higher grades, A or B, was well above the average. Analysis provided by the school shows results in biology were significantly above expectations based upon prior attainment. This was also the case in 2002. In recent years students have achieved significantly more highly in biology than in their other subjects.
55. Standards observed during the inspection were also well above average in terms of students' knowledge and understanding. In the lessons seen students made good, or very good, progress. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students interpreted a variety of pieces of experimental evidence leading to an understanding of current theories of the structure of the cell membrane. Discussion with students showed a good understanding of the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary structures of proteins. Year 13 coursework showed an above average understanding of the kinetics of enzyme catalysis. Standards of literacy and numeracy are also well above average. Students use ICT appropriately to research information on the Internet and to make some presentations. Use of ICT for data-logging has been restricted by the facilities available. The recent acquisition of laptops in the department, together with planned training, should address this situation.
56. Teaching of biology is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and explanation is clear. Lessons are well structured and planned, and efficient use is made of time. A variety of learning activities are used successfully to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Methods used include practical work, fieldwork, questions requiring application of knowledge, student presentations, research from textbooks and the Internet, small group discussion and independent note making. Magazine and newspaper articles are used effectively, often accompanied by structured questions, to promote good learning.
57. In one very good lesson seen, the teacher gave the students six pieces of experimental evidence to interpret in order to develop their understanding of current theories of the structure of the cell membrane. In another very good lesson the teacher elicited students' understanding of what defined a species and then built on this to give the scientific view. Infertile hybrids were explained and illustrated first with the mule and then with some lesser-known examples such as the 'tigon' (a hybrid of the tiger and the

lion). A clear explanation of ring species of gulls was given and the lesson concluded with students extracting information from a newspaper article about a new species of bat. Homework is used well to support learning.

58. Work is regularly marked and students are given good feedback and support. At present, however, there is insufficient feedback to students about their level of performance in terms of standards in relation to examination grades. The new head of biology plans to address this. While teaching overall is very good, in one lesson seen the practical task offered too little progression from GCSE. The teacher was restricted by lack of certain items of equipment. The lesson was still good, however, as the teacher made efficient use of time and successfully developed students' understanding of the theoretical basis for the experimental results at a higher level.
59. Leadership and management of biology have been very good, as evidenced by very high standards in recent years. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The new head of biology is sensibly evaluating how, in what is clearly a very successful subject area, improvements can be made. The planned increased emphasis on independent study skills and greater use of presentations and debates should strengthen the quality of students' learning further. There is at present no formal programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

60. The focus of the inspection was design and technology. A few students study textiles or food technology, achieving good results in A-level examinations.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Examination performances are improving.
- There are good standards of design folder work and practical outcomes.
- New courses are being developed.
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Self-assessment in students' work could be developed.
- The use of CAM could be developed in greater depth.
- Industrial visits could be used as a support to learning.

61. In 2002, the A-level results showed significant progress from earlier standards achieved by the same students. Unconfirmed results show above average performance for A-level and AS students. The 2001 A-level results were broadly in-line with the national average for students achieving A or B grades. All students were successful at achieving grades A to E. The AS level results were also average for students achieving A or B grades.
62. Attainment in lessons and work seen is above average in Year 12 and Year 13. Predicted grades and current standards of coursework support this judgement. Students make good progress in Year 12 in both the graphics and resistant modules of study, where considerable gains in knowledge and understanding are made, especially when developing graphical techniques and skills and in research methodology. Very

good standards of freehand sketching, good annotation and very good use of colour are seen in the graphical skills based exercise and good use of ICT in research, for example the work on Brunel. Good written work in the research into industrial and commercial practice of manufacturing is seen. There are some spelling errors in the work which are not always corrected.

63. In Year 13, very good work is seen in the CD player design project. High standards of presentation include freehand sketching, use of colour, ICT, photographs, and good investigation into different materials and their properties. Good aesthetic awareness is also found in the lighting project, where designs show understanding of proportion and ergonomic factors. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to insufficient detail in the research, a limited range of ideas and an over-reliance on commercial material for initial ideas. There are spelling errors in the work, sometimes in the headings of sections. Practical work, including modelling, is of a very high standard throughout. Key skills are developed well with oral contributions and use of ICT is particularly good.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned to include whole group and individual teaching which generates good learning. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson where the teacher used good subject knowledge when developing enhancement techniques in graphical presentation. Here the students experienced the use of different resources by experimentation to achieve the required results. A Year 13 lesson looking at production methods and quality control in manufacturing increased students' learning about environmental and social issues. The teacher involved the students in the lesson by encouraging discussion and response thereby increasing understanding. The students did not have sufficient time however to develop independent learning skills as planned. The application of knowledge is not always applied appropriately.
65. Leadership and management are good. Expectations are high and student response is very good. Assessment and marking is good and informative but self-assessment and the use of exemplar material, as a support to learning, needs to be further developed. The use of ICT in students' work is good but CAM needs to feature more predominantly. Relationships are very good and contribute to the good standards seen. The department contributes significantly to student achievement and the area provides a stimulating learning environment. The use of industrial visits would add to the learning experience of the students.
66. Improvements since the last inspection include increased use of ICT, new courses being developed currently at AS level, a general increase in student numbers, an improved learning environment and a general increase in resourcing. The department is aware of the need to address the gender imbalance in this subject.

BUSINESS

67. The focus of the inspection was business studies, but economics was also sampled. The teaching and learning seen in the economics lesson were good, with good progress being made on a new topic. A-level results in economics in 2001 were well above average, and provisional results for 2002 indicate that standards are being maintained.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Very good teaching underpins the very good progress students are making in their knowledge and understanding of business.
- Teamwork is a strong aspect of the department.
- Students' attitudes are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation in which many of the lessons are taught is unsuitable.
- More female students could be encouraged to undertake the subject.
- Students have insufficient immediate access to computers in lessons.
- Marking of students' work could include more detail and comments that are recorded in students' files.

68. Standards are well above average. Provisional 2002 results are very good with all students gaining A-level grades A to C. AS results are also very good. 2001 results were well above average. In A-level business studies, the examination results have been consistently above average for a number of years, with above average percentages of students obtaining the higher A or B grades. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades and predictions based on prior attainment, these results represent very good achievement.
69. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and written work, are generally above average for both male and female students. Only a few female students are to be found in the classes. All students make good progress in understanding the main concepts of the subject and make use of appropriate subject technical language. Although Year 12 students are at an early stage in the AS course, they are making good progress in understanding business theory. They understand how price elasticity of demand can be used for different purposes in industry and commerce. Year 13 students show good understanding of the issues surrounding consumer protection legislation and the complexities surrounding its implementation. Higher attainers in particular, both in essays and orally in lessons, show good evidence of understanding and applying business concepts appropriately, for example Year 13 students show insight into the power of advertising and the need for regulations.
70. Literacy is good. Note taking of a high order is encouraged in most lessons. Students have good listening skills. Higher attainers contribute well orally in lessons. Middle attaining students sometimes need help from the teacher to use business language in class answers. Numeracy is satisfactory and was well used in the lessons seen. While ICT is well used in coursework projects, it is not seen in use during lessons.
71. Students are highly motivated, keen to do well and, when questioned, express positive views of the subject. Personal development is very good. They are usually punctual and well prepared to start lessons on time. They see the relevance of the subject to their future life choices. They are co-operative and willing to help each other and members of staff. Relationships are very good, and students listen well to the views of others. The more reluctant students participate when encouraged by the teacher. Most show a willingness to engage in independent study and also work well when taking part in collaborative activities. However, there is little room for movement in some of the classrooms used. One room is only just large enough to accommodate the number of

students in the teaching group. This limits the range of teaching and learning strategies that can be used. It is very difficult, for example, for students to engage in collaborative group work in lessons taken in such a small room.

72. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is used effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12 lesson on price elasticity of demand where the teacher's skilful use of questioning helped to clarify students' understanding of terms such as elastic, inelastic, revenue, and price sensitivity. This good use of questioning improved as the lesson progressed, encouraging students to respond and extend answers. The more reluctant students participated with teacher help. As a consequence students' confidence and understanding grew.
73. The pace at which the lesson was conducted helped to ensure students maintained concentration and made clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills, contributing to their good progress in learning. Very good planning ensures that students are presented with increasing demands in lessons. While ICT is used well in coursework, there is a lack of access to computers in lessons, so insufficient use is made of ICT in learning. Assessment is closely linked to the course criteria and students benefit from teacher support in lessons and through the marking of their work, although marks and comments are often brief.
74. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and provide a clear direction for work in the department. There is a strong commitment to success and continued improvement. Teachers work closely together in planning and delivering the courses. This inclusive approach underpins the progress students are making in the subject. This is a strong and growing department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

75. The focus of the inspection was ICT. Some students take computer studies, and their results in 2001 were above average; provisional results for 2002 show that standards are being maintained.

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

Strengths

- The flexibility of courses at sixth form meets the needs of all students.
- There is very good teaching informed by college and commercial experience.
- Improved hardware and software are improving skill and application.
- Enthusiastic students apply their skills to a range of problem solving.
- Students are mature autonomous learners who have good relationships with staff.

Areas for improvement

- Gifted and talented students need to be clearly identified.
- Preferred learning and study skills should be established on entry to the sixth form.

76. The school has a tradition for computer studies that maintains good results at A level. In order to respond to the growing need for ICT skills in all aspects of learning, and to offer a more relevant progression from GCSE through to sixth form, the school introduced information and communication technology. In 2001 the school moved to offering a nationally recognised on-line programme for advanced vocational ICT; results in this course have not yet been tested at final examination level but have improved the retention rate. The feedback from external moderation of units of work has been

effectively embedded into future planning and has raised standards. Previous A-level results in ICT before the change to AVCE were below expectation.

77. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and in conversation confirms that the standards in the new course are average overall and achievement is good. Where students join the course from GCSE their standards are more consistent than those who opt for AVCE ICT without experience at GCSE. These students lack prior knowledge and in Year 12 some struggled, for example, with understanding on-line interaction that simulated the communication flow in a company. An effective new textbook for units 1-3, and very good teaching clarified the on-line learning and improved students' confidence and understanding. Since the textbook has been available, end of unit tests have improved dramatically.
78. A minority of students still lack some thinking and study skills, which impedes their written response to questions. However, work in key skills is good and fully integrated into the on-line AVCE programme. Year 13 students had a very positive view about the second year of the course. They cited lively, committed teaching and good debate, on areas such as ethical issues in the use of ICT, which made effective contributions to their enjoyment and achievement. Year 13 have produced very good multimedia presentations that are evaluated by their peers. An element of healthy competition in evaluation enhances the learning and critical analysis of each other's work.
79. Overall, teaching is very good. In lessons seen, teaching was at least good with two thirds being very good. Teachers have a wide range of skill and experience, which enriches their teaching. Regular use of visitors from local companies ensures industrial and commercial information is relevant and up to date, giving students an accurate context for their learning. The course requires independent planning and learning; teachers plan their time to target students encountering problems or those who lack prior experience. Teachers' interest and enthusiasm are contagious, which impacts effectively on learning and classroom relationships. Marking is good, annotation is clear and provides a very good model for students' annotation of their own testing and modification procedures. Marking for a minority of students fails to help them identify what they must do to improve their marks.
80. Management of the subject is very good, but monitoring of teaching of cross-curricular ICT is informal. Consistent review and monitoring of equipment and infrastructure is promoting improvement in ICT hardware across the curriculum; this has a good impact on the skills and application students bring to their sixth form studies. Some rooms restrict the opportunity for students to work away from computers as, for example, when planning off screen. The dynamic vision of a very good development plan keeps the department reflecting on student need and investigating alternative qualifications that will prepare students for the next stage in their lives.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

81. Satisfactory lessons in A-level physical education and GNVQ leisure and tourism were seen during the inspection. The 19 candidates for A-level physical education in 2001 performed well above the national average; provisional results for 2002 show that standards have been maintained.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and encourages good learning in lessons.
- There is good preparation of students for visits to community organisations.
- The use of the community as a resource is very good.
- Students' esteem is raised as a result of good personal development.
- Students have excellent attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is limited: there is no base for Advanced Vocational courses, creating a lack of corporate identity.
- Student numbers taking the course are small.
- Marking of work and feedback to students are not formalised enough.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning during lessons.

82. The AVCE results in health and social care for 2002 are good. All students entered for the double award gained A to E grades, with three-quarters of the entry gaining the higher grades. Of the candidates taking the single award, three-quarters gained A to E grades. In 2001 results were good with all students gaining grades within the B to D range. In the 2001 GNVQ health and social care, all students gained either a distinction or merit for the course. Students enter the course with lower average GCSE scores than for many academic courses within the school. A number of students attain grades above predictions based on prior attainment. Results are well analysed by the department.
83. In lessons, Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in developing knowledge and theory and applying this in new contexts, such as visits into the community. Year 12 and 13 students are achieving well. Students in Year 12 are a short time into their course but achievements are good. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the organisation and roles of members of the community care team within the health service. They are making good progress in developing their study skills and in understanding the performance criteria for their assignments.
84. Year 13 students produce coursework that is thoughtful and well presented, using good skills of word processing. Higher attaining students show critical ability of a good order in their work. Lower attaining students, while presenting factual material adequately, do not always analyse the content sufficiently. Students' written work in files is usually well organised and presented. Literacy standards are good. For example, articulate and confident students talked easily with elderly people at a nearby sheltered housing scheme when interviewing them to find out about care situations. Use of technical language is good, with words such as diabetic, symptoms, hormone, insulin, mono-unsaturated, and pancreas appearing in the unit on dietetics and nutrition. Numeracy is satisfactory. There is good use of word processing, but other uses of ICT to present and enhance work are not evident.
85. Students have excellent attitudes. They have been well informed about the subject in advance. Personal development is very good. Year 12 and 13 students manage their learning independently. Relationships between teacher and taught are constructive and students listen carefully in lessons. Attendance is good. Students understand the relevance of the subject to their lives.

86. Teaching is good overall, mainly because of detailed planning, good subject knowledge and presenting work that is suitable for student needs. The good teaching is encouraging good learning and this is raising student achievement. Teachers give clear guidance of the unit requirements of the course and act as very good facilitators. Feedback from teachers in lessons is personalised, accurate and to the point. However, teachers' written feedback on student work, while helpful, is often minimal. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide students with good opportunities to think about complex issues, for example in a lesson on the daily life and care of a stroke patient. The teacher and visitor tried hard to encourage thinking that went beyond simple responses and quick judgements. In a Year 12 practical lesson on dietetics and nutrition the teacher, through detailed questioning, enabled students to gain confidence in thinking aloud and supplying technical answers on different diets and conditions. In a lesson including both Years 12 and 13 students, sensitive and probing teaching ensured students were very well prepared with questions when making visits to the elderly.
87. Leadership and organisational management of the course are good. Teachers of health and social care are well qualified and there is a good team approach to the subject. There is a clear vision as to the purpose of the course and how to teach it. The subject does not have a base room and opportunities for the display of students' work are minimal. There is too little use of ICT to support learning during lesson time. The take up rate for the course needs to be improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

88. The subjects focused on were art and design and theatre studies. A few students take A-level music, and achieve good results.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching is very good.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- To maintain the recent improvement in A-Level results when compared to the same students' GCSE results.

89. The overall standards in art and design are good. Students study for the fine art option of the AS and A-level level examinations. The numbers have been quite constant at around 14 students a year, and standards have been steadily rising over the past three years. In 2002, 13 students took the A-level examination, and over three quarters of them gained a grade A or B; over half achieved a grade A. This is well above the national average. The students did better in the A-level examinations in 2002 than could have been predicted on the basis of their overall GCSE results. This is the first time this has happened since the last inspection. Fourteen students sat the AS examination in 2002. Their results were around the national average, but they achieved relatively poor grades considering their GCSE results. This year nine out of the 14 are studying for A-level and are progressing well; most have extended their work and raised their standards to above the results they achieved last year.

90. The standards of work seen in lessons are good. Most of the Year 13 students are now considering their individual research projects in consultation with their teachers. They are studying the completed work of last year's students perceptively and analysing them in detail to identify how they could have been improved. The students are able to make mature comments and be constructive in what they see. One Year 13 student is not time-tabled with the rest of the group and has to work on her own most of the time, which is not helping her to progress appropriately. The completed projects from last year's A-level examination showed that these students used their strength in academic research and their literacy skills to produce very good personal studies, many based on local artists. They are of high quality, well presented and most show personal involvement and research, often including visits to the artist or displays of their work. They use ICT skills well to present their work. The present Year 13 students' research in their visual notebooks is very good. It shows evidence of a developing personal interest in drawing and painting, and good research and experiment in processes and materials, including the recent study visit to Barcelona. Much work displayed in the studio is, however, copied from photographs rather than being developed from their sketchbooks and studies. Students progress well in the stimulating environment of their own studio, and have opportunities to do life studies from models who come in after school.
91. The Year 12 students are sustaining the pace and challenge from their GCSE courses. They can talk with confidence about their intentions and the way their work has developed; they all listen attentively to the comments of the teachers and they contribute well to reviews and criticisms of work. The detailed analysis and marking of last year's AS projects, using official mark sheets, has given them a clear understanding of the requirements of the examination and a perspective of the standards expected. They are developing their own personal approaches as they experiment and develop their own styles. The recently completed large-scale collages and paintings are adventurous and powerful, and are a good introduction to the techniques needed on the course.
92. The teaching seen was very good overall. Planning and preparation are clear and well focused on the students' needs and the examination syllabus. The teaching methods are very good, with challenging exercises, comments and questions. This is particularly evident during the regular reviews of examination work which are aimed at increasing the students' capacity for independent study. The use of sketchbooks has been encouraged and the basic skills reinforced to ensure a firm foundation for future development. Assessment is good and provides clear information to students about their progress towards specific grades. It is initially verbal at the beginning of the year but is then formally recorded, discussed with the students and regularly updated. The teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students well and are able to challenge and support them effectively. Students are responding positively, co-operate very well, and come in to the art studios to work and continue with projects in their own time. They have worked very well with artists in residence.
93. The quality of leadership and management is good. Planning is well considered and the schemes of work are relevant and regularly adapted to the students' needs. The art and design department is developing the use of displays and exhibitions of students' work around the school and the community to raise the awareness of the subject in the school. Examples of sixth form students' work in art and design studios are stimulating and challenging the younger students to extend their work and improve their standards. The school has gained an Artsmark Silver award for the quality of its work in the arts.

Theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above average.
- Standards of work from current students are high.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Relationships are very good.
- There is excellent accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- Occasionally, the pace of lessons could be improved.

94. In A-level examinations in 2001, all the candidates passed (as has been habitual at the school) and 6 of the 8 entered gained grades A or B. This is very high in comparison with other schools. A-level results for 2002 also show a 100 per cent pass rate, with about a third gaining the higher grades. Over a third of the 23 AS candidates in 2002 achieved the top grades, and all 23 were successful. Not all sixth form students have taken drama at GCSE, so their achievement is all the more significant.
95. 17 students have continued with A-level theatre studies, and standards remain high, as they do amongst Year 12 students who have taken up the course. It is a joy to watch these students in their lessons. They enter whole-heartedly into the work, contributing ideas and co-operating extremely well with each other and with their teachers. They are trusted to work independently, even in other rooms. Their commitment appears total. They plan scripts and improvisations with some skill, and produce worthy performances in a short space of time.
96. Year 12 students, for example, were able to present scenes showing amateur actors planning to rehearse a play, achieving similar comic effects to those employed by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Year 13 students created scenes from *Chicago* in the 1920s and *Germany* in the 1930s in preparation for work on Brecht's *Arturo Ui*. They evaluate their work confidently, both orally and in writing. Much of their written work is of a high standard, often using ICT. They use the Internet for research to particular effect. There is evidence that the higher attaining students can compare different texts skilfully. In another Year 13 lesson, students were able to rewrite a scene from Shakespeare with a Brechtian approach.
97. The positive attitudes of the students contribute hugely to their success. So too does the quality of the teaching. Classes are shared by two very experienced teachers who know their students and their subject very well. Tasks are planned with great skill and imagination: improvised work is often used as a way into a study of texts or theories, with considerable success. Year 13 students, for example, were asked to work on scenes that explored the cause of homelessness amongst teenagers, in preparation for an analysis of the respective techniques of dramatic and epic theatre. This worked very well, because the teacher knew just how much to let the students work independently and when to intervene.
98. The evaluation work, as a whole class, is most productive. There is usually a good pace to lessons, although, just occasionally, students could be expected to work at a faster tempo. Relationships are excellent: the balance of male and female students varies between the groups but this is not allowed to hold back the work. Students

support each other well, and the rapport they have with their teachers is striking. The number of students taking the subject is increasing, and it is encouraging that so many are male.

99. There is excellent accommodation for the subject, in the publicly available Arts Centre. Both the theatre area and the newly designated drama studio provide superb teaching spaces, and these are being used well. New equipment, including electronic resources, is expected soon, and this can only enhance the status of the subject. Staff and students throw themselves into ambitious school productions, and support a lunch-time drama club.
100. The previous inspection reported very good provision for the subject. This has certainly been maintained, if not improved upon.

HUMANITIES

101. History and psychology were the focus of the inspection, but geography was also sampled. Good teaching was seen in geography; A-level results in 2001 were in line with the national average, but provisional results for 2002 show a marked improvement: all candidates gained at least an E grade at A-level, with two thirds gaining an A or B. AS candidates also did well. Religious studies is an increasingly popular subject: in 2001, A-level results were well above average, with all the 10 candidates being successful, 6 of them at A or B grade. The provisional results for A-level and AS religious studies in 2002, with 31 and 28 candidates respectively, maintain these high standards.

History

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

Strengths

- There are very good results in AS and A-level examinations from a large entry.
- There is strong leadership and impressive teamwork amongst the teachers.
- Teaching is very good: there are excellent working relationships with students and a wide variety of learning activities.
- There is a thorough development of examination technique through assessments geared to examination requirements.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use could be made of ICT in teaching and learning.

102. The A-level results in 2002 continued the upward trend of increasing numbers of candidates and improved performance that have been the feature of recent years. Twenty-three of the 43 candidates achieved grades A and B and all achieved at least an E grade. A-level performance in 2001 was similar, except for fewer grade As. In comparison with national standards, these results were well above average. The school has maintained its 100 per cent pass rate at A-level for the past five years.
103. Standards of work seen are above average and improving in the first term of the A-level course. Students successfully employ a variety of note-making styles and their files are well organised for revision purposes, such as the regular factual tests that consolidate their learning. Their essays on Peel and on Chartism show detailed planning and are well argued, with appropriate references to the views of historians.

104. Last year's coursework was of a high standard, students producing detailed, sophisticated analysis and comparison of changes in 19th century protest movements in Britain and America. They benefit from the excellent constructive criticism of their assessed work. Diagnostic comments on essays are perceptive, rightly judging what students need to do to improve their grades. In lessons, students made very good use of source material to evaluate Peel's policies on Ireland and to analyse arguments for female involvement in the Chartist movement. Year 12 students showed similar ability in their use of historical sources to conduct a mock trial of Bruning for the collapse of the Weimar Republic. They are making good progress in developing their examination technique by practising examination answers.
105. The quality of teaching at A-level is very good. Teachers are on top of their subject and put it across enthusiastically. They make very good use of a variety of methods to engage students with the intellectual demands of the subject, expecting them to think for themselves and present their views. For example in a lesson on Peel's Irish policies, students worked from historical sources on particular areas of policy, pooled their findings and then reached a judgement on the degree of success. Teachers set a fast pace covering a lot of ground within the space of a lesson. Less academic students have difficulty keeping up at times, but there is the opportunity to be tutored in a study period once a fortnight. The relationships between students and teachers are excellent, many having taken part in the joint art and history cultural visit to Barcelona over half term. Students are highly motivated to achieve top grades and the thorough training they receive in examination technique equips them to succeed. From the outset, there is a strong emphasis on preparation for examination, using test papers to develop students' expertise.
106. There is very good subject leadership and management in the sixth form to achieve high standards for the large number of students studying A-level history. The four young teachers involved work extremely well together, sharing classes in Year 12 and maintaining a seamless continuity between lessons. Their commitment and enthusiasm for the subject bring out the best in their students. They have a healthy approach to monitoring and evaluating their work, to keep improving their teaching and the curriculum. Not content with the success they have achieved on the new A level courses, they are looking to broaden the curriculum, rather than continue topics first studied for GCSE. Greater use of ICT has also been identified as an area for development.
107. The subject has made good improvement at sixth form since the last inspection. Very good assessment procedures have contributed to the department's success. Standards have been pushed even higher under the new A level examination structure, achieving the largest number of candidates and the best examination results yet in 2002. Better teaching methods have increased student participation in lessons, for instance through greater use of discussion and more opportunities for students to research information and present their findings. This is a forward looking department, setting itself high standards and striving for excellence.

Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **very good with excellent features**.

Strengths

- A-level and AS results in 2002 were good.
- Well qualified staff have very good specialist subject knowledge.
- Teaching is very good, with a variety of methods used to aid learning and retention.
- Very good relationships between staff and students contribute to student motivation and progress.
- Helpful marking tells students what they have done well and how they can improve.

108. Psychology is a popular subject with 71 candidates at A-level in 2002. In the current academic year there are 57 students in their A-level year and 57 students studying at AS level. The subject has been generally more popular with girls although boys make up nearly half of the current Year 12.
109. Results at A-level in 2001 were above average when compared with national figures. Provisional results for 2002 maintain the standards: there was a 100 per cent pass rate with over a third of the students achieving an A grade. Available data also showed that, overall, there was significant progress by these students in relation to their earlier GCSE results. Significant added value has been a feature of psychology here over a number of years. There was also a good pass rate at AS level in 2002.
110. Much of the work seen on the AS and A-level courses included high quality responses, both oral and written. In an AS lesson on memory, students took part in a short memory experiment based on the "Levels of Processing Model" put forward by Craik and Lockhart. Discussion by students indicated that they understood the main characteristics of this model and an alternative Multi-Store Model of memory. Students debated willingly using appropriate terminology, and made progress in their understanding. In an A-level lesson on substance use students demonstrated well their understanding of key terms such as dependence, tolerance and addiction. They were well motivated in small group work in which they planned presentations to be delivered in subsequent lessons. Attainment in Year 13 is above average for the majority, with students displaying a mature attitude to their work.
111. AS psychology is a new subject for students in Year 12. During the inspection students were observed to work well independently and in groups. They were also attentive, listened well to their teacher and to each other in discussion and participated very well in all activities. In class discussions and in their written work there was evidence that they made steady progress in acquiring specialist subject vocabulary and in grasping key concepts. Overall, in Year 12, students were making very good progress with the majority achieving at an above average level. In all lessons observed, male and female students, and students of different abilities, were equally involved in classroom activities and contributed willingly. Relationships between teachers and students were excellent. All students showed positive attitudes to learning and behaved very well.
112. Teaching and learning, overall, are very good. In general, there is a clear link between high quality teaching, student learning and attainment. Students benefit from being taught by well qualified, knowledgeable and supportive teachers who promote very high educational standards. All teaching observed was of a high quality. It was characterised by careful planning, a judicious mix of methods and by appropriate pace. Lessons had clear and appropriate objectives which were made clear to students at the outset. Students are provided with a range of learning opportunities which include

formal teaching instruction, purposeful whole class and small group discussion and individual and small group tasks. Students are challenged in their thinking in a very supportive atmosphere. They are presented with good opportunities to consolidate prior learning. Lessons begin with a recap of the previous lesson's content and then particular attention is paid to the consolidation of new learning through the use of careful questioning to probe understanding. A number of effective techniques are used to aid memory and understanding, such as 'mind maps', involvement in mini experiments to illustrate relevant theory and large and small group discussion of key concepts and research findings. Students have a choice of whether to use ICT in the preparation of their coursework, but this is not yet systematically employed as a teaching tool.

113. Written work is marked constructively with students being told what they have done well and provided with improvement suggestions. Students report that they enjoy their psychology lessons and that they appreciate the supportive atmosphere provided by their teachers. They report that clarification and further explanation were always provided when difficult material was being covered. They were confident in requesting additional advice and support when needed.
114. Subject leadership and management is very good overall. Planning and co-ordination of the subject is very thorough and well developed. Effective use is made of detailed performance data to assess and monitor student performance. Under-performing students have targets set for them and are provided with mentoring to ensure that progress is made. There is a departmental development plan and a marking and monitoring policy in place. The subject co-ordinator provides positive support to the teaching team and she is an exemplar of good practice in her own teaching.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on English, French and German.

English

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

Strengths

- Examination results are above average.
- Standards of work from current students are high.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers would benefit from more lessons being observed by colleagues.
- Students would benefit by using opportunities for discussion in lessons more thoroughly.

115. All students secured at least a grade E in A-level English literature examinations in 2002. Over half of the 40 candidates achieved grades A and B. This represents an improvement on the school's A-level results in 2001, when just over a third of the 32 candidates achieved the higher grades: results that were above the national average. The 100 per cent pass rate has been maintained for several years. It has also been a feature of the AS English literature results in the first two years of this course. Although the percentage of higher grades fell slightly in 2002, over half the AS candidates in 2001 achieved grades A or B, standards that were clearly maintained by those students who

continued to A-level this year. Twelve students took AS English language in 2002: all passed, half of them with grades A or B.

116. The standards of work of current students are above average. They know their texts very well, the result of very good teaching and their own diligence. Note-taking is of a high order, and students are able to present research findings well to their peers. A class of Year 12 students, for instance, showed very good knowledge and understanding of background ideas to Dickens' novels in their presentations, even bringing in connections between the work of Dickens and J.S.Mill that were new to the teacher. Year 13 students showed that they can grapple with complex imagery and concepts in the poetry of Seamus Heaney. They use the Internet effectively for research and show a high standard of written skills, although many are rather reticent when it comes to discussion work, preferring to make notes, even in group work. The high standards most of them achieved in GCSE English are being at least maintained in the sixth form.
117. Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and most lessons are lively and stimulating. Teachers ask pertinent questions, and are able to stretch the minds of their students whilst continually assessing their progress by the answers they receive. They plan their lessons very well; a Year 12 lesson on how recent literary theory can aid an understanding of *Hard Times* was successful because the teacher had organised the tasks very carefully, with very useful handouts and worksheets. By the end of the lesson, students had learnt how a Structuralist approach to text can illuminate the contrasts that Dickens brings out in the novel. A Year 13 class made remarkable progress on what, for them, was a first encounter with Heaney's poems. The teacher built on their existing good knowledge of poetry to explore the tone and language of 'Death of a Naturalist', and to refine the vocabulary needed to talk about such poems.
118. Learning objectives are made very clear in lessons. Resources are well deployed: a Year 12 English language class made very good progress in their understanding of how texts can be classified, because the teacher introduced relevant resources at just the right moment. Pace was maintained, with an excellent balance between group work and plenary. The same lesson also highlighted how well computer technology is being used in this particular course: arrangements for a forthcoming lesson in an ICT room were made clear to students – redrafting of work on stylistic analysis necessitated them bringing the relevant disks.
119. Students respond very well and show a real sense of enjoyment in their lessons. It was unusual, but encouraging, to see many male students taking English at this level: in several classes, they out-numbered the female students. Co-operation between students is very good, and they relate very well to their teachers, one student informed me that English lessons were her favourite. There is ample evidence of students taking responsibility for their own learning. Their folders bulge with notes. Not all are handouts: they research books and websites to prepare thoroughly for coursework and examinations. The notes also show that spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are not neglected in English: reflections on 'sin and salvation' in *Hamlet* and attention to redemptive themes in Victorian novels are evident. The curriculum includes significant contemporary works, for instance by Irish writers, as well as a good coverage of the established classics. The introduction of English language, albeit only as an AS subject as yet, enriches the post-16 curricular provision.

120. The head of English was, sadly, away during the inspection, but the smooth running of the department in her absence indicated secure structures in place and an able deputy. The subject is well led and managed. Sixth form sets are each taught by two teachers, the pairings well thought-out to ensure a range of experience. Newly qualified staff benefit from sharing work on texts with more experienced colleagues. There is much support for one another in what is a very strong and well-qualified team of teachers. A 'light touch' approach is adopted towards the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, which is acceptable given the quality of the existing staff; examination results indicate that the confidence in them is not misplaced. Opportunities for staff to observe each other teaching, other than in the context of performance management, would be a useful addition to the professional development of all.
121. Progress has undoubtedly been made in sixth form English since the last inspection. Results have improved and the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students are very positive about the subject, and an increasing number of them are choosing to do it.

Modern foreign languages

French

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

Strengths

- A-level results are well above average.
- Teaching is good.
- There is very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistencies in teaching should be addressed.
- Long and short-term learning objectives should be made clear and shared with students.

122. Overall standards in French are above average. Results in A-level examinations in 2001 were well above national averages. All students achieved a pass grade and the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was well above the national average. Results in 2002 follow the same pattern. Overall performance in French compared with other subjects in the school is broadly in line with national averages. Results have shown a general, though not consistent, improvement since the last inspection. The number of students in French has been low but is increasing.
123. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall but students make good progress. Standards of writing in the present Year 13 are below average but are showing satisfactory, sometimes good, improvement. At the start of their A-level studies students write inaccurately making basic mistakes with tenses. Expressions are often anglicized and, for the weaker students, the inability to structure language effectively often makes meaning unclear. By Year 13, however, students improve their accuracy and are able to manipulate verbs more effectively. They are learning to vary their style and expression and to present and justify points of view. Oral skills are at an average level. All students speak with good pronunciation and relative fluency. The best students are able to extend their oral responses and react to unexpected questions.

124. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Most students speak with confidence and good pronunciation. They are beginning to express opinions and to extend their oral responses. Sometimes, however, they do not speak French enough, particularly in those lessons in which they are not encouraged to use French for day-to-day communication. Students have made very good progress in developing writing skills. They are already able to write to express feelings and emotions and to express and justify opinions, to use complex language and structure with a good level of accuracy. They show a good understanding of grammar and use dictionaries effectively which allows many of them to be creative in their use of oral and written language. All students are developing good ICT skills and good listening skills.
125. Students have a positive attitude to the subject particularly in those lessons where the level of challenge is high. In these lessons they are constantly involved in the lesson and support each other well. In lessons in which the pace is slower students sometimes lose motivation.
126. Learning and teaching are good overall. In all lessons students work conscientiously because teachers are successful in establishing a very good supportive working atmosphere and all students are encouraged to join in. Students develop good listening skills because all teachers have very good command of French and use it effectively in lessons. Students develop good oral skills in most lessons and consolidate grammar effectively because teachers plan lessons to build and consolidate learning. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, students were able to take part in a discussion about set texts because they had prepared material for homework. The teacher then used effective questioning to help students extend their oral responses and support those students who were less confident.
127. In some lessons, however, students are not encouraged to use French for day-to-day communication. In many lessons students make good or very good progress because the teacher has high expectations. The work is challenging and the pace is brisk. Learning is less clear in the minority of lessons in which the pace is slow and the level of challenge is lower. Students know their strengths and weaknesses because their work is marked thoroughly and discussed individually but they are not always clear about their level of achievement in lessons because learning targets for each lesson are not shared with them. In the long term they are not always clear about A-level criteria and what skills they need to demonstrate to achieve their target grades.
128. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. There is a very clear aim for the development of the subject as a result of the recent successful bid for language college status. The head of department effectively monitors teaching and the wider work of the department. Examination results, for example, are carefully analysed and strategies for improvement developed. The subject has very good resources including a dedicated ICT suite. All staff are well-qualified and students benefit from the support of a languages assistant. The departmental handbook does not contain specific policies for the sixth form and schemes of work need to be developed further. In particular, for each unit of work, they need to contain specific learning targets for students of different abilities. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. There has been a considerable improvement in A-level results.

German

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

Strengths

- A-level results are well above average.
- Teaching is good.
- There is very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for independent learning in Year 12 should be provided.
- Long and short-term learning objectives should be made clear and shared with students.

129. Overall standards in German are above average. Results in German in 2001 were well above national averages. All students achieved a pass grade and the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was well above the national average. Provisional results for 2002 follow the same pattern. Overall performance by students in German is better than in their other subjects. Results have been consistently above national averages since the last inspection with the majority of students achieving the higher grades.
130. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall but, in general, students make good progress. Standards of writing in Year 13 are below average. At the start of the course students write inaccurately making basic mistakes with tenses and word order. By Year 13, however, students improve their accuracy and learn to build more complex sentences using subordinate clauses. They are learning to present coherent arguments and to justify opinions. They do not have a secure grasp of grammatical concepts. They show a limited understanding, for example, of the difference between strong and weak verbs. This limits their ability to write independently.
131. Oral skills are below average. Students lack oral confidence and find it difficult to respond at length. Standards of listening and reading are at an average level. Students have developed good techniques for coping with complex written texts. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Most students speak fluently and have good pronunciation, though they often lack the confidence to extend their oral responses. They do not use German enough for basic communication in lessons. When given the opportunity, however, the best students respond well to unexpected questions. All students are developing good ICT skills and good listening skills.
132. Students have a positive attitude to the subject. Most students concentrate and contribute well to lessons. Most students in Year 13 respond to the challenging work with a great deal of commitment. Students in Year 12 contribute readily and support each other but are given few opportunities to take the initiative in learning.
133. Learning and teaching are good overall. In all lessons students work conscientiously because teachers are successful in establishing a very good working atmosphere in which students feel able to contribute. Students develop good listening skills because all teachers have a very good command of German and use it effectively in lessons. In the best lessons students improve their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and develop their skills because teachers plan lessons effectively. In one lesson, for example, students were able to build their understanding and use of the future perfect tense through carefully chosen exercises. Understanding was then consolidated through a challenging text which also enabled the practice of reading skills. In some

lessons, however, students do not feel confident to extend their oral responses because they do not receive effective support in building structured sentences.

134. In many lessons, particularly in Year 13, students make good progress and often perform above their potential because the level of challenge is high. In other lessons, particularly in Year 12, progress is not as good because the pace is slower and because they are not given enough opportunities to become actively involved in the lesson. Marking of students' work is thorough but teachers do not always show students how they can improve the quality of their work. Students are not clear about what they have achieved in lessons because teachers do not share learning targets with them. In the long term they are not always clear about A-level criteria and what skills they need to demonstrate to achieve their target grades.
135. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. There is a very clear aim for the development of the subject as a result of the recent successful bid for language college status. The head of department effectively monitors the quality of teaching and co-ordination between sixth form teachers is good. There is very good guidance for students at the start of the course. Resources are very good. The departmental handbook does not contain specific policies for the sixth form and schemes of work need to be developed further. In particular, for each unit of work, they need to contain specific learning targets for students of different abilities. Since the last inspection the subject has maintained its high standards and has made good progress.