

INSPECTION REPORT

ROBERT SUTTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Burton upon Trent

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124459

Headteacher: Mr A Downey

Reporting inspector: Mr David Jones
8197

Dates of inspection: 2 - 6 December 2002

Inspection number: 249736

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils:	11-18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ann Ward
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19443	Nancy Walker	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18840	Simon Wrigley	Team inspector	English	
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English (6 th Form)	
18850	Andrew Hodges	Team inspector	Science	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
18032	Isobel Randall	Team inspector	Educational inclusion History Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2172	David Saunders	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages	
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	
17233	Glynis Yates	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
2746	Roy Lund	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*Pupil's performance in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests taken in their primary schools is averaged to provide a judgement of attainment on entry to secondary school. At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Post-16 provision is offered as part of a consortium of local schools and pupils aged 17 and 18 may follow Advanced level course (**AS or A2**).*

*Inspectors' judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances, and thus whether the **progress** that has occurred is high enough for the pupils concerned. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those where pupils of similar prior attainment are educated.*

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Robert Sutton RC School is a mixed comprehensive school with 639 on roll between the ages of 11 and 18 years. The school serves the towns of Burton-upon-Trent, Swadlincote, Ashby de la Zouch and Measham, together with surrounding villages. Although the majority of pupils come from Catholic families, a significant number are from other faiths. There are some 639 pupils on roll and this number is rising. The school draws its pupils from up to ten primary schools, although the majority of each annual intake is from four of these schools. Less than two per cent of the school's population come from ethnically diverse backgrounds or speaks English as an additional language. The area served by the school has a broad socio-economic spread and provides no significant advantage or disadvantage. Approximately 11 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average.

Attainment on entry, as measured by their performance in the National Curriculum tests taken in primary schools, is average. Some nine per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and just over four per cent have statements of special educational need, both these figures are close to the national average. There are similar numbers of boys and girls overall but the balance varies significantly between each year group.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory standard of education for the majority. Pupils who entered the school with average standards make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 as do the majority by the end of Year 11. However, the achievements of the most able were below expectations in 2002. Over sixty per cent of teaching observed was judged to be good at each main stage of education. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour were graded very good or better in one in three of all lessons seen. The leadership of the newly appointed headteacher is a significant strength. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' respect for others and the quality of relationships between pupils and with staff.
- The management of pupils.
- The achievements of middle ability pupils.
- The work of the governing body in securing development of the new sixth-form centre.
- The strategic use of resources.
- Leadership and management of the headteacher and his priorities for development.

What could be improved

- The strategic management of the curriculum.
- The weaknesses in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Standards of achievement of the more able when compared with their prior attainment.
- The formal documentation of procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare.
- The quality and use of ongoing assessment target setting and the guidance given to learners.
- The library is an unsatisfactory learning resource and is currently unable to provide ground floor access to ICT for pupils with mobility difficulties.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. At that time the school was judged to be satisfactory, but was set targets to raise standards of achievement and the attainment of boys; review the management of the school, and the monitoring of teaching. The 2002 GCSE results have shown that the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is now satisfactory and that of the majority in Years 10 –11 is very good. Almost all

teaching is satisfactory and new monitoring procedures are good. However, little has been done to co-ordinate the work of senior and middle management in line with current best practice.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

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

* A-levels/AS-levels National comparators for 2002 were not available at the time of publication.

When pupils enter the school in Year 7, standards are in line with the national average overall. By the end of Year 9, pupil progress is satisfactory in response to teaching which is often good. Standards in the 2002 National Curriculum tests are above those in all schools nationally, but are in line with those of similar schools when measured against prior attainment. When set against the national profile, the results were well above average for English and above average for mathematics and science but below average for ICT.

The 2002 GCSE results show a similar profile to previous years. The attainment of Year 11, as measured by the mean points score obtained by pupils, was in line with the national average. However, it was well below that of similar schools, as measured by pupils' prior attainment.

When the results for 2002 are analysed the proportion gaining five or more Grades C or better is in line with that of schools nationally, as is that for one or more Grades G and above. However, the strong performance of middle ability pupils who obtained five or more Grades G or better was well above that of both all schools nationally and those of similar schools. In relation to the pupils' performances in national tests in 2000, the 2002 examination results represent unsatisfactory achievement by higher attainers but very good achievement by middle and lower-attaining pupils. The performance of girls was close to that found nationally and that of boys was better than the national picture. Some variation exists between the performance of girls and boys within subjects. The school met the targets set by the LEA in both 2001 and 2002.

Standards in subjects seen during the inspection

Attainment	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 - 11	Years 12 - 13
Above average	geography, science	art, geography	
Average	English, mathematics, design and technology, ICT, art, French, German, music, physical education (PE)	English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, history, German, French, music, PE	mathematics, science, geography, history
Below average			French, ICT

Achievement	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 - 11	Years 12 - 13
Good	science, design and technology, history, PE, art	science, design and technology, geography, history, PE	geography, PE
Satisfactory	English, maths, ICT, geography, French, German, music	English, mathematics, ICT, French, German, music	mathematics, science, ICT, history, French, German
Unsatisfactory		ICT	

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to and their enthusiasm for the school are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Their behaviour is good and they often display thoughtful good manners towards adults around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good and the relationships with other pupils and with adults is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national norm.

Pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is very good and the absence of oppressive behaviour is noteworthy. The school procedures for monitoring attendance are outdated.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in all years with nearly one in three lessons seen graded good or better. It is good at all levels in English, satisfactory in mathematics and good overall in science. The best teaching is seen in PE in all years and in art in Years 10-11. All other subjects show good teaching overall. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. A major strength of teaching lies in the management of pupils. Less than two per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers are good at meeting the needs of middle and lower-ability groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs but less so at meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils. Overall, the learning seen during the inspection was good; most pupils are hard-working. The quality and use of ongoing assessment, marking and the use of homework, although satisfactory, show some weaknesses where they fail to guide teaching and learning. Pupils' effort and pace of working are good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, the provision of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 10-11 and no vocational courses are currently available. There is good extra-curricular provision and the contribution of the community to students' learning is also good.
Provision for pupils with	This is good. A well-organised and managed system of support is helping to

special educational needs	raise standards.
Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory and they learn as well as the majority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school's Catholic ethos is fundamental to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The interest and informal care the school take are satisfactory and considerable work is ongoing with the LEA on the development of documentation to support this area.

The balance of the curriculum has some problems relating to inadequate organisation or time allocation that were found in ICT, art, geography, PSHE and physical education. Subjects are inconsistent in the collection and use of assessment data and in the information and guidance they offer to pupils. The formal procedures taken by the school for ensuring pupils' welfare are unsatisfactory, although there is a daily informal briefing linked to issues of pupil care. The school works satisfactorily in partnership with parents. Parental contribution to and involvement in pupils' learning are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership, focus and vision of the recently appointed headteacher are very good. The quality of management provided by other key staff is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory; its work in securing the post-16 provision of the school in the new sixth-form centre is commendable.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its own performance since the appointment of the new headteacher has been very good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good recent restructuring of the school's resources has secured the school's financial basis.

Although staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory, there are weaknesses in a number of departments where, despite the good work of those concerned, temporary appointments are required to maintain curriculum provision. In the central classrooms of the main building, limited space and the lack of access to modern ICT facilities are having an impact on standards. The library is an unsatisfactory learning resource and does not provide ground floor access to ICT for pupils with mobility difficulties. The principles of best value are applied effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationships between staff and pupils. The Catholic ethos of the school. The support and challenge provided for middle and lower ability pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication received from the school. The balance of extra-curricular opportunities. The use of homework.

The inspection team agrees with all of the parents' positive comments, although the balance of extra-curricular opportunities was found to be good. Inspectors agreed with parents' views that the clarity and range of communications could be improved, as could the use of homework.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

ROBERT SUTTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 52 male and female students, this is a smaller than average sixth form. Provision for post-16 pupils is made in conjunction with the Burton Consortium in the joint sixth form.

After several years of steady but limited growth, the governing body has secured the support of the diocesan authorities and Staffordshire LEA to develop a new sixth-form centre on land adjacent to the school. Building work has already started on this exciting new facility which will open in 2003. The sixth form focuses on a limited range of AS and A-level provision. About fifty per cent of the pupils in Year 11 continue in education linked to the school. The attainments of students on entry are average; the standard entry requirements are five GCSE Grades C or above, but students sometimes enter with lower attainment. A small number of students are from ethnic minorities, reflecting the composition of the local area and the main school. There are currently no students with special educational needs on roll.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall, the sixth-form provision is satisfactory. It takes students with a wide range of prior attainment, offers them appropriately challenging and often good teaching, and produces results that show at least satisfactory achievement for male and female students alike. Results have risen in line with national patterns in recent years. Learning is good, and is helped by the students' very positive attitudes to work. The lack of a post-16 religious education course and a key skills course is a reflection of the curriculum limitations seen in the main school. The management of the sixth form is currently satisfactory; a new leadership appointment is to be made from Easter 2003. Overall, the post-16 provision is cost effective.

Strengths

- The range of courses provided through the shared provision.
- The cooperation between staff in different schools.

What could be improved

- The provision of, the statutorily required, post-16 religious education course.
- The management of the post-16 curriculum and the provision of a 'key skills' course.
- Access to ICT facilities for private study.
- The quality of information, advice and academic guidance offered to pupils.
- The procedures for monitoring attendance and ensuring pupil welfare.

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	The provision for mathematics is satisfactory . The majority of students respond well and teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Physics	The provision for physics is satisfactory . Results are in line with those, which could be expected. Students are making good progress as a result of good individual teaching but limited use is made of ICT to enrich

	learning.
ICT	The provision for ICT is satisfactory . The progress and achievement of the majority of students in the sixth form are satisfactory, although standards are modest.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English literature	The provision for English literature is satisfactory . Examination results have been in line with national averages or better for several years. Teaching and learning are good.
French	The provision for French post-16 is unsatisfactory . The progress and achievement of the majority of students in the sixth form are unsatisfactory.

Good teaching and learning were seen in two out of three post-16 lessons. Lessons were sampled in history, geography, PE, biology and chemistry. The school offers a limited range of subjects post-16 within the Burton Consortium and it is the school's position within these arrangements that allows such provision to remain viable.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Post-16 pupils expressed concerns about the difficulties they have in accessing academic guidance from staff on two sites. Inspectors found some weaknesses in this area.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Currently a head of year holds responsibility for the pastoral care of all post-16 pupils but not curriculum provision. However, a new post of head of sixth form, who will be responsible to the new joint governing body, is to be appointed at Easter 2003, and this appointment will address the weaknesses in the development of provision.

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"> The continuity of their education at Robert Sutton. The support they have received from the new headteacher with regard to university entrance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiet study facilities and access to ICT resources The provision of subject specialist tutorial facilities in the new sixth-form centre.

The inspection team agree with all of the positive views expressed by the sixth form and their views on what could be improved.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards of attainment are in line with the national average overall. By the end of Year 9, pupils' progress is satisfactory in response to teaching, which focuses on pupils of average attainment. Standards in the 2002 National Curriculum tests are above those in all schools nationally, but are in line with those of similar schools, when measured against prior attainment. When set in the national context, results were well above average for English, above average for mathematics and science, but below average for ICT. Judgements regarding the standards of attainment achieved in religious education feature in the Section 23 diocesan report that accompanies this document.
2. The 2002 GCSE results show a similar profile to previous years despite a change in the way national comparators are calculated. The attainment of Year 11 as measured by the mean points score obtained by pupils was in line with the national average. However, it was well below the mean in comparison with that of similar schools.
3. When the results for 2002 are analysed, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more Grades C or better is in line with that of schools nationally but well below that of similar schools. The strong performance of those middle-ability pupils who obtained five or more Grades G and above was well above that of both all schools nationally and of similar schools, as was the proportion of pupils achieving one or more Grade G or better. These results are a significant strength of the school. In relation to the pupils' performances in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000, the 2002 GCSE results represent unsatisfactory achievement by higher-attaining pupils but very good achievement by middle and lower-attaining pupils. The school met the targets set for it by the LEA in both 2001 and 2002. As noted in the last report standards have remained close to the national average in recent years with some improvement shown in recent years in mathematics. Improving the attainment of boys was a key issue of the last report and the school has had some success in this area, although some weaknesses are still noted in the subject sections of this report.
4. In the English work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 were well above average. This represents good achievement given the pupils' standards on entry to the school. The improvement on the 2002 results is due to more pupils achieving the expected standards in the accuracy and organisation of their writing. About one in three of the pupils are reaching the higher levels because they effectively and deliberately seek to engage the reader through their choice of vocabulary. Standards in Year 11 are just above average. The 2002 GCSE results suffered as a result of a period of significant staff turmoil when the pupils were in Year 10 and, therefore, the maintenance of their previous good achievement was not possible. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in English.
5. Standards of attainment in mathematics of pupils at the age of 14 are in line with the national average and with those of similar schools. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests, the higher-attaining pupils performed well. Pupils' performance in mathematics at this stage has been broadly the same as in the other two core subjects of English and science. Standards of attainment at the age of 16 are also in line with the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress during this stage, including those with special educational needs. GCSE results were above the national averages in 2002, but a

relatively small proportion of pupils achieved the highest grade. Pupils' performance in mathematics in 2002 was stronger than that in English and science. Girls perform better than boys in mathematics in both the National Curriculum tests and at GCSE. Boys do not perform as well as boys nationally.

6. The standards in science illustrated by the results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at age 14 are above those of schools nationally but below average when compared with similar schools. The results over time are showing a rising trend. At GCSE, the performance of pupils is average in comparison with all schools nationally, but the percentage of pupils gaining Grades A*-C is below average and fewer pupils than may be expected achieved the highest grades. As with those in the National Curriculum tests at age 14, results over time show a slowly rising trend. In a similar pattern to that seen in mathematics, the performance of girls is better than that of boys in both the National Curriculum tests and at GCSE. However, the GCSE module results so far in the current year indicate that boys' performance is rapidly improving.
7. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show average standards of attainment in design and technology art, French, German, music, history and physical education (PE). They are above average in geography. However, standards of achievement in all of these subjects are satisfactory except in art and geography where they are good. Standards are below average in information and communication technology (ICT)
8. In Years 10 and 11 standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in ICT but satisfactory in all other subjects except for art and geography where they are above average. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in citizenship, a new course started in all year groups only twelve weeks before the inspection.

Literacy

9. In line with the school's policy for literacy, PE, science, geography, design and technology and English, teachers use questioning and discussion to include all learners, rehearse subject-specific language and refine understanding. This supports lower-attaining pupils, especially when reinforced, as in Science, with dictionary work. In history, higher-attaining pupils are supported by work that supports the use of subject-specific abstract nouns such as 'civilisation'. Elsewhere, in music and art for example, although key words are displayed in the classroom, their use needs to be more explicitly planned. Pupils take care over the presentation of written work, in music for example, and some teachers correct spelling. However, presentation is not an area of strength and the reinforcement of spelling strategies varies. There is little explicit whole-class demonstration of how meaning can be altered and refined by writers' choices, not just of words, but of word order in sentences and paragraph order in whole texts. The literacy policy will have more effect on practice if specific dates are set for the monitoring and evaluation of the advocated strategies.
10. Written annotation of work, such as in art and design and technology, is well used to track pupils' learning and helpful in self-evaluation. Research skills are well developed in history and design and technology projects where pupils transform their reading for particular purposes rather than merely copying or downloading undigested paragraphs. Beyond the library induction in Year 7, independent research using the library and ICT facilities is unsystematic. Reviewing planning to see where reading skills are taught explicitly and surveying pupils' independent use will be useful ways of evaluating the literacy policy.

Numeracy

11. The school's response to the National Numeracy Strategy has improved standards of numeracy in the school. Provision for the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Standards of numeracy of the majority of pupils are sound. The development of pupils' numerical skills forms an increasing aspect of the mathematics curriculum. Lessons in all years involve starting exercises and pupils of all levels of attainment show satisfactory levels of confidence and skills with number when undertaking these exercises.
12. Pupils display sound numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, in geography they interpret rainfall and climate graphs; in history they interrogate data showing in which industries women replaced men during the Great War; whilst in design and technology, they measure and weigh ingredients. The head of department is committed to the development of numeracy across the curriculum. The school is well placed to continue to make improvements in this area.

Special educational needs

13. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets set for them. All pupils are assessed for reading and spelling at the end of the September after their admission. In addition, the teaching assistants and special needs tutors (teachers) write half-termly reports for pupils on the special needs register. Initial assessments, together with any statements of special educational needs, are used to write each pupil's individual education plan (IEP), which contains targets for learning and for personal and social development and, where appropriate, behaviour. This good provision is having a positive impact. Pupils are achieving well in relation to both their statement and IEP targets.
14. The moral and social strengths of the school have a positive impact on standards. In better than one in three lessons the positive attitudes of pupils to the school / staff and the opportunities they are given are helping to raise standards achieved in lessons.

Sixth form

15. Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of prior attainment. Although the basic entry requirement is five GCSE Grades C or better, the school takes a flexible approach based on its knowledge of individual students and their educational and career aspirations. Some students, therefore, enter with results below the normal minimum. Students who join the school from others in the area tend to have similar results. Overall, however, the standards at entry are broadly average. Students tend to remain on courses; last year, close to 90 per cent of students who started courses in the sixth form completed them.
16. The school's results at the end of courses vary from year to year, the different character of each intake but have been just below average in recent years. In 2001, the last year for which national comparative data are available, results were above average in A-level chemistry, English literature, geography, history and physics. They were below average in A-level biology, design and technology, general studies, German, mathematics and physical education. In all other subjects, results were broadly average, although the small numbers on many courses make comparisons with national figures unreliable.
17. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. When individual students' 2002 A-level results are compared with their earlier GCSE scores, they do at least as well as would be expected. Among higher-attaining students, male students tend to do better than females in relation to their GCSE scores. Males and females achieve at similar rates amongst average students. Among lower-attaining students, both male and female students struggle to

maintain satisfactory achievement. There are very few students from minority groups, but their achievements are amongst the strongest. There are currently no students with special educational needs taking post-16 courses.

18. Work seen during the inspection focused on five subjects, but a number of others were sampled. Standards observed mirror examination results. Achievement in relation to prior attainment is satisfactory in mathematics, physics, ICT and English literature but unsatisfactory in French. The school has failed to provide the statutory religious education course for post-16 students

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. Pupils in the main school continue to have good attitudes to their work. They concentrate and listen well in lessons. Even when lessons sometimes lack pace and are uninspiring, pupils remain on task. They work hard and produce a good amount of work and usually enjoy their lessons. Pupils have an equally good attitude towards homework. They accept that it is necessary and they agree that it does actually help them to progress, and the vast majority of pupils complete their tasks on time. Many pupils often give up their recreation time to engage in research in the library and particularly the ICT suite. Almost 90 per cent of parents believe their children like school and in conversations during the inspection most pupils confirm this. The development of independent learning skills is hindered by the very limited library facilities available.
20. Pupils' good attitudes are further reflected in the school's attendance figures, which are consistently around 92 per cent and therefore above the average for secondary schools nationally. The school's attendance for the first half term of this year was well above average at 94 per cent and some classes achieved nearer 96 per cent. Year 11 pupils overall have poorer attendance than other year groups and they account for much of the school's authorised and unauthorised absence figure. This is a similar picture to that found when the school was last inspected.
21. Standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school have been maintained and are almost always good and almost 90 per cent of parents confirm this. As a result, pupils feel at ease and in most lessons they are able to learn. Pupils are polite and respectful and they show embarrassment and remorse when they know they have done something inappropriate such as using bad language within earshot of an adult. The consistency with which they move around in a sensible and orderly manner is particularly commendable, and this is an improvement since the last inspection when inconsiderate behaviour was seen on the stairs and in corridors. Long-serving senior managers have done well to address this issue. On the few occasions when pupils misbehave and disrupt the lesson, it is always because of the low expectations or weak class management of the teacher, rather than a defiance or determination to be difficult on the part of the pupil. During the last school year, there were 17 fixed term exclusions and this is a similar picture to when the school was last inspected. However, because of better systems for monitoring and supporting pupils, there has been a dramatic fall in the number of exclusions to no fixed-term or permanent exclusions over the past two terms.
22. Standards of pupils' personal development remain good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers have improved and they are now very good and a strength of the school. Pupils are very considerate towards one another; they work well in lessons in pairs or groups, sharing information and helping one another. In discussions, pupils told inspectors that the main reason they like this school is because it is small and friendly and everyone gets on together. There is mutual respect between staff and pupils and pupils show a surprisingly high level of tolerance and loyalty to each other and to their teachers.

For example, on the rare occasion when a small minority of pupils attempt to disrupt lessons, other pupils simply ignore the behaviour and do not emulate it. Similarly, when pupils feel they are unable to get on with their learning because behaviour management is not entirely effective, they do not complain, out of loyalty to the teacher. Outside lessons, pupils and students take care of each other and help and support where they can. For example, it came naturally to pupils to offer help to a boy on crutches in carrying his bags and helping him up the stairs. Similarly, when a girl in Year 9 was upset at the death of a very elderly friend, several of her peers comforted her as best they could and fellow pupils passing by showed concern. Pupils have a very high level of respect for other people's feelings and rights and are able to make responsible choices as a result. For example, when older pupils suggested in discussions that they themselves would like to be able to smoke with their parents' permission, they subsequently debated the rights of others and the dangers of passive smoking and entirely accepted the school's no smoking rule. The current Year 11 prefects also display a good sense of duty and willingness to take on responsibility through the content of their letters of application for the role of prefect. However, pupils and students show a distinct lack of initiative and responsibility towards their environment, in that there is an unusually large amount of litter about the premises; pupils simply discard empty plastic bottles, crisp packets, etc., on the floor.

Sixth Form

23. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes to their learning. They want to do well and they know that it takes hard work to achieve acceptable standards and they are generally prepared to put in the effort. Their attitudes are further reflected in the good levels of attendance observed in lectures during the inspection week. Attendance data was not available for inspectors to make a judgement on students' overall attendance. Personal development and relationships in the sixth form are also good. Students get on well together and help each other and they develop adequate independent learning skills.
24. Students are satisfied with the sixth-form provision overall. Most students are pleased with the quality of teaching and the challenge to do their best. Most are pleased with the help and encouragement to study and research topics independently, and the access they have to teachers if they have difficulties with their work. However, some students are unhappy with the information they receive about their progress, with careers advice, and with the range of activities and enrichment courses outside their main subjects. Opportunities to exercise responsibility are not extensive.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Teaching seen during the inspection was good overall and pupils learn well as a result. Classroom management is good, based on very good relationships. Teachers know their subjects well and often plan interesting lessons that meet pupils' needs and involve them in learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Six out of ten lessons seen were judged to be good or better and one in eight of all lessons was of high quality. Less than two per cent of the teaching seen during the inspection was unsatisfactory, and teaching of high quality was observed in all subjects. Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and overall mirrored the pattern seen across the school as a whole. Teaching in English and mathematics has a strong focus on core subject skills, and science is enhancing its work with the more able. Teaching is particularly effective in art, PE, history and geography and satisfactory in all subjects. The most inconsistent aspect of teaching was the quality and use of ongoing assessment to guide provision. The school collects a wide range of attainment data but not all teachers understand it or use it particularly well. The use of this information for target-setting for pupils is failing to provide consistency of challenge to higher-attaining pupils. Although the

proportion of good teaching was strong, there were relatively few lessons awarded the highest gradings. Good teaching rarely developed into excellence because the most able were not sufficiently extended.

26. A strong feature of the good teaching is the fact that almost all teachers manage their pupils very well. They reflect the caring philosophy of the school in their classrooms. They get to know the pupils as individuals and establish very good relationships with them. They establish clearly what is expected in terms of classroom behaviour. As a result, most pupils cooperate, are interested and attentive in lessons and learn well. This applies equally to those pupils just starting school as to those in their final year.
27. The positive impact on standards of pupils' attitudes and behaviour was a consistent feature. For example, pupils in a low-ability Year 9 English lesson successfully followed the teacher's 'rules' for answering questions. They listened attentively, were keen to answer and behaved very well. Pupils spoke clearly and listened very quietly. Some pupils in this group demonstrated drama skills at the highest possible national curriculum level.
28. In the great majority of lessons teachers combine their good, and often very good, subject knowledge with a good range of teaching methods. In a very good algebra lesson in Year 7, pupils used individual whiteboards effectively. The involvement in the algebra was challenging and supportive teacher-questioning consistently focused on developing pupils' answers into the teaching point required, giving pupils confidence to answer challenging questions on the edge of their own knowledge.
29. Lesson planning is generally good. In an excellent Year 9 history lesson for example, the teacher's ability to induce a sense of reality of war through the use of memoirs and poetry was outstanding. The class's attention was complete and pupils were inspired to offer serious responses at the highest national curriculum levels. Lower-attaining pupils working with the learning support assistant were supported sensitively and carefully to produce their own answers and celebrate their many successful insights into the reality of war.
30. Some teaching is not as effective as it could be. Not all teachers plan for the difficulties some pupils have with particular skills or concepts. This was the case in a Year 11 German lesson, for example, where pupils' rate of progress was slowed because the teacher failed to plan for the difficulty pupils would experience using resources written in German. Consequently, pupils lost time in translation and the development of dialogue was limited.
31. Teachers are aware of the importance of developing pupils' literacy skills and constantly try to reinforce pupils' ability to use subject vocabulary correctly. The positive impact of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy can be seen beyond the core subjects in geography and history. Numeracy skills are consistently revisited in design and technology, geography, science and physical education. Overall, the teaching of basic skills is good.
32. Most lesson plans include strategies for pupils with special educational needs and there is a good dialogue between the teachers, teacher assistants and special needs tutors over what could be done to help these pupils before and during lessons. Teachers make good use of the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) in order to set appropriate tasks related to their targets. IEPs are written for most subjects and so contain subject-specific targets.

33. Most teachers are good at asking different kinds of questions, which enable pupils with special educational needs to join in class discussions. However, not all reading materials and writing tasks are appropriate for pupils with literacy difficulties and few teachers make use of ICT to enhance learning or save time. As a result, pupils spend time laboriously writing up an experiment for example, to the detriment of being more fully involved in the science content of the lesson.
34. Staff make good use of praise and encouragement and relationships with pupils are positive. As a result, all pupils, and particularly those with special educational needs, work hard and maintain their interest and concentration in lessons.
35. The pupils respond well to the caring ethos of the school, within which they feel secure and positive about themselves as learners.
36. The teachers make very effective use of the teacher assistants and special needs tutors in lessons, and there is a real partnership between them. The teacher assistants and special needs tutors offer high standards of support to the pupils with special educational needs.
37. The teachers' oral feedback to pupils is positive and encouraging but marking often consists of just ticks and where there are written comments, they are usually related to attitudes, effort and behaviour and provide little evaluation of what has been learned. As a consequence, pupils' personal knowledge of their own learning varies significantly from subject to subject.
38. The application of ICT to enhance the teaching of all subjects, which is a statutory requirement, is a weakness and is restricted by difficulties of access to the resources. Therefore teachers' use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The result is that opportunities are missed to provide higher levels of challenge and support learning through the use of ICT.

Sixth form

39. All subject teaching in the sixth form is shared between the three schools in the consortium. Only the teaching taking place on the Robert Sutton site was inspected.
40. Teaching in the sixth form is at least satisfactory and is good overall; it leads to good learning, including the development of independent study skills, among the students. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in mathematics and French; in all other subjects they are good. Students make good progress in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. They work very hard, and show very good concentration on the tasks set. The various strengths of teaching in the main school apply equally in the sixth form. In particular, the generally good subject knowledge of teachers creates a positive and demanding learning atmosphere. A good example occurred in a Year 13 biology lesson, where the teacher's strong subject knowledge underpinned incisive question-and-answer work and developed the students' understanding. Thoughtfully planned and resourced practical work on cell structure reinforced the new learning. Students gave good oral explanations of their cell models using complex technical vocabulary correctly.

41. The planning and classroom methods used by teachers are satisfactory in the sixth form. However, teaching is organised between at least two of the partner schools and specific modules are taught on the different sites. This results in student movement and, at the time of the inspection, Robert Sutton students lacked both areas for quiet research and opportunities for focused academic discussions. The use made of assessment is both variable and not consistently co-ordinated. The use made of assessment information to guide planning varies from subject to subject and is strong in English and the sciences, where teachers are able to plan challenging work. However, the co-ordination of academic advice between and across departments does not give students consistent guidance on what they need to do to improve. In the post-16 information technology course, teaching is satisfactory, but the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in the other post-16 courses is limited.

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

42. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its students. It meets the range of needs of the students well. There is good extra-curricular provision and the contribution of the community to students' learning is good.
43. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The taught week of twenty-five hours for both key stages meets government recommendations. All subjects of the national curriculum are taught, although the time allocated for geography, PSHE, physical education and art is insufficient for these subjects to be studied in the required depth, and in art, which is taught in rotation with the other expressive arts. Pupils do not make as much progress as they might because they do not have continuity of experience in the subject. The inclusion of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy in English, mathematics and science has had a positive impact on planning and delivery in these areas of the curriculum. The extension of this National Strategy to the foundation subjects has already been taken up positively by history and geography. Statutory requirements for ICT taught as a subject in Years 7 - 9 are met; but the required use of ICT in other subjects is inconsistent and unsatisfactory. This cross-curricular provision is not planned across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall; an appropriate scheme of work exists but the time allocation is too low to allow the material to be covered in sufficient depth. Curriculum planning for the teaching of citizenship is in the early stages of development; an audit has taken place recently, identifying where the contributions that subjects make are found in their schemes of work.
44. The arrangements for grouping pupils according to their ability in English, mathematics and science are working well and the placing of additional learning support staff in specific subjects ensures that the requirements of students with special educational needs are met.
45. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a standard curriculum comprising all national curriculum subjects and drama. This structure allows French and German to alternate as the first modern foreign language, and a second language, again French or German, is offered in Year 9. The arrangement whereby pupils follow courses in expressive arts subjects in rotation is unsatisfactory because too little time is allocated and the discontinuity of experience does not allow pupils to build up their skills progressively in each of the subjects involved.

46. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, religious education and physical education and choose from a range of subjects to provide a balanced curriculum. The allocation of curriculum time for a number of subjects is unbalanced. Modern foreign languages receive a generous allocation of time but that for geography is insufficient. The time available for physical education does not meet the government's recommendation and the organisation of the curriculum provision in art limits the number of GCSE option groups that can be offered by this oversubscribed subject.
47. The ethos of the school promotes attitudes through which all people are valued; as a result, the incidence of racist or other discriminatory attitudes is very low. The school implements the requirements of the National Curriculum on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are attached to the English, mathematics, science and design and technology departments and are involved in curriculum planning. Some pupils are withdrawn, either individually or in small groups, for extra support and help in literacy in half-termly blocks. The school does all it can to avoid the pupils involved missing too much of the main school curriculum, by moving the half-termly sessions from subject to subject. The extra support in literacy enables pupils to derive greater benefit from the rest of the curriculum.
48. Many pupils with special educational needs are able to take GCSE courses and those pupils who are likely to find GCSE courses and examinations difficult are able to nominate a teacher as a mentor. For those pupils who are unable to take part in GCSE courses, youth award courses and Certificate of Educational Achievement courses are available. Useful lunch-time and afternoon clubs are available for pupils with special educational needs: a homework club, reading club and dyslexia (specific learning difficulties) club. The homework club session, held at lunch-time during the inspection, was very well attended, with 40-50 pupils actively engaged in research, discussion and other work. These clubs, which are run by the teacher assistants, offer well-focused support to pupils with special educational needs.
49. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are receiving all the help and support specified in their statements of special educational needs. The school promotes equality of opportunity in the breadth if not the balance of the curriculum, for example the limited access to GCSE art and the generous allocation of time to modern foreign languages that constrains other subject provision. Currently, the school does not have toilets for the disabled, ramps into the building, or lifts to enable pupils to reach the upper floors of the building. The access to the curriculum is limited for disabled pupils who are unable to study science or ICT, as they have no access to the upper floor in either block. No compensatory work is provided in ICT and pupils are required to sit in the library. At present, insufficient access to ICT in subject areas limits the enrichment available to pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum offered in most subjects does not provide enough challenge to meet the needs of the most able pupils.
50. The school makes good use of external careers consultants, one of whom works to make sure that students with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and emotional problems are given appropriate support. Specialist staff are available for two days each week and pupils have a good programme of planned small group access as well as opportunities to make personal appointments which they value. Dedicated careers lessons are held each week in the library for all groups on rotation.
51. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is extensive provision for physical education and school sport and a huge range of activities linked to other curriculum areas. For example, the 'Young Engineers' group in Year 9 meets with

representatives from Toyota to work on projects throughout the year. The science and history departments organise many visits to include museums, theatres and places of interest. A successful reading club meets at lunch-times and has a programme of events planned termly; a homework club enables pupils to engage in homework and other activities with support if needed; and a debating and public speaking club is very active. Many of these opportunities have a direct impact on pupils' attainment, their social skills and their ability to recognise others' achievements. The school continues to support the Catholic aid charities in particular LEPRO, CAFOD and Pump Aid through fund raising activities. All pupils are able to take part in a residential experience if they wish; these include a visit to the LEA's outdoor centre or a visit to a centre where pupils study moral issues, drama, music and art. Community links are good and developing through the use of many local businesses that are linked to the school as part of the Year 11 work experience programme. Year 9 pupils are involved with the feeder primary school pupils, helping them with reading in Years 2, 3 and 5, and with play activities in Year 2. A programme of work experience is arranged through the careers programme in year 10. The school does not currently provide vocational courses.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

52. The school makes good overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for spiritual and moral development is good. Assemblies contribute very well to both, through the use of stories, recent news items and singing. Simple techniques like the way pupils and staff are standing and the use of single singing voices create a calm atmosphere and this helps pupils to reflect on the point of the story. Discussions in form-time are sometimes used to reinforce these messages. The school meets the requirement for a daily act of collective worship and its strong catholic ethos lies at the heart of the positive attitudes and behaviour seen during the inspection.
53. Lessons in religious education help pupils learn about different faiths and pupils are able to identify similarities and differences in world religions. In some lessons, pupils express their wonder of the workings of the world around them and this is followed up by the teacher ensuring that the pupils have a little time to reflect on these moments. A good example was seen in a science lesson on the working of the heart. In a history lesson, pupils looked at a story of a soldier in the First World War and focused on the feelings involved. The ensuing discussion led pupils to an awareness of the realities of war. In this and other ways the pupils are given good support for understanding the differences between right and wrong. Desired behaviour is rewarded with positive attention. Unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour is managed well, with clear and consistent messages being given to pupils. Adults remain calm but firm. Many classes have rules displayed in them and younger pupils are keen to collect merits as part of the school's reward system. Through this, pupils gain a pride in their work and concentrate on behaving well.
54. The provision for social development is good. Lessons in art, history, science, music and PE particularly support this. Assemblies promote the sense of belonging to a community. In lessons, pupils work well in groups and support each other's learning. Good relationships are established and pupils listen to each other's point of view as well as to the teacher. The school council meets regularly and representatives have a genuine responsibility to put forward the views of a section of the school. The school has started to arrange further opportunities for pupils' personal development by having them show visitors round the school, visiting community groups and local primary schools, as well as taking a full part in the many extra-curricular clubs that are available.

55. The provision for cultural development is also good. Lessons in art, music, design and technology, science PE, dance, drama, art, geography, religious education and history all contribute to pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding. A wide range of visits is used to promote this area of learning. These include visits to theatres, museums, exhibitions and visits from performing groups and individuals. For example, a visiting dance teacher has used Lloyd–Webber's *Bombay Dreams* as the focus of provoking, open-minded discussion by the participants. Overall, the multicultural element of the provision is significantly the weaker aspect of pupils' personal development, with limited contributions from music, geography and history but stronger ones being developed by art and religious education.

Sixth form

56. The school is part of the Burton consortium that operates a joint sixth-form arrangement with a cluster of neighbouring schools. Some 13 advanced level courses are taught at least in part at the school and students have access to 29 within the consortium. This results in students being able to access a good range of courses including GNVQ intermediate and foundation level in business, and ASDAN in literacy and numeracy. Statutory arrangements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form are currently not being met. Some students commented on the lack of a key skills course in the sixth form that they have encountered through the other consortium schools but do not currently have access to at Robert Sutton. Movement between sites is facilitated by school mini bus. The new sixth-form centre is being constructed mid way between Robert Sutton and Paulett School and will provide modern facilities within a short walk for the majority of post-16 students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. On a day-to-day and informal basis, pupils and students are well cared for but there are a number of significant weaknesses in the school's formal procedures. Consequently, the school's very good intentions are not underpinned sufficiently well to protect pupils and staff, particularly in the event of an emergency. This situation is unsatisfactory and worse than when the school was last inspected. However, the new headteacher and the governing body are taking rapid steps to rectify this position.
58. The school's current child protection arrangements are unsatisfactory. Staff have not been given sufficient training to enable them to have a sufficient understanding of this aspect of pupil care. In addition, the school's policy document is extremely brief and it does not define the types of abuse or indicate any of the typical signs for which teachers should be watchful. Consequently, many teachers do not recognise when a pupil may be at risk and may need appropriate help. Although staff are very quick to share information on pupils' well being with colleagues, so that they can be sensitive and understanding of pupils' needs, there is no central register of minor concerns. Thus information filtering in from many different directions cannot be collated and emerging patterns identified.
59. Senior staff and governors who were briefed by the inspection team understood the importance of these issues. With the assistance of specialist support from the LEA, they began to restructure procedures and develop draft policy documents that were available for the inspection team to view at the governing body inspection feedback. Inspectors noted the rapidly improving situation in this important area. Several members of staff have up-to-date first aid knowledge and pupils receive appropriate care when they become ill or injured at school. However, accidents, including ones where there are potentially serious injuries, are not always recorded in the school's accident book, so there is no record of what happened, of what care was given or what was done to inform parents. Although the

school is one of the most caring, pastorally supportive and orderly schools the inspectors could recall visiting, its formal care procedures were found to be somewhat behind the requirements of current legislation.

60. Some of the school's practices are very effective in providing a good level of care for pupils. For example, pupils keep the same form tutor and head of year from Year 7 right through to Year 11, and so tutors get to know pupils very well indeed. They listen to them and take a real interest in them and are clearly concerned about their well-being. As a result, very good relationships develop and pupils grow in confidence and they know they have someone to turn to if they need help. However, some routines are not in the best interests of pupils' health. For instance, whether it rains or shines, pupils queue outside for lengthy periods waiting to be allowed into the dinner line. There are no pleasant areas or any seating for pupils to use at break and lunch-time and so they sit outside on stone floors and steps in draughty and wet walkways. A break-time rota system of supervision operates in corridors and toilet areas but not outside and so on the very rare occasion when a fight breaks out, there is vital delay in adult intervention.
61. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in the school's health and safety procedures and risk assessments are now more regular and more thorough. However, action to address identified concerns and to raise staff awareness of good practice has been insufficient and so a number of potential hazards remain. Most of these are because of poor maintenance and hygiene. For example, the remains of a broken seat in the grounds, loose and broken stools in science labs, sunken grates on sports courts, loose guttering, and broken or missing toilet seats and no soap in two toilet blocks. A major concern is the number of fire doors within the school which are left wide open, either because their automatic closure mechanisms are not working or because staff are not vigilant enough in closing them manually. The school's policy on visits out of school is dated and does not comply with the latest DfEE guidance. Formal written risk assessments are not carried out thoroughly before pupils are taken on out-of-school visits, and this is unsatisfactory.
62. The school has satisfactory measures to promote good attendance and consistently achieves attendance figures above the national average for all secondary schools. However, absence is not always properly recorded in registers and the school does not have a system of telephoning parents on the first day of pupils' absences to ascertain where they are, and some parents are rightly concerned about this. The head of pastoral care works with the local Education Welfare Officer in following up any pupils who achieve less than 85 per cent attendance in any half-term and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Approximately ten pupils are currently being monitored and helped to improve their patterns of attendance. Formal procedures to monitor and improve punctuality are not particularly effective and there is some lateness, but it is recognised that pupils travel from a wide area, often through congested traffic areas, and buses are sometimes late.
63. There are good procedures to promote good behaviour and eliminate oppressive behaviour, including bullying. The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of behaviour and they are skilled in managing pupils. They nearly always present good role models and they promote consideration and respect for others through much of what they do. Any incidents of unkindness or allegations of bullying are dealt with promptly and fairly in a supportive way, often by the headteacher. There is an emphasis on confession and forgiveness, and so pupils know that they can make amends and start afresh. Consequently, tension and hatred do not build up and a happy and orderly environment is maintained where everyone can work and learn and feel comfortable and secure.

64. The procedures for the assessment of attainment and progress vary considerably between departments. Overall, they are satisfactory, apart from those in art and music. However, there are strengths in physical education, design and technology, history, geography and English. The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning is also satisfactory but the picture is equally mixed, with weaknesses in ICT and art but strengths in science, geography, history and physical education. Equally, pupils' knowledge of their own learning is strongest in those departments mentioned positively and weakest in music, ICT and art. The most able are not consistently challenged and provided with guidance on how to attain the highest grades and this can be seen in the limited percentage of pupils attaining an A or A* grade at GCSE. Although the procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic development are satisfactory, the school does not have a coherent picture of the progress of individuals because the good information that is available is not consistently understood or used by departments.
65. All pupils with special educational needs are assessed for reading and spelling at the end of the September after their admission. In addition, the teaching assistants and special needs support tutors write half-termly reports for those pupils on the special educational needs register. Advisory teachers from the local education authority's special educational needs support service and educational psychologists are brought in to help with assessment and to provide advice, where appropriate. Initial assessments, together with any statements of special educational needs, are used to write each pupil's individual education plan (IEP), which contain targets for learning and for personal and social development and, where appropriate, behaviour. The special needs tutors monitor the pupils' progress against their targets every half term.
66. Most subject departments write their own IEPs and it is to their credit that they do so. However, their layout and quality are variable and many of the targets are similar. In addition, there is much confusion within the different IEPs between concerns, targets, strategies for meeting targets, success criteria and evaluation. It would be more efficient to have a single IEP form with general literacy and numeracy concerns, and targets, and a space for specific subject-related concerns, targets and strategies. The result of all these assessments is a wide variety of different pieces of paper, which do not necessarily refer to each other or use the same terminology, especially with regard to target-setting. The school should review its assessment procedures in order to simplify them, possibly using information and communication technology to help in this process.

Sixth Form

67. Educational and personal support and guidance for students in the sixth form are satisfactory. The newly appointed pastoral head of sixth form has a good relationship with students and is keen to help and guide them wherever he can. His very experienced predecessor continues to provide additional support for students, particularly by helping them with their decisions about courses to follow. The newly appointed headteacher has made significant resources available to support university applications, interviews and other preparations. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance in the sixth form have very recently been significantly improved, with the result that attendance is being recorded and absences are now followed up. All assessment is departmentally based in the sixth form and is, therefore, by necessity, a shared responsibility with the other schools in the consortium. There are positive sides to this arrangement. Teachers working closely with their colleagues in the consortium were able to identify irregularities in the 2002 advanced level marking in English, which resulted in a successful appeal and improved grades. The weakness, however, is that no one person is maintaining an overview of standards of attainment in the different course units taught by different staff on separate school sites and in the sixth form overall. The academic tutoring of post-16 students is less effective

than it might be. As a result, work in some subject areas, which could have counted towards students' assessment in key skills, has not been utilised. The use of assessment to guide teaching and perhaps more importantly learning must therefore be considered unsatisfactory.

68. The advice and support available to post-16 students are currently an extension to those offered in the main school. Consequently, although a member of staff has responsibility for the Robert Sutton students on site, no one has formal responsibility for those students from the other consortium schools who attend courses based in the school. Students have commented that it is difficult to make contact with subject staff on occasions and find that the pastoral support has failed to focus on their need for a quiet study area / research facility. They feel that they have difficulty in gaining an overview of how they are performing in their courses. These unsatisfactory arrangements will need to become a priority for the new head of the joint sixth form to be appointed at Easter 2003.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. Overall, there is a satisfactory partnership with parents that has been maintained since the last inspection. However, some of the legally required items are still not included in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Although the issue was not specifically raised in the last report, little has been done to further involve parents by improving the quality and timing of information available to parents. Pupils' reports meet requirements but they are not personal enough and do not state clearly enough how pupils can improve their performance.
70. Many of the current parents attended this school themselves as pupils and so a good level of mutual respect has developed. Consequently, parents hold the school in high regard. They are satisfied with much of what the school does and they are particularly pleased with the expectations of the school that their children should work hard and do their best, and with the progress they make. Some parents, however, do not feel well enough informed of their children's progress or with how the school works in partnership with parents. Inspectors' findings confirm that there is some justification in parents' views.
71. The school provides a satisfactory amount of information for parents. The school has a well-established open-door policy and because it has formed good relationships with parents, most feel welcome and comfortable in visiting the school to seek further information if they wish. Each pupil has a homework diary, therefore parents can familiarise themselves with the homework expectations. However, although they are useful in this way, and they are a very effective aide memoire for pupils, teachers and form tutors are missing the opportunity to use them additionally as a method of communication with parents, and so involve them more in their child's education. Termly newsletters provide interesting information about the life and work of the school. They also celebrate pupils' achievements and the successes of projects and initiatives, for example the experience of Year 9 pupils working with engineers from Toyota in designing and building a robot. However, much of this is retrospective and so parents cannot enthuse and encourage their children to take full advantage of what is on offer to them.
72. There is no systematic approach to informing parents of what is being taught in lessons and the onus is too much on pupils to communicate such information. Consequently, parents' interest and involvement is not being actively sought. However, parents are pleased with the recent initiative where the RE department has started to write letters and make telephone calls to parents to celebrate individual achievements in that subject. Written reports provided for parents once each year inform them satisfactorily of their child's individual progress. However, they are in the format of multiple-choice subject

statements with tick boxes and so they are rather impersonal. Subject teachers provide a brief text to supplement the tick boxes but they tend to concentrate more on the pupil's attitude rather than what they know, understand, and can do, and they do not set future learning targets. Parents have sufficient opportunities through formal parents' evenings and other events to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress and to see the work of the school.

73. Parents support the school well on the basis of the information they are given. For example, they reinforce the school's behaviour and attendance expectations and the school's dress code. Attendance at parents' meeting is good and they encourage their children to complete their homework tasks on time. In addition, a parent teacher association, which has been dormant for a short time, is now becoming active again in raising funds for the school.
74. Pupils with special educational needs have home-school diaries and the teacher assistants keep parents informed and involved about any concerns and about their children's progress. There are reports to parents every year and parents are fully involved in the statutory annual reviews of statements of special educational need.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

75. The recently appointed headteacher has balanced the school budget, revised and formalised the school's performance management programme and seen all staff teach. He has worked with the governing body to finalise the funding and planning permission for the new sixth-form centre, commissioned the refurbishment of part of one teaching block and is managing the reorganisation of the school's office accommodation to provide more space for the library. He has demonstrated very good leadership and made rapid progress in a matter of weeks. The evaluation of the school's work and the action taken to bring about improvement with other senior managers have been good.
76. Although he had been in post for a very short time before the inspection, both staff and pupils of all ages acknowledged the impact he has had on the many aspects of the school. He has a clear vision of how the school should develop, which is closely in tune with the school's catholic aims and values. He appreciates what has already been accomplished and has developed a good understanding with the school's hardworking governing body and the headteachers of his major feeder schools and consortium partners. By quickly gaining the support of the staff, the headteacher has reaffirmed the school's common sense of purpose; it was clear during the inspection that staff morale is high and that teachers feel well supported. The school has an effective climate for learning, which very clearly reflects the Gospel values that guide its work. The priorities for development that have been identified are the right ones and the school is well placed to improve and grow.
77. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis but some formal procedures relating to pupils' welfare, the monitoring of attendance and the setting of pupil targets are in need of attention. Routine administration is efficient, though the school's administrative support staff are over-stretched. The school has yet to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by new technology to support administration and the processing of data and information, for example about pupils' performance. Little has been done to co-ordinate the work of senior and middle management by the previous headteacher, as required in the key issues of the last report. However, senior managers are working hard with the new headteacher and governing body to develop the management and organisation of the school to bring it in line with current best practice. Most middle managers are very hard-working; departments are often well led with physical education, English, science and

history to the fore. However, the leadership of ICT has failed to address adequately the issues highlighted in the last report and the leadership of music has failed to make use of both the good facilities available and the interests and talents of all its pupils.

78. The overall effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is satisfactory. Their role in shaping the direction of the school is very good. The chair and the core of the governing body have worked with the school for some time, correctly identifying, with the aid of the diocesan authorities and the LEA, the need for change in post-16 provision, and bringing it about. However, their effectiveness in fulfilling statutory duties, for example the provision of post-16 religious education and providing access to ICT across the curriculum has been unsatisfactory. Similarly, there were limitations in the previous monitoring of financial matters, the organisation of the timetable and weaknesses in the child protection procedures, but these have been addressed rapidly and effectively. Overall, governors' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is satisfactory.
79. The special educational needs department is well run and provides very good support for pupils with a wide range of difficulties. Staff are well qualified and the co-ordinator has a clear vision for developing the school's inclusion policies. A very competent and committed team works well in this area. The accommodation is good overall, with a separate withdrawal room, equipped with two computers. However, it is not big enough or situated in a sufficiently convenient location to be used as a drop-in resource for the whole school. The learning resources are satisfactory overall but there are insufficient computer hardware and software to reinforce learning and to enable pupils to access the curriculum.
80. The governors and senior management team of the school are very committed to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and to the full development of their potential in learning and in personal and social skills. The school is a caring community and is perceived as such by parents of pupils with special educational needs; it is obvious that all pupils are valued and cared about within this Christian community. The leadership and management of this inclusive provision enable these pupils to make good progress over time.
81. Management of equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. The school stresses the importance of equality of opportunity but its intentions are undermined by a lack of policies and inconsistent practice in departments. Few departments have a monitored policy or statement, which reduces the strength of the approach to equality of opportunity across the school. The school has recently started to revise its equality of opportunity policy. A clear and coherent statement has been drawn up by the headteacher and the governors, but this has not yet gone to wider consultation and in its current form has implications for the curriculum offered in the main school.
82. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. However, the effect of staff absence on the provision in some departments is a matter of concern. The monitoring of teaching has now been made part of a well-structured performance management strategy, but, as yet, there has been no monitoring of how departments are implementing this. The school's continuing professional development programme has been linked to the whole development plan and the departmental plans, but department costs have yet to be included.

83. The school's strong support and development programme for newly qualified teachers is operated in parallel with a very good initial teacher-training programme run in conjunction with Loughborough University. This latter programme has contributed a number of talented young teachers to the staff.
84. Accommodation is satisfactory, but limitations in the size and layout of teaching rooms prevent the development / deployment of new technology and the access to higher-level tasks provided by such facilities is impacting on the ability to raise standards in the smaller classrooms in the main block. The learning resources available are satisfactory but most departments have had limitations in their resources in the last three years. The current method of distributing resources by departmental allocation is neither transparent nor yet linked to the school development plan priorities. New spending since the appointment of the new headteacher has been focused on facilities development; the extension of the library with new ICT research capabilities is welcome. The library provision is unsatisfactory; resources are dated, there is very limited access to ICT and the lack of a librarian hinders the development of independent learning, so important to the most able.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

85. The head of sixth form is part of the pastoral structure of the main school and, due to accommodation limitations, has no base from which to manage the post-16 provision. At Easter 2003, a head of the new Stapenhill joint sixth-form centre, currently under construction, will be able to plan and organise all aspects of provision under the guidance of the joint governing body and resolve issues such as the omission of research facilities, the lack of a key skills course and the limitations in the support and advice for students. This central responsibility will improve a situation where the omission from the statutory curriculum of religious education, the absence of a key skills course and the limitations in the advice to learners are brought under control. In the current transitional situation, the leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory but is limited to the pastoral support of Robert Sutton students. Departmentally based academic decisions and support structures are negotiated with the partner schools but co-ordination and organisation are variable, and currently lack a management overview.

Resources

86. Owing to the dependence on the host departments in the three partner schools, it has proved to be impossible to judge the quality of the resources available for post-16 students. However, when interviewed, they were unanimous about the need for a quiet study area, access to ICT facilities and the provision for subject equipped academic tutorial facilities in the new building.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to build upon the very good developments since September 2002 the headteacher and governing body should:

- (1) broaden and enrich the management team to focus on the strategic management of the curriculum and pastoral provision of the school*;
Paragraphs: 77; 81-82; 57-59; 43-46.
- (2) address the weaknesses in ICT across the curriculum*, notably the provision of ground floor access for disabled pupils;
Paragraphs: 49; 145-146; 160; 170.
- (3) refine the quality and use of ongoing assessment, target setting and the guidance given to learners. Use this detailed information to provide appropriate challenge to the most able;
Paragraphs: 64-67.
- (4) formalise the procedures for ensuring pupils welfare in line with current DfES guidance. The recently LEA supported draft policies in this area need to be formalised and staff training put in place as a matter of priority.
Paragraphs: 57-59; 67-68.

Sixth form

- (1) provide the statutory post-16 course in religious education and review the balance of provision, timetabling and management of the post-16 curriculum and the access to ICT facilities for private study;
Paragraphs: 85-86.
- (2) improve the quality of information, advice and academic guidance offered;
Paragraphs: 67-68.
- (3) improve the procedures for monitoring attendance and ensuring students' welfare.
Paragraphs: 67-68.

* A requirement of the previous report.

Other issues

- The library is currently an unsatisfactory learning resource that is unable to support departmentally based improvement in standards of attainment for the more able, independent learning, or provide access to the schools ICT network for disabled pupils.
Paragraph 49.
- Overcrowding in some of the smaller classrooms in the main block.
Paragraph 104.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

Years 7 – 11	137
Sixth form	21
	75

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

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	41	60	32	3	0	0
Percentage	0.7	29.9	43.8	21.9	2.1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	7	6	7	0	0	0
Percentage	4.7	33.33	28.5	33.33	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than 4 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	587	52
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	48	5

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	59	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	63	53	116

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	46	48
	Girls	51	41	43
	Total	101	87	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (65)	75 (67)	78 (69)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (35)	59 (44)	34 (39)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	46	48
	Girls	46	41	43
	Total	91	87	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (77)	79 (68)	72 (72)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (39)	45 (46)	39 (38)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	37	54	91

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	14	34	35
	Girls	33	53	53
	Total	47	87	88
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52 (49)	96 (96)	97 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	39.4 (n'avail)

Per pupil	National	39.8 (n'avail)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	10	17
	Average point score per candidate	16.3	17.7	14.3 (n'avail)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4 (n'avail)

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
647	14	3
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	2	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	148

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,834,309
Total expenditure	1,931,757
Expenditure per pupil	3052
Balance brought forward from previous year	132,850
Balance carried forward to next year	35,402

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

480

Number of questionnaires returned

137

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	30	1	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	57	33	3	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	66	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	56	2	7	2
The teaching is good.	27	59	9	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	45	12	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	31	3	0	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	41	12	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	56	14	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	22	74	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	44	15	5	2

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

- Parents expressed concern at the range of extra-curricular activities available, the extent of the communication they receive from the school and the use made of homework.

Other issues raised by parents

- At the parents' evening more than half who attended expressed concerns about the range of musical opportunities available to pupils and the disenchantment of pupils with the provision in the subject. The music report concurs with the concerns expressed by parents.
- The relationships between staff and pupils were viewed positively, as was the school's Catholic ethos.
- The support and challenge provided for middle and lower ability pupils were noted by parents who attended the parents evening as being strengths.

The inspection team agrees with all of the parents' positive comments, although the balance of extra-curricular opportunities was found to be good. Inspectors agreed with parents' views that the clarity and range of communications could be improved, as could the use of homework.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The sharing of learning objectives and the quality of pupil management
- Introduction of the National Strategy
- A strong team with capacity for further improvement

Areas for improvement

- Progression in Years 7 – 11 to ensure challenge for more able boys
- Evaluation and refinement of lesson structures
- Differentiation and active learning strategies, especially for boys
- Schemes of work

87. Over the last three years, the attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 has been average, though it is beginning to rise. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above average for all schools. This continues a trend of improvement over the last four years, during which the performance of boys has been just above national expectations and that of girls above national expectations. Over the last four years, results at age 14 have been (well) above the national average but the gap between the performance of boys and girls has continued to grow. Boys who perform well at the end of Year 9 make the slowest progress to GCSE.
88. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining an A* to C grade was below the national average, though the number of entries was higher than usual; all pupils gained at least a Grade G. However, all pupils obtained an A*-G pass grade. The percentage of pupils who obtained an A* or A grade was half the national average for the subject. The same high percentage of pupils were entered for English literature but the percentage of pupils achieving an A*-C grade was well below the national average. However, as with English language almost all pupils obtained an A*-G grade pass with a similar pattern of underachievement at the highest grades. The level of entries was also high for English literature but, whilst almost all pupils gained at least a Grade G, the proportion gaining Grades A* to C was well below average, as was the proportion achieving Grades A* and A. Standards of wider reading are good at Key Stage 3. Year 9 pupils show strong drama skills, which they can apply intelligently for their own sake and to enhance their English work
89. The transformation of teaching and learning envisaged by the Key Stage 3 strategy has started to take effect at all key stages but the process needs some refining and is not yet complete. Teaching at both key stages is always satisfactory or better, and mostly good or very good, particularly at Key Stage 3. Relations are respectful, humour is well used to encourage pupils and homework tasks, though not differentiated to meet the needs of the different abilities within the class, regularly challenge pupils to embed, apply and extend their learning. Standards of pupils' writing show that where clearly focused tasks grow out of sustained units of work, pupils achieve high standards in both key stages.

90. The strengths of teaching in Years 7 to 9 are teachers' subject knowledge and their ability to develop children's reading and language. In a Year 7 investigation of English words containing the Latin root 'port' teachers explained clearly at the beginning of each lesson what the focus would be. They provide open-ended tasks, which challenge pupils to express their understanding in their own words. For example, Year 8 pupils discussed the extent to which we can exercise free will, with close reference to a character in Anne Fine's novel, *The Tulip Touch*. Pupils researched the text enthusiastically and defended judgements with words such as 'actually' and 'deliberately'. In rehearsing and discussing strategies, teachers involve all pupils, and help them to reflect on their learning, as outlined in the assessment policy of the department handbook. Some excellent support is provided by additional staff which has a significant impact on motivation and learning. Sophisticated writers in Years 7 and 8 are already weighing words carefully in conversational narrative: '...but it couldn't be anyone, no; it had to be a princess.' Teaching in the department has now been secured. The change of a significant number of staff in recent years had an effect on the most recent GCSE results, but the improvements in years 7 – 9 have been significant and the department is well placed to develop further.
91. Where there are weaknesses in teaching in Years 7 to 9, tasks which are too prescriptive are ill-matched to the different abilities and learning styles of pupils within the group – whether setted or not. Some teaching lacks explicit demonstration of how writers choose and rearrange words for particular effect. There are insufficient opportunities to focus pupils on listening and to help pupils reflect on how they have learnt during the lesson. Classroom responses are already showing improvements in spelling, as national literacy strategies are becoming more embedded. Where more formal language is required in media and literary responses, there is a greater need for teachers to model writers' choices of words and word order.
92. At GCSE, teachers' clear explanations and focused language exercises are a regular feature. Pupils are allowed space to develop points of view and these are refined by the teacher's skilful questioning. Pupils show good ability to annotate texts, locate information and the more able can connect and provide reasoned interpretation and opinion. In a Year 10 higher-attaining set, pupils drew on their personal experience and wider understanding of the cultural context. Speaking of Mr Jamison in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a boy observed, 'He's a role model for the white community'.
93. In Years 10 and 11, weaknesses in teaching occur when pupils are asked to engage in tasks before they appreciate the purpose of what they are about to do, rehearse strategies or know what they are trying to achieve. In one Year 11 lesson, the pupils - boys in particular - were not sufficiently focused to take responsibility within their group or to learn from the exercise. More planning is needed on the use of teacher-led sample responses, differentiation tasks and pupil self-review. Even the more able GCSE pupils are superficial in their approach and are not able to integrate quotations and technical vocabulary into their critical responses.
94. Pupils generally work well, respect and support each other. Both boys and girls participate eagerly, sensitively and seriously in group discussion, listening attentively and presenting opinions with conviction. Occasionally the behaviour of lower-attaining groups (mainly boys) impedes learning where tasks are too long or open-ended. Pupils generally produce sustained work, although ICT and the library are not sufficiently used to support independent research.
95. Pupils are helped to reflect on their learning and responses as part of the newly introduced target-setting procedures. One average Year 11 pupil knew her target but was still unsure

of what to do about it or how it would contribute to her learning. It would help embed citizenship and key oral skills, if speaking and listening sheets contained relevant prompts. Target-setting is best where it is interactive and focused on behaviours as well as outcomes, for example re-reading and redrafting work

96. The full English curriculum is covered in years 7 -11 and makes a major contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural education. However, the absence of full schemes of work needs urgent attention; currently it does not indicate how skills and applications, such as ICT and Library will be explicitly and progressively developed. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being implemented although there is some unevenness in the impact of aspects of the lesson structure but monitoring and evaluation of progress may struggle to refine this without fully developed schemes of work.
97. The department is well led. The new head of department is providing good induction to a new young team of hard-working, enthusiastic and well-qualified teachers who have a shared commitment to raise standards. Departmental performance and the impact of new approaches, such as those advocated by the Key Stage 3 strategy are kept under review and extended to GCSE to address the dip in standards caused when significant staff changes took place. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection. Classrooms are attractive and the key words displayed are sometimes referred to in lessons. There is still a need to improve ICT access and buy thesauruses. The department places a higher value on extra-curricular English activities such as a Readathon and the Romeo and Juliet theatre trip for Year 10 than is often the case. The head of department has introduced new systems for recording curriculum coverage, target-setting and the tracking pupils' progress. The head of department has made good use of school and LEA support for annually reviewing results, moderating standards at GCSE and adjusting plans.

DRAMA

98. Drama is well taught at both key stages and in the out-of-hours provision at Key Stage 4. Drama has much to offer the school's development of inclusive teaching and learning strategies. For example, in a mixed ability Year 9 drama group, learning was enhanced by a pupil's use of language in role: 'You are not worthy to be in the House of God!' The timetabling of drama requires more attention to how pupils' skills are developed, recorded and reported. At GCSE the quality of drama teaching is good but drama studio accommodation and resources should be improved.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The expertise of the leading teachers in the department
- The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy
- The flexible response by teachers to address the needs of pupils outside of lessons

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of the more able pupils
- The attainment of boys
- Access to information and communications technology for pupils and teachers

99. Standards of attainment of pupils at the age of 14 are in line with the national average. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are in line with the average of all

schools nationally, and of similar schools. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests, the higher-attaining pupils performed well. Girls performed better than boys. Pupils' performance in mathematics at this stage is broadly the same as the other two core subjects of English and science. Attainment on entry to the school in mathematics varies from year to year, but it is broadly average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress at this stage.

100. Standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress during this key stage. GCSE results have varied over recent years. They have been broadly in line with the national averages. In 2002 the proportion gaining A* -C grades was above the national average, but within this group the percentage gaining the highest grades of A* and A was below the national average. Pupils' performance in mathematics in 2002 was better than the other two core subjects in the GCSE. Girls perform better than boys, who do not perform as well as boys nationally.
101. Standards of work seen in classes and work scrutiny were in line with expected levels throughout the main school. They reflect the way pupils are grouped into sets by prior attainment. In Year 7 they use letters to represent unknowns in algebra. In Year 8 they calculate the surface area of shapes. In Year 9 they calculate the mean, mode, median and range. In Year 10 they solve quadratic equations. In Year 11 they use time series and moving averages. Middle ability and the least able make appropriate gains in knowledge through this work but the most able could do more.
102. Teaching and learning throughout the main school are satisfactory. One in every two lessons seen was well taught. Groups are formed on the basis of prior attainment comprising pupils of similar abilities. This arrangement works when teachers plan well. It is less successful where teachers set work which is either too hard for the lower-attaining pupils in the group or too easy for the higher-attaining pupils. The outcome of this variable challenge is that the most able do not obtain the highest grades at GCSE. In most lessons, the teacher recalled and built on the work which had gone before. In one Year 9 lesson on averages, the teacher completely changed her approach when she realised that some pupils did not really understand the work done before.
103. Lessons contain an appropriate range of learning approaches, including group and individual work. Lessons usually begin well with effective starter activities involving mental problems, often with a 'competitive' edge. Pupils enjoy this. In one Year 7 algebra lesson, the teacher made very good use of resources (whiteboards), requiring pupils complete the calculation and have it rapidly checked and pupils made clear strides in their learning. Teachers usually make effective use of questions that require pupils to think through their answers and show a secure level of understanding of the topic being covered. Teachers regularly set appropriate homework, which is properly marked, as is the work done in class. Although good records are kept of pupils' progress and academic performance of pupils is closely monitored, there is a need to refine the targets set so; they are clearly understood by pupils and linked to both national curriculum levels and GCSE grade requirements. Teachers give freely of their time in helping pupils, with 'drop-in' clinics to help individuals. This enables some higher-attaining pupils to study for an additional GCSE, in statistics, and for lower-attaining pupils to receive 'booster' support.
104. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. Most are well motivated and respond to the questions that are asked of them. Some boys and girls, particularly in Years 7 to 9, show less interest; this is because teachers do not provide work that is appropriate to their needs or do not manage the classroom effectively.

105. The department is well led. The head of department, ably supported by her 'second-in-charge', works very hard to support and monitor the less experienced teachers. Liaison with the feeder schools is good and the department is well regarded by other departments. Some of the specialist mathematics rooms are not large enough to accommodate safely the larger classes. The timetable allocation is barely adequate and is reduced by time for movement between lessons. Furthermore the lessons are not always evenly distributed across the week. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, as the department does not have enough access to the necessary equipment. Until recently pupils have had only limited access to calculators to support their graphical work. Provision has improved under the good management of the head of department, but slowly, because of the difficulties in staffing experienced over recent years.
106. Progress in developing mathematics since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have risen at age of 16. Teaching and learning continue to be sound overall. Procedures for monitoring have been strengthened, as have record keeping and assessment. The enthusiastic implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been the most significant improvement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Consistently good teaching
- The contribution of technical support staff to pupils' learning

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data for target setting
- Self-assessment by pupils
- The use of ICT in science

107. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are above those of schools nationally but below average when compared with similar schools. The results over time are showing a rising trend. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are average. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was a little below the national average and the proportion gaining grades A*-G is just above average. Fewer pupils than may be expected achieved the highest grades. The results over time show a slowly rising trend. In both key stages, the performance of girls is better than that of the boys. The results of the modules taken so far this year indicate that boys' performance is rapidly improving as they are responding to the Key Stage Three National Strategy.
108. The school offers combined science courses as well as physics, chemistry and biology. The small numbers of students taking the wide range of individual science subjects make it difficult to analyse trends in results and make comparisons to national statistics.
109. The achievement of pupils as they move up through the school is good. The work in exercise books confirms this. By the end of Year 9 pupils make good progress. The achievement of the most able pupils has improved over the last few years but the numbers reaching the higher levels are slightly lower than could be expected. In a Year 7 practical lesson, pupils could give a good explanation of the relationship between heat and melting and use the particle theory to begin to explain this. In a Year 9 lesson on reactions of metals and carbonates, pupils could give a clear description of previous work on the

process of neutralisation and were able to use the ideas to explain what was happening in the new reaction. The achievement of the most able improved in 2002 and that of middle and lower ability pupils was in line with expectations. There was little difference between the standards achieved by girls and boys.

110. The department is very aware of the need to focus on the scientifically focused literacy and numeracy skills of the pupils when they enter the school. A range of strategies has been developed to help the pupils' progress in these areas. In the best lessons seen at Key Stage 3, key words have been identified and used. In one lesson, the pupils became more accurate in their use of appropriate scientific language within discussions. In other lessons, pupils used prepared worksheets with missing words and well-prepared writing structures to focus science investigations. In a Year 9 lesson, opportunities were created to use the key words in discussions about what made a good scientific account. Pupils were encouraged to say what was good and bad about a piece of scientific writing they had been given and why the correct use of terminology was important to the science noted. The attention given to the acquisition of oracy and literacy skills is a key factor in the good rate of progress shown by these pupils.
111. Through Years 10 and 11, most pupils continue to make good progress. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils could give a clear explanation of the involvement of electrons in the flow of an electrical current but found more difficulty in linking this to the other observations made during the experiment on electrolysis. In another lesson, they showed a good understanding of rates of reaction and were able to use ideas about energy to help their explanations. Most pupils work hard, though fewer achieve the highest grades of A* and A than would be expected, although good work on target-setting being extended from years 7 – 9 will address this.
112. The pupils have many opportunities to practise their scientific enquiry skills. In a Year 10 lesson on neutralisation, pupils' apparatus handling skills were much improved on those seen in lower year groups and more accurate results were being obtained. This in turn led to a reflection, by pupils on the fairness of the test employed and how it could have been improved. Some more capable pupils make more limited progress than might be expected as a result of having work that is too easy for them. In one Year 10 lesson, pupils knew that light is needed for photosynthesis, that glucose is made and that this is converted to starch. From questioning it was clear that the pupils knew the test for starch and could have easily made a prediction as to where the starch is likely to be found, but they were not required to do so.
113. The quality of teaching varies but it is good overall, with over three-quarters of the lessons seen being judged good or better. In the best lessons, teachers gave clear, simple explanations and instructions that were easy to follow. Their plans contained clear learning intentions that were shared with pupils so that they understood what they had to learn. Their planning clearly took into account the present level of literacy skills as well as those for the area of science being studied. The resources for the lesson were very well prepared and used. Classroom management of behaviour was good and effective methods of teaching were chosen. In these lessons it was clear that assessment was beginning to guide the planning on a day-to-day basis.
114. Where the teaching was less strong, the learning intentions for the lesson were more generally planned but did not take into account the specific needs of the pupils. The aims were not shared with pupils in a way that they found easy to understand and some of them quickly lost track of the long-term goal for the lesson. The management of behaviour was still effective, but this lack of clarity led to a slowing of the pace of the lesson, which in turn led to lower levels of concentration from the pupils. As a result, less learning took place.

In a significant number of lessons, opportunities were missed to practise enquiry skills such as predicting, inferring and evaluation.

115. The science staff work well together and the technicians contribute very strongly to the steady progress that the pupils are making. The head of department provides very positive and clear leadership. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements but not enough use is made of ICT. The department realises this and is taking steps to remedy the situation. Despite this, the department fulfils its statutory requirements in this area. The present accommodation is adequate although storage is at a premium and the level of resourcing is barely adequate. The assessment and recording system of the department gives much information about pupils' progress but it is not yet exploited to set targets for pupils' performance. The system is starting to have an effect on lesson planning but is not yet strongly influencing the range of resources required. There is a regular system of monitoring and lesson observations that is becoming embedded in the culture of the department and the sharing of good practice is starting to eliminate inconsistencies in practice. This will also ensure that the cross-curricular themes identified in the recently revised scheme of work will be reflected in lesson planning.
116. Marking is done regularly and follows the school's marking policy. Good verbal feedback is given to the pupils about their performance but as yet this is not supported by pupil self-assessment, or by a commentary on how pupils can improve. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The redevelopment of the schemes of work, the detailed ground work on the use of assessment to inform both teaching and subject provision, and the cross-departmental monitoring of teaching, represent some of the stronger practices in the school.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards in Years 10 and 11
- The high quality of pupils' sketchbooks and the wide range of media used
- Good teaching enables all pupils to achieve well
- The extent of independent learning in the upper school

Areas for improvement

- The identification and support of able pupils
- Assessment is not secure or sufficiently established
- The planning of work does not integrate sufficiently literacy, numeracy and ICT
- The school's limited curriculum planning raises issues of equal opportunities for pupils wanting to study GCSE

117. Pupils' art skills and knowledge on entry are average. Although some aspects of their work progress well in Years 7 to 9, overall, attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. Some standards are high by this time, however, and remain so throughout the school. In particular, the standard of pupils' sketchbook work is very good. They learn quickly and effectively how to present their investigative work in an exciting manner. From the start, sketchbook pages are well annotated and include vibrant, imaginative visual explorations in a rich range of media. Sketchbook work is above average by Year 9, providing very good preparation for GCSE requirements. This breadth of work means that middle and lower-attaining pupils achieve well, because all can find

success through various expressive media. Potentially able pupils, whose painting and drawing skills could be better, are not achieving as well as they could in these graphical areas because of a lack of appropriately challenging support. Standards of graphical work are improving in Year 7, so higher overall standards will be feeding up through the school.

118. GCSE results in recent years have been well below average. A significantly lower than average proportion of pupils has been taking the subject, as at the time of the last report. Recent staffing turnover has disturbed the progression of learning, but the recent appointment of a new subject manager has begun to improve standards. Although they did not progress well to Year 9, current GCSE pupils have achieved well in Years 10 and 11 and standards in both years are above average. Year 10 in particular is very strong. These older pupils have also developed high standards in their sketchbooks, many of which are very good. Most boys produce preparation work which is much more visually exciting than is usual for boys. All pupils are good at using inexpensive, often scrap resources to create imaginative explorations in both preparation work and in finished pieces. In the upper school, standards of graphical work often do not match this, with drawing too often falling below average and this is clearly linked to the staffing disturbance pupils experienced previously. An improvement in painting and drawing would pull up standards even further. As pupils get older, they become very good independent learners, most often working conscientiously and creatively on their individual tasks. Most need little intervention from the teacher. This represents a very good improvement over the situation described in the last report. Pupils now achieve well in art in all years because they now enjoy the subject but more focused challenge is still needed.
119. Pupils are very keen on art, thoroughly enjoying their lessons especially as they get older. Year 7 classes are often difficult to settle, with boys particularly unable to concentrate well enough to achieve as well as they might. Pupils rapidly rise to the high expectations of the teacher and by Year 9, most are good learners. This success creates a high demand for the subject for GCSE, which can not be met because there are too few staff to provide more than one class in each GCSE year. This arises partly because of curriculum arrangements in Year 9, which not only give less time for art than usual, but also mean that the teacher has restricted time for GCSE work. The opportunity for pupils to study this increasingly successful subject in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
120. Teaching is good overall. It is always satisfactory and is very good in Years 10 and 11. The key strength of the teaching is that of enabling pupils to produce the very good sketchbooks and work-journals described above. This gives pupils of all abilities a confident, 'can-do' approach to all they do. It also enables them to become independent learners, making decisions about their work with the support of the teacher, whose skills in guiding good learning are very strong. Planning of the art aspects of the curriculum is good, giving opportunities for the wide range of experience described. The integration of literacy, numeracy, ICT and more abstract areas such as reflection into pupils' work is not planned well enough. Expectations are high, and the improved quality of teaching is the most important factor in the rapid improvement in the subject. Assessment is not yet fully secure, so pupils do not know how good their work is in relationship to the expectations of the National Curriculum.
121. Since the appointment of the new head of department progress has been good, standards of the majority are rising. The department is part of a creative arts faculty, which currently has no manager. New in post, the subject leader has had no formalised way of communicating with senior management. She would benefit from training in management aspects of the subject such as the use of data and in the use of ICT as a creative tool in pupils' learning.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The nature and range of preparatory work
- The audit work conducted in many departments

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching and learning
- The implementation of best practice by all teachers
- The involvement of all departments in both teaching and assessment

122. The school started this new national curriculum subject in September 2002. Governors and staff were properly briefed on the rationale and content of the course, and staff identified to be responsible. At the time of the inspection there was insufficient information on which to judge standards achieved.
123. The school claims, with some justification, that citizenship is already embedded in its ethos and in the schemes of many departments. Delivery is through subject teaching and personal, social and health education, especially the work of tutors. Possible links with citizenship have been identified in mathematics, science, history, geography, religious education, art, physical education, though not yet in ICT or in music. Some subject leaders have nominated particular modules for assessment in citizenship but this work has not yet been built in to a coherent system.
124. This cross-curricular structure of the course is supplemented by occasional off-timetable sessions for year groups. The first of these concerned human rights, particularly those of children, and was led by a representative of Amnesty International. Pupils commented on how powerful this experience had been. Some arresting posters by pupils arising from this session are displayed in the hall. Important learning experiences are provided by visits for example by the debating society, which has entered national and local public speaking competitions. To date, the debating society has involved Year 12 students but main school pupils have been invited to join through the school council.
125. Citizenship is well represented in the scheme of work for personal, social and health education. In the work of two tutor groups observed during the inspection tutors linked health education to aspects of citizenship in a very effective session with a Year 8 group on AIDS and another from Year 9 on drugs. Other tutors are developing citizenship themes within the context of the school's charity work and they are aware of the need to reflect pupils' learning experiences in citizenship outside school in records of achievement. The quality of teaching and learning in the tutor-led sessions was good. Well-focused questioning rapidly dispelled myths and drew analytical comment from pupils of a standard in line with expectations.
126. The well-established council, chaired by a senior teacher, has seen its decisions bear fruit in various domestic and safety measures. The experience available through the school council could be more significant if pupils, supported by staff, chaired meetings. Many important matters, for example relating to curriculum and staffing, should involve representatives of pupils and students. Governors could do more to support the implementation of the subject by welcoming student observers to their meetings particularly with regard to the new sixth-form centre.

127. The monitoring of provision, in this first term, has not yet begun and assessment is still being planned in most areas. There is urgent need to ensure all subjects share in teaching the programmes as statutorily required, and for outcomes in learning to be monitored and reviewed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Assessment procedures are good
- Good relationships in all areas
- Shared vision for development across the department
- Good range of specialisms in Years 10 and 11
- Good standards of practical work

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring more frequently across all areas of the department for consistency of practice
- Develop the systems and control module in more depth in Years 7 to 9
- Presentational skills, graphical and written with middle and lower-attaining pupils
- Ensure that pupils understand national curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and target grades in Years 10 and 11

128. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average for girls and marginally below average for boys, as reflected in the recent National Curriculum teacher assessments. Girls generally produce better work particularly in their design folders. The proportion of pupils, both boys and girls, reaching the higher Level 6 is increasing, but few pupils are reaching Level 7. Attainment on entry is average and pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Practical work is usually good and the better design folders are neatly presented in all areas of work. Good ideas have been developed in the plastics project in Year 7, looking at phone holders, where good use of colour has been used to improve presentation. Good work was seen in Year 8 textiles, where pupils were investigating different uses for fabrics, and good dimensioned drawings and appropriate use of commercial material in research were seen in the Year 9 clock project. Weaker work in Year 7 to Year 9 is mainly due to poor presentational skills, both graphical and written; drawings were done in pen and not pencils, spelling errors were uncorrected and work was left unfinished. This work usually lacks depth of research and the use of different methods of investigation to analyse problems. Good use is made of ICT where appropriate. Achievement is good over time, particularly in practical work.

129. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results are above average in textiles, food technology, graphic products and resistant materials. Results for the child development course are also above average. These results show a good improvement from the 2001 performance for both boys and girls, particularly in terms of the proportion of A*-C grades. Results in previous years have been broadly average across the specialisms.

130. Current standards of work in Year 11 are broadly average, with a proportion of above average work seen in most specialisms. Girls usually produce better standards than boys particularly in the design folder work. In Year 10, good work in textiles researching new fibres and fabrics such as lycra and teflon used good, annotated pencil drawings. Good work in the packaging and promotional project undertaken in Year 10 graphics investigated suitable material for a local cricket club. In Year 11, a food technology project researched foods from other cultures in Year 11 and the substitution of differing grain products. There

is good work in Year 10 and Year 11 child development, where neat presentation was seen in the project on adoption and pupils had done good individual child studies in Year 11. Where standards are lower research skills are underdeveloped, presentation both written and graphical is sometimes poor, work can be unfinished, and initial ideas are not well enough developed. Spelling errors also occur in work in all areas. Practical work, including modelling, is usually good and pupils make good use of ICT, including computer-aided design (CAD). Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computer-aided manufacture (CAM)). In child development, pupils are making satisfactory progress and achievement is good. Standards of work are satisfactory overall in project folders.

131. All pupils including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and integrate well. The setting system allows for work to be aimed at specific groups of pupils with educational or behavioural difficulties and also to enable higher-attaining pupils to be suitably challenged. Attitudes are generally good and pupils work well together. There is some inattention and distraction in lessons where pupils are slow to respond to teacher requests for attention or to listen to instructions in lessons where the task is not well matched to pupils' ability.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A proportion of very good and satisfactory teaching was also seen. In the better lessons, learning is increased and good progress made because teachers share lesson objectives with their pupils, use their good subject knowledge to expand or develop ideas, conduct the lessons briskly and manage the pupils effectively. These qualities were seen in a lesson where pupils developed evaluation techniques when they were focusing on improving their design skills, and in a Year 11 food technology lesson where the teacher made good use of GCSE assessment criteria when marking practical assignments. In lessons which were only satisfactory, the teacher tended to spend too long explaining theory, use language which was too complicated for the pupils and to spend too much time dealing with pupils who were distracting others; the result each time was that the class made less progress than it should have.
133. Leadership and management are good. There is good documentation, the development plan addresses the appropriate priorities for improvement. Good assessment procedures are in place and good relationships exist in the department, which has a shared vision for improvement. The department reinforces pupils' literacy and numeracy, though some pupils have difficulty in measuring accurately. In most areas, good use is made of ICT, though less so in food technology. The department contributes positively to pupils' personal development. Pupils also benefit from activities after school including the Young Engineers Club run in conjunction with Toyota. Closer and more frequent monitoring of teaching would allow good practice to be shared and greater consistence to be achieved. Assessment practice is satisfactory but pupils are not given enough information for them to know how well they are progressing or what they need to do to achieve their targets. A good range of specialisms is offered in Years 10 and 11, but the systems and control module is weak. In spite of improvements to food technology, accommodation is limited and sometimes outdated and a number of problems were indicated to the school. Resources are also limited and some of them are out of date, particularly computers and sewing machines. The department still does not have a technician, even though the issue was raised at the time of the last inspection.

134. Standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 3 and in some specialisms at GCSE, though some pupils continue to have problems in designing, researching and presentation. The departmental development plan has improved and now has clear detailed priorities which are linked to the school's own development plan. Some limited improvement has been noted in the accommodation, which remains barely satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject
- Teaching of basic skills
- Use of ICT in the subject
- Leadership of the subject

Areas for improvement

- Further develop the use of ICT with mathematical modelling, using spreadsheets
- Level related target-setting
- The curriculum provision in years 10 and 11
- Accommodation: non-specialist classrooms lack the resources

135. At the end of Year 9, pupils' standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. As attainment on entry is average progress is satisfactory. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades, and A*-G grades at GCSE in 2002 was slightly above national expectations and represents improvement over previous years. While most pupils have made satisfactory progress, higher-attaining pupils have made less, and the proportion of pupils reaching grades A* and A is below the national average.
136. Evidence from work seen during the inspection confirms this attainment and shows that pupils, especially those with special educational needs, are making more progress. Pupils in Year 7 were able to interpret maps and use latitude and longitude. They also displayed a good knowledge of place and an ability to describe and offer simple explanation of climate and seasonal change. In Year 9 the higher-attaining pupils are able to explain how physical and human processes interact and cause variations in population density and used their numeracy skills to good effect. Lower-attaining pupils describe and account for the observed variations in terms of one process. All pupils develop and use ICT capability within the subject. Year 9 pupils were using the Internet to research information to support a project on the Kobe earthquake. They used ICT to assist with presentation, the majority were able to use ICT as a tool to edit information for presentation, and the more capable refined their work electronically. The department emphasises the development of literacy skills in lessons and pupils are encouraged to use extended writing in assessment topics, such as the report on weathering around the school site in Year 8 and the Kobe earthquake report in Year 9.
137. Pupils in Year 10 used and further developed their geographical knowledge and understanding in describing settlements in less economically developed countries, using data interpreted from photographs, and offering explanations for their location, appearance and construction, and making comparisons with local settlements. Pupils in Year 11 were preparing materials for coursework. Their work concentrated on local field-studies relating to urban zones. They could account for the zonation seen in Burgess' model, fit the localities they had studied to this model and explain the reasons for the attributes of each zone in terms of historical development, land values and accessibility. In other lessons,

Year 11 pupils were seen working with river studies to determine and identify the landforms associated with erosional and depositional processes. They explained why the erosion of ox-bow lakes was interrupted when land in the neck of such features had been built upon, and could identify places where ox-bow lakes had formed in past times from evidence seen on Ordnance Survey maps. Pupils working towards the lower tier examination produced less extended writing which tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

138. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Their teachers' enthusiasm is contagious. Relationships are good and pupils work together well when asked to do so and they help each other appropriately, for example when using complex ICT skills in lessons, but are careful not to complete tasks for each other. Behaviour in lessons is good and a positive working environment is generated in classrooms.
139. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good knowledge of the examination system. They communicate this well to their pupils. They also have good knowledge of ICT and of the software that their pupils use in geography lessons. Their teaching of basic skills is good and pupils develop literacy, numeracy and basic geography skills in their lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher demonstrated skills of climate graph construction using the overhead projector. Pupils quickly understood what was required of them and constructed their graphs accurately. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages pupils' intellectual and creative effort in lessons and pupils are rewarded for their efforts with praise and certificates of merit. The pace of learning is brisk, particularly in lessons seen in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching was only satisfactory, a good exposition by the teacher encouraged pupils to explain the processes affecting population density, but then pupils' written work was only descriptive and the teacher did not demand explanations to extend the higher-attaining pupils. Lesson planning pays specific attention to pupils with special educational needs and work is differentiated to ensure that progress is made. Less attention is paid to the needs of higher-attaining pupils and although academic targets and assessment criteria linked to National Curriculum level and GCSE grade criteria are shared with pupils for assessment topics and GCSE course work, this does not happen for class work and homework.
140. The department is well led and is given clear educational direction. Teachers are well matched to the courses they teach. The head of department monitors teaching, and senior managers monitor his teaching. As teachers contribute to the teaching in other subjects, departmental meetings, although regular, are not as frequent as would be desired and informal daily contact is well used to manage the day-to-day running of the department. Teachers have a good command of the subject, resources for teaching are plentiful within the department and good use is made of the Internet to research for project work. The geography room provides a good learning environment and has attractive and relevant wall display. Resources to support teaching are available and the room comfortably accommodates large classes. However, although there are blinds on the windows, they do not provide enough blackout for the overhead projector to be seen comfortably from all parts of the room. The timetable does not make most efficient use of the room and half of the geography lessons are taught elsewhere in rooms that are less well suited. Time and effort are wasted transporting resources and equipment between rooms, at times at the other end of the school. The timetable does not make best use of time available, with different amounts of time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11.
141. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements to the accommodation, to teaching and in the attention to the development and use of numeracy skills. Accommodation has improved with the provision of one specialist geography room. With the demands of the timetable, more dedicated space is needed for the subject. Teaching

has improved and there is now much less reliance on exposition, copying and note taking. Enquiry methods are established and well used.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department supports in full the ethos and values of the school
- The contribution of the department to cross-curricular learning, especially literacy, numeracy and citizenship
- Quality of teaching, in particular the clear focus on learning
- Challenging and supportive nature of assessment and feedback to pupils

Areas for improvement

- Widen the resources for learning in the form of research texts in the library
- Develop ICT to support learning in history, of which the department already have good knowledge but to which they have insufficient access

142. Attainment in the 2002 GCSE examinations matched the national average, a considerable improvement on results the previous year. Boys' performance was as good as girls'. Attainment on entry to the school is average, and Year 9 pupils are maintaining this standard in the National Curriculum teacher assessments.
143. The improving standards in the main school are confirmed by the quality of work seen during the inspection, which was above average. By Year 9, pupils can draw conclusions from sources. The majority write fluent, relevant and well-organised historical argument. Their oral work shows that they have good knowledge of the periods that they have studied and can compare them with the situation being examined in a lesson. The more able pupils in Year 11 can draw inferences from clues within and across a range of sources, whilst the majority make simple but accurate deductions. They use evidence well to support their historical arguments. Almost all pupils present their work well, taking pride in its appearance, accuracy and completeness. They follow instructions closely but are confident when making their own historical decisions. When they speak during class discussion, pupils of all ages do so willingly, with confidence and thoughtfully. A small minority of students of all abilities tend to take shortcuts when writing, working from what they already know instead of working on their skills of interpreting source materials; although they make good causal connections they are not developing the necessary ability to work with sources of evidence. The present Year 7 are working at expected levels but there is evidence to show that pupils entering the school in previous years had lower standards. Pupils' achievement is, therefore, good by Year 9 and again by Year 11.
144. Teaching is at least good in all lessons throughout the school, and is sometimes excellent, with the result that learning is always good. Teachers use an interesting and motivating range of activities to reinforce and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In lessons, starting with a range of different quizzes, they ask pupils to remember the facts covered in previous lessons, praising their good recall, while encouraging them to work out the significance of each of their answers to the issue being studied. They make sure that pupils understand the key ideas with which they work. For example, in one Year 7 lesson, the teacher asked pupils to explore the meaning of civilisation in the Roman Empire and to discuss it in relation to our views today. Pupils of all abilities developed their understanding in open discussion, making mature statements that showed their recognition of the importance of aspects of society ranging from discipline to tolerance.

145. In all lessons seen, the teachers challenge the pupils to think beyond their initial statements, by asking supplementary questions, presenting them with conflicting evidence, or by using materials that make them reconsider their initial assumptions. One very powerful example of the latter was when the teacher told a story in which the enemy became a real person, leaving the pupils thinking seriously about the impact of warfare on individual victors and vanquished. Teachers give very good support to pupils with special educational needs, collaborating well with learning support staff so that all such pupils make very good progress and are proud of their achievement. They also provide challenging questions that make real demands on the most able, encouraging them to work in depth. This match of work to abilities is helped by thorough and regular assessment of pupils' understanding both through formal standard tests and also through regular marking to recognised standards. Pupils all know how well they are attaining, and have been set specific targets for improvement. All achievement is celebrated in an atmosphere in which pupils want to succeed. In a few lessons, some pupils can sit throughout the discussion without contributing as the teacher invariably asks volunteers to speak, but the variety of activity means that all pupils have to write their findings even if they have not spoken. Students in the sixthform lesson seen were required to report on the significance of 20th century Prime Ministers, but the teacher did not ask them to draw independent conclusions about the pattern that emerged.
146. Good departmental leadership has achieved this consistency of approach. At the same time as staff, in particular the head of department, redesign the topic and lesson plans to develop pupils' thinking skills, they share their views on the extent to which their methods succeed with different pupils. They work closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator to make the work accessible and interesting to all pupils. The schemes of work give good support to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy, The citizenship aspect of history is well covered both in the content of the lessons and also in practical example given by the manner in which classes are conducted. The pupils have good quality textbooks in the main school, with a good range of other resources to widen their understanding. Although the staff have good knowledge of the way in which ICT can develop pupils' historical knowledge and understanding, and have written plans for the use of ICT in class, they find it difficult to book computer rooms. As a result, the department is not meeting the National Curriculum requirement to use ICT in history. The sixth-form course has too few books either in the library or in the department for the necessary wider reading that would raise students' standards.
147. Improvement since the last inspection has been significant, especially in the recent re-writing of schemes of work to improve pupils' thinking and in the quality of the department's contribution to whole-school issues such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship. As a result, standards have begun to rise. The integration of ICT into the course has still to be addressed, as has the development of an adequate sixth-form reading resource.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The ICT curriculum covers all statutory requirements
- Pupils have good basic skills across a wide range of applications of ICT, and are confident in their use of computers
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in ICT in all year groups and particularly in public examinations
- Develop pupils' ability to work independently when planning, researching and evaluating their work
- Co-ordinate ICT across the curriculum so that use of ICT in all subject areas meets statutory requirements
- Assess pupils' work more consistently and improve the guidance offered to pupils

148. Standards in the short course at GCSE taken by all Year 10 pupils in 2002 were well below average, with girls performing better than boys, but with almost no pupils attaining grades A*-C. These results marked a deterioration in standards since 2001, although 2002 was the first year of a new examination. Observations during the inspection show that the attainment of Year 10 pupils is higher than that indicated by last year's results. Year 11 pupils do not have a discrete course; they experience ICT only through its use in other subjects, and so their attainment varies according to their experience. Where they use computers, however, their attainment meets the purpose of the task. Throughout the school, girls' attainment is better than boys'.
149. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum teacher assessments show that attainment is below average. These assessments were confirmed by observation during the inspection. Pupils have good basic skills that allow them to carry out procedures without close instruction. They can present information in a range of forms from simple word-processing to desktop publishing and multimedia, inserting and adapting materials from other sources such as the Internet. Pupils seen using spreadsheets could carry out simple calculations for given purposes. However, pupils attain below expected levels because they do not give enough thought to the planning and evaluation of their work. For example, they design communications to suit their own preferences without researching their purpose or meaning. When searching for materials on the Internet, they do not refine their searches. As pupils enter the school with levels of attainment below expectation, their achievement is satisfactory.
150. By the end of Year 11, attainment is still below average. In work seen there was no evidence of pupils applying higher-level ICT thinking to their work in other subject areas. Almost all Year 10 pupils work on an information system of their own choice almost always at similar levels to those following the same task in Year 9. Both were seen during the inspection working on an information system, such as a leaflet or electronic presentation, on a health topic. A few of the higher-attaining Year 10 pupils, almost all girls, can research and analyse the task with reference to the purpose, content and audience. Most still consider only their personal preferences. A substantial proportion does not select the software with reference to its suitability for the purpose, preferring to use the program that they find easiest. Their achievement therefore remains unsatisfactory.

151. Pupils throughout the school enjoy learning and using ICT. They use their own computers to research and to produce work across subjects. Some GCSE geography pupils come to weekly subject-specific sessions outside the normal school day. A group of Year 10 pupils attend extra lessons to convert their short GCSE into the full award. Pupils sharing computers support each other when they are not directly using the computers. They treat the equipment well. The lunch-time computer club is usually full, but pupils prefer to search Internet or play games rather than improve their standards in ICT or other subjects.
152. Teaching is satisfactory in ICT lessons, resulting in learning that is usually satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their clear demonstrations at the start of lessons and individual support develop pupils' basic skills well. Where teaching is good, in some Year 10 classes, they show pupils what they need to learn during the lesson and provide challenging tasks to encourage them to think. They provide individual support based on their observation of the extent to which individuals are coping with the tasks. Pupils respond well to these circumstances, working confidently and with concentration in an orderly atmosphere. In the majority of lessons, in which teaching is satisfactory, work is planned to meet national objectives, either in the Key Stage 3 pilot study materials or in the GCSE programme. However, teachers do not match work to the needs of individuals, especially those with learning difficulties or the most able pupils. Such pupils, therefore, learn less well than the majority. Pupils in such classes cope well with the initial tasks in which basic skills are taught but do not learn to develop their thinking into systematic planning of their own tasks, based on analysis of the specific needs of the problem.
153. Throughout the main school, teachers assess pupils' work at the end of assignments but do not do so at regular intervals, so that pupils have insufficient knowledge of how well they are doing and how they can improve. Target-setting is inconsistent. Noticeably at GCSE, teachers expect pupils to attain good levels of planning and evaluation without giving them enough guidance. As a result, standards in coursework are lower than expected and this has had a negative impact on examination results.
154. The leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory. Throughout the main school, the ICT department staff have not established efficient working practices that would help them to teach beyond the introduction of basic processes. They introduce the lessons with a statement of objectives and instructions, but allow pupils to rush into practical work at computers before they have planned their work. One result of working almost entirely at computers is that, although the school is well equipped with an above average proportion of computers to students, ICT classes almost all have at least some pupils sharing computers, thus slowing the rate of progress with coursework. The monitoring of teaching is haphazard.
155. The other major impact of these weaknesses in management is on the use of ICT across other subjects which does not fully meet the demands of the National Curriculum in any subjects except geography and design and technology. There is some use of ICT in most other subjects, with good use in science, but teachers cannot book computer rooms for all groups. Almost all teachers have enough knowledge of ICT to apply it to their teaching, but it is not consistently planned into schemes of work. Use is not tracked or co-ordinated except where a department such as design and technology is teaching a part of the ICT course.

156. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in that there has been good improvement in the level of resources and in their reliability following the appointment of a skilled IT technician. The issue of use of ICT across the curriculum has still to be addressed, as has the degree to which pupils are taught to work independently.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The excellent facilities
- The determination of teachers to minimise the disruption caused by current staffing difficulties
- The good time allocation

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE
- Numbers taking two foreign languages to GCSE
- Numbers studying languages in the sixth form
- Development of the use of both assessment and ICT

157. Results in modern foreign language assessments at the end of Year 9 have shown steady improvement since the last inspection. In 2002, results were close to national averages but, over the years, they have been below those of other subjects in the school and well below national standards for the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 6. In the years immediately after the last inspection, standards attained at GCSE in French and German rose sharply, reaching a peak in 2000. Since then there has been a worrying decline in the numbers gaining a GCSE grade A*-C, these now being below national averages. Few candidates gain the highest grades A* and A. Although GCSE standards are still higher than those at the last inspection, the trend is a matter for concern, particularly as the current Year 11 seems unlikely to reverse it. French and German are, at the moment, among the less successful subjects in the school.

158. Standards seen in the classroom largely reflect results in national curriculum assessments. Pupils enter the school keen and willing to start a foreign language. This enthusiasm was evident in the Year 7 lessons observed, where pupils were anxious to volunteer answers in the foreign language and to produce work in their exercise books. Standards of presentation varied and, in some instances, work was copied in a very inaccurate way. By the end of Year 9, the gap between ablest and least able pupils has widened substantially. Some can produce extended work using three tenses of the verb, while others are struggling with basic concepts. The introduction of a second foreign language in Year 9 is an added burden for less able pupils, whilst higher-attaining pupils rarely find it worthwhile to pursue both languages to GCSE.

159. Standards in Year 11 are not good, with pupils writing only small amounts of German over the period of a lesson and with many errors. These errors are largely caused by pupils' insistence on trying to translate English into German – a difficult exercise even for the most gifted of linguists. Very few pupils follow language courses in the sixth form.

160. Throughout the school pupils with SEN are adequately dealt with, although little support was seen in classrooms. Similarly, pupils who have English as an additional language, most of whom are fluent in English, are well integrated.

161. The department was, at the time of the inspection, under severe long-term stress through staff absence, two of the four teachers being replaced by supply teachers, albeit competent ones. The remaining full-time teachers make valiant and determined efforts to plug the gaps. Nevertheless, the disruption and lack of continuity are harming pupils' progress. One Year 8 boy reported having had four teachers over four terms. Lessons are as well prepared as they can be in the circumstances and only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Staff have an adequate command of the languages they teach and make efforts to use the target language in the classroom. The pilot scheme for modern foreign languages has contributed useful materials and methods to promote good learning. The significant staffing difficulties have prevented any coherent use of assessment to either inform teaching or pupils of what they need to do to improve. Pupils' attitudes to the subject vary, some older pupils being clearly disaffected and unwilling to do more than the bare minimum. An over-reliance on group and pair-work makes it easier for pupils to drift off task. No pupils are disapplied from languages and statutory requirements are met. The generous allocation of curriculum time for languages has a negative impact on the breadth and balance of the school curriculum provision, and the extra time is not resulting in higher standards. Lack of staffing has hindered the development of the use of ICT. The department involves about half of Year 8 pupils on an annual visit to France or Germany, their work being displayed at a parents' evening on their return.
162. The absence of a head of department has had its effect on standards. New initiatives have been slow to take root. To remedy this leadership vacuum and the problems caused by staff absence in general is the single greatest task for the department if it is to regain the standards and progress achieved only two years ago. The excellent accommodation provides a good springboard for success.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- There is a clear rationale and enthusiasm for music from the leadership of the school

Areas for improvement

- The accountability of the department for provision and standards
- Improve both the accuracy and use of assessment practice
- Use of targets to raise pupils' standards
- Raise the number of pupils choosing to study music
- Formalise the management of the subject in line with the best practice in the school
- Increase the range of extra-curricular music opportunities

163. Standards in music are average but these often relate to abilities pupils bring with them to the department. Recent GCSE results have been above average, although the numbers opting have been small and often confined to girls. More pupils have chosen music in the current Year 10, including boys.
164. National Curriculum teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in recent years has indicated remarkably high standards, though figures for 2002 were not available. A scrutiny of previous work seen and the assessment of that heard during the inspection shows that standards are in line with national expectations and therefore do not match the grades awarded by the department. The use of assessment information is at best haphazard, although a mark book is kept; it provides little insight into the basis of the high standards claimed in Year 9. Overall, the achievement of the majority is satisfactory, but

as a search of the department's resources revealed no differentiated work available for the most and least able pupils, these areas of pupil progress must be considered unsatisfactory. Achievement would improve if pupils were made aware of their current levels of attainment and how to improve, for example by having these displayed in the room or in exercise books.

165. Performance is the best aspect of pupils' work, both in individual's basic instrumental skills on guitar, keyboard and drums and in group recordings of composed blues. Year 8 pupils prepared improvisations using percussion; these were mostly serious, structured attempts. Very little writing is done to consolidate learning from practical experience and to support literacy. Pupils in each of the first three years respond well to the stimulus of good supply teachers, especially during Latin-American composition, and pupils directed well a 'band' rehearsal consisting of a quartet of flutes and a violin. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 responded well during Latin-American workshops made available by artists in residence. They learn to play panpipes in ensemble and are quick to learn new songs.
166. Year 11 pupils lack confidence in composition, though all can use a computer program to help with this, and some have acquired it for use at home. Some individual project work is of a good standard and is well presented. Most pupils score poorly in attempts at past listening papers. They are insufficiently aware of how to improve their projected grades. However, Year 10 pupils demonstrated good perception in aural analysis. They are aware of, and can express in words, feelings and atmospheres created by the music they hear. Boys, in particular, readily show their enthusiasm and reveal their knowledge.
167. About 70 pupils receive instrumental tuition, subsidised by the school; both pupils and the good supply teachers available were very enthusiastic in the sessions observed. The peripatetic support is satisfactory overall but no evidence was found of any monitoring by the head of department of this provision.
168. The school has a good record in recent years of organisation of events such as shows and talent contests, and music has made contributions to school celebratory events and visits. A production of *Aladdin* is currently being managed and supported by staff from other departments. Some parents expressed doubts about the quality of provision for music: they perceived a lack of enthusiasm and questioned the support available for children with musical talent and ambition. GCSE pupils commented consistently about their lack of confidence in their teacher's knowledge of the examination requirements.
169. Teaching in music is satisfactory. The one music teacher was absent, sick, during the inspection. The judgement is made on the basis of observation of the obvious quality of the specialist supply teachers, which the school did well to provide, and an analysis of the written and recorded work done previously.
170. Strengths of the teaching observed at first hand include enthusiasm for music and for pupils' learning. All the teaching seen was by specialist supply staff, whose efforts were particularly creditable in the circumstances, and from the presenters of workshops. Good classroom management ensured acceptable behaviour and good learning conditions. Teaching was skilful in eliciting responses, boosting pupils' achievement and developing thinking skills by making links with other subjects. These teachers chose their own materials, which stimulated most pupils and widened their horizons. A supply teacher offered help after school to support Year 11 pupils in composition. Workshops, with very good teaching, were particularly valuable in providing new experiences and pupils participated fully. Pupils were made aware of the sensitive nature and spiritual quality of music in all cultures.

171. Accommodation is good. Resources appear to be deficient in number for large classes in Years 7 and 8. Computers need a sequencing program for composition, and music keyboards for direct input; headphones are not readily accessible and insufficient in number. In the departmental documentation available no evidence of a subject development plan was found.
172. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although GCSE results have improved and numbers are slowly increasing, examination groups are small. Evidence from the pupils' work seen and heard confirms the certain potential and latent enthusiasm of pupils to improve standards if more is expected of them and assessment information provides regular targets for them to achieve. Staffing problems have led to instability, which has affected the confidence of some pupils. Departmental documentation is unsatisfactory. Extra-curricular activity is at a low ebb.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average examination results in GCSE PE
- Teaching; especially the level of subject knowledge and expertise and teachers' planning
- Pupils' and students' attitudes to physical education are exceptionally high
- Assessment strategies; especially the quality of immediate feedback to pupils and students and the detailed analysis of examination data
- Leadership and management of the department
- Extra and extended curricular opportunities and links with outside agencies

Areas for improvement

- Increase the time available for core PE in Years 10 and 11
- Continue to develop teachers' use of assessment to aid progression
- Continue to develop pupils' and teachers' understanding of assessment levels and examination grades

173. Judgements are based on the observation of lessons in games activities in both key stages and GCSE and AS/A-level Theory. Attainment at both key stages is in line with national expectations. On entry, pupils have had a range of experiences and come with an enthusiasm that is exploited by talented teachers.
174. National Curriculum teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 shows that the number of pupils reaching national expectations is above average. At Key Stage 3, pupils are able to watch demonstrations accurately and use the information gained to improve their own performances. Their knowledge and understanding of fitness and health are secure although still basic at this stage; many know the reasons for warming up and cooling down and are able to name some of the muscles they use for particular warm-ups. They are able to design and lead simple warm-ups for others in their groups.
175. In Year 7 girls' football and hockey, many make good gains in their learning and are acquiring the basic skills of these games quickly. They perform the skills well in isolation and are beginning to use them effectively in game situations. In Year 8, boys and girls are able apply skills learnt previously to new situations. The boys work hard to improve their lay-up shots and jump stops during the lesson and have some success in using these skills within the game situation. Many girls have transferred skills they have learnt in netball to basketball successfully, particularly in shooting, passing, spacing and dodging

and marking. All ability groups make good progress because good teaching provides insightful coaching.

176. Physical education and games GCSE results are above the national average. Girls are achieving better than boys overall; pupils are more successful in the practical elements of the course than in the theory elements. GCSE physical education is one of the most successful subjects in the school, and for some pupils it was their best GCSE result in 2002.
177. Standards at Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with expectation for those pupils not involved in examination work. In football and netball, pupils design their own fitness circuit to improve their performance over time and sharpen the skills of the game. They know how important stamina is and understand the principles of training for a game to improve performance. GCSE pupils are achieving standards in line with or above national expectations for Key Stage 4 pupils. They demonstrate good skills in basketball and can assist with officiating confidently. In badminton they coach one another well, giving good, accurate feedback to help improve skills. They practise well to improve their performances and many succeed in making improvement during lesson time. The contribution to pupils' health education is very good. They know and understand the function of the heart and vascular systems. They know how oxygen is transported to the muscles and why it is needed there. They build new information onto their prior learning and are able to draw on knowledge from other curriculum areas, for example biology.
178. At GCSE higher and average ability students use correct terminology throughout and pay attention to organisation and presentation. Work files indicate that the lower ability students cannot organise their work so well and some fail to revise and recall information when tested. In a Year 11 theory lesson, all pupils showed they had a good understanding of how the media influences sport. A small number of boys, however, do not have the maturity or skills to discuss this objectively, they are not prepared to accept others' views and seek to dominate the session with their own strong opinions. The majority of pupils do achieve a better level of discussion, and are able to share a large number of newspaper and television stories that illustrate the positive and negative effects of the media on the attitudes that people have about sport. The unsatisfactory research facilities available in the school library are limiting the further improvement in standards at GCSE.
179. The high proportion of good or very good teaching has raised standards. Planning at all levels is very good and pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subject. A feature of the best teaching is the high level of immediate feedback given and the encouragement of pupils to evaluate their own performance during lessons. Health and safety matters are well taught and strictly adhered to. Teachers are enthusiastic and motivating, and relationships are very good. Teachers are able to set high expectations which pupils respond to and respect. The majority of pupils and students are well behaved; they come to lessons well prepared and participation rates are high. They answer questions confidently and cope well when left to work independently. Pupils are able to work well together and are cooperative and sensitive to one another's efforts.
180. The leadership and management of physical education are very good. The head of department is well organised and ensures progression and continuity across all key stages through very good planning of schemes of work and the assessment of pupils in collaboration with all members of the department. The attention to tracking pupils' and students' progress is also very good and the analysis of data is a strong feature. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is good and fulfils statutory requirements. The Key Stage 4 curriculum gives opportunities for pupils to build on their previous work, but the lack of time within the

school's curriculum provision limits the range of sports options off site. The opportunities for all pupils and students to take part in activities beyond the curriculum are very good, and links with outside clubs and other agencies are well established. This has helped the school to achieve Sport England's Sportsmark Award for the second time.

181. Since the last inspection the progress that the department has made against their areas for development has been very good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of provision in religious education is the focus of a diocesan led Section 23 inspection report produced by the diocese and published in conjunction with this report.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. However, the national comparative data for 2002 was not available at the time of publication of this report.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	68	n/a	50	n/a	2.2	n/a
Physics	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	4	n/a
ICT	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	1.5	n/a
English language	18	83	n/a	6	n/a	1.9	n/a
French	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	5	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

182. The inspection of mathematics covered the AS-level and the A-level in mathematics, including statistics and mechanics. Teachers at the partnership school teach the pure mathematics module at A-level and AS. In the science faculty, the focus was on physics, but chemistry and biology were also sampled. In chemistry and biology results were average in 2002 and students did as expected given their GCSE results. Within teaching, explanations were particularly clear and enabled students to gain a clear understanding of, for example, the function of cell membranes and the structure of fatty acids. The quality of teaching in chemistry and biology is good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge
- Progress and achievement by the majority of students

Areas for improvement

- The advice given to students prior to starting mathematics with regard to the demands of advanced level mathematics
- Access to information and communications technology for pupils and teachers

183. Overall, the progress and achievement by the majority of students in the sixth form is satisfactory. A and AS results have been variable over recent years. Numbers entered

have also varied considerably. In 2001, only one of the three students achieved a pass grade at A-level. The sole AS candidate also failed to gain a pass grade. In 2002 outcomes improved. The sole A-level candidate achieved a pass. Four of the six AS-level candidates were successful. They have moved on to the A-level course, where they are making satisfactory progress.

184. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books is in line with course requirements. Some students find the work challenging, reflecting their levels of achievement at GCSE prior to entry to the sixth form. These students who entered the course without obtaining high grade passes at GCSE struggle with the demands of the first year of the course and this explains the numbers of students who fail to complete courses successfully.
185. Teaching is sound overall. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and are deployed effectively to their strengths. All lessons have clear lesson objectives and are conducted at an appropriately brisk and challenging pace. Good relationships are developed between the teachers and students. Work, including homework, is regularly marked. Where appropriate, an indication is made of how the work might be improved. Some lessons contain an appropriate range of learning approaches with group and individual work. Teachers are not very successful in encouraging discussion and debate.
186. Most students find mathematics hard work. They appreciate the care shown by their teachers and the way they try to help them. Some students in Year 12 are not really committed to the subject and this is reflected in their punctuality and attendance. It is likely that the 2003 results will therefore be similar to those of previous years. As with the main school, management of mathematics in the sixth form is good. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place and the teachers work closely together. Limited use is made of information and communications technology.
187. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are broadly as they were then, reflecting the fact that a minority of students embark on courses that they find taxing. As before, others reach a good standard.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured and organised and this helps students to gain knowledge and understanding
- Students work well in groups and support each other's learning
- Students show very good levels of concentration in lessons
- The subject is well led and has an adequate range of resources, which are used creatively to enable students to learn well

Areas for improvement

- To continue to develop expertise and resources to use ICT to enrich the teaching and learning
- Continue to develop the monitoring of students test results and progress and to use this information to help students improve their levels of knowledge and understanding

187. The small numbers of students taking the subject make it difficult to analysis trends in results and make comparisons with national statistics. The results achieved by students are in line with the predictions made from their GCSE results. The average points score of these students is lower than that in other subjects within the school.
188. The standards of work of current students are satisfactory. In Year 13, students are making progress towards the predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they are doing well because of the effective teaching they receive which demands much of them. The way in which lessons are organised clearly focuses students on their learning. In a lesson looking at action and reaction forces, students were able to draw on previous knowledge of springs, friction and mass to conclude that the law of conservation of momentum has been verified. Students use their numeracy skills confidently and this supports the standards they obtain.
189. Students in Year 12 are also making progress. They show a satisfactory understanding of Hooke's Law, electrical resistance and the basic model of conduction in metals. They can also use this model to help explain current flow. The work in students' files shows that comparatively little use is made of ICT. When opportunities are available, students show themselves to be competent users.
190. Teaching is good overall, and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the best teaching are sensitive planning that makes very good use of the available resources, a brisk pace within lessons and the creation of a very good working atmosphere. Teachers show very good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and also use it well in setting interesting tasks. In a Year 13 lesson on simple harmonic motion the teacher ensured that all became confident users of the equipment by using demonstration and individual tuition. Students worked on a series of exercises as individuals using and practising these skills. In this way, they gained confidence in their work and results and were able to concentrate fully on their explanations of what happened in the investigation.
191. Much of the written work demanded of the students takes the form of structured questions that follow up the lessons. Work is marked promptly and accuracy is always checked. Students receive verbal feedback on their performance and this is reinforced by comments reminding them how they can improve their work and reach higher levels.
192. Students learn well. They listen very carefully, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching they receive. Behaviour in lessons is always very good. Students learn well from each other in discussions and when responding to questions. Year 12 students responded well to the challenge of working out the resistance in different parts of a circuit. The teacher makes skilful use of time to ensure that students, who learn well as a result, maintain very high levels of concentration.
193. Students are becoming more confident with research tasks. They are able to extract information from a variety of sources and are beginning to construct their own notes. Students use a variety of ways to present their work, but they do not use ICT consistently to enhance their work.
194. The good teaching and learning result from the work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment in the department to building on what has already been achieved by the students. To this end, a very good range of helpful support material has been developed. The performance of students in tests is monitored and the use of this information is starting to influence the planning of future lessons. The monitoring of the

quality of teaching and learning is developing well and has started to identify the good practice within the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The introduction of a course that meets the learning needs of the students
- Inter-school cooperation that provides good opportunities for study
- Students' enthusiasm for the course

Areas for improvement

- Standards in coursework, particularly in analysis and evaluation of their assignments
- The level of guidance given to students about the quality of their work and how they can meet the requirements of the course
- Opportunities for students studying other post-16 courses to learn the key ICT skills that they need to apply in their work

195. Only one student from the school is following the A2 course, but the AVCE course offered in Year 12 is considerably more popular. Results at AS-level, entered by only a few students, were below average in 2002, but students attained higher grades in the components of the shared course studied at Robert Sutton. The A2 student was absent from school during the inspection, and his work was not available. The work of Year 12 AVCE students seen during the inspection is satisfactory for the stage reached in the course, but they are now struggling with higher-level thinking required. Achievement at this stage is good, as several students did not study ICT in the lower school and the results of some who did so were well below average.
196. In work seen during the inspection, students work at expected levels. They can develop a spreadsheet model to calculate mortgage repayments, researching appropriate formulae on the Internet and using advanced spreadsheet features such as macros and validation checks. The level of critical thinking which they demonstrate is below that required, and their work is descriptive rather than evaluative. Students are generally not aware of the shortcomings in their written work. Girls work more systematically than boys. All students enjoy the course. They generally work independently and with confidence. They feel that they are well supported by the teachers and that they are making progress.
197. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of applications, ensuring that basic skills are well taught and reinforced, giving students a secure basis for independent work. Teachers work well with students on an individual basis and cater for a wide range of previous background. Teachers do not give students a clear sense of their strengths and weaknesses through constant assessment. In particular, they expect them, without being shown how, to analyse and evaluate their work at higher levels of thinking and expression.
198. The introduction of the AVCE course that followed the school's analysis of students' needs has increased the numbers of students opting to study ICT. However, those students who do not follow an examination course are given no planned teaching in the ICT key skills that they need for their other subjects. From Year 10, some students have no consistent teaching and only patchy experience of ICT.
199. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The school is better equipped to support post-16 study. In cooperation with a neighbouring school, the department has

developed a course that has grown in popularity, as it meets the needs of the students. There has not yet been a corresponding improvement in standards.

HUMANITIES

200. Geography was not inspected in depth in the sixth form. However, it was sampled. In the work scrutinised and lesson seen it was noted that teaching and learning were good. The quality of work seen in files indicates that students will continue to achieve success in line with national expectations. The subject benefits from arrangements for a shared sixth-form provision and the number of students is sufficient to provide viable groups.
201. Similarly history was not inspected in depth. In the one lesson seen, sixth-form students identified important issues around a range of Prime Ministers, but did so with a firm steer from the teacher. They depended on the teacher rather than attempt themselves to analyse and articulate an argument based on their sound personal research. Only one candidate from the school entered the A-level examination in 2002, but A-level results over time indicate that students gain passes in the middle range, with few high grades or failures

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature and French were chosen for inspection. The numbers taking English have been limited in recent years, as have those taking French.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject and relationships are good
- Examination results have been in line with national averages or better for several years
- Assessment and target setting arrangements are very good

Areas for improvement

- Current students could make faster progress towards achieving high A-level standards

202. Results of A-level examinations in English literature, for several years now, have been at least in line with national averages and sometimes have been higher. The 2001 results cannot be compared with national figures because of the small number of candidates from the school that year, although all did well – two of the three students entered gaining Grades A or B. In 2002, no candidate finished with less than a Grade D, and 11 of the 12 entered gained at least a Grade C. The results were in line with predictions based upon the prior attainment of these students.
203. A larger number of students took the AS examination in 2002, although grades are not available because the school challenged the results on one particular paper. The challenge was successful, and marks have been raised, quite considerably in some cases. Marks on individual papers, however, show that students were attaining grades across the whole range from A to U at this juncture.
204. Those who have continued with A2 in Year 13 are making steady progress, although they show less imagination and flair for the subject than the current Year 12 students. Although the Year 12 students have only been taking the course for three months, they have already

moved beyond the level of work that they were accustomed to in Year 11 and many are making good progress. They are able to research ideas and present their work to the rest of the class with some confidence. They are beginning to write in a style appropriate to A-level work, although they are inclined still to focus on content rather than on language. This is less true of the work being done on poetry: students showed that they could identify words associated with sound or colour, and comment on their effects. Boys achieve as well as girls.

205. Students have positive attitudes to their work. They relate well to each other and to their teachers, and participate readily in group or paired work, being very supportive of one of their group who has a hearing impairment. They take a pride in their written work and make careful notes: material in their files includes press cuttings they have gathered as background material to their studies. Posters used in presentations show that they research topics well, taking pictures and text from web sites and using them imaginatively for display purposes.
206. Good teaching is enabling the students to make progress. Teachers know their subject well and set appropriate tasks, both in lessons and written work. They mark the written work regularly and thoroughly. Good planning and a range of activities make lessons a worthwhile learning experience, although a brisker pace would make them even more effective. Students are helped to become independent learners through the kind of tasks they are set. In a Year 12 class, for example, paired work discussing a quotation from *The Handmaid's Tale* led to a whole-class discussion and was followed up by further group work that allowed different approaches to be explored. The teacher then related what they had discovered to a written task, set as homework. In another lesson, students were able to explore the concept of pathetic fallacy by looking at aspects of Tennyson's poem *Mariana* in groups. Well-structured tasks enabled them to learn more about how language operates in a poem. They were thus prepared for a homework task requiring them to apply the same principles to another poem. The teacher skilfully involved all the students in the work, including the boy with a hearing impairment.
207. The subject benefits from good leadership and management. None of the current English staff have been at the school for more than 18 months, so it is to the credit of the head of department that they have been welded into a strong team, able to teach the A-level syllabuses, in conjunction with staff at a neighbouring school. The provision of specialist sixth-form accommodation will undoubtedly make a difference to future teaching. Resources for learning are sound, although access to computers is recognised as being too limited. Detailed, medium-term planning is still at an early stage, but there is clear guidance on assessment and target setting. The decision to use 'tracker sheets' to monitor the progress of sixth-formers, as well as those lower down the school, has been a wise one, and will give teachers and students alike a clearer picture of what is being achieved over time. Teaching staff are monitored as part of the performance management process, but within the department there is a more informal approach based on the fact that teachers share classes and resources, standardise coursework together, and generally work very closely in delivering the curriculum.
208. The staffing changes in 2001 were undoubtedly a distraction. The current Year 13 may still be affected by the lack of initial guidance they received, but the department is now capable of getting on with the task of raising standards and maintaining the good provision that was very evident at the time of the previous inspection.

French

Sixth-form provision for French is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Staff try hard to motivate often diffident students

Areas for development.

- The very small numbers
- Staffing difficulties at the Robert Sutton School
- Students' inadequate prior attainment and preparation for advanced level study

209. The one student of French last year gained a Grade A pass at AS-level, but did not elect to continue to A-level. Numbers of candidates over recent years have been very small and no comparisons can be made with national statistics. Currently there are no candidates in Year 13 in either French or German and only two each in French and German in Year 12, none of them originally pupils of Robert Sutton School.
210. The sharp transition from the relatively modest grammatical demands of GCSE to the higher standards required in the sixth form is a severe hurdle. Many basic concepts have to be taught from scratch and oral work presents a considerable challenge to the very small groups involved. Teachers, sometimes supply teachers, work hard to motivate classes, but students' diffidence makes their task harder. In one Year 12 French lesson students arrived late, without valid excuse and without their homework. In a year 12 German lesson, students persisted in trying to write aspects of their work in English first and then translate it into German, a bad habit from GCSE that still remains beyond their grammatical capabilities.
211. The staffing difficulties faced by the department this year are having a significant impact on provision at advanced level. The issues faced in the main school and detailed in that report continue post-16.