

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Framlingham

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124813

Headteacher: Dr David Floyd

Reporting inspector: D. Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 30 September – 4 October 2002

Inspection number: 249739

Short/Sixth Form Enhanced inspection carried out under section 10 of the School
Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Barbara Howard (Mrs)
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Mills is an average size comprehensive school with a larger than average sixth form. There are 1074 students on roll, with 272 students in the sixth form. The school serves a wide rural area; it is situated in the Suffolk town of Framlingham. It is a popular school and draws about 30 to 40 per cent of each year group from outside its catchment area. The school gained Technology College status in 1996 and has become a pilot for the 'e-Learning Foundation' since March 2002. The socio-economic circumstances of students are varied, but are generally above average; the number of students eligible for free school meals is below average. A negligible number of students come from a minority ethnic background; very few students have English as an additional language. Around three per cent of students are on the school's register for special educational needs, and approximately two per cent of students have a Statement of Special Educational Need; both figures are well below the national average. The overall standard of attainment of students when they enter the school is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thomas Mills High School continues to be highly successful; it is a school with many outstanding features. Standards of attainment are well above the national average for all year groups. Students achieve very well as the result of very good teaching. The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher is excellent. Students' personal development is significantly enhanced by an ethos that is supportive, yet also based upon high expectations. The staff show a strong commitment to the shared objectives of continuing improvement; the extra-curricular provision is excellent. Relationships are very good; this is reflected in high standards of behaviour and the developing maturity of students. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in examinations and tests are well above national averages.
- Students are taught very well.
- The leadership and management provided by key staff are very strong.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent; their behaviour is very good.
- The range of curricular opportunities is very good; particularly impressive is the number of extra curricular activities.
- The quality of care, support and guidance for students is very good.

What could be improved

- The accommodation for art and science and canteen facilities. The provision for computer technology in music and art.
- The professional development of heads of department to enable the monitoring of teaching by subject specialists.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection in 1997. Standards of attainment in tests and examinations have continued to improve and are consistently well above average. In comparison with similar schools, GCSE results are amongst the top five per cent nationally. The quality of teaching has improved and is a major factor in promoting high levels of achievement. The quality assurance procedures introduced since the previous inspection produce high-quality information about the progress of students. Assessment data is very comprehensive and provides useful information for target setting. The key issues identified in the previous report have been effectively addressed. The popularity of the school has sustained its growth but this is beginning to put a strain on the current levels of accommodation. The school has made effective and well-planned responses to national initiatives on literacy, numeracy, citizenship and the curricular provision for different groups of students.

The commitment and hard work of senior management, governors and the support of parents have led to significant improvements in the quality of accommodation and buildings.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A*	A*
A levels/AS levels	*	*	B	

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

* In 2001, the method of reporting post-16 qualifications changed significantly. These changes mean that previous sixth form results are not comparable with those of 2001.

In the 2001 national curriculum tests for 14-year-olds, the combined results were well above the national average. In English, mathematics and science attainment was well above average. Overall attainment in these subjects is also well above that of similar schools. The overall trend in test performances is above the national picture. In general, students achieve very well and make significant progress in their studies. The rising trend in GCSE results is above the national average. The examination results in 2001 place the school in the top five percent nationally and also in comparison with similar schools. These standards are highly commendable. Examination performance in most subjects was significantly above national figures, with very good standards being achieved at the highest grades in design and technology, science, history, and religious education. Attainment in the sixth form was above average in 2001. Overall achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is very good. Examination results for 2002 indicate that the school has sustained its high-level performance. The targets set for 2001 and 2002 were successfully met, being marginally exceeded. The targets have been realistic and appropriately challenging. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve very well; throughout the school there is no difference in the rate of progress made by boys or girls, pupils from different backgrounds or those who have special educational needs. Standards of work in the sixth form are now well above average.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students show a commitment to, and real enthusiasm for, their studies; their very positive attitudes help them to learn very successfully.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The movement around a complex and large site is well-ordered and disciplined. Students have high standards of behaviour; they work well together and show respect for the opinions and views of others. In most lessons teachers did not have to make reference to behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students develop confidence and maturity as they progress through the school. Students respond well to the opportunities offered by their school council. The positive relationships promoted within the school are a major strength.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average; unauthorised absence is particularly low

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good. There were examples of excellent teaching in a range of subjects: for example, in art, design and technology, music, English, politics and mathematics. The high quality of teaching meets the needs of students very well. Standards of teaching in English, mathematics and science are generally very good. The national literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies have been effectively introduced into the school. Across the school, the main teaching strengths are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, effective planning, high expectations and the good support and encouragement for students. In response to this focused teaching, students learn well; they work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding in subject activities. Students concentrate well and show good levels of maturity. The positive relationships in most lessons help to sustain students' interests and motivation.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad and balanced; it caters very well for the individual needs and interests of students. The range of extra-curricular activities is very effective and extensive; it positively promotes students' personal development. Participation rates in these activities are high.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students are supported well; they achieve well in tests and examinations. The targets for students are reviewed systematically; these procedures help to monitor progress well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Many opportunities for personal development are effectively threaded through the curriculum and the day-to-day life of the school. There is mutual respect between staff and students. The moral and social development of students is particularly strong. The school makes an extensive provision for visits abroad and trips; these activities develop students' cultural awareness and understanding.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Staff know students very well and are vigilant in carrying out the school's arrangements for student welfare. Pastoral teams provide very effective support and guidance for students.

The school collects substantial amounts of data about the performance of individual students across all departments. This information is used well to monitor progress and the achievement of students. Training in child protection procedures is thorough and ongoing. The school has not conducted a recent review of its risk assessment procedures.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher leads with vision and has clear priorities for the school's development. He has successfully promoted change within the school. An efficient and hard-working senior management team ably supports him. Many heads of department and pastoral leaders show good-quality leadership and management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive and show a strong commitment to the well-being of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have worked hard on such issues as improving the overall quality of accommodation. Communication between the governors and the school is open and productive.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school has established an exceptionally high standard of quality assurance procedures. The review and monitoring methods effectively identify both strengths and areas for development. Review data is used very efficiently to identify targets for departments.
The strategic use of sources	Very good. Financial planning and control are very efficient. The school's resources are used well. The school's accommodation capacity is increasingly under strain because of the increasing number of students. The teaching and non-teaching staff are effectively deployed.

The school's development plan clearly identifies priorities for improvement. The self-review cycle is a particularly strong feature. There is a statutory breach that the governors need to address: this is for a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy in the school environment. • Parents support the aims and objectives. • The strong emphasis on work and achievement. • The school cares for their children and treats them as individuals. • It gives a rich educational experience. • There is a wide selection of extra-curricular activities and trips • Children behave well. • Wide use of technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A solution to the overcrowding in some classrooms. • The canteen facilities. • Less pressure and more support for the middle achievers.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views about the school's standards and ethos. The variety of extra-curricular activities and visits in which the students take part is exceptional, and the quality of music provision is outstanding. The school recognises the difficulties with numbers in some classrooms and is addressing the problem. Likewise, everything that is possible is being done to improve the canteen facilities. Inspectors understand the concerns that a few parents expressed about the constant encouragement to achieve academic success, but do not consider that it is excessive or does harm to the students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form comprises 272 students. It is of above average size and larger than at the time of the last inspection in 1997. There are similar numbers of boys and girls on roll in Years 12 and 13. Fewer students than is typical come from minority ethnic backgrounds, but the proportion is similar to that in the main school. The number of students eligible for free meals is well below average. The number of students who continue into the sixth form is well above average and the school also recruits a considerable number of students from other schools. Most follow AS and A-level courses. A small minority takes advanced vocational (AVCE) or intermediate vocational (GNVQ) courses. The school has a liberal entry policy that normally allows students to study AS and A-level courses if they have four GCSE grades A*-C.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form meets students' needs very well. It enables them to achieve well and to reach standards that are well above average. Students have very positive attitudes and want to make the most of their opportunities in school. Teaching is good overall and much is very good, ensuring that students learn well. Leadership and management are very good and provide students with a very good, cost-effective quality of education.

Strengths

- Students achieve well above average standards.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Students have very positive attitudes and make the most of their opportunities.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that teaching and learning are of good quality.

What could be improved

- Standards in biology.
- Opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards at A level have improved and are now well above average. Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to achieve well.
Biology	Unsatisfactory. Standards are well below average and students do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work for students.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Standards are improving and are now above average. Teaching is satisfactory and enables most students to achieve as well as expected. Some lower attaining students underachieve in relation to prior attainment.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Good. Good teaching enables students to make good progress and attain above average standards.
Design and technology	Very good. Standards are above average. Very good teaching and students' enthusiasm for the subject enable them to achieve very well.
Business Education	Very good. Standards are consistently above the national average, especially in the 12-unit course. Teachers' good, up-to-date subject knowledge helps students to achieve very well.
Art	Very good. Standards are well above average. Teachers' extensive knowledge and very effective lesson planning enable students to make very good progress.
Geography	Very good. Teaching is very good and provides students with excellent support through the rigorous marking of their work. Students are enthusiastic learners and achieve well above average standards.
History	Very good. Standards are above average. Very good teaching, based on very secure subject knowledge, helps students to develop their understanding at a good pace.
Psychology	Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. Students enjoy the subject and work hard.
Religious Studies	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' performance is closely assessed and monitored by high-quality leadership. Students achieve well above average standards.
English	Good. Standards are above average and many students achieve high standards in English literature. Teaching is good and very helpful marking of work enables students to make good progress.
French	Good. Standards are in line with the national average. Teachers' constant use of French and high expectations enable students to learn effectively.
German	Good. Standards are broadly average. Teaching is good and enables students to make good progress.

Work was sampled in other subjects. Teaching was good overall in these subjects: for example, in physical education and information and communication technology, detailed planning and good use of resources enable students to achieve well; the standard of work is above average. In a Year 13 music lesson the quality of teaching and learning was very good. The teacher's excellent musical expertise and knowledge were used very effectively to promote students' understanding of Purcell's musical style.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students benefit from good personal support and guidance. They are all treated as individuals and tutors know them well. The school provides clear information to help students to choose courses. Students' progress is very closely monitored and they are aware of the standards they are achieving towards their target grades. Careers advice and guidance is good, although provision from external sources does not always meet students' needs fully.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and cost-effectively managed. The quality of teaching and the standards achieved in each subject are monitored and evaluated very closely. This leads to prompt, effective action to improve standards when necessary. The school ensures that all students have equal access to courses and enables students with a wide range of attainment to achieve well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are accessible to help them overcome difficulties with their work. Courses are available that suit their talents and aspirations. Teaching is effective and challenges them to do well. They are given clear, helpful information about the choice of sixth form courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They would like the school to listen and respond to their views more. Careers advice.

Inspectors fully agree with students' positive views. They also agree that students do not have sufficient opportunity to express their views formally. For example, students do not participate in the school council. Inspectors agree that the advice available from the external careers service is too limited and the school is working hard to improve this. However, the availability and quality of careers advice in the school are very good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of attainment in tests and examinations are well above national average

1. Academic standards are well above average throughout the school and they have been maintained at this level since the last inspection. Students achieve well by the end of Years 9, 11 and 13, particularly in GCSE examinations.
2. The ethos of the school is one in which standards are expected to be well above average. This is partly because students' levels of achievement on arrival at the school are above average and also because teachers and managers challenge students to work hard and achieve well.
3. Trends in the results of national curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations have been above the national picture. This represents a good level of performance because it is harder for schools that already achieve high standards to raise standards at a faster rate than schools that start from a lower baseline.
4. Students achieve particularly well at GCSE. Over the past three years, students made significantly more progress during Years 10 and 11 than pupils across the country. Achievement is good for students of all ability levels. The standards of performance achieved place the school in the top five per cent nationally. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are well above average.
5. Performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is above average. Students read widely with a good understanding of texts. They have good analytical skills and can interpret material effectively in a wide range of subjects. Students have good writing skills; their imaginative writing is particularly strong. They write fluently, with very good expression. The quality of presentation of work is good. Speaking and listening skills are well developed. The numerous group activities which take place in lessons help to develop this ability. The overall standard of literacy in the school is very good. Standards of numeracy are also very good. Students are confident and competent in applying number skills to problems that occur in other subjects. Students' analytical skills are strong in investigative scientific work.
6. Students have good ICT skills. Most students can competently use a range of software programs. In a number of subjects there is evidence of students using word-processing skills, data handling and spreadsheets to analyse data. Most have access to ICT facilities at home and this supports their learning in these skills.

Students are taught very well

7. Students are taught very well throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with examples of excellent teaching. For example, teaching is very effective and stimulating in art, design and technology, music, English and mathematics. No example of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the main school. The minimal amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen in the sixth form was mostly centred around insufficient opportunities for independent work and teaching being too teacher-directed.
8. A particular strength is the consistency of the quality teaching across subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the students and the school. They form a self-evaluative group, supporting one another well. The school has a rigorous

programme for professional development and training. Each member of the leadership team supports other teams of teachers. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.

9. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, expertise and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their students. In a Year 9 physical education lesson on tactics and skills in rugby and hockey, the teacher's expertise enabled concise explanations of specialist skills and promoted confidence very well. Teachers have high expectations and work is usually well matched to the ability of students. In the best lessons, teachers set suitably challenging tasks. Another strength of the teaching is the teachers' use of discussion and activities, enabling students to express their own views and ideas. This was shown to good effect in a Year 9 religious studies lesson on 'confirmation', where the discussion focused on the impact of beliefs and values on the practicalities of everyday living.
10. The very good teaching evident in some lessons enables and consolidates students' learning. Explanations are clear and questioning is effective in moving students' learning forward and helping them to recall previous learning. For example, in a Year 11 geography lesson, the teacher probed students' understanding of population transitions, considering the impact in different countries. Occasionally, in some subjects, the lessons are too teacher-led, which impedes the independent learning of students.
11. The quality of teaching seen in a Year 9 lesson dealing with a 'willow boat ' project was excellent. The teacher has exceptional subject knowledge and expertise. A significant strength was the ability to enthuse and motivate pupils. They responded very well to the high expectations and produced ideas and 'boats' of good quality. Students were making tremendous progress in their knowledge and skills in the subject.
12. Building on what students understand and know is a positive feature of most lessons. This aspect is achieved by detailed planning. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson studying Tom Leonard's poem 'Unrelated Incidents', students learnt specialist vocabulary and were able to identify differences between standard English, dialect and accent. Students developed a good understanding of the poet's purpose in writing the poem.
13. The homework set is purposeful, challenging and used well to reinforce learning. Good opportunities are provided for accelerated learning in lessons. A range of visits and visitors to the school motivates students and promotes their learning. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs is good.
14. Students are keen to achieve well. They make clear advances in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.

The leadership and management provided by key staff are very strong

15. The headteacher provides excellent leadership; there is a clear sense of direction for the school. He has instilled the ethos of always striving to improve that permeates the school. The school has placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning and on self-review. The school is managed with thoroughness and a clear purpose to bring about improvement.
16. An effective senior management team very ably supports the headteacher. The team works well together and shows a strong commitment to the objectives of the school. They exercise their delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. The quality assurance procedures that operate within the school are of a particularly high standard. This rigorous review of performance for each subject leads to targets being drawn up for both the whole school and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria so that its success or otherwise can be measured and the level of planning for meeting these targets is particularly detailed.
17. Governors show strong commitment and are knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. They support the school well and have been particularly active in promoting improvements to the school buildings and its environment. The governing body is an effective team and working relationships with the staff are good. Annual meetings with parents are carefully minuted; these show the care governors take to explain the school's work to parents. Helpful information on the required areas is given in the annual report. The prospectus is an attractive and informative document, which reflects the school's values and work very well.
18. The school's resources are put to very good use to improve the quality of education.. Adaptation, refurbishment and new buildings since the previous inspection have been effectively carried out. A particular strength of the management is the way it has been able to generate additional financial support from the community to promote these developments. There has been significant improvement to the buildings and learning environment for mathematics, performing arts and English. The library is a well-resourced and attractive area; the opportunities provided effectively promote learning. Financial and strategic planning are strengths. Governors and senior management are well informed and capable enough to achieve the 'best value' for the school.

Students' attitudes to learning are excellent; their behaviour is very good.

19. Students show an enthusiasm for their school and the wide curriculum offered. They arrive at school promptly, some travelling considerable distances, and move quickly to lessons, apologising if they are detained for any reason. They are keen to talk about their studies and show an appreciation of the variety of extra-curricular activities, sporting events and visits that are available. As an example, the many musicians in the school give up their free time for rehearsals and, in an atmosphere where everyone is trying their hardest and "sitting on the edge of their seat", produce music of which the school is justly proud. This is evident when the young musicians are taken to other European cities to give concerts, something that is planned for both the senior and junior orchestras this year.

20. Behaviour in lessons is very good, with very few exceptions. Generally students listen very carefully to what they are being told, are keen to answer questions and produce their homework without too many reminders. To this end, the school log books, which now cover the whole academic year, are used very effectively to record homework and also keep parents in touch with what is expected.
21. Students moving about the school are sensible and well mannered to adults and to one another. It was noted that some students thanked their teachers as they left classes. The school has a strong pattern of student responsibility built into the house system and the prefecture. In the upper school, elected class representatives to form a council which discusses matters of importance. This was recently used by the Local Education Authority as a sounding board for proposals to vary the school year to six terms. Students' views were carefully recorded. It is perhaps, regrettable that students in the lower school do not have a more formal representation in council meetings. Nor is the sixth form represented in the council. All sixth form procedures are included in discussions by the head of sixth form, either directly with the students' society or with the head boy and girl and their deputies. Some sixth form students feel that they would prefer more direct involvement and for their views to be given greater status.
22. Relationships are very good between the students and with their teachers and the other members of the school staff. The courtesy of referring to students in class as ladies and gentlemen was frequently noted, although most teachers know their classes by name and their students as individuals.
23. The school has a code of behaviour that is endorsed by parents and pupils in the home/school agreement. Parents uphold the principles contained in the behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Students who do well and try hard are rewarded with merits. There was no evidence of rough behaviour, bad language or discourtesy seen and the school site is clear of litter. Attendance is consistently higher than the national average.
24. In assemblies, religious education, personal, social and general studies lessons, as well as in tutorial periods, opportunities are taken to discuss the values and beliefs of other people and to engender respect and kindness towards others. Membership of particular groups, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and service overseas in nationally organised operations help to build an understanding of the student's role in the world.

The quality of care, support and guidance for students is very good

25. Procedures for child protection are very clearly the responsibility of the deputy headteacher, who makes sure that every member of staff are aware that they must report any sign of distress or of ill health in one of the pupils. Outside agencies might be called in if there were to be a problem. Training in awareness and handling of such delicate matters is ongoing.
26. The personal, social and health education of the students, which includes such areas as sex education, drugs awareness and the dangers of alcohol, are effectively included throughout the curriculum. This is clearly set out in a policy document. Health and safety matters are regularly reviewed. In particular, the arrangements for the many buses which take students to and from school and, in doing so, have to enter the school site, are very carefully studied to ensure maximum safety of students and parents who drive onto the site. There are particular rules about those students

who drive to school and to outside venues, for example for sporting fixtures. They must have signed parental approval and may not take passengers.

27. Students know that their teachers treat them as individuals and are always willing to give help and advice if they are asked. Generally, teachers are known to be very approachable and caring, so that students do not need to feel worried and alone if they have a problem. Students with special needs are included in all activities and each class teacher will have details of how their needs must be met.
28. The school is a caring place where students' well-being has been carefully considered; where behaviour is well regulated and generally good so that no one feels oppressed; and where resources and space are provided so that students may gain the best education possible. Supervision around this complicated site after lunch and before the afternoon's lessons is rather difficult, but the staff currently employed are dedicated to seeing that the students come to no harm.
29. Procedures for marking, assessment and reporting are closely linked- they produce high-quality information. These procedures produce consistency throughout the school, so that data is comprehensible and meaningful to all. Assessment data provides the efficient vehicle for monitoring progress, target setting and curricular planning. Very good use is made of student data and progress reports are issued each term. Data is stored on computer and each head of year is responsible for the input. Reports are detailed and comprehensive; they indicate effort and homework descriptors, levels achieved (or grades in upper school) and targets. Students have minimum and 'golden' targets-these provide appropriate motivation for students. Data from feeder primary schools is used on entry, alongside indicative tests, to help with planning and to ensure every student has the opportunity to reach his or her potential. In every curriculum area students are made aware of the level of work being undertaken. Criteria for levels and targets are in every exercise book.
30. The majority of parents are full of praise for the education that their children are receiving and the way in which the school cares for them. In particular, they comment on the provision of laptops for upper school students and the benefits that this can bring, although some have concerns about how the laptops are carried to school if the child uses a bicycle and how they are to be maintained. Parents are delighted with the school's excellent examination results. Teachers hold discussions about students' progress and then, if they are concerned, they will invite the parents to come and discuss their child's progress. Although the format of reports is new to some, the information given is clearly set out and the comments are helpful, even though they do not always set targets.

The provision for the personal development of pupils and the outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities

31. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. Assemblies during the week of the inspection gave students the time to reflect on the impact on family life of having a disabled child. There were also opportunities to celebrate harvest as a time to share gifts with others less fortunate. Opportunities for personal development are effectively threaded through the curriculum and the day-to-day life of the school. There is mutual respect between staff and students. Teaching embodies clear values and staff are good role models in their valuing of students' opinions. Successes are celebrated and certificates and photos serve as reminders and goals to aim for. The environment exudes a feeling of harmony. Rooms and corridors have an abundance of displays, paintings and reminders of the

school's history and former staff and students. Tutor time provides the opportunities to reflect on beliefs and morals. Students are proud of their school and are honest, thoughtful and respectful. The annual history trip to the war graves in Somme is a moving and emotional experience for participants.

32. A particular strength of the school is the school council, which is a consultative committee. This provides good opportunities for students to develop personal responsibilities.
33. There are many extra-curricular activities and clubs, for example homework clubs, sports clubs and chess club. There are extensive field trips and visits abroad. Students have good opportunities to learn about other cultures, for example the Aztecs in history. In art, students can study African and Indian art forms. Religions of the world are appropriately studied. A multi-cultural day is being organised and a whole-school charity day, where one of the charities will be to help youngsters in Kenya.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The accommodation in art and science and canteen facilities. The provision for computer technology in music and art.

34. The popularity of the school is reflected in the increasing size of the school roll. The capacity of current classrooms for some sixth form classes is becoming increasingly inadequate. The lack of sufficient space has led to some restrictions in teaching methodology. The school is operating at close to its optimum capacity. In administrative terms, this leaves little room for manoeuvre in order to run the school as efficiently as possible.
35. The accommodation in art has limitations and impacts negatively on the work of the department. The main art studio incorporates a corridor between classrooms. This can be disruptive to classes that are being taught. The space is too cramped for any extensive 3D work to be developed on a whole-class basis. The storage areas are very limited, particularly for storage of students' 3D work. The current number of science laboratories is only just sufficient to cope with curriculum demands.
36. The canteen facilities are not large enough. This an area of concern expressed by the parents. A good system of queuing is operated and supervisors manage to make it possible for students to get their lunch quickly and find somewhere to eat it, but the arrangements are not conducive to creating a social setting for students.
37. There is no access to ICT within the art department. This lack of computer resources restricts some opportunities for creativity in this area. The loss of photography as an element of the sixth form art provision has narrowed the range since the last inspection. The planned acquisition of some laptop computers in chemistry should help address the insufficient use of ICT.

The professional development of heads of department to enable the monitoring of teaching by subject specialists.

38. The monitoring of teaching by senior managers is very good in both its breadth and detail. All teachers are observed frequently. They receive detailed feedback of their lessons and points for improvement where necessary. Through these systems, the quality of teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of lessons found to be very good is improving. These extensive procedures could be further improved by incorporating the specialist knowledge of heads of departments. Heads of department need to be trained to observe lessons so that they can both carry out monitoring to identify the features of high- quality lessons and share good practise.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	35
	Sixth form	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	5	14	12	4	0	0	0
Percentage	14	40	35	11	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	4	26	26	15	2	0	0
Percentage	6	35	35	21	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	802	272
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	47	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	60	1

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	81	81	162

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	60	64
	Girls	70	66	69
	Total	130	126	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (86)	78 (79)	82 (84)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (50)	57 (59)	54 (47)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	59	62
	Girls	59	63	66
	Total	112	122	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (76)	82 (82)	86 (86)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (37)	63 (49)	71 (57)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	80	148

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	58	68	68
	Girls	70	80	80
	Total	128	148	148
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	86 (78)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	57.4
	National	39.0

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE-A level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	33	55	88

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.8	21.2	18.5	-	-	-
National	16.9	17.9	17.4	-	-	-

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	12
	National	9.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	1068
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	388.83

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	01 – 02
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	£
Total income	4238884
Total expenditure	4431609
Expenditure per pupil	4273
Balance brought forward from previous year	263680
Balance carried forward to next year	70955

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29.7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1070
Number of questionnaires returned	406

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	5	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	49	1	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	59	3	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	55	14	2	8
The teaching is good.	37	54	1	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	44	12	2	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	40	6	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	47	15	1	12
The school is well led and managed.	47	43	1	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	46	3	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	40	11	1	14

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

39. Over the past four years, A-level results have been above average in comparison with results nationally. In 2001, the results were well above average in economics, geography and religious studies. They were above average in art and physics and average in biology, English language, English literature, design and technology and history. They were below average in mathematics, chemistry and French. In all other subjects too few students were entered for the results to be statistically significant. Girls' A-level results in 2001 were well above average compared with girls' results nationally, while boys' results were in line with boys' results nationally.
40. Results in the AS-level examinations in 2001 were average. Nearly a third of students gained A or B grades and a particularly high proportion gained these grades in religious studies, physics, performance studies, art and design and technology. Few students gained A or B grades in biology. Overall, the proportion of A-E passes was 93%, above the national average.
41. Twelve students took advanced vocational examinations in 2001. The results were above the national average. Most of these students were boys and their average points score was higher than that of the girls by a significant margin.
42. An analysis of the average points score of students who took A-level examinations in 2001, compared with their average total points score in GCSE examinations, reveals that they made above average progress in the sixth form. While the collective performance of the school is above average, the performance of individual subjects is more variable. For example, results in history and mathematics in 2001 were relatively lower than the same students' results in their other subjects.
43. A preliminary analysis of A-level results for 2002 shows an improvement in the overall pass rate and a comparable increase in the average points score. Although the national comparators are not yet available, good standards were achieved in art, chemistry, mathematics and religious studies. Standards were relatively poor in biology and information and communications technology.
44. In the fourteen subjects chosen for inspection, standards seen were well above average overall. They were well above average in religious studies, art, geography and mathematics; above average in history, psychology, French, German, business education, physics, chemistry, design and technology and English. Standards were average in biology.
45. Students' achievement in these fourteen subjects is good overall. They achieve very well in business education, religious studies, art, geography, mathematics and design and technology. Their achievement is good in English, history, physics, psychology and design and technology; it is satisfactory in French, German, and chemistry. Achievement in biology is unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs achieve well. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

46. Standards seen in other subjects that were sampled during the inspection were above average overall. They were well above average in music and politics and above average in ICT and sports studies. Attainment in the general studies program was in line with expectations.
47. Students achieve very well in mathematics, religious studies and design and technology because teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide students with clear advice and support. Design and technology students are particularly interested and enthusiastic. In art, achievement is also very good because of students' high level of interest in the subject, teachers' extensive subject knowledge and their awareness of students' individual needs. In geography, students achieve very well because of the excellent support and advice they receive during individual tutorials and from teachers' very detailed marking of their work.
48. Students' achievement in biology has been unsatisfactory until very recently. Students have had inadequate opportunities for practical work and structured independent study.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

49. The students are very proud of their school and of everything for which it stands. They show a determined attitude to their work and want the timetable to allow them the maximum time for learning sessions and research. They know that they are fortunate in the rich educational experience that they are offered and in the wide selection of additional activities within sport, the arts and travel that are available during the school year. There is a strong emphasis on wanting to succeed, which is frequently mentioned and willingly accepted by the large majority.
50. There are some benefits for students in belonging to the sixth form society but the full importance of these is not evident early in the school year. The school's promise to the students is outlined in the charter for post-16 education that applies to pupils who join the sixth form from other schools too.
51. There is an above average level of attendance and students are anxious not to miss any learning opportunities, so that they arrive punctually for lessons. Their behaviour is excellent and they are good role models for students in the whole school. They are willing to take on responsibility and to be involved in the provision of school activities for younger students. Some help with reading in the lower school. The head girl and head boy, deputies and prefects work with the head of the sixth form in arranging internal sixth form procedures. From time to time they assist in planning and organising large school events which raise money to promote educational opportunities for young people in Africa or for other charities.
52. Students appreciate the well-maintained and resourced surroundings in which they work and can achieve good academic results. They form good relationships with their fellow students and with the teaching staff, and are polite and helpful to visitors. However, some students in the whole school, including the sixth form, show a definite reluctance to contribute their ideas in a discussion with people they do not know well, even though they may have strong views on an issue.
53. The range of material included in the compulsory general studies programme enhances students' personal development. Although for some it does not seem a relevant part of their education, the research and discussions generated help to widen their understanding of the outside world and their own future responsibilities in it.

Topics include religions, advances in technology, the uses of a study of genetics, and morality.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

54. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned well. Teachers set appropriate tasks and activities to effectively build the students' knowledge and understand of their subjects. Overall, students are positive about the quality of teaching they receive and appreciate teachers' accessibility and support when they have difficulty with their work. Recent results indicate that students are well prepared for examinations.
55. In the fourteen subjects chosen for inspection, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in mathematics, design and technology, business education, art, geography, history and religious studies, and is good in psychology, physics, English, French and German. The quality of teaching in biology, chemistry, general studies and for Key Skills is satisfactory. In some of the other lessons observed, teaching was excellent in politics and very good in music.
56. Many of the good features evident in the main school are also present in sixth form teaching and learning. The greater maturity and willingness of students to contribute to lessons help the effectiveness of teaching. A significant strength of teaching is the very good specialist subject knowledge of staff. Teachers know the various examination specifications well and ensure students are fully conversant with examination technique. Other very good features of teaching that promote students' progress are high teacher expectations and the pace of the lesson. In many lessons good questioning skills allowed teachers to draw the best from students and to challenge their thinking: this was particularly apparent in politics and geography. However, some lessons are too teacher-directed, leaving insufficient opportunity for student participation and scope for independent learning.
57. The teaching of biology is generally satisfactory in the sixth form but there are areas which have specific weaknesses. The pace of work in some lessons is too slow; there are insufficiently high expectations about completing tasks within a specified time interval. The form of questioning does not probe the understanding of students often enough.
58. Generally, teachers expect students to work hard and take an active part in lessons. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson which involved an analysis of the main character in 'The Great Gatsby', students were challenged to offer their own views for discussion. Consequently, a lively discussion emerged, where students developed a short critique of the novel. The pace of this activity meant that students were focused on the tasks, and the outcomes of the lesson were very productive.
59. Most teachers plan lessons very well. A particular feature of lesson planning is the way that teachers integrate learning examination technique with acquisition of subject skills and knowledge. This was seen in a Year 13 geography lesson in which students who had recently been to a field course on the Gower peninsula were using a range of source material to explain the coastal features. At the same time they learned how to organize information to answer an A-level-style question.
60. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally very good. In music, teachers use their expertise to give individual tuition to the students about the development of their work

The result is creative and vibrant work that also draws well on the students' previous experience and their musical competence.

61. Some teachers make very good use of ICT to promote students' learning. In a Year 12 business education lesson, which focused on the business activities of a local garden nursery, students were encouraged to use the e-mail to clarify points from the class discussion. This activity enabled students to extend their understanding of business operation. However, there is insufficient use of ICT applications in biology and chemistry. The constraints on access to ICT facilities in art and music are limiting opportunities for learning.
62. Teachers are aware of the needs of the relatively few students on the special educational needs register and take these into account when planning their lessons. Generally, good planning ensures that materials are suitably adapted to meet these students' needs and enable full participation in all lessons. However, in some chemistry lessons, there is insufficient breadth of material to accommodate the needs of lower attaining students.
63. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught in specified lessons for students following vocational courses. The commitment and motivation of some students in these lessons are lacking. Insufficient use is made of the data about students' prior attainment to structure the lessons more appropriately to their individual needs. In other lessons students are given a range of opportunities to develop the skills of working with others and problem-solving through the style of learning that they are offered in subjects.

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

64. The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of courses towards AS and A-levels, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and Intermediate GNVQ qualifications. Students can choose combinations of 22 AS and A-level subjects, in addition to AVCE and GNVQ courses in business education. The requirements of Curriculum 2000 have been successfully implemented and have resulted in students following a broader range of subjects than previously. For example, the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to allow students to combine the study of, A-level and vocational courses. Since the previous inspection the school has responded well to students' requests for a broader choice by introducing courses in psychology, physical education and ICT. Courses in health and social care and manufacturing have been discontinued. However, there are good links with Suffolk College, which provides a wider range of vocational courses. Overall, the curriculum is well planned and allows students to follow a coherent programme of study from Year 12 to Year 13. Nearly all students are able to study the combination of subjects that they want. Most students follow four AS courses, or equivalent vocational units, in Year 12. They usually progress to study at least three of these subjects at A level, or their vocational equivalent, in Year 13.
65. The school makes every effort to ensure that all students who wish can continue to study in the sixth form. Students have equal access to all courses, dependent upon their prior attainment. A minimum of four GCSE passes at grade C is required for Advanced level study, but the school caters successfully for several students who have not previously gained a GCSE grade C in the subjects of their choice. The one-year intermediate GNVQ course provides an appropriate option for students who have been less successful at GCSE. Some students progress to study at AVCE level in

Year 13 as a result. Students with special educational needs receive good support to enable them to achieve well. The needs of gifted and talented students are well met. For example, potential Oxbridge candidates are identified and supported when necessary. The school prepares several higher attaining students each year to enter examinations for Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) and is involved in a pilot scheme to offer Open University foundation modules.

66. All students follow a course towards a general studies qualification. The course covers a suitably wide range of topics, including religious and political issues, to enrich the curriculum. It ensures that the school meets statutory requirements for religious education. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form. Students follow a suitable programme of personal, social and health education during active tutorial work in registration groups and this time is also used well to develop study skills, especially for Year 12 students. Students on vocational courses are taught the key skills of communication, use of number and information technology through a well-designed programme that enables them to gain Key Skills qualifications. Other students also have sufficiently high levels in these key skills to allow them to achieve well on AS and A-level courses.
67. Provision for careers education is good. Students who intend to go on to higher education are well supported and receive ample advice. The local careers service provides good support for students who follow the GNVQ course in Year 12. However, other students are critical of the limited advice available from the careers service about opportunities for employment. The school is aware of the difficulty and is trying to ensure that this provision improves this year. Students on vocational courses have good work experience opportunities.
68. In addition to academic courses, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities to enable students to develop other talents and interests. For example, students have the opportunity to study a two-term course towards the community sports leader award. This helps many to become more involved in the community by helping to coach younger children.
69. Provision for students' personal development in the sixth form is very good. Weekly assemblies provide the opportunity to reflect and harvest celebrations during the week of the inspection were a time of thanksgiving. Students are treated as young adults and show an added loyalty to the school and its beliefs. Mutual respect pervades. Achievements are celebrated in assemblies, the termly newsletter and via displays in the sixth form area and school corridors. Fund-raising events effectively encourage students to consider their values in relation to others. Students are given roles of responsibility as head girl, head boy, house captains, form prefects and as members of the sixth form committee. However, students feel that they have limited opportunities to express their views and that the school does not always respond to them. During tutor period, roles were taken seriously, as prefects collected merits and others took students from a Year 7 class for paired reading. Collective thoughts about the Duke of Edinburgh trip to Canada vividly reflected their feelings, trials, challenges and experiences in words, drawings and photos. Everyone realised the need to work together, to help others and work collaboratively to reach goals. The annual Christmas party and summer ball are highlights in the sixth form social calendar. The curriculum is further enhanced by revision conferences, trips to the theatre, industrial trips, field trips, residentials and visits abroad.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

70. In the sixth form, progress reports are issued four times in Year 12 and three times in Year 13. Four descriptors are used for homework and effort: excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Individual data is stored on computer, which has the added advantage of being readily accessible. Very good use is made of value-added data. To enable targets to be set and to raise standards further, the GCSE average point score is set against in-house data and provides baseline data for each student. Attendance, use of study time and completion of work are also rigorously monitored. Students, teachers and parents are fully aware of progress and targets and individual help is always available when needed.

Advice, support and guidance

71. Even in the sixth form, where about one-quarter are new to the school, all students are treated as individuals and become well known to their tutors and the other teachers. The school makes every effort to care for their needs and to make their path to higher education or employment as easy as possible. Plenty of advice is made available and good opportunities for interview practice and work experience arranged. The local careers' service assist the school in providing good information, and displays in the school corridors are used to alert pupils to occupations which might not be so well known to them. A large exhibition is arranged so that universities and employers may send representatives into school to talk to pupils and their parents. Parents and students are naturally concerned to know that the advice they are given is the best, most accurate and up-to-date available.
72. Every effort is made to provide a curriculum based on people's needs rather than expecting students to fit into a more rigid lesson framework. The school also tries to ensure that every sixth form student has somewhere to work, access to a computer and to all types of research. It is aware of the parents' concern about large numbers of students taking some courses and the consequent lack of space in classrooms and is trying to address this problem.
73. Students who have joined the school for the sixth form speak of the warm welcome given to them and the ease with which they settled into the new regime. Sixth form students have an effective induction day when staff address them and they are given a handbook which covers many aspects of sixth form life and responsibilities. Their parents are kept closely in touch with their progress and good arrangements exist for recognising when a student is finding difficulties with particular studies.

74. All the staff, under the guidance and instruction of the deputy headteacher, are aware of the issues surrounding child protection and what must be done if they believe a student is at risk. Any student showing signs of problems, distress or developing ill health will be given advice and assistance in this caring school. Students are also very caring of one another and will alert a member of staff if they are concerned about the well-being of one of their colleagues, for whatever reason.
75. Students are also well informed about a healthy life style and the school takes care to provide a safe environment. There are problems with the number of large bags which students have. These are sometimes left in corridors, for example during assemblies, and are strewn around in classrooms during lessons, but staff do attempt to prevent accidents being caused by making sure there is always a path left clear. Other than this, the school is very clean and litter free. The facilities are well maintained and the learning environment is very pleasant.

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

76. Generally parents are very supportive of the school and feel that it is doing a good job in developing the maturity of their children. Students who are seen to have potential are encouraged to stay on into the sixth form and do, in the event, often surprise everyone with what they are able to achieve. Concerns were expressed about some overcrowding in a few large classes and underfunding for the sixth form. The school is well aware of these difficulties and is doing all it can to address them. Parents support the school in many ways and become very involved in fund-raising for school projects and for the charities which the school supports. They also show their support and respect for the teaching staff in ways such as providing cakes for them on an occasional basis. This kind of support is much appreciated.
77. Parents commented that the information on the choice of examination courses had been helpful, although some were concerned about the limited amount of careers information. Inspectors found it to be good.
78. Student questionnaires show a general satisfaction with sixth form provision. They have particularly positive opinions about the range of courses and the information about subject choices. They praise the accessibility of teachers and the good teaching that challenges them to do well. Their main criticism is about the extent to which the school listens and responds to their views. There are opportunities for students to share their concerns with staff, for example through the head boy and head girl. However, in practice, this system does not work very effectively. Sixth form students do not have a voice on the school council and therefore rightly feel that they cannot contribute to school developments as much as they would like. Some students are critical of the limited advice available from the careers service about opportunities for employment. The school is aware of the difficulty and is trying to ensure that this provision improves this year.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

79. The sixth form is very well led and managed. A period of considerable change has been very effectively managed, ensuring that the school has successfully introduced new arrangements for AS and A-level courses. The effectiveness of leadership is shown by the well above average standards achieved by students. Students achieve well because leadership ensures that the quality of teaching is good. Overall, sixth formers and parents have confidence in what the school provides for them and numbers of students have increased significantly since the last inspection.
80. The head of sixth form monitors the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of individual subjects and departments very closely. Where performance has not been what it should be, the headteacher and senior staff have taken action to improve the situation. For example, a change of management in biology is already improving the learning and achievement of students in that subject. Heads of department also evaluate how successful they are in meeting specific targets for their subjects. However, the senior management team now recognises the importance of enabling heads of department and subject specialists to take more responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. At present there is insufficient opportunity for them to do so.
81. The school development plan includes specific objectives that ensure a clear direction for the work of the sixth form. For example, ways of measuring value-added have recently been revised so that the school has a very clear view of the achievements of students. As a result, the school sets appropriately challenging targets for individual students and subjects in examinations. The structure of A-level courses is constantly reviewed and this has led to a clear policy about times of the year when students enter modular examinations. The school is committed to the principles of inclusive education. The sixth form reflects this commitment by offering courses that meet students' needs and ensuring that students with a wide range of attainment achieve well. The headteacher and head of sixth form are responding well to the demands upon management created by the increased number of students. A phased programme of development is being discussed and devised to ensure that the very effective management of the sixth form continues.

Resources

82. Finance is well managed and systems for monitoring and administration are good. The most recent audit report confirms the good practice. Decisions taken by governors on sixth form issues are based on a good understanding of the school's priorities through an awareness of the school development plan. The sixth form is cost effective. The increased course structure allied to the popularity of the school are placing increasing pressure on the sixth form budget. The principles of best value are mostly applied well. The sixth form gives good value for money.
83. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced to teach the sixth form curriculum. The school spending on technical, administrative and clerical support is in line with national averages. This results in appropriate support for the relevant subject areas.
84. Arrangements for performance management are effective and fulfill statutory requirements. They are an important part of the quality-assurance framework for the sixth form. Staff development opportunities are well structured and effectively

promote teaching competencies. There is very good support for newly qualified teachers through a designated programme and a good-quality induction scheme for experienced newcomers.

85. The level and variety of up-to-date learning resources in subject areas are good. School expenditure on books and materials is above average; this is beneficial in supporting the achievement of high standards. The library has good reference materials and the book stock is suitably broad in its range, although light in the provision for physics. There are good central resources for ICT to promote independent learning.
86. Accommodation for the teaching of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but includes several concerns. There is an adverse impact on the sixth form curriculum caused by the lack of availability of scientific laboratories to conduct investigations. This situation is particularly critical in science, where this shortfall is having an impact in limiting students' progress. Similarly, in art, the size of the rooms is a constraint on creativity and independent learning.

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

GCE AS-level courses 2001

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	1	100	83	-	23	2.00	2.27

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	20	80	87	25	43	4.90	5.80
Biology	34	82	88	32	34	5.06	5.25
Chemistry	24	79	90	33	43	5.00	5.90
Other Social Studies	5	100	87	20	34	4.40	5.30
Physics	13	92	88	62	40	6.15	5.67
Economics	7	100	89	57	36	7.43	5.52
Religious Studies	9	100	92	78	38	8.00	5.84
Art and Design	28	96	96	50	46	6.86	6.57
Music	4	75	93	25	35	5.00	5.74
Full Design and Technology	9	78	91	33	30	5.11	5.38
Geography	17	88	92	59	38	6.71	5.74
History	16	100	88	25	35	5.63	5.45
Communication Studies	6	100	93	33	31	4.67	5.53
French	9	100	89	22	38	4.67	5.59
German	3	67	91	33	40	4.67	5.81
English Literature	18	100	95	33	37	5.89	5.91
English Language	14	86	91	29	30	5.29	5.27
General Studies	55	84	85	33	30	4.95	4.91

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.00	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics courses were inspected and reported on in depth.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at A level are well above average and have shown considerable recent improvement.
- Both the leadership and the management, by an acting subject manager, are very good.
- The quality of teaching is generally very good.

Areas for improvement

- The units of the courses in mathematics and further mathematics are not sufficiently linked together to help those studying further mathematics to learn at a steady rate.
- There are inconsistencies in the marking of students' work and its use to help students improve.

87. A-level results in mathematics have fluctuated over the past five years, and in 2001 were closer to the national average. The inspection judgement is that standards are improving rapidly and are now well above those normally found. In the previous inspection, attainment was judged good. Unvalidated results for 2002 indicate that all students gained at least a pass in A level, with almost half gaining A grades. Achievement, related to attainment in GCSE, was good. AS results were less successful, in terms of passes, but this was partly due to the open-entry policy of the school. Although students are given suitable guidance about their choice of course, several opt for mathematics that inevitably cannot cope with the demands of the subject. A number of students join the school in Year 12 from different backgrounds and some find the work hard. Attainment at AS level compared unfavourably with other subjects in unvalidated public examination results in 2002. All evidence seen indicates that one class of students attained poorer results.
88. The standard of work seen in Years 12 and 13 is very good overall, particularly when taking previous GCSE results into account. There have been some recent changes in teaching staff, and as much as possible has been done to compensate for any possible underachievement in the students' Year 12. In Year 13, students have a good understanding of algebra, and use their knowledge effectively to, for example, perform long division with polynomial expressions, or divide expressions into simpler fractions. No mechanics or statistics lessons were seen during the inspection due to timetable arrangements. In Year 12, students are building a secure foundation upon which to base further work, for example in the differentiation of polynomials.
89. Students following the course in further mathematics in both Years 12 and 13 also make very good progress in their additional lessons. Occasionally, however, their progress in learning is restricted in basic A-level lessons, as insufficient work has

been done to link together the different courses and to make sure that they are not repeating tasks with different teachers.

90. The quality of teaching is generally very good. An excellent lesson was seen during the inspection, and none were less than satisfactory. The very good teaching is due to the very good subject knowledge of most teachers, and their understanding of possible misconceptions that students might gain. Lessons are consistently very well planned and structured, and teachers work hard to get students to think. Some marking is of exceptionally high quality and gives students a very clear understanding of how to improve. It is used particularly well by some teachers to select students for additional tutorials to correct their problems. These are valued by students, provided by teachers in their own free time, and show their level of commitment. Nevertheless there is some inconsistency in the quality and use of marking. On rare occasions, a teacher's incorrect use of mathematical notation impedes learning in lessons. The students listen carefully and concentrate well in lessons, although they are often passive listeners. They have a good opinion of their teachers, and a very high opinion of the temporary subject manager. Basic numeracy is well taught in lessons designed to develop the key skills of non-mathematicians and there is good provision for students who wish to retake GCSE mathematics.
91. An exceptionally committed temporary subject manager, who sets an excellent example through her own teaching and the quality of support given to students and staff, manages the subject very well. There is a very clear focus on teamwork and on checking and improving provision, teaching and standards.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good subject knowledge and students find the teachers helpful.
- A new head of biology has recently been appointed who has a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in 2002 were well below the national average.
- The range of learning opportunities is too restricted.
- Insufficient good-quality homework has been set to consolidate and extend students' understanding.
- There is insufficient use of ICT for data-logging and simulations.

92. The GCE examination results in 2002 were below the national average for those obtaining pass grades and well below for those obtaining higher grades A to C. The school's own analysis indicates underachievement by middle and lower attainers. In recent years students' attainment had been broadly in line with their performance in other subjects.
93. Standards of work in the current Year 13 are about average. In a lesson on genetic diseases students used their research findings to make a presentation using Power Point or overhead transparencies. Discussion led by the teacher showed and developed students' understanding of these genetic mutations, their impact on the molecular structure of haemoglobin and the reason these mutations have survived in terms of resistance to malaria. Students show a spread of ability in terms of their understanding of the detailed processes involved in photosynthesis and respiration.

94. Students in Year 12 have just started their course. Standards are again about average. Students showed a reasonable understanding of carbohydrate structure and the fluid mosaic model of the cell membrane but experienced more difficulty with explaining the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary structure of proteins.
95. Teaching in the last two years has been unsatisfactory overall in that, in 2002, students underachieved by approximately one grade. However, most teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory and some was good. In a lesson on genetic defects affecting the blood, the teacher had made the students research this and then make presentations using various media. The teacher concluded the lesson by drawing out the key points through questioning the students to check and develop their understanding. The lesson was very effective. Students were set a homework to prepare a leaflet to explain these blood disorders to a young couple, including probabilities of inheriting the disease. In another lesson on enzyme action the lesson was conducted at a brisk pace. The teacher made a brief input of the key points - without allowing the students to make notes. They had to concentrate. The explanation was clear and concise. Questioning was used effectively to check students' understanding. The students were then given a clear time-scale to make a model illustrating enzyme action. Model-making has been used and is most effective when it is used to consolidate understanding of complex processes such as the translation of genes to produce proteins. Other good features seen included clear explanation and useful overall summaries of processes such as respiration. Some lessons had unsatisfactory features. Clear time-scales were not always given and this resulted in the pace of working being too slow, with too long a time being spent on basic activities. In some cases there was insufficient questioning to check students' understanding and questions were set which involved simple repetition of facts that had already been given. Teaching of biochemical processes needs to be improved in order that students can grasp the essential concepts. The range of learning opportunities is too limited. In particular there is insufficient use of ICT for data-logging and to provide simulations. The new head of biology is clear about what needs to be done, however, and is conducting an audit with a view to broadening the range of activities.
96. Students have had inadequate opportunities to develop their understanding through tackling a range of problems and there has been too little practical work. Insufficient emphasis has been given to structured independent study.
97. Although the head of biology has only been in post for a matter of weeks, she has shown good leadership and management. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory but, in a short time, the new manager has had a significant impact. A more appropriate syllabus has been chosen, which puts greater emphasis on certain aspects of modern biology, and new textbooks and revision guides have been purchased. She has produced an induction booklet for students, together with clear unit objectives for each module. Teachers' planning is being monitored and lesson observations are planned. A centralised system to track students' progress has been put in place, which will help to identify underachievers.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved since the last inspection.
- Results in 2002 were well above the national average.
- The teaching is thorough and methodical.

Areas for improvement

- There is some underachievement by lower attainers.
- Greater use of ICT in the department.
- The departmental development plan is insufficiently detailed.
- There is no formal system in place for the head of chemistry to monitor lessons.

98. The GCE examination results in 2002 were well above the national average. All students who took the examination obtained a pass grade and the proportion obtaining the highest grades, A and B, was well above average. Results in the previous two years were in line with the national average. Students' performance in chemistry has, overall, been consistently in line with their performance in other subjects. More detailed analysis, however, reveals some underachievement by lower attaining students.
99. The standards of work of current Year 13 students are above average. In recent work on the electrophilic reactions of benzene and the relative strengths of various organic bases, they showed a good understanding of how to find the order of a reaction by plotting concentration data against time. The standard of some graph work was, however, below average.
100. Students in Year 12 have only just started their course. Standards in the work seen were again above average in terms of understanding of atomic structure, of calculations involving the mole and of evidence for electron energy levels based on ionisation energy data.
101. Teaching is generally at least satisfactory and there are often good features. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and explanation is clear. Good features include a brisk pace, thorough questioning to check students' understanding, the use of framework questions to give structure to students' research and the use of some self-study units. Homework is set and marked regularly and gives students sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding to new and related situations. There is variation between staff, at present, in the scale they use for marking and there is no centralised system for tracking student progress. In a small number of lessons there were some unsatisfactory features. Clear time-scales were not set for tasks and, in some cases, this resulted in the pace of working being too slow. Teachers' introductions to practical work are sometimes too lengthy. Whilst lower attaining students were given support in class, and additional support is available in a chemistry clinic, they would benefit from alternative teaching approaches more tailored to their needs. Thus, for example, calculations involving the mole could be compared with more everyday conversion of units and alternative strategies could be explained for working out molecular structures. Lower attaining students are weak in their evaluation skills in their practical coursework and need more support in this area. A number of strategies are being put in place, which should be of benefit to lower attainers. These include 'can do' tests which students have to resit if they obtain a low mark, and homework which has a core plus extension structure. There is a range of learning activities, including practical work, some structured self-study and problem solving. This is at present too restricted, however. In particular there is too little use of ICT for data-logging and simulations and little use is made of student presentations. There is little extended treatment of

social, cultural, spiritual and moral issues using simulation, debate and role-play, for example.

102. Much of the students' written work takes the form of responses to structured questions to consolidate and extend the work done in class. One unit is taught on a self-study basis but, at present, there are insufficient opportunities for independent work. Numeracy skills are well developed for middle and higher attainers but lower attainers need more structured support for chemistry calculations.
103. Leadership and management of chemistry are satisfactory overall. Standards in chemistry have improved since the last inspection and progress since the last inspection is good. Work has been started on producing a scheme of work and there is a commitment to broadening the range of learning opportunities for students. The planned acquisition of some laptop computers should help address the insufficient use of ICT. Development planning for chemistry needs to be more detailed and monitoring of lessons implemented.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good.
- The physics course is up to date and encourages the study of physics in relevant situations.
- The close monitoring of students' work enables them to achieve well.
- Student attitudes are very good and have a positive effect on their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT.
- Teachers' questioning styles to help students to solve problems for themselves.
- Greater consistency in use of comments on marking and feedback to students on how to improve.

104. Attainment has been consistently above the national average for physics for the last four years and this trend has continued into 2002. There has been some fluctuation in attainment over the same time, with a significant rise in 2002. Overall, students perform in line with school expectations. Able pupils show good value-added from GCSE. However, lower attaining students make slower progress.
105. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are also above average. Students show above average understanding of their current work on density and can apply this to new situations. They can clearly explain earlier work on Olbers' principle. They use mathematical skills effectively in work on simple harmonic motion. Coursework is of a high standard and shows a good use of ICT skills. Their research is of a good standard and students apply their knowledge well to interesting current physics-related issues such as the Millennium Bridge and the effect of meteorite impact on the earth.
106. Students in Year 12 have just begun their AS course. Their work on electricity shows they are making satisfactory progress from their previous GCSE work.

107. Overall, teaching is good and enables students to learn well. Teachers have a good command of the subject area. They plan lessons well and have high expectations of students. They explain difficult concepts logically and clearly. For example, students developed their understanding of simple harmonic motion when the teacher made effective use of a light-hearted story about Postman Pat and his dog. This explained the derivation of equations very clearly and students made good progress. Teachers make good use of text and CD-ROM resources. In the best lessons, teachers use questions well to help students' understanding. However, teachers do not always prepare their thoughts or resources as well as they might. They often talk too much in lessons and students do not have enough opportunity to contribute. As a result, students have difficulty in anticipating and solving minor practical problems by themselves. For example, in a practical lesson to find the density of air, students needed prompting to ensure the mass of the apparatus was not affected by accidental contacts with the desk surface. Teachers often mark students' work well. They provide encouraging comments, corrections and feed back to students – especially to those who made errors. However, there is a need for greater consistency in the use of comments and of the departmental marking policy.
108. Assessment data on students is used effectively to set minimum and “golden” (high level) targets. Tutorials are held for pupils during which targets are reviewed. This close monitoring of students' work has a positive effect on their achievement. Homework and revision clubs offer students the opportunity to discuss problems with teachers and provide valuable extra support.
109. Student attitudes to their work vary from very good to excellent and, as a result, learning is good. Students showed interest in their lessons, asking questions and applying themselves well to their work. Students said they were enjoying their physics course.
110. The course chosen for physics is supported by a high-quality CD-ROM resource. This is available on the school network, on loan CDs, or students buy their own. This resource allows students the opportunity to work independently on areas of the course they choose or for directed homework. Homework and coursework are helping to develop independent learning skills. However, teachers miss opportunities to extend independent learning skills further. For example, resources in the library for advanced-level physics study are limited.
111. Management of the physics department by the recently appointed subject leader is good and improving. Schemes of work are in place and the choice of an appropriate physics course is helping in this area but more tailored, school-based schemes are being developed on a rolling programme as the course progresses. The analysis of student data is developing and the subject leader is aware of the current position of the department. Monitoring of pupils is established and more comprehensive monitoring of the work of the department is proposed through the scheduled monitoring of teaching. The subject leader is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of ICT provision and its use in the department: there is good provision of laptops and some support software. Generally, however, insufficient use is made of ICT resources. The number of laboratories is just adequate in science; the overall provision will become under increasing pressure with increasing student numbers.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Students are enthusiastic learners.
- High quality learning resources are used very effectively.

Area for improvement

- Professional development of teachers with regard to industrial practices.

112. In 2001, standards at both AS and A2 level were above the national average and similar to those in comparable schools. The results in 2002 for AS and A2 level show further improvement, especially the higher grades, and again were above national average.
113. The department's improvement in provision since the last inspection is good.
114. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and during discussions confirms that standards overall are above average and that students' achievement is very good. In general, students do well on those parts of the course which are concerned with their own ability to use research and analysis skills. They confidently use a broad range of ICT systems for imagery, research and development and 3D computer-aided design. A significant majority of students discuss their designs with growing confidence.
115. All students show a high level of interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When they are working individually on computers in lessons, they help each other. Technological discussions are common and contribute to excellent learning. They are able to produce a detailed and justified design specification from the objective analysis of research data. Students demonstrate imagination and flair, for example in the design and manufacture of a motorised scooter.
116. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have excellent command of the subject and transmit their enthusiasm well. They are very good at anticipating aspects that are likely to be misunderstood and they make excellent use of individual tutorial sessions to develop students' knowledge and understanding. When students are working individually during lessons, teachers make very good use of time, discussing work and asking students probing, searching questions and providing opportunities for them to develop higher-level critical evaluation skills. Teachers provide students with excellent written, ongoing feedback on their coursework and therefore students are clear about what they need to do to improve.
117. The subject is very well led and managed. An excellent system of tracking and recording individual students' progress is well co-ordinated and the information shared with the teaching team and with individual students. A wide range of high-quality learning resources is effectively deployed. However, teachers would benefit from further professional development involving hands-on experience of industrial practices.

BUSINESS

118. The focus was on business studies, but economics was also sampled. In economics, examination results were well above average in 2001. Although the provisional results for 2002 were slightly lower, there were still a high number of top grades and the majority of students did better than expected, considering their overall GCSE results. This is due to very good teaching and subject management as well as the exemplary attitude of the students.

Business Education

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average, especially for students following the AVCE, 12-unit course.
- Teachers have very good, up-to-date, subject knowledge and high expectations of students.
- Students receive clear guidance about what they need to do to improve.
- Very good relationships engender a strong partnership in learning.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work have not been updated to take account of wider current curriculum developments.
- Greater involvement of students in research and individual presentations.

119. The results of the post 16-vocational courses in 2001 were above the national average and well above in the previous year. This trend continued in 2002, with especially good results in the 12-unit course, where half of the students obtained the higher grades. The attainment of the very small number who took the intermediate course was satisfactory. Students make very good progress compared to their achievements at the age of sixteen, with examples of young men doing particularly well.
120. These high standards are mirrored in the written work of the Year 13 students taking the advanced vocational course, as well as by their knowledge and understanding shown in class. They were able to enhance their answers to a human resources question by reference to an informed awareness of other aspects of business behaviour. The teacher's very good knowledge of current issues, such as the prevalence of short-term contracts, was an important factor in their academic success. Their study of Ipswich Football Club illustrated a high level of competence in applying well-understood theory to an analysis of a local institution. Some students taking the 12-unit course produced in-depth work of a very high standard. The current Year 12 have quickly learnt about the basic structures of business organisations and are engaged by well-organised tasks that centre on the current marketing requirements of a real life company.
121. Teaching is very good. Students benefit from the teachers' enthusiasm and ability to effectively communicate up-to-date, expert subject knowledge. Learning objectives are clear and lessons begin with a clear overview that helps students make links between different aspects of the course. Very good questioning tests, reinforces and extends learning. There is a strong stress on literacy and numeracy and students do well in these business skills. Students comment favourably on the continuous assessment and marking to pinpoint difficulties and highlight areas that need

improving. In the odd lesson, the timing of tasks and activities was askew and the teacher did not always try to ensure full participation by all students.

122. The commitment of the teachers, allied with the maturity and positive attitudes of the students, result in a highly motivated learning partnership. The majority of students are engaged by realistic problem-solving activities. They work well in lessons and do good research for their set assignments, confidently using ICT. However, they are not greatly involved in the ongoing collection and analysis of a range of current examples that would illustrate the encompassing nature of business studies.
123. The very good teaching and learning stems from the high quality of the management of the subject. The department makes a significant contribution to the school's aims and values by facilitating very good access to higher education and employment opportunities. Relatively few students drop out of classes in the first year. There are high expectations that the students will make very good progress and they respond accordingly. Resources, including the local community, are very well used to enhance learning. There is a wide range of well-prepared and chosen teaching materials. Unfortunately, these are not readily available in the department's computer area as an aid to independent learning and to meet individual needs. Schemes of work have not been updated to take account of current curriculum developments, such as the focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and citizenship. Although there is a range of material in various files on the computer, these are not available in a coherent hard copy format that would benefit, for instance, temporary teachers. The departmental handbook is poor.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

The overall quality of provision in art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well above average standards.
- Teachers' extensive knowledge and very effective lesson planning promote very good progress.

Area for improvement

- Cramped accommodation and lack of storage space have a negative effect on students' learning.

124. Since the last inspection there has been a general improvement in pass grades at A level and a significant improvement in the proportion of students achieving A-C grades in 2002. Students make very good progress. In Year 13, students with comparatively low GCSE average point scores have achieved C and D grades at A level. In Year 12, students are coming from a GCSE background much higher in standards than seen at the previous inspection. A large percentage of students who follow the subject at AS and A level continue on to further education and higher education courses in art or art-related areas.
125. Students are attaining to very high levels. Some excellent work is produced in both two and three dimensions. Students produce very high quality preparatory study and research work. They use a broad range of media well and show confidence in handling materials. However, students make little use of ICT resources in creative work, although some was evident in students' research work. Work of very good quality is seen in many of the students' sketchbooks, including visual analysis work using colour studies, tonal diagrams, enlargements and compositional analysis.
126. Students produce very good written work to support their investigations. A wide range of forms of writing is included, ranging from personal reflection and annotation of their own sketches to historical research and essays on artists, designers and movements. The artwork of many of these, the students have written about after seeing them at first hand. Students' contributions to class discussions do not match the quality and strength of their written work.
127. The overall quality of teaching in art is very good. Teachers have an extensive knowledge of the subject. They have a clear understanding of the range and depth of work required at AS and A levels. Very effective lesson planning builds upon students' prior learning and establishes a pathway along which students are led into new areas of experience, understanding and competence. Practical media and equipment are well chosen and prepared to emphasise the learning points. Visual resources and art historical materials are carefully selected to emphasise key areas of learning. For example, a good range of images of Picasso's constructional sculptures were used most effectively in a 3D lesson.
128. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the work of each individual student. The impact of this monitoring is very effective and contributes greatly to the high overall performance of students. Lesson introductions, historical and contextual references, and technical instruction are continually and deliberately linked to aspects of the work of the individual students. Students benefit greatly from this clear and effective relation between their own endeavours and that of other artists and designers. However, some of the critical feedback sessions are limited in time and scope.
129. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are excellent. Students are respectful to the teachers and behave in supportive way towards one another. In lessons, they are attentive in discussions to the views and opinions of their peers. They are careful with one another's work and materials and take responsibility for ensuring the room is left in a good state ready for the next class. Students' sketchbooks and logbooks reveal an energy and commitment to the subject. Many students make independent visits to galleries and museums of art to follow points of personal interest. After-school workshops on, for example, life drawing are well attended.
130. Students have access to a broad-ranging art curriculum and process work such as printmaking. They also have regular opportunities to attend life-drawing classes at the

school. The critical and historical studies element of the course is very well developed. This includes visits to galleries and museums; visiting artists brought into the department; and access to a high level of expertise and art historical knowledge among the members of staff (some of whom are practising artists). Within 2D work, students are able to work on substantial pieces, using board and acrylic paints. Students have opportunities to explore a rich range of modelling and constructional techniques, including claywork, plaster casting and construction in plaster, card, wood, wire frame, metal, cane and paper. Good links between the art and technology departments allow students and teachers some access to metal-handling equipment and other specialist facilities.

131. At the present time students do not have access in the art studios to ICT facilities for either creative work or historical research. However, a digital camera can be booked through the school's central resource facilities and computers in the learning resource centre are accessible.
132. The cultural development of the students is a strong feature of the work of the department. Students are inducted into an appreciation of a wealth of art and artefacts from both European and non-European cultures, from the present day and from the past.
133. The department carries out a close monitoring of the progress and achievement of each student. It has an efficient and effective 'early warning system' regarding student underperformance. Students are given a clear picture of the structure and requirements of the assessment objectives. Students with a special educational need are monitored closely and consequently supported effectively. They do well in this subject. Departmental leadership is very good. Team teaching has been introduced to make full use of the range of specialist expertise. This initiative has impacted positively on student performance.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Results are well above average.
- Very good leadership.
- Teaching is very good, which promotes very good student progress.

Areas for improvement

- Results on investigation examination papers are comparatively low.
- Enhance the quality of the teaching areas by increasing the range of display material.

134. Geography is a popular subject. In each of the last five years, between 14 and 18 students have taken the subject in Year 13. There has been a sharp increase in the number entering the sixth form this year: 39 students are taking the AS course, reflecting the popularity of geography and the number choosing it in Key Stage 4. In both years since the AS course was introduced, two-thirds of the students have continued into Year 13. Very few leave during the sixth form courses. Overall,

roughly equal numbers of girls and boys take geography but there is a marked imbalance from year to year.

135. Standards are well above average. There has been a steady improvement in A-level results and, in 2001, ten of the 17 students who took A level attained the highest grades, A and B. Girls achieve a greater proportion of the higher grades and attain a higher standard overall. The department has an open-access policy and Year 13 students who took A level in 2002 started the course with lower overall grades in their GCSE subjects than previous groups. Nevertheless, they made very good progress in the sixth form so that, when the A-level results were published, six of the 14 students achieved A or B grades and all achieved a pass grade. Results in the AS examinations have also been very good. Standards in the physical environment and human environment papers are high, but lower in the investigation paper. The department is addressing this issue vigorously in its lesson planning. Results for 2002 have yet to be validated and are subject to the review, announced during the week of the inspection.
136. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average, especially in Year 12. Students' attitudes are very good and it is clear that they enjoy learning. They learn very well. They demonstrate very secure recall from earlier lessons: for example, concepts of optimum population in a lesson on China's population policies. Students make very good notes, helped by the teacher capturing the main points of the lesson or discussion on the board. They respond quickly in oral work, especially when questions are addressed to individual students, and discuss issues well in pairs. In written work, a few students in Year 13 did not always relate their Internet research on tourism in Costa Rica and British National Parks to the question that was set. Others did not extend their explanations of coastal processes sufficiently. However, thorough marking ensured that these shortcomings were made clear to the students.
137. The quality of teaching is very good. All the lessons seen were lively and held the students' interest throughout. Teachers' enthusiasm is clearly passed on to their students. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Teachers have high expectations and challenge students very well. A major strength of the teaching is the detail in which lessons are planned in order to guide students towards well-thought-out objectives; aims are made clear to students, lessons are broken into a series of tasks and learning is reviewed at the end. The use of homework tasks, to be completed for the next lesson reinforces what the students have learnt and complements longer-term assignments. Teachers also put a lot of emphasis on developing study skills. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on suburban and urban-fringe developments, students were asked to make notes on two sheets so that they could add to their subject-specific word lists. Teachers mark students' work rigorously and show them very clearly what they should do to make progress. They use assessment data very effectively to set targets for individual students. Another way in which teachers provide excellent support to students is by providing individual tutorials: one girl in Year 13 said, "The teachers are always there for you."
138. The range of learning opportunities is very good. The department has good resources and students are issued with up-to-date textbooks which they do not have to share. Teachers supplement these with their own excellent worksheets and study guides. Students have ample access to ICT facilities that can be used for enquiry work, although the range of texts in the school library for their wider reading is limited. The programme of fieldwork is good but a challenge for the department is to raise attainment in the investigations papers to match the theory papers. Strategies for this have been considered in development planning, and it was clearly evident in a lesson

in which Year 13 students were learning how to select the appropriate quantitative techniques to use in their own coursework. The room in the sixth form suite in which geography is taught provides cramped accommodation, especially for the large Year 12 sets and for group work and practical work. The display areas could be used to greater effect than at the time of the inspection, for example with reference maps at different scales, by topical displays and presentations of students' work. This would also make the teaching area more attractive.

139. The leadership and management of geography are very good. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are excellent and are a main factor in the very good progress since the last inspection. The head of department shares with his colleagues a clear vision of how the subject should develop. He leads a strong team who work hard and share a commitment to raising further the high standards in geography in the sixth form.

History

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables students to achieve well.
- Well-motivated students.
- Very good AS results in 2002.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' questioning techniques, to stretch the more able students.

140. Standards of work seen within the sixth form are above national expectations, with many students exhibiting well-developed historical skills, which enable them to process ideas quickly, and to offer constructive historical interpretations easily.
141. At A level in 2002 all students passed the examination but not so many students achieved the higher grades as in the previous year. However, in terms of the value added to prior attainment, these were good results. Standards have continued to improve since the previous inspection.
142. In the 2002 AS level examinations results were very good; all students passed and about half of the students gained grades at the higher level. This marked a very significant improvement over the previous year. The evidence of written work and classroom observation indicates that this standard of attainment is being maintained in Year 13 and that these students are now achieving standards in advance of national expectations. They research historical evidence and arguments very thoroughly and reach very systematic and logical conclusions in, for example, their analysis of what led to the collapse of the Weimar government in Germany.

143. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work in Year 12 confirm that the students are already confident historians who enthusiastically analyse and debate historical contexts such as those of the early Tudor monarchy and the Era of Appeasement. They understand how to research an historical context by exercising empathy to test out hypotheses, such as a consideration of whether Henry VII was in any realistic sense threatened by his rivals. This performance reflects the capability that they demonstrated in their high levels of GCSE attainment in 2002.
144. The students' personal responses revealed that they had been attracted to the sixth form course as a result of the historical education that they had received earlier. Several indicated that they intended to continue with their historical or archaeological studies into higher education. They felt that they were well supported as individuals by the teachers in their studies.
145. Teaching is always good and often very good; it is based on high levels of subject knowledge and understanding and on careful planning which establishes clear objectives that both challenge the students and ensure a strong pace to learning. The context for this teaching is a curriculum which is offered in a varied and interesting manner. Thinking in role and diagrammatic analysis of historical contexts are good examples of their repertoire. Their assessments are thorough, informative and accurate and these give the students very clear guidance about how they might secure improvement. Consideration of the use of questioning techniques, so as to further challenge students, would enhance this strong position.
146. Leadership is strong and thoughtful. Teaching and learning are well-managed to achieve very good outcomes. These have included a successful implementation of AS examination courses leading to very good results; the development of a new local history case study for A2 coursework; the careful co-ordination of the assessment strategy; and the delivery of consistently high standards of teaching and learning. The result is that these various elements blend together to achieve the constructive atmosphere present in the department.

Religious Studies

147. The focus was on A-level and AS religious studies, but general studies was also sampled. Modules have been introduced which aim to address the key issue of fulfilling the requirements to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. One lesson was observed. This was satisfactory. It included examples of the design of places of worship but these were insufficiently focused on comparing and contrasting sources of inspiration in art and religion. The teacher-led method did not make the best use of time. Students' attitudes were positive, but an opportunity was missed to draw on the students' own experiences to help them reflect using real artefacts from the worlds of art and religion, in favour of rehearsing examination technique.

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

Strengths

- Results in 2002 were well above average.
- Students are achieving very well, many with little prior learning in the course topics.
- Attitudes to the subject are very positive.
- Teaching is very good: secure subject knowledge, with high expectations of students leading to very good learning.
- The subject is very well led with particularly close monitoring of students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that useful strategies to support the weaker students do not slow the pace of teaching for higher attainers, particularly in whole-class teaching.
- Opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through spoken contributions, explanation and argument available in both course topics.

148. The GCE A-level exam results in 2002 were well above average. They were similar to those in 2001, which were in the top five per cent of schools across the country. Students did significantly better in religious studies than in their other subjects. In 2002 all students who took the examination gained a pass grade, and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was also well above average. Male and female students did equally well. One student achieved a merit in the Advanced Extension Award for the most able. In relation to their GCSE results across a broad range, students did at least as well as expected. A few students with modest GCSE results did very well. All students who took the AS examination in 2002 gained a pass grade, with most students gaining better grades than in their other subjects. Overall, students achieve very well.

149. The standards of work of current students are also well above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In work seen, they provide full explanations of practices in Islam, clearly set out for later retrieval. This is an essential requirement in a course which features the linking of their work on Islam with their work on ethics. Learning goals are understood by all students and reflected in their range of work. They use specialist language, evidence, examples and argument with increasing confidence and accuracy. In ethics, students' work on crime and punishment shows that they have researched the subject. They are able to consider others' ideas with their own and apply them to issues of deterrence in general. More capable students select information about Islam to produce helpful, concise summaries for themselves and others. They illustrate their answers well, using appropriate references. They organise their work about ethical issues well. They give their own opinions while identifying the sources of different views.

150. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but they are achieving at least as well as expected as a result of effective teaching and planning which provide early routines and very good support for learning skills. In one lesson, they were making relevant notes, taking into account the different information required for examination answers. They each have a copy of the appropriate text book to reinforce their learning through independent study. Students are aware of their expected grades. Their work also includes evidence of research on the Internet. Students have opportunities to express their views on how well they are doing at regular intervals and they value the skills they are acquiring.

151. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. Teachers have very good knowledge of the course and the examination requirements and this makes students confident. Teachers give clear explanations, passing on very good strategies for organising and preparing for written tasks. Students' improving skills are evident in the way they use their increasing knowledge, and in the literacy and accuracy of their written work. Good introductions and endings of lessons ensure students are clear about what is expected of them. Teachers' expectations are high. Teachers share the scheme of work with students so they can always catch up if absent for any reason. However, some lessons are led throughout by the teacher. In these lessons, teachers work at the pace of the weaker students and do not provide sufficient challenge to the more capable. Lack of monitoring of tasks and note-taking in lessons means some students start other written tasks from a less secure base of knowledge. Teachers' emphasis on examination requirements occasionally limits opportunities for contributions and initiative by students and limits their enjoyment. Many students start the Islam course with little or no prior knowledge and do not know where to look for first-hand experience of Muslim people, places and artefacts in communities beyond the school.
152. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles that they experience. Students work well together.
153. The subject is very well led and managed. The new course has been established well. There is a commitment to high standards in the subject, with all students given targets and provided with helpful routines from the start of the course. Students' progress is monitored regularly and linked to grades, and marking is accompanied by helpful comments on how to improve. Students have adequate practice in extended writing and examination questions to familiarise themselves with what is required and to reflect on their own needs. Individual tutorial support is offered to each student during the course. Students' performances are carefully analysed. Accommodation and resources are good.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Assessment and tracking of students' progress are thorough and systematic.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to take initiative and develop their ideas in lessons.
- Comparison and evaluation of different psychological perspectives and research methods.
- Subject specific monitoring of teaching.

154. Psychology was introduced into the sixth form in 2000 and the subject has rapidly grown in popularity with 28 candidates at GCE Advanced level (A2) in 2002 and 46 students currently preparing for examination in 2003. Retention rates from AS level are very high.
155. Standards at the end of both Years 12 and 13 are above average. This is reflected both in recent A and AS-level examination results, and in the students' work seen during the inspection. Students were entered for A2-level examinations for the first time in 2002, and a high proportion gained the highest grades of A and B, in line with their above average standards in the AS-level examinations in 2001. The AS results in 2002 were slightly weaker, reflecting students' poorer performance in the theory paper than in practical work. The department is addressing this issue. Students achieve well given that they have no prior experience of the subject at the beginning of the course. They perform as well in psychology as in other subjects. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls.
156. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a range of psychological concepts and research methodology and are mostly confident in judging the value of these, adopting a critical stance especially in terms of the nature of samples used and the validity of experiments. This was particularly well shown in a year 12 lesson on the psychometric testing of innate ability. At a very early stage of their study, students demonstrated a very good grasp of the weaknesses in the psychometric testing of United States of America army recruits in World War 1. They also demonstrated a good understanding of the ethical considerations associated with experimental research.
157. Students develop good skills in structuring and writing practical reports. Their assignments are well structured and use appropriate terminology. They provide clear descriptions of projects and their findings and good descriptions of the psychological basis of the study. They also reflect good understanding of the importance of good investigative design and procedures in experiments, and of the need for these to be capable of replication. However, while students have a sound grasp of the range and nature of psychological methodology, their in-depth understanding of individual research studies, and their ability to compare and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these, is weaker. Folders are well organised and contain useful information for revision, but there is little evidence of independent research and note-taking.
158. Students enjoy psychology. They relish the opportunity to engage in a new area of study and work hard in lessons. Many are very keen to contribute their ideas but many others tend to be compliant rather than avid, proactive learners. Their personal development is well supported by the very good class relationships and the constant requirement to understand human feelings, and consider the impact of human action on others.
159. Students respond very well to lively and purposeful teaching. Teaching and learning are good. This is evident from the lessons seen, planning documents and the students' work. They make rapid progress because of the skilful sharing of the teachers' good subject knowledge, clarity of explanation and reinforcement of key points. Teachers plan and structure lessons well so that they meet specific learning objectives and help students to learn at a good pace. The strong emphasis on the development of psychological research methods enables students to develop their own investigative skills well. In a Year 13 lesson, for instance, students made rapid progress in understanding the different types of research design, and the need to

prepare a testable hypothesis, in their preparation of a written report. Teachers give particular attention to the use of psychological terminology and provide clear guidance for writing reports of a scientific nature. However, they give insufficient attention to the comparison of different psychological perspectives. This restricts students' knowledge and their capacity to evaluate relative views.

160. Students are helped to organise their work by the setting of clear time schedules. Teachers mark work well and give clear guidance for the improvement of homework assignments. They constantly check students' understanding in lessons by questioning and monitoring. Their use of seminar approaches helps students to contribute their ideas. However, questioning is often insufficiently probing and does not challenge to expand their initial responses. As a result, students do not always deepen their understanding or engage in learning of a higher order. Similarly, there are too few opportunities for students to explore issues and topics in depth for themselves, through, for example, group discussion and preparation of their findings for the whole class.
161. Students' progress is monitored closely through systematic assessment procedures which are well integrated into teaching and learning, and linked to course learning objectives. Assignments are regularly and rigorously assessed against examination criteria, and outcomes used to track students' progress, inform teaching, and set targets for improvement.
162. Homework is used well to extend learning and to promote independent study and research skills. Research in lessons and in students' own study time is well supported by up-to-date materials and the use of ICT.
163. The good provision for psychology results from good leadership and management. The enthusiastic and lively leadership of the teacher responsible for the subject, working in close partnership with another teacher of the subject, provides a very clear direction for work in psychology. Courses are well planned and structured. Schemes of work provide very good guidance for teaching and learning. The curriculum provides good breadth, balance and relevance and is kept under constant review, along with all other forms of provision. Teaching is regularly monitored within the school's arrangements for performance management, but the value of monitoring in supporting improvement is lessened by insufficient subject-specific focus. Much has been achieved in a short time, which is reflected in students' enthusiasm and good achievement in the subject, and in the continuing improvements in provision.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Strengths

- Current standards in A-level English are above average, especially in English literature.
- Teachers' very good knowledge of their subject allows them to extend students' learning well.
- Teachers' marking is very detailed and provides students with clear advice about how to improve.
- The department monitors students' work carefully, to ensure that they achieve at least as well as expected.

Areas for improvement:

- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities in lessons for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Planning of work to ensure better continuity when teachers share classes.
- Monitoring of teaching to develop a wider range of teaching methods.

164. A-level results in English literature in 2000 were above the national average. In 2001 they were close to the national average and results were of a similar standard in 2002, with all students gaining passes. Students achieved well, by comparison with their previous GCSE results. In English language, A-level results have been broadly average in all recent years. They were similar in 2002. No students gained the highest grade, but most achieved as well as expected. In AS examinations, results in 2001 were better in literature than in English language. All students passed English literature and a good proportion gained the highest grades, whereas not all passed English language. Results were similar in 2002. Most students achieve at least as well as expected and the AS courses equip them to continue to study successfully at A level. Once committed to courses, nearly all students complete them.
165. Year 13 students have just begun their A-level courses but they are already achieving above average standards, especially in English literature, where they are building well on their success at AS level. They have a thorough knowledge of the plot and characters in novels they are studying. They are very aware of the historical and social background of texts. For example, they were able to refer to the Jazz Age and discuss Jay Gatsby as the embodiment of the American Dream in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. A visit to Canterbury helped students to understand the background to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. They explained this in carefully planned, well-structured essays. However, only higher attaining students are able to analyse in any depth the way writers use language for effect. In English language, current standards in Year 13 are just above average. Students analyse a wide range of texts with understanding, including transcripts of conversations they have recorded. They have a good grasp of specialist vocabulary but some are unsure about how to organise and structure their response to texts. When analysing their own transcripts, they omit details of interaction between speakers, such as stressed syllables and pauses in the dialogue. As a result, some analyses are not as comprehensive as they might be. Low attaining students make errors of syntax and grammar in their own writing.

166. Standards of current Year 12 students are broadly average, but students have a wide range of attainment on entry to AS courses. High attaining English language students can identify and discuss typical features of mass-produced romantic fiction, such as the overuse of cliché in description. In English literature they can explain the complexity of Shylock's motives in *The Merchant of Venice* and explore alternative interpretations of his character. Low attaining students lack confidence and read aloud very quietly. They have difficulty in synthesising their views or summarising evidence in their essays. Some do not integrate quotations into their essays and slip into an inappropriately informal writing style. However, all are making good progress from their prior GCSE level of work, at this early stage of the year.
167. The quality of teaching is good and enables all students to learn well. Teachers have a very good knowledge of set texts and methods of textual analysis. As a result, they give clear explanations and ask good, precise questions in class discussions that help to extend students' understanding. Teachers' marking is very good and supportive. They provide detailed notes and advice on most pieces of assessed work. They show their high expectations of students by providing guidance for the further improvement of work that is already of a good standard. As a result, students know how well they are doing but also understand how they can gain even better grades. Teachers plan lessons carefully, making frequent reference to assessment objectives so that students are always aware of what they need to achieve. They often use homework well to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning by preparing work for a forthcoming lesson. However, especially in large classes of up to 24 students, students have insufficient opportunity to take such responsibility. A lack of variety of teaching methods and too much teacher-led discussion prevent students from developing a personal response to texts. In particular, lower attaining students do not develop confidence in their own ability to analyse what they read, and rely on the teachers' views instead. One exception to this was observed in a lesson about Owen's poem *Dulce et Decorum est*. Students first shared their own research about life in the First World War trenches. They then discussed different questions about the text in small groups before presenting their ideas to the rest of the class, who took notes and responded with further discussion. As a result, all developed and shared a personal response to the poem, with sensitive guidance from the teacher when needed.
168. Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They are attentive and conscientious, although they rarely express strong views about the texts they read. They especially appreciate the clear advice that teachers provide when they mark their work and the way in which they keep them well informed about their progress.
169. Effective leadership and management of the department help students to achieve well. The progress of individual students is very closely monitored. The head of department evaluates achievement each year and this leads to realistic, effective plans to improve standards. The work of teachers in the department is regularly monitored but there is insufficient focus on developing a wider range of teaching methods to meet all students' needs. There are several part-time teachers in the department and some classes are taught by three teachers. Planning for these classes is unsatisfactory, as students occasionally duplicate work that they have already completed with another teacher.

Modern Languages

170. In September, the head of German was appointed overall head of languages. Languages are becoming increasingly popular in the Sixth Form, with several dual linguists.

German

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

Strengths

- Level of teacher knowledge and expertise.
- Work experience abroad.

Areas for improvement

- To share teaching and learning strategies across the department.
- To promote independent learning.

171. The number of students opting for German in the sixth form is steadily increasing. On the basis of relatively small cohort numbers, attainment at AS and A levels is overall in line with expectations.

172. During the inspection week, standards in lessons were good and students are making good progress as a result of good teaching. Year 13 students have a secure grammatical understanding. They are able to use the conditional and subjunctive confidently and acquire difficult vocabulary and structures. Listening skills are good, as a result of good understanding and learning techniques to pick out the relevant facts required in answers. Two very contrasting Year 12 lessons were seen. These highlighted problems students encounter in the transition from the more structured teaching at GCSE to the evaluative techniques required at sixth form level. The level of language used in a text on social relationships was lost on many students. The concepts proved too difficult and confidence was lacking. As a result, the topic had to be approached in a different way, but, by then, the pace of the lesson was very slow and laborious. In another lesson, the topic, "The rights of young people in England and Germany," was nearer to their hearts. Different methodology was successfully used and students interacted and shared ideas. Scrutiny of work provided evidence of the high standards of work being achieved. Year 12 students organise their files well and cover a vast amount of new work to bridge the gap from Year 11. They consolidate new grammar and keep copious notes on course requirements and a variety of topics. Year 13 students draft and re-draft their work and respond well to teachers' detailed comments on how to improve. Teachers set and mark homework regularly. They set open-ended tasks which suit all abilities.

173. Teaching was good overall and some very good teaching was seen. Three lessons were observed. In the best lesson seen, which was on racism, the planning was such that there was a gradual build up of knowledge and students were fully involved. They were constantly challenged and the pace was brisk. The teacher used German throughout and his enthusiasm rubbed off on the students. Students were made to think for themselves. One satisfactory lesson was very much teacher led. Progress here was laboured, as the text was difficult and important steps were omitted in the planning and delivery of the lesson. The teachers' command of the German language and use in lesson delivery are excellent. Teaching is not currently monitored by specialist linguists as there are few opportunities to observe each other. This would

help ensure that planning is at the appropriate level for the group. The teachers work well together and share ideas. Students' confidence would be boosted, if some of the excellent teaching methods used lower down the school were used in the sixth form, for example, Power Point presentations and the use of the interactive whiteboard. This could have the advantage of promoting independent learning, which is essential at this level.

174. Teachers make good use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and set appropriate targets. Students are positive about their studies. Work experience in Germany is an added bonus and strength of the course. The subject is well managed and schemes of work are up to date. Authentic and appropriate study materials have been carefully selected, which are of interest to the students.

French

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

Strengths

- Staff expertise.
- Use of French in lesson delivery.

Areas for improvement

- To arrange work experience abroad.
- To continue to focus on confidence building, in particular in oral work.

175. On the basis of relatively small numbers, attainment is broadly in line with expectations, at both AS and A levels.

176. Standards seen in lessons were good. In Year 13, the more able students were able to speak confidently and fluently. Some still lack confidence, but, in a debate on crime and punishment, all inhibitions were forgotten, as people voiced opinions, at times quite vehemently. The teacher added encouragement. There were errors, but who cared? This was a 'fun' exercise, which brought out important issues and everyone was made to feel that their contributions were valued. The quality of written work varies. The more able use complex structures and sophisticated language, whilst some give minimal answers, with a higher degree of inaccuracy. The Year 12 students are already working to a high standard. Students find the transition from GCSE difficult, but everyone is motivated and keen to succeed. Students new to the school are also settling in well. Oral presentations are already being prepared to present to the group. This is no mean feat, but the result is a 'feel good factor', as the teacher adds encouragement and guides the students.

177. Teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was observed. Three lessons were seen. The teachers were role models in using French throughout. Teachers provide a stimulating environment and steep the lesson in the native language. This has the advantage of making everyone listen and try to understand. Teachers ensure students clearly understand oral, aural and written texts. Their teaching is explicit. They use mime, synonyms and rephrase sentences to help students' understanding. Students respond well to these challenges and high expectations. Teachers use a variety of methods to motivate the students, such as formal debate. Homework is regularly set and marked in depth. Teachers make good use of assessment data to monitor individual students. The teachers are committed and lessons are well planned to cater for all needs.

178. The subject is well managed, with up-to-date schemes of work in place. Work experience, which will further enrich studies, is at planning stage. Independent study could be further encouraged by the use in study time of the Internet to research topics.