

INSPECTION REPORT

BELPER SCHOOL

Belper

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112989

Headteacher: Mr. Trevor Harding

Reporting inspector: Linda Humphreys

7956

Dates of inspection: 27th – 31st January 2003

Inspection number: 249744

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	John O'Gaunt's Way Off Kilburn Road Belper
Postcode:	DE56 1RZ
Telephone number:	01773 825281
Fax number:	01773 820875
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Alan Eccleston
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7956	L. Humphreys	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? What should the school do to improve further?
14032	M. L. Saunders	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8756	P. Hanage	Sixth form co-ordinator	Mathematics Educational inclusion	
10316	N. Bertram	Team inspector	Geography	How well the school is led and managed?
23480	M. Harding	Team inspector	Citizenship (11-16) Religious education (11-16)	
11044	J. Hedge	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs Drama (sixth form)	
22906	B. Hodgson	Team inspector	Physical education (11-16)	
24127	J. Kidd	Team inspector	History (11-16)	
18989	B. Mason	Team inspector	English	
23246	J. Mitchell	Team inspector	Science Physics (sixth form)	
23308	J. Morrell	Team inspector	Music (11-16)	
12336	M. Overend	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)	
31129	J. Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design (11-16)	
24887	Y. Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) German (sixth form) Provision for students with English as an additional language	
17923	M. Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4417	P. Stevens	Team inspector	Links with the community	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
13189	P. Walton	Team inspector	Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections
Grasshoppers
1 Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	14
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	17
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	27
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	28
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	32
LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY	33
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	35
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	41
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	66

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Belper School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18, serving the town of Belper and the surrounding rural area. The school is bigger than most, and is oversubscribed. It has grown by about 300 students since the last inspection, and is now unable to accept as many students from outside the area as it did. Nine per cent of students are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. There are very few students from ethnic minority groups, only six of whom speak English as an additional language. The attainment of students when they enter the school has been average, but in 2002 is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including those with statements of need, is below average. The school has been a Technology college for eight years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which fulfils its aims as a technology college both in school and in the community. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good, and very good relationships play a significant part in the school's success. The school is very well led and management is good. Since the last inspection standards have improved at age 14 and in the sixth form, and the proportion of GCSE A*-C grades has increased, although the overall rate of improvement in GCSE is below the national trend. This is all achieved on a broadly average income, and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Relationships are very good and are instrumental in good teaching and learning.
- Students are well behaved, keen to learn and enjoy school.
- The school is very well led and well managed.
- The school fulfils its role as a technology college very well.

What could be improved

- There are fewer than average A* and A grades in 2002 GCSE examinations.
- There is inconsistency in how departments assess work, interpret results, track progress and set targets
- Teaching is not always observed rigorously enough to improve its quality.
- The new citizenship course is not well organised.
- Reports to parents do not always focus on attainment as well as attitudes.
- There is no religious education in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1997, the popularity of the school has increased to where it is now oversubscribed. Standards have improved, particularly at age 14 and in the sixth form, and the rising trend of results at age 14 is above the national upward trend. There has been improvement in all the issues for action identified by the last inspection, although some, such as assessment, appraisal and what is expected of some students in some lessons, need further improvement. Students aged 11 to 16 are now taught religious education, but not sixth formers, and there is still no act of worship, although many assemblies are profoundly spiritual experiences, and provision for students' spiritual development has improved. Links with the community have been strengthened and extended significantly. Improvement is good.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Results are strong at age 14 and in the sixth form and achievement is good. Results in national tests at age 14 in 2002 and in AS- and A-levels in 2001 are well above average. GCSE results are weaker: although the proportion of A*-C grades in 2002 is above average, there were fewer A* and A grades, and higher attaining students underachieved in some subjects. As a result, the average points scored in GCSE are much the same as the national average but well below the average in schools whose students' attainment in national tests in 2000 was the same as in Belper School. Over the past five years, results at age 14 have risen faster than nationally, but GCSE results have not risen as fast as other schools. The standards seen during the inspection are above average and students of all ages achieve well. The school sets realistically challenging targets, but just failed to meet them in 2002.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students are eager to learn and diligent workers. They also enjoy extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of students behave well. The level of permanent exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students are mature and responsible, and relationships are a strength underpinning much of the school's success.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average: students like coming to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

For students aged 11 to 16, the teaching in English and mathematics is good, and it is satisfactory in science. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught: most subjects develop these skills well. Students use language accurately and have good numeracy skills. The strengths of teaching at all ages are very productive relationships, effective questioning and teachers' knowledge of their subjects. The school meets the needs of students well for the most part, but there is sometimes not enough support for lower attaining students, and sometimes more could be demanded of higher attainers. Students acquire knowledge and skills at a good rate, and learn to think and reason.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well balanced and offers a broad experience, enhanced by the school's technology college status. Requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) in art and design are not met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory for younger students: provision in Year 7 is narrow and does not address the range of needs. Good for older students.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Students receive good personal support. In-class support is good, but not enough attention is given to progress in speaking and listening
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good for spiritual and cultural development and very good for moral and social development. The trust and quality of relationships evident in school contribute to this well.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Care for students' welfare is very good. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, but there are inconsistencies between subjects, and not enough tracking of the progress of groups.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good, although reports are not consistently good in giving information about what students can do.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives very good leadership, and management is good. Development planning is based on accurate evaluation of the school's work and sets sensible direction for the school's future.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school well, and take an active part in evaluating the school's success and planning for its future. Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship, religious education in the sixth form and ICT in art and design are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall, but some subjects are less adept than others at evaluating results and the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Funding is used well, and technology college status has benefited the school and its community in many ways. The school ensures best value in contracts. and costs but does not compare itself widely enough. The school provides good value for money.

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 like school • children make good progress • they feel comfortable about asking about questions or problems • the school's high expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework • information about children's progress • the school does not work closely enough with parents

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views, and also agree that reports are not always informative enough. However, during the inspection week, the team saw homework being set in accordance with the homework policy and found evidence of the school working well with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Belper School sixth form is much the same size as sixth forms in most schools, with 129 students in Year 12 and 49 in Year 13, which is about 25 more than when the school was last inspected. Numbers of boys and girls are much the same in Year 12, but there are only two thirds as many boys as girls in Year 13. Most students choose to continue into the sixth form, which offers AS, A-level and a few vocational courses. The students in the sixth form reflect the nature of the school population as a whole. Access to the sixth form is open, and attainment when students begin sixth form courses is average. Over half of students continue into higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very good sixth form. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are above average, and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and the range of courses has been increased to meet students' needs. Students are well supported. The sixth form is very well led and well managed, and is cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Relationships and students' personal development are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good, and students are well supported.
- The sixth form is very well led and well managed.

What could be improved

- There is no religious education.
- The provision for key skills is not well managed.
- Teaching is not observed rigorously enough.

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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Very good teaching and learning contribute to above average standards. Students enjoy the subject, and numbers are increasing.
Physics	Satisfactory. Attitudes and relationships are good. Physics is well led and good use is made of ICT. Some teaching does not meet all students' needs well.
Design and technology	Good. Very good teaching and learning lead to above average attainment and achievement. Students are highly motivated.
Business education	Good. Students' progress is very well tracked. ICT and links with business are used well.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Information and communication technology	Good. Consistently good teaching enables students to make good progress in this new course.
Drama and theatre studies	Very good. Teaching is very good and students have a very mature approach, so they achieve very well.
Geography	Good. Good teaching develops students' research and analytical skills.
English literature	Good. Good teaching and students' attitudes lead to above average attainment.
German	Good. Teachers' use of German develops students' above average speaking and listening skills.

Teaching and learning were generally good in the lessons sampled in other subjects. The sixth form studies programme includes personal, social and health education, citizenship and key skills. Teaching and learning in these lessons varied considerably from excellent to unsatisfactory. The best lessons used the context of issues close to students' hearts to develop learning very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well supported in most respects. Careers provision is in the midst of change following changes in local careers provision.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and well managed. Governors and senior staff know its strengths and weaknesses well and plan sensibly for its development. Not enough attention is paid to observing teaching in some areas to check its quality.

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 for help • the choice of courses • students are well taught and challenged • help is given to study independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice about future options • information about their progress • they do not have access to helpful and constructive advice • the way the school responds to students' views • they are not treated as responsible young adults

The inspection team does not agree with some of the students' views.

The inspection found:

- that the 6th form prospectus, whilst brief, was clear in providing information.
- that individual support and advice to students is helpful and constructive, and available from both form tutors and subject tutors.
- that students are kept well informed of their progress
- that there is a good range of activities and enrichment opportunities
- that students are treated as responsible adults by staff.

However, the inspection findings confirm the students' views that careers advice and guidance and help with university applications could be improved, and that, whilst there are many mechanisms for listening to sixth formers' views, the school does not always communicate clearly what actions they have taken in response to these.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Since the last inspection, the level of students' attainment when they enter the school in Year 7 has improved. At that time attainment on entry was average, whereas in 2002 it is above average.

2. Standards of work at all ages are above average. The key factors in this are the school's ethos, which encourages every individual, the good teaching and students' diligence and eagerness to work.

3. Results in 2002 national tests in English and science are well above the national average, and above average in mathematics. These results are well above the average in schools in similar economic circumstances, and also well above the average in schools with similar attainment at age 11, with science results particularly high. Since 1998, these results have risen at a faster rate than the national trend. Girls' results are above the girls' average by a greater margin than boys' results are above their average. Teachers' assessments of students' performance in other subjects vary greatly from subject to subject. It is apparent that these assessments are not accurate in some subjects, and few secure conclusions can be drawn.

4. Differences between girls and boys were less evident in the work seen during the inspection. Inspection evidence indicates that, at age 14, standards are above average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science: the school's careful provision for revision helps students to do well in national tests. Attainment in art and design, modern foreign languages and religious education is above average, and attainment in other subjects is in line with the national average, except in ICT, where attainment is below average reflecting students' low attainment in this subject when they enter the school. Achievement is good in most subjects, notably in English, mathematics and science, but also in art and design, drama, ICT, modern foreign languages, and religious education.

5. Students with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other students and achieve well in most subjects at ages 14 and 16. In Years 7, 8 and 9, where students are taught in mixed ability groups, this is because teachers ensure that work is well adapted to individual needs. Students with statements of need are supported in class by educational care officers and also make good progress. Small numbers of students are withdrawn from lessons for additional support according to need and achieve well given their starting point. For example, in Year 7, students who have difficulties with spelling are withdrawn from mainstream lessons once weekly to follow a spelling programme, and last year about two thirds of these students improved their spelling age significantly.

6. Over the four years from 1998 to 2001, the school's GCSE results remained above the national average, but have been fairly static and have not risen as fast as has happened nationally. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades has steadily increased. However, in 2002, despite an above average proportion of A*-C grades, the school's results as a whole were just in line with national results. In some subjects, fewer A* and A grades were gained than nationally. Boys did significantly better than girls. The relative scores of boys and girls have fluctuated over the past four years, and no clear pattern emerges. The only factor of which the school is aware is that there was a group of girls who did not take the examinations seriously, some even failing to attend examinations. Results in 2002 are affected by the

inclusion of seven students who no longer attended the school by the examination period. When results are calculated taking this into account, the school's results are higher.

7. When this school's results are compared with the results in schools in similar economic circumstances, the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A*-C is above average, but the proportion gaining five or more grades A*-G, and the average points scored by students, are average. When recalculated to take account of the students no longer attending the school, results are well above average. In comparison with schools where students gained similar scores in Key Stage 3 tests in 2000, although the percentage gaining five or more grades A*-C is average, the other results are below average. When account is taken of the students no longer attending, A*-C and A*-G measures are above average, but the average points score is still well below other schools, which reflects the lower proportion of the highest grades in some subjects.

8. Whilst results in some subjects, such as art and design, design and technology, English, English literature, German, humanities, short course religious education and science are above average, results in mathematics and French are average, and drama, geography, history and physical education results are below average. The school believes that staffing difficulties in design and technology and mathematics influenced the results obtained. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are above average overall, but that there are significant differences between standards in different subjects. Achievement is good overall, but students do not achieve satisfactorily in geography. Four students with statements of special need achieved at least 3 GCSE passes last year.

9. Throughout, the very small number of students from ethnic minorities, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as their peers. Students with special needs also achieve well, as do students with particular gifts and talents in most subjects. The exceptions include art and design and music, where talented students are less well catered for.

10. Students' standards in speaking are good. They are involved in class discussion in most subjects. Students address adult visitors to the school with courtesy and clarity, and in standard English. The vast majority listen with attention and understanding to one another and to their teachers. Overall standards in reading are good. The quality of students' written work, however, is more variable. An effective English course on grammar develops students' writing in Year 7. However, although most subjects encourage writing for a range of purposes, and most students produce good work, there is no consistency of approach to the correction of technical errors. Students' work in a small minority of subjects often remains unmarked, and not all subjects keep track of students' written work rigorously enough.

11. Students' skills in numeracy are above average. They generally have the necessary skills and techniques to help them to make at least satisfactory progress in other subjects; in some subjects such as design and technology and science, their skills help them to progress more quickly. For example, in design and technology students can measure and draw well, so their accuracy improves the quality of finished products. Numeracy skills are used well in geography to draw graphs and interpret information from a variety of sources, and in ICT in using spreadsheets and interpreting graphs. Students calculate accurately, and interpret and represent data in science. Sixth form students of business education make very good use of numeracy; their key skills in this area contribute to their overall progress.

12. Students enter the school with below average ICT skills, but they are taught to use a very wide range of ICT applications, and they rapidly acquire the competence and confidence to use ICT to help them learn in most subjects. Many are particularly skilled in using the Internet and the school's intranet for research.

Sixth form

13. When the school was inspected, national data for 2002 sixth form examinations were not available, and so the school's results cannot be compared to other schools. However, the school's results in AVCE, AS- and A-level examinations in 2001 are well above average: boys' results were above the average for boys', and girls' results were very high. These results represent very high achievement by those students based on their prior attainment. Most 16 year old students choose to continue their education in the school's sixth form, and retention rates on courses are good.

14. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall, but vary between well above average standards in mathematics to average standards in a number of subjects. Achievement is good, again with some variation between subjects. Achievement is very good in design and technology and drama, where some students have no experience of the subject before joining the course, and satisfactory in German and physics, where students are reaching standards that might be expected from their previous attainment.

15. Sixth form students have good skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and their numeracy skills support their work in other subjects well. All are very adept at using ICT for research and for presenting their work, and can use computers where they need to handle and analyse data.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. A significant strength of the school is the very good quality of relationships throughout the school community. Students address staff using their first name and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect between adults and students. This also contributes to the very good personal development of students, who are mature and articulate young people with a clear sense of responsibility toward each other and the wider community. A significant minority of sixth form students complained, in responses to their questionnaire, that the school fails to treat them as responsible young adults. However, the school treats students as responsible young people from the beginning, and so students may notice less difference in the sixth form than in some other schools. The school successfully fulfils its aims for students' personal development.

17. Students respond well to the many opportunities provided to consider the views of others and to understand and reflect upon human emotion and existence. For example, in a Year 10 citizenship lesson, students demonstrated an awareness of different perspectives when discussing the sentencing of criminals with a visiting magistrate. In a house assembly, students listened very attentively and with great interest to a sensitive presentation about anger.

18. Students' attitudes to the school are good, and most parents report that their children enjoy school. Students themselves speak positively about their experience of school and welcome the wide range of activities available to them. A significant number of students participate in extra-curricular activities and all appreciate the enrichment week held in the summer each year which is designed to ensure that all students can participate in a range of activities. Students are diligent workers.

19. Students appreciate that the school values everyone as an individual and see this as an important contribution to the low levels of bullying within the school. When bullying does occur, they are confident that in most cases this is dealt with effectively. Parents support this view, and parental satisfaction with the standard of behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Behaviour is good. Movement around the school out of lessons is very orderly and students queue sensibly at lunchtime for the canteen. Most students have access to classrooms before school and during breaks, demonstrating their trustworthiness. There are very occasional examples of poor behaviour in some lessons. The level of permanent exclusions is low and fixed term exclusions are used appropriately as part of the school's behaviour management policy.

20. Students with special needs are fully integrated into the work of the school. Their relationships with their peers and with teachers are good and, as a consequence, they have a good measure of self-esteem. They are well motivated, take their work seriously and are keen to make progress. They behave very well.

21. Attendance for the year 2001-2002 is above the national average and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. As at the time of the last inspection, a very small number of students with a poor level of attendance affect these figures significantly. Students are punctual at the start of the day and most lessons start promptly.

Sixth form

22. Sixth form students have equally positive attitudes to the school, and a large proportion of students choose to continue in school after GCSE examinations. The vast majority of those who responded to the questionnaire enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others. Students' attendance is good.

23. Relationships in the sixth form are very good, as elsewhere. Students give their time to service, such as helping in lessons with younger students, and house and school councils. They develop personal learning skills through independent research, and teaching helps them to become lively and independent thinkers who are interested in a wide range of subjects and ideas. They appreciate teachers' efforts to further their development: spontaneous applause followed a thought provoking sixth form assembly which considered 'despair' and how to confront it. Aspects of the personal, social and health education course prepare them for independent life in higher education and employment.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory, and two thirds of teaching is at least good. Just under a tenth is very good and there are several examples of excellent teaching. There is more very good and excellent teaching after the age of 14.

25. The most significant factor in the success of teaching and learning in this school is the quality of relationships in nearly all lessons. The school's ethos is evident in the way staff and students work together, and every student is made to feel that his or her contribution is valued. Clear mutual respect boosts students' self-esteem and enables them to venture ideas without fearing failure or ridicule. Discussion and sessions where both teachers and students ask and answer questions are among the most productive learning experiences.

26. On the whole students are eager to learn, quick to settle to work and very willing to concentrate and try hard. Students are well managed. The small number who do not behave are generally well dealt with, and enthusiasm is also well directed into productive channels. This is a feature of drama teaching, where students learn to work with self-discipline and confidence, so they are not afraid to experiment and learn from their mistakes.

27. Many teachers use questioning very effectively. A short sequence of questions often helps students to quickly focus at the beginning of mathematics lessons. In many lessons teachers use questioning to find out if students have enough grasp of the work to move on to the next stage. Sometimes teachers ask challenging questions, such as how? and why? to make students really think, and through discussion and asking their own questions students refine their ideas and deepen their understanding. For example, in a history lesson on the American West, questions encouraged students to distinguish fact from opinion. In religious education lessons, open questions allow the whole range of students in mixed ability classes to contribute at their own level. Students' interest in their work often prolongs questioning into productive discussion.

28. The majority of teachers know their subjects well, and plan carefully to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject. For example, skill was shown in presenting mathematical ideas and methods in ways that helped the wide range of attainers in mixed ability classes to learn equally well. In an art and design lesson where students worked in sketchbooks, the teacher used her very good subject knowledge to pass on information, guidance and constructive criticism, and students adapted their work accordingly. Insistence on correct use of technical language in design and technology clarifies students' understanding of design processes. ICT teachers' familiarity with the school's intranet means that they use the materials well to help students learn new skills. Modern foreign languages teachers' excellent language skills provide a model for students, which helps them acquire good speaking skills. In music, teachers' very good knowledge and practical experience are evident in the guidance for practical work, as well as the advice during activities, which allows students to know how to improve. Demonstrations by teachers in drama show students how to express themselves with the body as well as the voice. In many cases, this good knowledge ensures clarity of understanding.

29. In most subjects, methods and activities are well chosen to cater for the varying needs of students in groups with a wide range of ability, and everyone can make progress at an appropriate rate. However, in some subjects, including art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT and music, higher attaining students are not taught in such a way as to enable them to reach the highest standards. In mixed ability classes in Years 7, 8 and 9, students with special educational needs mostly make good progress because teachers adapt work carefully to their needs. There is good practice in history, for example, where teachers know their students well and use modified materials sensitively and effectively. However, in ICT, activities are not adequately adapted for these students and there is not enough support. This lack of support sometimes affects lower attaining students in other subjects too, as teachers cannot devote enough time to helping individuals. Educational care officers play a valuable role in supporting students with special educational needs, but sometimes the style of the lesson means that support is not well used, and educational care officers do not always act on their own initiative enough. A number of students from all year groups are withdrawn from mainstream lessons for teaching in the learning base. Although students benefit from this teaching or intensive support in small groups or one to one, the range of materials is dull and the focus of support often very narrow. Students with special needs in Years 10 and 11 following the certificate of achievement course are well taught. Work is well planned with a broad range of tasks to sustain students' interest. Teaching focuses well on students' difficulties with basic literacy.

30. The availability of research resources on the school's intranet and the ready access to the Internet are used well by teachers to give students chances to work independently to find information. The school's good provision of computers means that teachers in most subjects routinely include ICT activities to enhance learning. Work in subjects such as design and technology, geography and science develops students' practical skills and enables them to learn through investigation and discovery. For example, in a graphics lesson to design an Internet café, students came to increased understanding of scale through taking measurements of their classroom.

31. Marking varies in quality. Some is not regular or conscientious, but in other instances, work is marked with useful comments on its quality and what would make it better. Most teachers are aware of how students are performing on a day-to-day basis and use this knowledge to plan ahead, but few subjects refer to National Curriculum levels to show students how well they are doing and what the next level requires. Some subjects, including the new citizenship course, do not track students' attainment and progress accurately.

32. Time and resources are generally well used, and homework extends classwork satisfactorily in most subjects.

33. The relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed in a number of subjects with students of different ages. There are no common major shortcomings, but in several instances, the planning and organisation did not give students good chances to learn. Sometimes this was because the activities were not well suited to the range of students' needs in the group, and sometimes because teachers spent time with some students at the expense of others. On one occasion, controlling disruptive students took time away from ensuring the rest were progressing.

34. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, this is again due to several reasons. The new citizenship course is largely taught by form tutors and, although some teaching is very good, some tutors lack expertise. This is sometimes true in religious education. Occasionally students are less cooperative than they might be. Sometimes the initial pace of a lesson is allowed to slow. Occasionally in lessons which suit most students the needs of the highest and lowest attainers are neglected.

Sixth form

35. Teaching in the sixth form is good. There is more very good and excellent teaching than in Years 7 to 9, but much the same as in Years 10 and 11. The strengths of teaching in the sixth form are similar to those observed in earlier years. The respectful relationships which underpin younger students' learning are equally effective here in giving students confidence to volunteer ideas and think their way through things. The quality of relationships is very productive in encouraging drama students, especially boys, to overcome inhibitions to perform.

36. Teachers know their subject very well, as well as being very familiar with examination requirements. Clear explanations and instructions set the scene for learning. In a graphic products lesson, excellent exemplar materials inspired students to think imaginatively and laterally, and the high level of the teacher's design knowledge and skills developed students' appreciation of the skills of developing strategies to realise their ideas. Mathematics students learn that care with the first problems will embed new techniques to enable them to proceed more rapidly.

37. Questioning continues to be used effectively so that students think more deeply and strive to meet challenges. As before, it often leads to productive discussion. Teachers steer

matters skilfully, listening, encouraging, interjecting judiciously and drawing things together to summarise what has been learnt. The support for individual students is just as effective as in earlier years in helping them to learn at their own rate.

38. High expectations are a stronger feature in the sixth form. This takes the form, for example, of insistence on accurate technical language and rigour of expression in mathematics, and of demanding rehearsal of body language, voice and character projection in drama. In English literature, high expectations were realised as the teacher built carefully on students' knowledge of the text to draw out increasingly perceptive ideas about character. Students enjoy the challenge and invariably push themselves to achieve more.

39. The teaching of key skills varies from good to unsatisfactory and depends to a large extent on the expertise of the form tutors who teach this, as formal key skills teaching is part of the sixth form studies course, which includes personal, social and health education as well as citizenship.

40. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, in each case time was not used effectively and students did not learn enough in the lesson. In one, unimaginative planning relied on the course book and provided no more stimulating resources or activities, and attention was concentrated too much on a higher attaining student at the expense of others. In a key skills lesson, students made little progress because the teacher made little attempt to review and direct their work, and most were not inspired to make much effort. One lesson was unsuccessful because for most students, the lesson was a repetition of work already covered.

41. In lessons where teaching, although satisfactory, had some minor shortcomings, this was also often to do with the pace of learning. Often a sluggish response from students was accepted, and no effort was made to inject more urgency. Some lessons allowed activities to go on for too long, particularly strongly teacher centred ones. In some, there was not enough sharp focus on what was to be learnt and no strategies to draw students' attention to important points and reinforce them.

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

42. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are good at all stages and reflect the aims of the school.

43. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 includes all National Curriculum subjects, religious education, drama and a period each week of personal, social and health education, which includes citizenship. The curriculum is generally well balanced and broadly based. However, the art and design curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for ICT. In spite of the school's best endeavours, gifted linguists cannot be offered the opportunity to study two languages. French was offered after school, but staffing difficulties have forced the school to abandon this. The rotation arrangements for music restrict students' progress in some skills. The arrangements in the humanities faculty result in some geography and religious education lessons being taught by non-specialists, and some aspects of technology are split between two teachers, which affects continuity.

44. Students are placed in mixed ability groups on entry to the school and these groups are used for teaching all subjects in Years 7 to 9, except modern foreign languages where students are taught in groups organised broadly by ability. The range of students' needs in mixed ability sets is generally well provided for, though on occasions, the more able are not sufficiently challenged, for example, in history.

45. In response to the previous inspection, the school sought support for teaching literacy, and training, including guidance on using 'writing frames', was provided. Since then, most subjects have introduced keyword booklets and spelling lists, most display key subject vocabulary and have literacy policies.

46. Overall provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Students with special needs follow the same curriculum, subject teachers provide for them well, and they make good progress overall. However, the learning support department's provision is too narrow. In Year 7, many of its resources are directed at students with spelling difficulties. A significant number of students in Year 7 with a spelling age below 9 are withdrawn once weekly to follow a spelling programme. No additional support is provided for reading. Students are tested at the end of the year but no further support is provided in Year 8 for those who do not achieve the target spelling age. The department has good access to a wide range of assessment data and information on students in Year 7, which should enable staff to determine students' varying needs more precisely. The current focus on spelling does not adequately address the range of students' needs.

47. Six students speak English as an additional language. This is very low compared to most schools. Of these, one pupil is at the early stages of learning English. The school works closely with the Derby Access Unit. When students enter the school, their language learning needs are assessed, and a suitable programme of support is arranged until they reach the higher stages of English. The school's provision is satisfactory overall. Currently, the one pupil at the early stages receives good in-class support in English and science, and two individual lessons in reading and writing. Although progress in reading and writing is well monitored, insufficient attention is given to progress in speaking and listening. The school is not aware enough of the differences between the particular language learning needs of students learning English and the literacy needs of other students.

48. At age 15, all students study English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, a modern foreign language, personal, social and health education including citizenship, physical education and religious education. There is a good range of options to meet students' needs and interests. These include all the other National Curriculum subjects along with a GNVQ in ICT. The school is seeking to link with a local college to provide further opportunities for work related learning. Students continue in mixed ability groups for most subjects. Students are grouped according to the level of examination entry for which they aim in mathematics, French and German, and also, in Year 11, in English and science. These groupings are effective for the most part, but some higher attaining students underachieve in a few subjects where they are taught in mixed ability groups.

49. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. The learning support department offers alternative accreditation through the certificate of achievement in English. In Year 10 students are working towards the Youth Award, and a small number in Year 11 are taking the certificate of achievement in mathematics. Supported study sessions are provided for some students instead of another subject.

50. The benefits of technology college status are evident in most areas of the curriculum. For example, the science department organises a science festival every other year for Year 6 pupils in local primary schools and Belper School's Year 7 and there is a researcher in

residence in Year 9, and visiting speakers. The science department's ICT suite is effective in raising standards. The Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education (CASE) programme develops students' thinking skills. The good level of ICT resources ensures that ICT features in most subjects. The development of extensive learning materials on the school's intranet, many prepared by students of all ages, is a valuable learning resource for students and for the wider community as it is accessible from home.

51. The well-structured personal, social and health education programme, that also includes citizenship, broadens the curriculum in all years. This is taught by form tutors, and enriched through the contribution made by visiting speakers who come from a wide range of backgrounds and include magistrates, prisoners, blind people, nurses and the police.

52. Arrangements for careers education are good. The careers co-ordinator works closely with staff from Connexions to provide support and guidance from Year 9 to Year 11. Particular support is provided for disaffected students, the very able and those with special needs. Work experience takes place in Years 10 and 11, and students have the opportunity of at least one work placement in addition to work shadowing.

53. The curriculum is considerably enhanced through the extensive and varied range of extra activities. These, together with various elements of the community links programme, bring another dimension to the life and work of the school. During the course of the year nearly all subjects provide 'catch up' sessions either at lunchtime or after school, and there is also a wide range of sporting, dramatic and musical activities, both choral and instrumental. The school year starts with a sponsor afternoon where all students take part in an activity of their choice to raise funds for school houses. At the end of the year, a week's programme of activities focuses on the interests of the year group involved. Activities include cycling in Derbyshire, outdoor activities in Yorkshire, skiing and snowboarding, camping and canoeing, horse riding and stable management, dance and drama, and film making and editing.

54. Overall the provision for personal development is very good. This area of school life has improved significantly since the last inspection. The improvement in religious education has strengthened provision, as has the introduction of citizenship. Senior managers have worked hard at this, as the development of the whole person is at the heart of the school's ethos. This is set out in the school's aims, and exemplified in the drive to ensure that every student's experience is enriched by a range of additional opportunities.

55. Spiritual development is now well provided for and much improved since the last inspection. The school's ethos encourages achievement in many forms, including academic success but also community service and making the best possible effort. This is a school in which students can grow and flourish, learn to respect and be respected. Although there is no collective worship, there were clear spiritual themes in assemblies where teachers dealt sensitively and movingly with Holocaust Memorial Day, and with relevant issues such as dealing with anger, which was discussed in a context of forgiveness and healing. Some assemblies are profoundly spiritual experiences. There is good provision of weekly thoughts which some, but not all, tutors develop well to give reflective experiences to their groups. The school responds well to special circumstances and annual events such as bereavement and Remembrance Day. In lessons, there are many opportunities for inspiration and creativity, and the programmes of study in religious education, GCSE humanities, and personal, social, health and citizenship education give good opportunities to learn about beliefs and values and to develop personal beliefs. Displays are changed to match festivals and seasons: during the inspection there were striking wall displays about the Holocaust.

56. The provision for moral development is very good. There is a clear code of behaviour, known by all, with a fair balance of rewards and sanctions, and this generally results in good

behaviour. The high expectations for behaviour in and out of lessons encourage personal responsibility very well, and teachers and support staff set the tone for this by the quality of their relationships with students. The school takes care to teach the principles that challenge racism and bullying, and to promote the equality and dignity of all. During the inspection, a secure email facility was set up on the school web site to allow students to report any bullying or other problems, to replace the well-established 'listening boxes'. This was immediately used, and the school responded promptly. In a number of subjects the moral aspects of topics are well taught, and education about morality and values is very significant in religious education lessons. Citizenship lessons seen included moral themes to do with responsibility for the environment, the ethnic diversity of British society, and understanding life from the viewpoint of the disabled. What is right and wrong, and the personal and social consequences of law breaking also arise in these lessons and they include visits by magistrates. The moral aspects of drugs and health education are well dealt with, and prisoners on parole from Sudbury Open Prison make a strong impact in lessons on drug education. Students have many opportunities to be generous and to give community service. An outstanding example is the luncheon club for senior citizens. It has been part of school life for 20 years, and all Year 7 students take it in turns to serve there with courtesy and helpfulness.

57. Provision for social development is also a very good feature. A feeling of belonging is fostered through a strong house system, which breaks the school into six smaller communities with house assemblies, councils and varied activities. A high quality school bulletin supports the larger corporate identity of the whole school. The school has worked hard to increase students' opportunities for responsibility which now include serving on house councils and the main school council. Students are allowed to initiate action and make decisions, such as the need for a quiet area at lunchtime. Older students act as mentors to younger students, and some students act as web designers for the school intranet. All students are trusted to be in the buildings before school and in break times and this is rarely abused. Very little litter or graffiti was seen. All students take part in a sponsored afternoon to raise money for projects to benefit the school. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities appeal to a wide range of students. The weekly programme is broad and many students participate. All take part in the annual enrichment week, and there are field trips and residential visits. There are good quality programmes for personal and social education, citizenship, work experience and careers. Drama lessons are very successful in building students' confidence and social skills. In many lessons there are good opportunities for paired work and group work, and generally students collaborate successfully. Older students can join the Duke of Edinburgh unit which fosters both teamwork and leadership skills very well.

58. Cultural development is good through a range of lessons in many subjects. The British democratic and judicial systems are well taught in citizenship, and world artistic traditions are a strong feature of art and design lessons. Culture is celebrated in many of the good quality displays. The school has a tradition of dramatic and musical productions, and rehearsals for a production of 'Fame' were underway during the inspection. The music area at lunchtime was buzzing with activity in every room. The school has worked hard to ensure that sufficient education about cultural diversity is offered in a largely monocultural school, and is succeeding well. This programme includes visits by music and drama groups representing different cultural traditions. The humanities faculty take year groups on field visits, recently to Lincoln to study the topography and the cathedral and castle, to 'Beth Shalom', which relates to the holocaust, and to a mosque. They are also developing links with the historic Belper Mill and Heritage Centre.

Sixth form

59. The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of choices, mainly at A- and AS-level, but with an increasing number of AVCE and intermediate GNVQ courses.

60. The balance between academic and vocational programmes is improving, and there is good access and equality of opportunity. Students are able to follow a programme that reflects their interests. In the evening, courses in GCSE English and mathematics, and other courses such as sign language, offered by the adult centre based on school premises, are open to sixth formers.

61. The school surveys students in Year 11 in order to construct the timetable around their choices. Parents and students felt that the process last year had not been clearly set out, and the school has worked hard to enable nearly all students to follow the combination of courses they wish. The proportion of students continuing into the sixth form and completing programmes is high, and numbers are increasing. The school has rightly identified the need for programmes to meet the widening needs of potential students, and is introducing new programmes each year.

62. There is a good enrichment programme for all students. In Year 12 this programme includes personal, social and health education, key skills and general studies. In Year 12, many students choose to take an AS general studies examination, and in Year 13, a small group of students continues to A-level. All students have the opportunity to gain accreditation for key skills by completing a portfolio, with the support of their tutors as needed. Many students do not feel that the time is well spent, and inspectors agree that some key skills provision is not of good quality. Some lessons are good but some are unsatisfactory. The school has a sound vision of what should be provided, but does not keep track of the content and quality of individual lessons. The impact of the school's technology college status is demonstrated through students' capable use of computers for a range of applications.

63. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good, although during the inspection week, teaching and learning varied from excellent to unsatisfactory. The content is carefully chosen to prepare students with skills to cope with independent life. However, the school fails to meet its statutory obligation to provide religious education for all students and there is no provision for a daily act of collective worship. The assembly attended during the inspection made an excellent contribution to students' spiritual development.

64. A significant minority of students expressed concerns about the careers education and information provided. The school has acknowledged these concerns and its arrangements are changing in order to link with the new Connexions service, and to eliminate the gaps in continuity. The support and guidance available to students from form tutors and subject tutors is helpful and constructive, but specific advice and guidance and help with university applications could be improved. A major contribution is made by the vocational education faculty who spend much time and energy supporting, advising and preparing students for the future.

65. Sixth form students benefit from the school's wide range of extra activities. Some of the school's links with the community also afford sixth form students wider opportunities. For example, some are involved in the collaborative architecture project. Work experience is available in Year 12, and many students serve the school and the wider community, helping with lessons for younger students, running school and house councils, and gardening for the luncheon club's senior citizens.

66. The provision for personal development in the sixth form mirrors the same commitment and principles as the main school, suitably adjusted for the needs of older students. In particular, a greater degree of personal initiative and responsibility is expected if students are to make the best of the opportunities offered. On balance their opportunities are very good.

67. As in the main school, there is no collective worship, but there are now regular assemblies. An outstanding assembly was observed. It was an inspiring, deeply spiritual experience. There are good opportunities for aesthetic and creative work in some of the subjects offered, but the overall range of reflective experiences and education about beliefs and values is limited because there is still no religious education.

68. A number of lessons offer opportunities to explore ethical topics, such as a German lesson on expanding the European community. Students have many chances to put values into action through raising money, their community service programme, participation in councils, and mentoring younger students. Their social development is fostered by the partnership between teachers and students in lessons, as well as by enrichment activities. These are appropriate for their age, and recently have included driver education, running the school bank, taking part in the Barclays New Futures Environmental Project and working for accreditation as sports leaders. Culturally, students are well provided for through a wide range of subjects, and extra-curricular opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

69. Procedures for child protection and for promoting and ensuring students' welfare are very good and reflect the caring ethos of the school. All staff are briefed about child protection and there are very useful guidelines for staff. The school has in place a range of effective policies to monitor and promote good behaviour and attendance, and to deal with bullying.

70. The form tutor is at the heart of the school's system for caring for students, coordinated and supported by heads of house. This system is effective and students feel confident that there are a number of adults within school to whom they can turn for support. The school has good links with external agencies. For example, the voluntary drug action group co-ordinator and the school nurse, along with others, contribute to the school's personal, social and health education programme. Students know of the services available to them, for example those provided by the school nurse. There is also a range of strategies to keep in school students who may be at risk of dropping out of the school system. These include a pilot scheme in Year 11 for some students to spend a day a week on work experience, and the provision of a 'circle of friends' for students who are experiencing a range of difficulties. Such initiatives illustrate the school's ethos of valuing every individual and make a good contribution to students' welfare. Students speak of the success of the arrangements to help them settle happily in Year 7, and the intranet contains a section written by younger students to smooth the way for primary children anticipating their arrival.

71. Since the last inspection the school has established a house system to keep track of, and support, students' academic and personal development more effectively. This has been very effective in coping with the significant increase in numbers at the school and provides students with a sense of identity in addition to membership of a tutor group, and the opportunity to mix across the age groups. The educational and personal advice and guidance for students is good and is enhanced by the very good relationships which permeate the school.

72. Care for students who are identified as having special needs is very good. Students are identified through the school's primary liaison programme and discussions are held with

primary teachers to gather further information. The department tests the spelling of all Year 7 students in addition to the tests carried out by the school shortly after students begin Year 7. Subject teachers and form tutors provide additional information on the performance of students as they move through the school. The individual education plans of students with special needs are regularly reviewed. Even so, in Year 7 support for students without a statement of need is entirely concentrated on spelling, whatever the range of needs which could be identified. Indeed, after Year 7, only a very small number are identified as being in need of any additional support either within the school or from outside agencies.

73. Students benefit from the school's strong commitment to individuals as well as from the caring relationships in both the learning support base and in the school generally. Students with English as a second language receive good care and personal support, which enables them to integrate well into the school community. Students with statements are well known by both teachers and educational care officers. Support and advice are available for those students who have behavioural difficulties. A small number of students with Asperger's Syndrome receive very good support from a friendship circle as well as counselling. The learning base is available for students to do homework if they wish.

74. The school's procedures for assessing the performance of the students have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. An assessment group has been set up and training has been given to all teachers on how to determine performance accurately and analyse results coherently. The school provides course co-ordinators with much detailed information on the performance of individuals to help to track progress and intervene when underachievement is noted. The school does not, however, analyse the performance of students in each teaching group closely enough to evaluate attainment and achievement.

75. Practice is not consistently good in all departments. Students' work is not consistently well marked by every teacher. The best marking is regular and detailed, and gives students good advice on how to improve. The weakest gives only cursory comments and does not always acknowledge and praise what students have achieved. The assessment group has established a process to keep track of faculties' practice, and is rightly placing emphasis at the moment on ensuring that all teachers give their students useful comments on how they may improve their standards. Several faculties are adept at tracking the progress of students and ensuring that they remain on course for the grades they have the potential to attain. However, some departments do not assess work well enough to set accurate targets to raise standards and have a weaker grasp of interpreting the data available and using it to measure progress.

76. The school provides tutor review days to enable parents and students to consider students' performance with the form tutor and review their targets. However, these are not regarded as useful by many parents, mainly because they feel that many targets are too vague, and so not helpful in promoting better achievement.

Sixth form

Assessment

77. Through the questionnaire students expressed some concern about the information they receive about their progress. Although the pattern of inconsistency remains in the sixth form, assessment is good overall. Marking is more helpful, and, on the whole, teachers are more adept at tracking students' progress. Groups are generally much smaller. This enables mathematics teachers, for example, to keep track of students' progress informally but effectively. There is particularly effective practice in business education, where a

computerised record keeping system keeps track of students' progress towards set targets and other benchmarks.

78. The school participates in the Advanced Level Information Scheme (ALIS) and sets target grades for individual students to work towards using a close analysis of GCSE performance, the grades predicted by teachers, and the levels at which students are currently working.

Advice, support and guidance

79. In the sixth form, procedures for tracking attendance and behaviour are good. Students understand the school's registration requirements and know that, if they do not comply, they will be denied the privilege of studying at home.

80. Admission to the sixth form is by interview. Although access to the sixth form is open to all, a minority of students is invited to sign a trial period agreement if the school feels that they would benefit from closer supervision than others. Some parents and students expressed concern about procedures for choosing sixth form courses. The school believes that there was some misunderstanding about the sequence of procedures, and that most students were able to follow the courses of his or her choice.

81. As in earlier years, the form tutor plays a central role in the welfare and guidance of sixth form students. Form tutors and subject tutors provide good personal support and information, advice and guidance to students about their studies. The provision for careers guidance in relation to future studies or employment is satisfactory. The school is in the midst of change following changes in local careers provision, and has devised a more structured approach for the coming year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. In the questionnaire and the meeting for parents, they expressed positive opinions about the school. Parents are particularly positive that their children like going to school and make good progress, and that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. They agree that the school expects their children to work hard and is helping them to become mature and responsible. A significant number of parents did not feel that the school provided the correct amount of homework and that sometimes the school did not work closely with parents. Inspection evidence does not bear this out. During the inspection week, the team saw homework being set in accordance with the homework policy and found evidence of the school working well with parents.

83. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range of information to parents. There are useful curriculum guides for all stages, and parents are informed of a range of policies which are available to them on request. Good information is provided for students starting at school, and the school prospectus has been revised to include the information which was missing at the time of the last inspection. Parents expressed concerns about the information they get about their children's progress. Annual reports to parents vary in quality and reports from subject teachers do not always clearly indicate what students know and can do, and what they need to do to improve. The school is aware that the recent target setting process and tutor review event was not helpful for all parents and is reviewing this.

84. There is regular contact between the special needs staff and the parents of students with special educational needs. Parents receive a copy of their child's individual education plan, and some are involved in drawing up the plan and helping their child to work towards learning targets. Parents of students with statements of special educational needs are invited to the annual review and all parents are regularly informed about children's progress and any change in the student's programme as a result of the progress they make.

85. Parents make a sound contribution to their child's learning. The school works hard to generate good links with parents, and parents are very supportive of school events such as performances.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

86. The leadership and management of the head teacher and key management staff are good.

87. The head teacher gives very good leadership. His integrity is recognised and he is widely respected. With governors and senior managers, he ensures that the school's ethos is preserved and that the school continues to strive for high standards of attainment, and quality of education, as well as fulfilling its role for the community. This vision is clear in the school's aims, which are evident throughout the work of the school. Plans for developing the school are based on accurate evaluation of its work.

88. Responsibilities are delegated effectively and management is good overall. Many subjects and other areas of the school's work are managed well, but some things, such as sixth form key skills, could be run better. The management of the newly introduced citizenship course is unsatisfactory. Day-to-day organisation and management are good. Good relationships, a key characteristic of the school, are emphasised in working documents, and evident in management practice.

89. The governing body offers a wide range of experience and expertise, which the school uses very well. Governors know and understand the school well and are aware of its strengths and the areas which need improvement. The part they play in shaping the direction of the school's development is very good. The priorities for development are widely discussed by staff and governors so that they are well directed to the needs of the future, including the pressing topic of growth in pupil numbers. Governors work confidently to fulfil their role, and all required policies are in place, including the policy on race relations which has recently been revised. However, statutory requirements for a collective act of worship and for religious education in the sixth form, reported in the last inspection report, are still not met, although religious education is now taught to all younger students. The requirement for ICT in art and design is not met.

90. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its use of results data, and is now better placed to evaluate its performance than in the past. This is generally well done, although some departments are less adept at analysing and interpreting data. On the whole, the school does not analyse the performance of students in each teaching group closely enough to evaluate attainment and achievement. Teaching is monitored through arrangements for performance management and by senior staff, but observation is not rigorous enough to improve the quality of teaching.

91. Most of the issues identified by the last inspection have been tackled and improved. The school has grown to a point where it is oversubscribed. Standards have risen, and effective new management structures have been introduced, such as the house system and

senior managers' links with faculties. The commitment and capacity of governors and staff to improve the school still further are good.

92. The difficulties experienced by the school at the time of the last inspection in relation to the dispute over the costs of servicing the sports centre have now been resolved and have resulted in a Trust arrangement for running the centre.

93. The school's budgetary control procedures are of a high standard and the school's accountant plays a significant and effective role in efficient financial planning and control of expenditure. Resources are used well to support the school's planned development, including the additional funding afforded by technology college status. The last inspection found that ICT resources were not well used, but this is no longer the case. Unit costs are generally in line with similar schools and the below average spending on teaching staff is explained in the main by the number of younger members of staff. The sixth form is subsidised by the remainder of the school by a very small amount, which is not significant. The personnel and finance sub-committee of the governing body is very well advised on the school's expenditure and commitments, and exercises relevant control over expenditure.

94. The administration of the school is effective. Procedures to ensure best value in relation to contracts and costs are good, but the school does not go far enough in comparing itself to other schools beyond the area with which it is familiar. The school is very effective in enabling students to attain high academic and personal standards through good teaching and other provision. In the light of the effectiveness of the school in relation to favourable contextual factors and average unit costs, the school provides good value for money.

95. The provision of teaching staff is good overall. The school has a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The school has recently had a significant turnover of staff; currently 20 per cent are new to the school, 11 per cent of whom are newly qualified teachers. The provision of support staff is good overall, but there are too few laboratory technicians in science. Provision for newly qualified staff, teachers new to the school, and initial training students is good. There is a well-structured induction programme for newly qualified teachers. The school is a keen provider of initial teacher training and the programme for the 13 student teachers is well organised. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement in the provision of teaching and support staff, but some geography is still taught by non-specialists, and some tutors need support and training for teaching the new citizenship course.

96. The arrangements for performance management in the school are satisfactory overall. Procedures are well structured and clearly documented, with clear roles and guidelines. Although in some departments, for example in design and technology, the monitoring and review process is well coordinated, the procedures are not consistently implemented across the school, so not all teachers derive maximum benefit from the experience. The new coordinator for continuing professional development has established clear priorities for funding, which include ICT, and support for the literacy strategy. The school is aware that all aspects of performance management should be coordinated into a single comprehensive policy, but this is not the case at present.

97. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. Since the last inspection three major building programmes have taken place, remodelling the science area, providing a sixth form block and refurbishing the jointly used Belper Leisure Centre. The latter will provide much needed sports facilities for the whole school and the specialist equipment needed for A-level physical education. However, most of the new accommodation was designed to cater for the

number of students in the school at the time, and the recent increase in numbers means that there are not enough classrooms.

98. While there are some good features in the newer areas, other subjects are still working in conditions which were described as cramped and in need of attention in the last report. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in art and design, ICT, and music, and poor in modern languages. One of the four art and design teaching rooms is too small, and another is split level and disturbed by noise in the adjacent corridor. Much of the furniture is old and dilapidated. Some ICT rooms are too small for students to work collaboratively, and the shape of one means that students cannot all see the demonstration screen. The smaller of the two music rooms is too small. There are not enough practice rooms or storage facilities, so resources have to be left out in classrooms. Modern foreign languages are still taught in mobile classrooms. There is very little storage space, and staff share an office with physical education staff which is too small.

99. The library is a small room for the number of students and students in the school, but it is well organised and clearly laid out. However, the size limits the use that can be made of it for teaching lessons. The library stock is satisfactory overall. There is a good stock of fiction and literature, but the books available for some subjects, such as ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education, are limited in range and sometimes out of date. There is also a range of music CDs and a variety of magazines is taken to support a wide range of interests

100. Resources are generally adequate. There are shortfalls in art and design, music, science and religious education. In art and design, there is a shortage of simple apparatus such as batik frames, and students do not have enough access to computers. There are not enough pitched percussion instruments or enough computers for music. Science textbooks for younger students are old and in need of replacement. The religious education department needs more books for younger students, and a wider range of resources.

101. One of the benefits of technology college status is the high numbers of computers, and an outstanding feature is the amount of information for teachers, students and the wider community available on the school's intranet. A group of students, of all ages, prepares materials for this site. Students can access all this information from a computer at home. Every subject has a section and these are regularly augmented. There are also sections about transferring from primary school, and a confidential message service to report concerns about bullying. Teachers use the site to share information, such as providing materials to be used when a teacher is absent.

102. Many subjects made good use of external resources such as visiting speakers, visits and field trips.

Sixth form

103. The leadership and management of the sixth form is shared between two staff and overseen by the deputy headteacher. The development of the sixth form is articulated with the same clear vision as the rest of the school, and the school's aims are carried out in the sixth form provision. Leadership is very good and the sixth form is well managed.

104. Senior managers and governors have the same good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form as in the rest of the school. Sensible choices have been made to extend the provision to offer more vocational courses to meet a wider range of students' needs and increase the numbers of students choosing to stay on in the sixth form. The need to enrich students' experience is acknowledged with the inclusion of optional general studies

and the sixth form skills course for all, but the omission of religious education wastes the opportunity to enrich students' personal development which is now so effective for many younger students. Resources are well deployed: the disparity between sixth form income and expenditure is not significant and there are no major shortfalls in resourcing.

105. The systems for keeping track of attendance and welfare are effective, and students' progress is also tracked well. Overall, the leadership and management of subjects are good and there are good links between faculties and senior management. However, there is not enough rigour in the observation of teaching. Not all subject leaders are equally effective in observing whether teaching is consistently good, and the heads of sixth form do not keep a similar track of the teaching of sixth form skills, which is not always well taught. The school is aware of the need to develop this relatively new course further and has plans for keeping better track of it.

Resources

106. The resources in all departments are at least adequate, and some departments have good levels of resources. These include business education, drama, German, and ICT. All sixth formers benefit from the large number of computers available in school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

107. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education, governors and senior managers of the school should:

- (1) Improve provision for students capable of gaining the highest grades in GCSE examinations by setting greater challenges for them.
(Paragraphs: 6, 9, 29, 156, 167, 169, 181, 182, 185, 207)
- (2) Improve the consistency of marking, assessment and the use of data to set targets and track progress.*
(Paragraphs: 3, 10, 31, 74, 75, 90, 122, 138, 140, 158, 165, 178, 183, 203, 209, 214, 215, 221)
- (3) Make observation of teaching more rigorous so that teachers can improve the quality of their work.
(Paragraphs: 33, 34, 90, 96, 139, 149, 151, 157, 164, 182, 191, 201, 202, 214)
- (4) Organise the management of citizenship more effectively.*
(Paragraphs: 34, 88, 95, 160-165)
- (5) Ensure that all subjects report to parents about how well their children are doing, as well as about their attitudes.
(Paragraphs: 83, 221)
- (6) Provide religious education for sixth form students.
(Paragraphs: 63, 67, 89, 104)

Sixth form

- (1) Provide religious education.
(Paragraphs: 63, 67, 89, 104)
- (2) Organise the management of and key skills more effectively alongside personal, social and health education and citizenship.*
(Paragraphs: 39, 62, 88, 105)
- (3) Make observation of teaching more rigorous so that teachers can improve the quality of their work.*
(Paragraphs: 39-41, 90, 96, 105, 233, 243, 275)

*Issues marked * are identified as priorities in the school's development plan.*

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Comply with statutory requirements for a daily act of worship and for ICT in art and design.
- Widen the support in Year 7 for students with special educational needs who have no statement of need to include more than spelling.
- Review specialist provision for students who speak English as an additional language.
- Increase levels of in-class support for students with special educational needs who do not have a statement of need.
- Improve the deficiencies in accommodation as finances permit.

LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

108. Links with the community were judged effective when the school was last inspected. Since then, the school has fulfilled the objectives in successive development plans to establish a wider range of links as part of its mission as a technology college. The links with the community make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school and of the local community, and are a major strength of the school.

109. The school is involved with the local community in numerous and extensive links. It is joint owner and main user of the sports centre, and an active partner in the managing trust. It has links with a number of companies. Some have supported its technology college development through sponsorship, work experience opportunities and vocational education courses. Fifteen Year 9 students are involved in an environmental project with the Derbyshire Wild Life Trust, developing skills such as path building and board walking. This first group will later act as group leaders in training younger students, with the intention of developing an area on the school's site. Belper School is one of only two Derbyshire schools selected to take part in the Design in Britain award, in conjunction with a local architecture practice and the RIBA. Year 10 and Year 12 students are involved in producing a piece of work that brings together the Derbyshire landscape and the built environment in the context of industrial change. The successful basketball lottery bid has increased training opportunities available to Belper students as well as other young people in the local community, and has also provided the opportunity through which students can be introduced to local rugby and volleyball clubs.

110. A significant part of the school's educational links is its arrangements with local primary schools to support their work in ICT. Technology college funding is used to provide ICT support in all the primary schools who send students to Belper School at age 11. In addition, the school hardware manager also regularly visits the primary schools. The purpose is to raise standards of attainment. All these schools are very appreciative of the guidance and support they receive, and of the hardware provided to help them implement the ICT curriculum. They also appreciate the support that has been provided in the areas of science and technology, including the science festival for all Year 6 students. Technology work undertaken with Year 6 students on robotics has involved staff, parents and the community.

111. The school has done much to become involved with activities in both the local and wider community. Equally important is the way in which it has involved the community in the school. The school buildings and facilities are used by members of the community most evenings of the week, and, for many groups, this is not only restricted to term time. Derbyshire adult education service provides a wide programme of academic and vocational subjects, many of which are also used by students from the school. Belper Model Railway Club, The Penguin Club, theatre, music and dance groups, as well as the guide association, are all frequent users of the facilities.

112. A bungalow on the school site is rented to organisations for children under the age of five. These include playgroups, Belper Toy Library, a mother and toddler club and a child health clinic. The playgroups enable students to have work experience with young children, and also provide practical experience for sixth form students as part of the Health and Social Care course. Twice weekly the school organises a luncheon club for a number of senior citizens, when a cheap and wholesome meal is provided as well as a social environment. In the course of the year, most Year 7 students are involved in serving lunch and entertaining the group over the lunchtime period.

113. The personal, social, health and citizenship programmes are enriched and broadened by the contribution made by a very wide range of visitors. In addition, many visitors from

industry, including neighbourhood engineers, support vocational education and the science festival.

114. During the year a significant amount is raised for charity. Each tutor group in Year 8 is required at some time during the year to identify a charity and to organise fund raising for that cause. Sixth form students are also involved in gardening for some of those senior citizens who attend the luncheon club.

115. In order to maximise opportunities for community involvement the governing body has allocated the role of community governor to one of their number and has identified a clear and detailed remit for his role and responsibilities. Contact has been made with the Rotary Club and all community users in order to audit and respond to community needs. The role involves reporting back to the governing body on the outcomes of this, and also keeping track of the initiatives already in place to evaluate their success.

116. The school's links with the community play a significant role in fulfilling its aims. Students grow in the realisation that they are not only members of the school, but also members of a much wider community. The activities and opportunities provided enable students to become aware of the needs of others, and of how they may contribute to society. They learn to appreciate issues such as those related to crime, the use of leisure, the environment, and old age. This makes a strong contribution to students' very good personal development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	139
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		73

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	8	22	47	47	5	0	0
Percentage	5.8	15.8	41	33.8	3.6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	11	24	10	3	0	0
Percentage	6	21.5	47	19.6	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1162	178
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	112	4

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	28	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	99	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
--

55

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	90	99	189

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	70	69
	Girls	82	82	78
	Total	142	152	147
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (73)	80 (70)	78 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (41)	53 (39)	44 (41)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	69	63
	Girls	93	80	80
	Total	156	149	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (73)	79 (81)	76 (68)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (40)	48 (44)	44 (35)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	103	104	207

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	57	93	97
	Girls	61	97	103
	Total	118	190	200
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	57(57)	92(95)	97(97)
	National	50(48)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.2 (40.2)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	43	32	75
	Average point score per candidate	243.6 (14.8)	239.4 (24.6)	241.7 (19.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	37	30	67	*	*	*
	Average point score per candidate	243.6	239.4	241.7	*	*	*
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

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

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1317	62	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.8

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	678

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	26.3
Key Stage 4	23.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	3 579 896
Total expenditure	3 557 122
Expenditure per pupil	2 878
Balance brought forward from previous year	51 537
Balance carried forward to next year	74 311

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	25

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1340
Number of questionnaires returned	543

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	58	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	61	10	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	20	5	2
The teaching is good.	21	66	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	56	15	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	45	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	45	5	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	55	18	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	26	57	6	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	54	5	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	48	9	1	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; students are keen to learn.
- Attainment in national tests in 2002 is well above the national average.
- Attainment in GCSE in 2002 is above the national average.
- Boys' attainment has significantly improved since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Refine planning for new requirements.
- Develop English resources for the school's intranet.
- Provide more support for students with special educational needs in Year 7.

117. Attainment at age 14 is above average. Students achieve well thanks to good teaching and their own eagerness to learn. Results in national tests in 2002 are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Over the five years since the previous inspection, when test results were well below average, attainment has risen, particularly that of boys. There is now little difference between the relative attainment of boys and girls compared to boys' and girls' national averages. The poor attitudes to work of boys observed at the last inspection are no longer seen.

118. Attainment at 16 is also above average, and achievement is good. The proportion of A*-C grades in GCSE English language in 2002 is above the national average, as it was in the previous two years. It is about the same as in similar schools. Boys' results are above the boys' national average by a greater margin than girls' are above the girls' average, and more boys gained grade A*. Girls' performance has fluctuated over the last three years. In 2002, girls' attainment, although much the same as the national average, fell below their performance in the previous year. Results in GCSE English literature in 2002 are well above the national average, with slightly less difference between boys' and girls' results. All students taking the Certificate of Achievement in English attained either distinctions or passes with merit.

119. By Year 9 the vast majority of students, including those with special educational needs, speak with growing confidence and fluency. For example, in one lesson they spoke with animation about ideas inspired by the novel 'Skellig' by David Almond, and in another lesson with interest about a pamphlet addressed to young victims of bullying. By Year 11 the vast majority, at all levels of attainment, communicate ideas clearly, and listen with interest and understanding to the suggestions or instructions of others. Students with special educational needs can follow discussion, for example on set poetry texts, and make their own contribution. When closely questioned, most students offer well-argued, expressive replies, often displaying maturity of thought. Students speak in Standard English in more formal situations; for example they converse sensibly and becomingly with adult visitors to the school.

120. Weekly lessons in Year 7 focus on reading 'for a purpose'. The majority of Year 9 students grasp exact meanings from fiction and informative texts. Students with special educational needs have clear understanding of straightforward texts. In Year 11 higher

attaining students identify wider inferences from increasingly complex texts, while lower and middle attaining students see more exactly into meaning. Students with special needs in English taking the Certificate of Achievement course read with increasing concentration and understanding, although they rely on support to gain sufficient understanding of more complex texts.

121. By Year 9 higher attaining students write with freshness and accuracy. Middle attainers write with clarity on subjects they know well, although a small minority make elementary errors in spelling and punctuation. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs write briefly, and with reasonable clarity, on carefully prepared topics. However, the amount of learning support for students with special needs in writing is not always adequate, especially in Year 7. Handwriting is legible and usually in the cursive hand. By Year 11, higher attainers understand the relationship between meaning and style, and maintain effective structure in argument. Middle attaining students organise their thought logically and write with increasing clarity. Lower attaining students often use only a limited choice of vocabulary in extended writing. Those with special needs write with reasonable accuracy on brief, straightforward topics. Students at all levels of attainment, boys as well as girls, make beneficial use of word processing facilities in their writing, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

122. Teaching is good, with examples of outstanding teaching. Students enjoy English, are keen to learn and cooperate well. The vast majority behave courteously and, with only the rare exception, co-operate well with one another and their teachers. Learning is good. Good subject knowledge and careful planning ensure that lessons focus on expanding students' knowledge and understanding, as well as their productive skills. For example, a very effective lesson on persuasive writing used Dahl's 'Boy' to illustrate the use of longer sentences and the role of punctuation, which students transferred to letters about school uniform. Sensitive questioning encourages students to think more searchingly. Teachers listen attentively to students' comments and questions, and so students gain confidence and become more articulate. The best teaching liberates students' creative capacity. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, the teacher's questioning and encouragement to express their ideas generated a momentum whereby students' imagination soared. In other contexts careful teaching ensures that students produce carefully constructed work. Pupils enjoy living up to teachers' high expectations. Excellent teaching on the 16th century poem by Chidiok Tichborne, written hours before being hung, drawn and quartered, roused students to considerable intellectual effort, raising many ideas about the power of the human mind and personality. Homework extends classroom tasks. Marking is supportive and informative, and work is continuously assessed, but not always in terms of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, so students are not always aware of how they are doing in relation to these criteria.

123. The course co-ordinator, only recently appointed, gives good leadership. He offers enthusiasm, scholarship, expertise as a teacher and, as a published educational author, a sure knowledge of the concerns and interests of students. The department is well managed. It has benefited from participation in the trials for the new Shakespeare tests. The policy handbook and a wide supply of interesting, adaptable schemes of work give teachers clear guidance on effective practice. However, units of work will need further refinement for forthcoming syllabus changes. Varied educational events provide further stimulus for students' personal development, including Year 7's 'first theatre visit', poetry workshops, speakers on favourite novels, and the participation of the whole school in celebrating National Poetry Day. The department plans to contribute materials to the school's intranet. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

124. Across the curriculum, most subjects emphasise accurate use of language with keyword booklets and lists, and make provision for developing reading skills. Extra-curricular

activities also play a part: there is a book club, as well as reading and poetry events. The use of discussion in many subjects develops good listening and speaking skills. However, although most subjects encourage writing for a range of purposes, and most students produce good work, there is no consistency of approach to the correction of technical errors. Students' work in a small minority of subjects often remains unmarked, and not all subjects keep track of this rigorously enough.

Drama

125. Attainment at ages 14 and 16 is average. Results in GCSE examinations have fluctuated in recent years: they were close to the national average in 2000 and above average in 2001, but below average in 2002. While boys' results in 2002 are close to the boys' national average, girls' results are below theirs.

126. Drama is taught in Year 7 on a six week rotational basis with music. Groups are small in Year 7, but larger in the next two years. By Year 9 students have a clear understanding of the basic requirements for performance. Although some students are not always sufficiently expressive in their speaking, most are convincing. The vast majority show dramatic imagination in improvisation and in mime. Good teaching allows students to make rapid progress, and achievement is good. Just before the inspection, Year 7 students worked alongside sixth form students in a production of 'Harry Potter'.

127. Drama is a popular GCSE option. Standards in work observed during the inspection are average. By Year 11, students show an ability to co-operate in unity of effort to plan activities, use their initiative and take responsibility in preparing their roles. Students can impersonate character and make effective contact with other characters in performance to create tension. They make confident entry to a make-believe world. They show increasing fluency of speech and analyse in role relationships between characters. They understand the expectations of an audience. They explore tough moral issues in their projects, for example presenting Myra Hindley's childhood life in an attempt to explain her later criminal behaviour. Students with special educational needs gain confidence in drama and make effective contributions to their group's work. Students' logbooks and coursework files contain interesting accounts of their experiences in drama. They are taught how to write accurately and reflectively on their personal responses to the dramatic process. They understand the role of the director in shaping themes and atmosphere, and understand how costume relates to character and themes. They are able to evaluate their own work and that of others in performance.

128. Teachers have high expectations and students rise to the challenge. Teachers' expertise is evident in their presentation of worthwhile drama which inculcates standards of good judgement in the arts. Teachers open a world of imagination to students. Their demonstrations allow students learn how their body, as well as their voice, can be expressive instruments, and that changes in mood can be indicated in subtle ways. Classes are very well managed so students learn to control enthusiasm and work with self-discipline and confidence so they are not afraid to experiment and in this way learn from their mistakes. Students with special educational needs enjoy this subject, gain in confidence and also achieve well.

129. Leadership is good and teachers are a highly motivated, enthusiastic team. Management and organisation are efficient. The course coordinator's experience as a GCSE examiner brings invaluable specialised experience to the department. Fresh ideas are continuously added to an already imaginative scheme of work, and the department makes a significant contribution to students' personal development. Although accommodation in the two drama studios is good, the hall is not an ideal teaching space. There are deficiencies in lighting and sound facilities, and stage equipment. Improvement since the last inspection is

good. The tradition of school productions has been maintained and links made with local theatre groups. A new GCSE syllabus has been introduced which meets students' interests more closely and has encouraged more students to continue with drama in the sixth form.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 are above average, and results in national tests are well above those of similar schools.
- Students have very positive attitudes to mathematics and enjoy learning.
- A strong team of specialist teachers provides very good individual support for learners.
- Students' communication skills are good, in particular their ability to discuss how to tackle tasks and what methods to use.
- Teaching and learning are good and this results in good progress in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment information is not used enough to track attainment and achievement.
- Marking is not consistently good.
- Short term curriculum planning is not detailed enough to provide a good framework for learning.

130. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Good teaching and learning have led to steadily improving standards in Years 7 to 9, as shown in the national tests. Results in tests at age 14 are above the national average in 2002, and well above those in similar schools. Girls did better than boys, but in previous years boys have done better. GCSE results have improved, but more slowly, and are lower in 2002 than in the previous year. GCSE results in 2002 are in line with national averages at both A*-C and A*-G; students achieved the results expected from their prior attainment. These results were generally not as good as their results in other subjects. Staffing difficulties in mathematics were a factor in this. Boys' results are better than girls', but in 2001 the reverse was true. This fluctuation over time, with no clear pattern by gender, reflects the work seen during the inspection, where there is no clear difference in the participation or attainment of boys and girls.

131. Attainment on entry for the current Year 7 is above average. This has gradually been changing: when students in Years 10 and 11 entered the school, their attainment was average.

132. Overall, standards in Year 9 are above average. Higher attainers reach standards well above average, lower attainers below, and a few well below average standards. Students achieve well in Years 7-9, both in lessons and over time. The work seen during the inspection shows that students make good progress, in particular in their ability to discuss how to tackle tasks and what methods to use. Encouragement from teachers helps students to improve skills in communicating mathematically, and these skills are key factors in their progress.

133. Overall, standards of work in Year 11 are in line with national averages, with higher attainers reaching well above average standards, and lower attainers well below average standards. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in lessons, but progress over time is only satisfactory. This is because staffing problems last year meant that many students have some ground to make up, and teachers have to fill the gaps in students' knowledge before they can start on new topics.

134. In all years, students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. This is because very good individual support from teachers helps every student deal with his or her particular difficulties. Learning support staff also provide good support in class. On those occasions when there was no additional support, and the numbers in the class were large, the overall rate of progress sometimes slowed as teachers tried hard to meet all the demands for their help.

135. Higher attainers in Year 9 can find the volume of cylinders, and draw and interpret cumulative frequency graphs. Average attainers can solve linear equations and find unknown angles in polygons, and some can find the highest common factor in index form. Lower attainers can recognise different types of symmetry and draw pie charts. Lower attainers can use these skills in simple, clearly structured questions but are not as confident, quick or accurate as higher attainers in deciding how to apply them to more complex problems.

136. Higher attainers in Year 11 simplify algebraic fractions, find the volumes of prisms and use the sine and cosine rule to find unknown sides or angles in any type of triangle. One student used calculus to calculate rates of change in a coursework project. Average attainers can use trigonometric ratios to find unknown sides or angles in right-angled triangles. Lower attainers find the area and perimeter of different shapes and use simple fractions, but sometimes have difficulty in remembering the correct units to use in answers. The mental arithmetic skills of average and lower attainers are sometimes inaccurate and slow.

137. Most students' behaviour and attitudes to mathematics are good, and they are sometimes very good. Students enjoy mathematics, and the good relationships encourage students to take part in discussion. Students are not afraid of making mistakes, or expressing ideas, so they learn more rapidly because they are confident enough to discuss alternative methods of solutions and ask for help when they do not understand. Teachers create a good mathematical environment for learning through their own interest, knowledge and enthusiasm.

138. Teaching and learning are good. In nearly all lessons observed, the teaching was at least satisfactory, and in a majority of lessons it was of higher quality. A strength is teachers' skill of presenting mathematical ideas and methods in a way that is appropriate for the often wide range of attainers in a class. Teachers often use a short sequence of questions to help students to quickly focus at the beginning of a lesson. This also helps them to assess whether students have the basic knowledge and understanding required to proceed to the next stage of learning. Oral methods of assessment are used well during lessons to assess progress. However, teachers do not all mark written work with consistent detail and frequency. ICT is used well to help students to learn through investigating topics. For example, Year 11 students used computers to find out how altering certain values in an equation affected the gradient and intercept of a straight line. The visual impact of seeing the graphs change as different values were used helped them to remember the relevant theory.

139. When teaching and learning are satisfactory, rather than good, it is because the pace of the middle part of lessons slows down when teachers are helping some individuals and others do not learn as much as they could. In the only unsatisfactory lesson seen, class management was not strong enough to deal with a group of disruptive students, and students did not make enough progress.

140. The head of department leads a committed team of knowledgeable, specialist teachers, who work well together to help all students make good progress. Each teacher has a good range of data about his own students' progress, and they use this effectively to keep track of individuals. However, this information is not used enough at departmental level to track the progress of different groups of students and to highlight areas of strength and weakness. Short term curriculum planning is not detailed enough to provide good guidance, especially for teachers new to the school. Management is satisfactory.

141. Basic numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics. Students have the skills and techniques to allow them to cope well with the demands of other subjects. For example, in design and technology accurate measurement and drawing improves the quality of finished products. However, other subjects do not do enough to develop these skills further.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average at 14 and above average at 16.
- Students achieve well between the ages of 11 and 14.
- The department tracks students' progress well and uses the knowledge effectively in planning the curriculum.
- Good use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of teaching lead to learning in some lessons which is too slow.
- The procedures for monitoring teaching are insufficiently focussed on improving teaching.
- The provision of technical staff is inadequate for the number of laboratories and the range of lessons.

142. By the age of 14, attainment is well above average. Results in 2002 national tests are well above both the national average and the average in similar schools. Results have risen steadily over the last few years slightly faster than nationally. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

143. Attainment in lessons and in students' work shows a wide range of attainment, but, on average, is not as high as the 2002 national tests results. All the same, a significant number of students reach standards which are very high. For example, one student in Year 9 will take the GCSE examination in June 2003, two years early. Most students show above average understanding. Others, who reach standards lower than expected, have difficulty in drawing conclusions from experimental data, but complete most of their work and present it neatly.

144. Students' gain in knowledge, understanding and skills in experiment and investigation between the ages of 11 and 14 is above average. National tests results are significantly better than might be expected from these students' attainment on entry to the school. This good achievement stems from teachers' good planning and students' eagerness to learn. The practice of providing thorough revision programmes at both 14 and 16 is effective in the period just before students take their tests and examinations. This well-conceived

programme, for which students are regrouped on the basis of their prior attainment, leads to good consolidation of knowledge and increased understanding, representing good learning overall.

145. By age sixteen, attainment is above average. In GCSE examinations in 2002, the proportion of students reaching at least grade C was well above the national average for boys and just above for girls. For both boys and girls, the proportions gaining a pass, and gaining higher grades A*-B, are above the national average. Results have improved steadily in recent years. There have been some differences, but no consistent pattern, in the performance of boys and girls over the past few years.

146. The work seen in school is also above average, although there are no significant differences between boys and girls. Some students reach very high standards in all aspects of science, including experimentation and investigation. For example, one pupil produced an outstanding account of an experiment to investigate the effect of temperature on the action of the enzyme pepsin. Other characteristics of high attaining students' work are a very secure grasp of scientific literacy and very good use of mathematics. One student in Year 10 will take the GCSE examination this year. Average attainers interpret graphs relating to the motion of objects but do not understand the differences between conduction and convection. Some low attaining students have rather lackadaisical attitudes and do not always complete their work.

147. Achievement between the ages of 14 and 16 is satisfactory overall. Students with high prior attainment make good progress in developing knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of science due to their own commitment to success, good relations with teachers and teaching which is well focussed on their needs, particularly a good revision programme towards the end of Year 11. Other students, including those with special educational needs and some with weaker commitment to science, achieve satisfactorily.

148. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some significant strengths. Almost half of the lessons seen were good and the rest satisfactory. There were no unsatisfactory lessons, nor was any very good teaching seen. Teachers' subject knowledge and planning are good and students learn effectively because learning objectives are clear and well matched to their needs. For example, in a lesson in a sequence on distinguishing between elements, compounds and mixtures, all students were able to learn effectively through a combination of experiment and written work which allowed each to work at an appropriate pace. In several lessons, students were given some responsibility, through carrying out their own experiments or researching topics using the Internet, with appropriate guidance in a well-managed learning atmosphere. Good relationships ensure that this mode of learning is consistently effective. ICT is used effectively in almost all years to develop students' ability to work on their own. Well-structured homework books provide a good range of learning opportunities beyond lessons. In most lessons, students make a good contribution to their own learning through good powers of concentration, and secure practical skills in handling apparatus.

149. In some lessons, judged satisfactory in most respects, students learn less effectively because teachers do not take account in their planning of students' wide range of needs or because the activities do not maintain students' interest and enthusiasm. In a lesson on energy resources for Year 7, the teacher's introduction was too long and attention wandered. The follow-up activity to identify the energy content of food by examining food labels was too long for the amount of resources provided. In one or two lessons, students do not learn through inattention and lack of cooperation with the teacher and each other. It was surprising to see students not listening attentively to each other's presentations.

150. The head of science shows good leadership and a strong commitment to progressively raising standards. An effective management structure appropriately devolves responsibility to a number of colleagues. The department works well as a team, the weekly bulletin providing a simple but effective means of identifying issues for action.

151. The department has good procedures for observing and recording how students are doing. This allows a close watch to be kept on students' progress and under-performance to be identified. These students are given extra support, particularly as tests and examinations approach. Planning is good. Analysis of students' performance feeds into a rolling programme of development of the department's work, linked to teachers' professional development and the annual budget. Some creative ideas are being fed into the framework provided by the national strategy for teaching science between the ages of 11 and 14. There are procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching but these have not had a major impact in raising the overall standard of teaching and learning in lessons. Resources are adequate but the textbooks for younger students are old and in need of replacement. Technical staff work very hard but the total number of hours is inadequate.

152. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Attainment at 14 and in the sixth form has improved significantly and standards reached at the age of 16 have been maintained above average and are rising. Students' attitudes, the use of homework and marking are all significantly better. Display has been improved in most laboratories and the computer suite is now well integrated into the science area.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average at age 14 and well above average at 16.
- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Teachers provide well for students with special educational needs.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students' use of sketchbooks and personal resource material is good.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching of drawing for different purposes.
- The attainment of the most able.
- The accommodation and learning resources.
- Statutory requirements relating to the use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

153. In 2002, teachers assessed students' attainment at the end of Year 9 as well above the national average, but these assessments are generous. Results in 2002 GCSE examinations in courses in art and design are well above average, an improvement on 2001 and a significant improvement on results at the last inspection.

154. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Sketchbooks contain good quality observational drawings of everyday objects and the human figure, and investigations into methods and materials. Drawings are developed into good quality compositions in paint, pastel and mixed media. Students lack understanding of the use of line to show space, form, light and shade or texture, and shading sometimes flattens rather than accentuates form. Students make good reference to Futurism, Cubism, and abstract art, and produce work based in the style of famous artists, such as scraperboard-like compositions based on Paul Klee's tropical fish. They also work in 3-dimensions with clay, wire and card, but do not

generate enough work on computers. The multi-cultural content is good, and students are influenced by Japanese, North American and African art, but there is little to reflect the rich history of Belper. Few students use art and design words to discuss their work and annotations in sketchbooks are descriptive rather than evaluative. Students arrive in school having had a variety, and often limited, experiences of art and design, but by the end of Year 9 they have a clear understanding of the basic skills of drawing and composition and a working knowledge of a range of art and artists, and so achievement is good overall.

155. Attainment in Year 11 is well above average. Sketchbook work is very good, and observational drawing is central to students' activities. Many have highly sophisticated pencil skills, capturing, for example, the delicate qualities of light and shade on glass containers, daffodils, or the inside of apples. These drawings are the starting points to large scale, original pieces of work in a range of materials and scales, inspired by Georgia O'Keefe, Andy Goldsworthy or American Pop artists such as Warhol or Rauschenberg. Students often scan their drawings into a computer and modify them. Work is ambitious in concept, with paintings often changing into sculpture as they develop. Students offer critical analysis of their work, although few give any personal view of the artists' work that inspires them. They make rapid progress and achievement is very good.

156. Whilst achievement overall is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, there is a difference in the achievement of different groups of students. Those who are least capable make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11, because teachers know these students' needs very well, and break their work into manageable components. Those who are most capable make unsatisfactory progress. Their sketchbooks are particularly well maintained with high quality drawings and stimulating imagery, but they do not use drawing to collect information about form, space and texture well enough to produce innovative, original work. Numbers gaining A* grades in recent years are well below average.

157. Teaching and learning in art and design are good overall: good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Some lessons for younger students are not well managed, and boys in particular respond less well than girls. Sometimes the teacher's subject knowledge is less secure than in lessons for older students. Very good teaching is characterised by well-planned, challenging lessons. For example, Year 10 students made rapid progress in a lesson devoted to sketchbook study with discovery at the heart of learning. The teacher had high expectations and students gained new knowledge of famous artists while improving their technical skills in their efforts to please her. Her management of her students and their diverse activities was excellent, and she used her very good subject knowledge to pass on information, guidance and constructive criticism. Year 11 students following the design course made similar good progress in a lesson investigating product design. The lesson was managed with good humour, generating interest and cooperation. The teacher's encouraging manner allowed his students to improve their research skills when investigating a wide range of products. Students knew what they were doing and how to improve, and there was mutual support and appreciation of each other's efforts.

158. Leadership and management are good and the course coordinator has a very clear view of her department and its future direction. Assessment methods are thorough, and GCSE students know their current performance levels and target grades well, but younger students are less sure of their National Curriculum levels. There is a need for continued in-service training for newly qualified teachers and teachers returning to the classroom after career breaks. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Teaching rooms are not grouped together, one is too small, and another is split-level and suffers intrusive noise from an adjacent corridor. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory. Difficulties accessing computers

prevents full delivery of the National Curriculum, while the shortage of simple apparatus such as batik frames is limiting the quality of students' work.

159. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have improved to well above average, and attitudes have improved although a minority of younger boys are still occasionally obstructive. Younger students still do not have enough access to ICT. The department adds greatly to the environment with its displays around the school.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Some excellent teaching which promotes high standards and can be used as a model for others
- A good range of opportunities for all students to be involved in the school community.
- The way the curriculum is enriched well by visitors.
- Well-planned citizenship contributions from the Humanities faculty.
- A system of citizenship awards that offer recognition and encouragement for responsible action.

Areas for improvement

- An effective assessment and recording system is needed which takes account of work in all subjects and of community involvement in and out of school
- Ensuring balanced planning for National Curriculum requirements.
- Monitoring standards of teaching and learning to ensure consistent standards, and sharing the best practice.

160. This is a new area of work for the school and provision is not consistently good. However, it is clear that students do receive a rich experience. Overall, students reach average standards at the end of Year 9. Most are interested in the lessons and achieve satisfactorily. They respond to the school's opportunities for participation with interest and often with enthusiasm. Students are proud of their initiatives when they see a school council decision put into action. The senior citizens who attend the long-standing luncheon club appreciate students' courtesy and helpfulness, and the students enjoy their participation.

161. It is not possible to distinguish between the attainment of different groups of students. In several lessons observed, visitors made presentations or students watched lengthy videos. In these cases, only the oral response of some students could be gauged. The school cannot offer satisfactory evidence of attainment or of community involvement, and students do not record what they do in ways that evaluate their participation and effort. The systems for this are still at an early stage of development and need some refinement to enable tutors to report to parents with accuracy. In an outstanding Year 9 lesson on global citizenship within a unit of geography studying the Brazilian rainforest, it was clear that attainment is above average on this topic, and that students of all abilities were stretched and achieving well. They learned that local actions have global consequences and that we all share responsibility for sustainable development. The lesson was well planned across all of the citizenship requirements and it was possible to judge attainment securely. Another lesson showed that most of the students gained satisfactory levels of knowledge on how Parliament works and were able to relate this to their own school council elections.

162. At the end of Year 11 students do not meet the more demanding requirements for average attainment at this age. There is not enough evidence of knowledge and understanding of the required topics, or of the skills of presenting informed opinions and of evaluating their own community participation. However, some good learning was observed in several lessons. In one, students listened to a visually impaired visitor and their questions at

the end showed sensitive insights into the life situation of a disabled person. In an outstanding Year 11 lesson, students made excellent progress in learning about the ethnic and cultural diversity of modern Britain and the rights of citizens. It is clear that students acquire significant learning about some of the prescribed topics. They understand the workings of the courts and the justice system, helped by the regular visits from local magistrates. Many participate responsibly in the annual sponsorship afternoon and in a range of other community activities.

163. As in the lower years, students' response is generally good. In lessons they are interested, listen, take part in discussion opportunities and ask questions. They take part with some enthusiasm in community activities such as house and school councils, organising house quizzes and discos, an environmental club, helping with Year 7 induction and working on the design and maintenance of the school web site. This needs to be recorded systematically, and this could easily be done with some adjustment to the way records of achievement are kept.

164. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A wide range of quality was seen, including two excellent and one unsatisfactory lesson. The excellent lessons, already referred to above, were characterised by clear planning and very good subject knowledge that enabled students to make significant gains in learning. The lessons had a very good variety of tasks and activities, which encouraged students to think independently, to work co-operatively, to listen, and to discuss in informed and reasonable ways. The stronger lessons motivated and engaged students well, and as a result they made very good progress. In the global citizenship lesson, students were so involved that they were spontaneously volunteering relevant points such as "Doesn't the rainforest give us 20 per cent of our oxygen?" and "All this means we could get malaria back in England" and the teacher adapted these points skilfully to extend everyone's learning. In a weaker lesson, too much video material was shown for students to digest, and the teacher gave insufficient time for discussion or for reinforcing the significant points. The subject is largely taught by tutors within the framework of weekly personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons, and their expertise varies. Some need more support and training, and all need a clearer structure for lesson planning and assessing.

165. The school is working in a situation of some difficulty, as the leader of this new area has been absent for some months. Nevertheless, a wealth of material has been gathered and much curricular enrichment has been organised through visitors. However, the subject is not well organised. Schemes of work are disjointed and lack coherence, and do not ensure balance to clarify the identity of citizenship, and to take account of cross-curricular contributions such as that of the humanities faculty, which has taken responsibility for global citizenship and the history of democracy. The school has a well-established tradition of providing a wide range of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, and opportunities to exercise responsibility and to give community service, so it will not be difficult to ensure that citizenship requirements for responsible participation are met by all and suitably recorded. The school already makes awards for citizenship which knowledge good service and provide an encouragement to take responsibility. It is appropriate that the school council is involved in monitoring this scheme.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- GCSE A*-C grades are above average.
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and attainment is above average.
- Teaching is good so students learn well.

Areas for improvement

- Greater challenge for talented students.
- Raising the standards of boys' portfolio work.

166. There was some disruption to staffing in the previous school year, and some aspects of design and technology were taught by non-specialists. The morale of both staff and students was affected, and the subject played less part in technology college activities than is usual. Staffing is now much improved with a new course coordinator and specialist teachers.

167. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. When students enter the school they have widely differing experiences of design and technology, but, by the age of 14, students have made progress and achieve satisfactorily. Staffing problems in the past affected students' progress. Students now handle tools confidently, work with precision and evaluate their practical work as it progresses. They are confident in working from their own plans and developing design ideas, and use measuring techniques precisely. Literacy skills are good and technical language is used well. Higher attaining students make good progress, but there is insufficient challenge for the very highest attaining students. Teachers' assessments in 2002 would suggest well above average attainment, but these are acknowledged by the school to be inaccurate.

168. In 2002 GCSE examinations, the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades is above average, fewer students passed than nationally and the average points scored by students is average, because there are far fewer A* and A grades than nationally. In terms of average points scores, there is little difference between girls' and boys' results, but girls scored better for A*-C grades than boys. However, when results in the different aspects of design and technology are examined, there are significant differences between boys and girls. Girls did better in food and textiles with specialist teaching than did boys in resistant materials and graphic products taught by non-specialists.

169. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment is now above average in all aspects, and achievement is good. Students develop, test and modify their ideas, and experiment with materials. They evaluate how their work meets the specification for the task. In students' portfolios, design work is well organised and research skills are well developed. Products reflect original design ideas. Higher attaining students attain well in all areas. They annotate work well, are confident in orthographic development and evaluate work effectively. However, many lower attainers' portfolio work, particularly a number of boys, is below average. They prefer making and modelling activities to presenting work in written or graphical form. The most able students are not challenged enough.

170. Students with special educational needs achieve well, because teaching caters for their needs, educational care officers give good support, and teachers expect them to do well. In response, students are motivated and work at a productive pace.

171. The department is now better organised under the good leadership of the new course coordinator. Staff no longer teach outside their specialism and planning is good. Teaching

and learning are good, and there is evidence of improving achievement. Students behave very well, and are keen to work. Lessons are well planned, particularly when practical activities have to be completed within a single lesson. The pace of lessons is often rapid. Teachers make effective use of their knowledge to demonstrate skills and techniques so that students learn to handle tools safely and accurately. Emphasis on technical language clarifies understanding of design processes and develops precise writing. Practical sessions are well managed so students' well directed enthusiasm speeds progress. Good relationships enable students to learn from constructive criticism to evaluate and modify their work. Questioning is used well to draw out understanding.

172. The design and technology curriculum is enhanced by the extra-curricular activities funded through technology college status. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The department has suffered a period of turbulence but is now back on track. Teaching and learning are good, and students enjoy their work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good relationships promote good attitudes to learning.
- Use of the Internet gives students up to date and relevant information.
- Analysis of GCSE results has led to improved planning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards particularly at higher levels and especially in GCSE.
- Students' regular and frequent use of computers to analyse data and draw conclusions from research.
- Using data on students' attainment to track progress and help students improve.

173. In 2002, 50 per cent of students gained grades A*-C in GCSE examinations, which is below the national average. The trend over the last three years is similar. Contrary to the national situation, boys did better than girls. Boys' results are in line with the boys' national average, whereas girls' results are significantly below theirs. At age 14, results are above average for the proportion of students gaining level 5, and average for level 6. However, there is again a significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, but here boys' results are close to the national average and girls' are well above average. In GCSE and at age 14, students attain mostly in the middle range, with few reaching the higher grades or levels.

174. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at age 14 is broadly average, and in line with last year's teacher assessments. The Year 9 work available was confined to the work done in the last few weeks, as the humanities timetable schedules geography to start after Christmas. Students satisfactorily describe living conditions in Japan, and the relationship between people and their environment. They understand the immense pressure of the population on the land and how the lives of the Japanese people and the economy have developed. Only a few higher attaining students can fully explain the reasons for the environmental relationships. The vast majority use textbooks to do simple research, and many use the Internet to find out more detail. Most recall work from previous years well, such as the effects of earthquakes which they learned in Year 8. Achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory.

175. Attainment at 16 is below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Students use statistics to draw climate graphs and describe the climate in terms of rainfall and temperature, and then relate vegetation to climate. In urban geography, all students know the terms to define such areas as the central business district and residential zones, and apply them to Belper in simple practical research. In more complex studies, only a few can interpret population statistics in other than very elementary terms. Only a small number relate population pyramids to criteria such as literacy rates, numbers of doctors and infant mortality, and draw conclusions about the prosperity of populations and the reasons for this. Many students use information from the Internet to enrich and enliven their work. However, because it is difficult for classes to use computer rooms, students do not make good progress in using analytical graphic tools to deepen understanding, of, for example, how to define economic development and make quick and accurate comparisons.

176. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection, all geography lessons were taught by specialist geography teachers, but this is not true of all of the geography lessons in the humanities rotation, and so no comment can be made on any difference since the last inspection, when non-specialist teachers were found to lack geographical expertise.

177. Strong features are the good relationships and teachers' good knowledge, which together underpin learning. This means students are willing to learn and respond well to active methods. For example, in Year 9, a class explored the relationship among different buildings when laying an outline of their ideal village using a plan and wooden blocks. The discussion promoted understanding of settlement patterns as well as respect for one another's point of view. Year 8 class students produced a booklet on preparing for an earthquake, which ensured that students could describe the after effects of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Standards of literacy and numeracy support descriptive writing and simple statistical methods. At all levels students express opinions about the differing standards of living arising from varied environments without making value judgements. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development.

178. Management and leadership of the recently appointed course coordinator are good. The schemes of work which were judged unsatisfactory at the last inspection have been thoroughly reviewed. The various elements of GCSE results have been analysed, and as a result the approach to course work now examines the methods students use more closely and ensures that more pieces are completed within time limits, to try to ensure higher levels of attainment than in recent results. Assessment is unsatisfactory because it does not allow teachers to track the progress of individuals and groups in order to set accurate targets to raise standards, nor does it inform students of exactly where they are and what steps they have to take to reach higher levels.

179. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Changes are already apparent, despite having started so recently, and the small number of specialists has the commitment and capacity to improve standards. New texts are in use, the syllabus has been changed and use of the Internet information gives students access to recent and relevant information. However, ICT is not used enough to display and analyse graphic information.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Leadership is good, and promotes high levels of teamwork.
- Teaching is good and the use of ICT gives students many opportunities for personal research and presenting their work in different ways.
- Relationships are very warm and students feel valued and supported.
- The provision for students' personal development is very good, and field trips and excursions are a strong feature.

Areas for improvement

- The percentage of A*-C grades in GCSE examinations, particularly from girls.
- Assessment of work at the end of Year 9.
- More emphasis on literacy and students' active use of subject terminology.
- More practice in higher-order historical skills to reach the highest GCSE grades.

180. Standards at age 14 and 16 are average overall, although there are examples of higher attainment than this in Years 10 and 11. Because the department does not place enough emphasis on literacy, a significant minority of students do not use historical terminology extensively and make only cursory comments on cause and effect. However, students' skills with ICT for personal research are very good. Many have a good understanding of the nature of evidence and of how historians work, and give cogent reasons for their answers. For example, they can decide which developments in surgery in the nineteenth century had the most effect on increasing patients' chances of surviving an operation. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but it is good in Years 10 and 11 because teachers have introduced new coursework arrangements.

181. The department's work with students who often find the subject matter difficult is very effective. The course leading to the Certificate of Achievement award promotes high levels of motivation among those who might otherwise become disaffected, and all three students following the course in 2002 attained the highest grade. At GCSE, attainment at A*-C has been below average for two years, and 2002 results are also below average for the proportion of A*-C grades. However, the average points score is average. This is because fewer students gained A* and A grades than nationally, but all students gained a pass. Girls did better than average in 2001, but, in 2002, their results fell much further below their national average than boys' results were below theirs. Results in assessments at age 14 in 2002 are above average but, because the department has no effective system for consistent marking, these are inaccurate. Work seen during the inspection shows that students' attainment is average at the end of Year 9.

182. Teachers treat students with great respect, to which students respond very well, behaving very well and showing real interest during lessons. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and it is good in Years 10 and 11 where better planning, marking and homework lead to a faster pace of learning. Students are given opportunities to learn at their own pace, because lessons are well planned and because teachers provide resources and assignments which ensure that students of all ability levels achieve some personal success. Sometimes teachers ask challenging questions designed to make students think, and high levels of historical debate ensue and students ask questions which demonstrate a profound understanding of the topics under consideration. In a very good Year 10 lesson, for example, students made some very perceptive comments about how pain and infection were

countered during the nineteenth century and, after consideration of new developments, made accurate predictions as to what would be the result. In a significant minority of lessons, however, where questioning is not challenging enough, students are not required to give extended answers, or to display the higher-order historical skills in judging the utility and validity of the evidence. This prevents students attaining grades A and A* in the GCSE examinations. Nonetheless, teachers are concerned to whet students' appetites for historical study and to demonstrate to them just how interesting and valuable it can be. The use of a PowerPoint presentation in a Year 7 lesson to highlight the claims of Harold Godwinson, Harold Godwinsson and William of Normandy to the throne of England in 1066 is just one example. The students were fascinated by this approach and gave their opinions on each personality with a maturity which belied their years. Year 11 students gave a range of very high quality presentations on the American West, which were the result of the teacher's encouragement and motivational skill, and students' mutual support during the paired and group activities.

183. Leadership is good, and the talented and committed staff work very hard and form a good team. The department places great emphasis on recognising students' achievements. In each classroom there is a vibrant learning atmosphere, augmented, for example, by the thought-provoking and moving display commemorating the holocaust. The department's provision for students' personal development is very good. The historical excursions are a particularly strong feature and the visit to Beth Shalom is the highlight of the departmental year. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the opportunities it provides for pupils to evaluate their own performance. Marking is generally good but the department's arrangements for recording students' levels of performance at the end of Year 9 are unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- High quality materials on the school's computers are very effectively used by students in school and at home.
- The school works very closely with primary schools to raise standards even before students enter the school.
- Students use extra-curricular provision well.
- Very good technician support makes sure that the school's computers are reliable.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not write about their work well enough.
- The highest attaining students and some students with special educational needs do not always have the most suitable work.
- Some of the computer rooms are too small.

184. In the last two years, the school has made major changes to the way ICT is taught. From September 2001, most students in Year 10 started a GNVQ course, and a new course was introduced for younger students in September 2002. Both of these courses are very well supported by materials on the school's intranet, including video films, demonstrations and links to important information. This is one of the main factors in students' good learning. The materials are constantly available in school and at home, and students enjoy making good use of them. One good example of the way in which these resources are used in school was in a Year 10 class. Students learning to use spreadsheets regularly looked at examples on the computer network. This helped them make the right choice when they were not sure. They also kept checking to see if their work met the standard needed for certain grades.

Time was used well because they knew when to move on or if they needed to add something more to their work.

185. These resources are still being developed. At the time of the inspection, there was little material to challenge the very highest attaining students. Similarly, students with reading difficulties sometimes cannot read the information and so do not learn as well as the rest of the class. They need more materials specially written for them, or more help from teaching assistants.

186. Another outstanding feature of the school's intranet is its link with primary schools. Materials are provided to help primary pupils learn, and Belper School provides a technician to work entirely with primary schools, teaching pupils and developing their own teachers' skills.

187. At present, students enter Year 7 with standards below the national average but these standards are rising thanks to the support provided. Attainment at age 14 is below average, but achievement is satisfactory, given students' low attainment on entry. Students in Year 9 have followed the new course for only three months, and, although learning is now good and standards rising, attainment has not yet risen to the national average.

188. There is no difference in the standards of boys and girls. In 2002 teachers judged standards of work inaccurately as above the national average. The school now has better methods for assessing pupils.

189. Higher attaining students select appropriate software, and explain their choices. They do not understand well how to present work to different audiences. Average attainers present information well but have difficulty describing their work. A significant number know the computing terms but cannot write explanations clearly. Lower attainers can enter data into a computer and make simple changes such as colours and size of pictures and writing, but cannot choose software for particular tasks.

190. In 2002, about 40 students finished the newly introduced course. Their results are in line with the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 11 are above average, and students achieve well. Higher attaining students use a wide range of spreadsheet functions, and know how to add animation when designing pages for the Internet. Their work already assessed for GNVQ is at the highest level. Average attainers can design Internet pages and can produce clear charts and graphs, but they are not as good at describing their work as they are with technical skills, and this holds their standards down. Lower attainers can alter a word-processed document and carry out a search on the Internet. They do not plan work well and so have difficulties in developing projects. The school needs to ensure that all students in Years 10 and 11 have sufficient time not only to cover the course but also to refine and improve their work to have a chance of higher marks.

191. Teaching and learning are good in nearly all lessons, with some very good teaching and only one example of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are very familiar with the intranet materials and use them well to help students learn. The best teaching uses examples which students readily recognise, such as a popular television programme as the basis for work on spreadsheets. In this lesson, the teacher's skilful and sympathetic use of humour added to students' motivation. Occasionally, teachers attempt to move everyone in the class forward at the same rate. Sometimes this is appropriate when students collaborate on a project, such as the Internet radio. At other times students do not learn enough because some are attempting activities which rely on skills they do not have whilst others are not presented with new challenges.

192. Because students use computers so extensively, they readily appreciate the ever-increasing importance of ICT to their lives. The school also uses computers effectively for students' personal development through researching topics on the Internet, and another powerful example is the reminder of Holocaust Memorial day whenever students switched on a computer that day.

193. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers collaborate as a supportive team. Technicians serve the school well by ensuring that equipment works dependably. By building many of the school's computers, they have provided the school with sufficient computers very efficiently. Many students use computers outside lessons, and a group adds and revises intranet materials. ICT master classes feature in enrichment week. Some ICT rooms are too small for pupils to work collaboratively, and the shape of one means that pupils cannot all see the demonstration screen. There are not enough ICT books in the library.

194. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school now has far more computers. New courses have been introduced and the valuable intranet has been established. Parents now receive reports on their children's ICT work. The school has very recently been identified as a 'lead school' for the subject.

195. In some subjects, the use of ICT is making a significant contribution to students' learning. For example, in English, greater use of computers, especially for writing, has led to boys achieving higher results than previously. Good use is made of the Internet for research in history. For example, students find out about life in the past at a local stately home, and use this information to make presentations for their class. Pupils also regularly carry out research for science, for example into forms of energy, and they use computers to record data from experiments. However, less use is made of computers in some subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- High standards in GCSE French and German
- Teachers' effective use of their excellent language skills, which raises standards of speaking and listening.
- Students' well above average standards in writing.
- The excellent working relationship between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- Writing comments on work which tell students how to improve.
- Extending the range of classroom resources to complement the use of textbooks.
- Improving the quality of the accommodation when finances permit.

196. Students study either French or German from Year 7 and most students continue with that language to GCSE in Year 11. At present, no students study a second foreign language. In 2001, GCSE results in modern foreign languages were above average overall. Results were average in German and above average in French. Girls out-performed boys in both languages. In 2002, GCSE results improved to well above average overall. Results are above average in French, and well above average in German. The gap between the performance of boys and girls narrowed significantly. In 2002, students did better in modern languages than in other subjects. The overall trend over recent years is one of improving results and of above average and increasing proportions of A* and A grades. The rising

GCSE standards are mainly due to the good learning opportunities teachers can provide in lessons for all students' needs as a result of students being grouped by ability.

197. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average and the achievement of all students is at least good. Able students make very good progress, reaching well above average standards. In listening, in both French and German, all students can understand recordings of native speakers at a language level appropriate to their ability. In speaking, students of all abilities, and especially boys, speak confidently and unselfconsciously with good accents. For example, in a lower attainers' German lesson in Year 9, students described clearly in German their individual plans for the weekend. Students' high standards in listening and speaking are the result of teachers' consistent and fluent use of the foreign language in lessons. Exercise books show that many students reach well above average standards in writing. All students can express themselves in full sentences, for example in letters about holiday events. Most students can remember, and subsequently re-use the language they have already learned. This is because teachers test students frequently on vocabulary and grammar, and refer consistently in lessons to what students already know. Most middle and high attaining students have a good vocabulary, and can express themselves well using the present, past and immediate future tenses. In reading, standards are above average due to the good choice and use of reading texts. Students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers' good planning; the German-speaking educational care officer gives highly effective help to students with learning needs.

198. By the end of Year 11, standards in French and German are well above average in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and achievement is good. The achievement of able students is very good, especially in writing and speaking. All students are very aware of how they are progressing because teachers frequently refer to examination requirements during lessons. By the end of Year 11, many students have progressed to confident speaking and writing using irregular verb forms, agreements, and a sound vocabulary. For example, in an excellent Year 11 French lesson students expressed opinions on differences between French and English schools. Standards in listening are well above average. In reading, students make very good progress; they can deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words within challenging texts, such as German material about the impact of the environment.

199. The department supports students' development in literacy very well through emphasising accuracy in writing, and raising students' awareness of how language works. Both languages contribute occasionally but effectively to students' basic arithmetic in simple transactions in shopping. Students' use of ICT is not well developed, but ICT is used effectively by teachers in some lessons. For example, a very good PowerPoint presentation using image and text in a Year 8 lesson motivated students well, especially boys, to describe ailments. Gifted and talented students make good progress, as their needs are carefully provided for.

200. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Teaching in half of the lessons seen was very good, with one example of excellent teaching. Teachers structure their lessons very well and make objectives clear so students know what they are learning. Relationships are excellent; this contributes substantially to the high standards in the department, because students and teachers respect each other and are keen to communicate in the foreign language. For example, in a very good Year 11 German lesson, students expressed their opinions confidently on how their home town could be improved because they had listened and responded well during the earlier parts of the lesson.

201. Teachers mark students' work regularly and thoroughly, and most students are made aware of the levels at which they are working, but not all teachers consistently add written comments about progress and how to improve. The good teaching could be further enhanced by the use of a wider range of resources, including overhead projectors.

202. Leadership and management are good. The course coordinator gives clear direction and inspiration to the department through her strong commitment to raising standards. Teaching is not observed often enough to ensure consistency of good practice. Improvement since the last report is good, with the exception that the subject is taught in mobile classrooms, described as requiring attention to woodwork and guttering in the last report. These buildings were then fourteen years old, very little improvement has taken place since, and there are no definite plans for improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm inspires students to learn.
- Lessons engage students in enjoyable music making activities.
- The numbers of students taking part in extra-curricular activities, including an annual musical production, has grown.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- Accommodation and resources, especially the shortage of computers
- Regular music lessons for all students in Years 7 to 9 throughout the school year.

203. In 2002 teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 as above average. However, some classes had no music tuition at that time because there were not enough qualified staff, so these are the results of only part of the year group. GCSE results in 2002 are well below national averages although boys achieved above the boys' national average for A*-C grades. Factors affecting this low attainment include the staffing problems and the teaching timetable in Years 7 to 9.

204. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. The reasons for this include students' varied musical experiences before joining the school, the loss of lessons last year because of the lack of qualified staff, insufficient ICT experiences and the rotation arrangement of lessons. Although each year group receives the recommended time for music, it is condensed into three half-term sessions. Continuity is broken both by the six week gaps between sessions and by some classes being taught by a different teacher for each lesson. Whilst practical activities do not appear to be affected too adversely thanks to opportunities for practice at lunchtime, composition and listening work do not develop. Students who wish to study music for GCSE start at a disadvantage. Considering students' prior attainment, achievement is satisfactory.

205. Students in Year 7 can find notes on a keyboard, but cannot manage without the letter names above the notes on the printed sheet. Some do not have a secure grasp of rhythmic notation. Older students can define a chord, work out which notes belong to chords and play a chord progression in bass clef by using the chord symbols. However, some are not sure of the notation for sharps and flats and the effect they have on the notes. Whilst students sometimes make perceptive observations in lessons, their written work is vague and imprecise. Musical vocabulary is not sufficiently encouraged in discussion work. No singing

was observed. Year 9 students do not have sound knowledge and understanding of the basic rudiments of music.

206. In Years 10 and 11, standards are just in line with examination board expectations for this stage in the course, and achievement is broadly satisfactory. However students do not regularly devote time to composing and do not write down their ideas for subsequent editing. The attainment of some Year 11 students is below average. Many Year 11 students had handed no work in for several weeks, and lessons are designed to help them catch up on things they should have learnt earlier. For example, in one lesson, carefully structured listening enabled the students to grasp the technique of writing melodies to fit given chord patterns.

207. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and some teaching is good. Students look forward to their music lessons and come prepared to participate, thanks to the practical nature and interesting content of lessons. Teachers plan lessons well and explain tasks clearly. This enables students to settle quickly to music making. Both teachers have very good practical experience of music and know the subject very well. This is evident in the guidance given before practical work and the encouragement and advice during the activity. In one lesson, students felt frustrated at their inability to make progress with their compositions, but in their next lesson attitudes and progress were much improved when they were shown options for overcoming their problems. Teachers' very good knowledge is also evident in the careful choice of resources which enables students to discover learning for themselves. Whilst lesson planning caters for the needs of most students, including those with special educational needs, the more musically able are not given enough challenge. In some lessons there are no students' performances to either celebrate a particular achievement or act as an example. In a few otherwise satisfactory lessons, the nature of the proposed practical work excited students so much that time was lost waiting for calm before starting the activity.

208. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. A course coordinator and specialist staff have been appointed, so all students are now taught music and standards are beginning to rise. The number of instrumental teachers has increased to cater for the growth in number of students requiring lessons. There is an annual musical production and smaller concerts are also given. The department is buzzing with activity during non-teaching time with students practising classwork, preparing for performances or practical examinations, or just listening.

209. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. At that time, music was well taught and attainment was average at 14 and above average in GCSE. Staffing difficulties in the intervening years mean that the situation at present is much worse than at that time. The timetable is unsatisfactory, and accommodation and resources are inadequate. Assessment is not rigorous and students do not use ICT enough. However, new staff are working very hard to improve the situation and there are some signs of improvement. Significant support is needed for a department anxious to turn things around.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and students.
- Students' enthusiasm for physical education.
- Students' self assessment booklets in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Community sports links for basketball, volleyball and rugby.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards.
- Share good practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that lessons are planned to help students move to higher levels.
- Improve assessment to help students understand how they are doing and set targets.

210. Teachers' assessments of attainment at age 14 in 2002 are below the national average, particularly for girls. However, the standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national averages, although in some lessons there are lower levels of performance in some activities. For example, Year 7 basketball students are able to dribble the ball with some control and understand the importance of shielding the ball, and in swimming many students are working at the levels expected for their age, showing confidence in the water and satisfactory technique in breaststroke and front crawl. Year 9 basketball students understand the basic rules of the game, but their shooting skills are below what is expected at their age. In gymnastics in Year 9, most students attain average standards in paired balance work, and some higher attaining students are able to perform more complex routines.

211. GCSE results in 2002 are below the national average, although there was some improvement on the previous year's results. These students underachieved as their results did not match predictions. During the inspection, written work was only available from the upper attaining half of the age 16 year group, whose standard is average. Students taking core physical education are working at the standard expected at their age.

212. Students on the GCSE course in Year 10 have satisfactory understanding of factors affecting participation in sport. Standards in soccer in Year 11 are average overall: some higher attaining students have good skills, but lower attainers have less confidence when dribbling the ball and often lose possession when challenged. Most higher attaining students in Year 11 basket ball attain above average levels, and show good technique in shooting, sharp and effective passing and good understanding of man to man defence. Students have average levels of understanding in the theory part of the course, including anatomy, physiology and training methods. They make satisfactory use of this knowledge as they complete the project required for the examination.

213. In all lessons students of all attainment levels make satisfactory progress as they learn new skills, and improve and refine existing ones. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, where students build on skills and understanding to reach average standards in Year 9. Sometime achievement is good, particularly where students are learning new activities, such as basketball and hockey in Year 7. Older students' achievement in some activities is good, such as in GCSE basketball in Year 11, where students, and particularly girls, make good use of previously learned netball skills to develop shooting to a good standard. In other activities in Years 10 and 11, such as badminton and soccer, attainment is average and achievement is satisfactory.

214. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with examples of good and very good teaching, and one example of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to students, helping them learn new skills and improve existing ones. For example, students learn how to push and receive the hockey ball, and some higher attaining students are beginning to use the reverse stick, and improve the quality of swimming strokes, and develop correct breathing technique in front crawl. Lessons are planned satisfactorily, and include practices for students of all attainment levels. Classes are always well managed and students behave well. The good relationships are a major factor in successful lessons. Students are enthusiastic and work hard. However, they have only limited opportunities to be independent and take control of their learning. For example, at the start of lessons teachers lead students through warm up routines which students could take charge of themselves. There is little assessment in lessons, and no use is made of National Curriculum levels to help students set targets for improvement.

215. There is satisfactory management and a shared vision to provide good experiences for all students. School clubs and teams provide additional opportunities for all students, including the gifted and talented. There are good standards in extra curricular boys' soccer. Inter-school netball fixtures have recently been started and standards are improving, as teams are beginning to compete successfully against other schools in the area. The successful basketball lottery bid has increased training opportunities available to students and other young people in the local community and has also provided the opportunity through which students can be introduced to local rugby and volleyball clubs. The accommodation for the subject, which is based in the Sports Centre, is generally good, although ongoing building work at present restricts students' changing accommodation. However, the all weather pitch is poorly maintained and its surface is uneven. Staff have no changing area and share a small office with another subject. Medium and short term lesson planning does not include how to move students on to higher levels. A good self-assessment booklet has been introduced for students in Years 7,8 and 9, but National Curriculum levels are not used enough in this nor in teaching to track students' attainment and to set targets for improvement.

216. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of teaching have been maintained and students continue to be enthusiastic. Although attainment in both GCSE and in Year 9 assessments are below national average in 2002, standards observed during the inspection are in line with national averages. An A-level in physical education has been introduced in the sixth form.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment have improved across the school.
- Short course GCSE results are well above the national average.
- There have been significant improvements to the curriculum, including good fieldwork for many students.

Areas for improvement

- There is still no religious education in the sixth form.
- Using assessment information so that students' progress can be tracked and action taken.
- Ensuring consistent standards of teaching and assessing across a large team of non-specialists.
- More books and artefacts are needed to teach the new syllabus.

217. This is a subject where standards have improved dramatically since the appointment of a specialist leader. Students' previous experience of religious education is varied, but most students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and attainment is above both national expectations and those of the locally agreed syllabus. This is a significant improvement on the low standards at the last inspection, and reflects improved teaching, increased time and better resources. Many teachers are still non-specialists, but the course coordinator, appointed since the last inspection, has transformed the quality of teaching by effectively disseminating expertise and revising teaching materials. Most students respond well to the teaching and to the teachers' respect for their views. Their behaviour is good, and real enthusiasm was seen in several lessons. There is no significant difference in the attainment, progress and response of boys and girls.

218. By age 14, students acquire a broad knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions. They gain a good understanding of how religious beliefs shape people's lives and decisions, and are able to relate their learning to their own lives effectively. Students use correct terminology accurately and write well to record knowledge and to consider meaning and purpose. Year 7 students in particular are learning to take a reflective approach. They can express their inner thoughts with confidence and fluency. This is a new initiative that should lead to further improvements in standards.

219. At the age of sixteen standards are also above average. The short course GCSE is now offered, and, in 2002, 84 per cent of students gained grades A* to C, and all students passed. This is well above the national average. Around one third of last year's Year 11 chose to take the examination. The others gained accreditation through the school's own certificate of achievement. This year many more students wish to enter. Attainment at age 16 is above average. Students continue to make good progress in their depth of knowledge and maturity of thinking, and the achievement of most students is good. They feel secure that, however sceptical they may be of religion, their viewpoints are respected. Year 10 students know about the increase in divorce in Great Britain and use numerical skills in drawing graphs to investigate the rates of increase and recent decline. They understand the beliefs of different Christian groups and also of Islam towards divorce. Year 11 students understand how faith in God is acquired through upbringing or through a conversion experience, and consider the humanist position of non-faith.

220. Teaching and learning are good overall, and teaching by specialists is very good, characterised by very good subject knowledge which develops good understanding. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to be reflective and to review what they are learning and this helps students to relate it to their own life experiences. In mixed ability classes, teachers pitch the lesson appropriately, with enough 'open' tasks to stretch everyone, and extension materials for the more able, so that all make progress. Religious artefacts are used effectively to develop students' understanding. For example, in one lesson there were two decorative copies of the Qur'an with a Qur'an stand. The teacher showed how a Qur'an is kept wrapped in a special cloth and put on the highest shelf as a mark of respect. Religious education makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through lesson content and teaching style. Teachers are good role models and students respond with similar courtesy, and learn tolerance and mutual respect. Where teaching is not quite as strong, subject expertise is less good, and there is less discussion, group work and use of high quality resources.

221. The subject leadership is very good. There is a clear vision for future development and much effective hard work and commitment has already brought about significant improvement. Management is good. The task of supporting a large team of non-specialists and ensuring a consistent high quality of teaching and accurate marking is difficult for a single specialist, particularly as there is no time to observe the quality of the team's teaching. There has been very significant improvement since the last inspection: all students in Years 11-16 are now taught religious education, although there is none in the sixth form and there is no full GCSE course. Students' work is assessed as the local syllabus requires, and students are involved in assessing their work, but the department does not use this data to watch over students' progress and intervene as necessary. Reports to parents do not make clear students' academic performance in religious education in the first three years. New books have been well chosen, but the department needs more for younger students. There is a strong programme of fieldwork across the humanities faculty, which is very beneficial to religious education. Year 7 go to Lincoln where they study the cathedral as well as the castle. In Year 9 pupils visit 'Beth Shalom', a Holocaust memorial centre, and Year 10 visit a mosque. More resources are needed for enlivened teaching such as through the stimulus of fine art and the increased use of artefacts.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	21	90	*	52	*	40.0	*
Further mathematics	8	100	*	75	*	66.0	*
Biology	12	83	*	33	*	35.0	*
Chemistry	15	93	*	40	*	37.0	*
Physics	14	79	*	14	*	30.0	*
Design and technology	18	56	*	17	*	19.4	*
Economics	7	71	*	43	*	28.6	*
Physical education	6	83	*	33	*	28.3	*
Art graphics	5	80	*	40	*	32.0	*
Art fine art	5	100	*	60	*	48.0	*
Drama	15	93	*	13	*	32.7	*
Geography	9	56	*	22	*	23.3	*
History	7	86	*	0	*	28.6	*
Sociology	20	95	*	30	*	36.0	*
English Language	3	67	*	0	*	27.0	*
English Literature	21	100	*	91	*	54.0	*
French	3	67	*	0	*	23.3	*
German	4	75	*	25	*	32.5	*

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

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	24	96	*	54	*	82.5	*
Further mathematics	8	100	*	75	*	102.5	*
Biology	20	90	*	45	*	75.0	*
Chemistry	19	95	*	21	*	69.4	*
Physics	13	92	*	46	*	78.5	*
Design and technology	10	80	*	30	*	62.0	*
Economics	8	75	*	25	*	55.0	*
Business studies	6	67	*	0	*	86.6 [#]	*
Health and social care	6	67	*	0	*	66.6 [#]	*
Art graphics	9	100	*	56	*	91.1	*
Art fine art	8	100	*	38	*	82.5	*
Drama	5	100	*	0	*	76.0	*
Geography	14	93	*	14	*	67.1	*
History	6	100	*	17	*	73.3	*
Sociology	12	92	*	17	*	68.3	*
English Language	9	100	*	11	*	73.3	*
English Literature	7	100	*	57	*	88.6	*
French	3	100	*	67	*	93.3	*
German	3	67	*	0	*	53.3	*
General Studies	3	67	*	0	*	81.1	*

[#] indicates double award

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	10	90	*	50	*	10	*
Health and social care	7	100	*	29	*	0	*

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and physics. Further mathematics, biology and chemistry were sampled. The results and teaching and learning in further mathematics are similar to those for mathematics. Teaching in biology and chemistry is satisfactory overall. Work is well organised, and students are mature and well able to work on their own when given the opportunity. GCSE mathematics courses are available after school in conjunction with the local adult education centre for those who wish to improve their previous grade.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning lead to well above average standards and very good achievement.
- Good retention rates, and the increasing numbers who study mathematics, result from students' very positive attitudes to mathematics.
- Teachers assess students' work well, which helps students to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm about their subject are used well to improve learning.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used enough as a tool in teaching and learning.

222. There is a good range of courses for the size of the sixth form. The numbers taking AS- and A-level mathematics courses are increasing and the retention rates are good.

223. Overall the standard of attainment on entry to Year 12 is slightly above average. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 13 are well above national averages, showing very good progress. Students achieve very well. They are highly motivated and respond very well to enthusiastic, knowledgeable teaching. The high level of mathematical debate, building on communication skills developed in earlier years, demonstrates this.

224. In 2002 A-level results, nearly half of students gained the highest grade, A. In 2001, results were even better, and were very high in comparison with national results. Over the past few years, virtually all students have passed, and results have been well above national averages. Some years male students get better results in examinations, in other years female students do so: there is no clear pattern.

225. Students in Year 13 understand the different situations arising from the intersection of a straight line and a circle, and describe how these would be represented algebraically. Lower attainers do not work as fast as the higher attainers and need some prompting in their working. Students in Year 13 can integrate and differentiate a wider range of more complex functions than students in Year 12, gradually building their expertise over the two years. Work seen in a Year 12 lesson showed that students recognise odd and even functions; higher attainers are able to apply the concepts almost intuitively. In both years, higher attainers recall and use different methods quickly; lower attainers are slower in remembering them and

applying them accurately. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls in work seen in class.

226. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject. This is clear in their teaching and generates an equal enthusiasm from their students. Teachers' thoughtful approach to solving mathematical problems, either orally, or through written work, provides a clear model for students' learning. Students' work is marked regularly. Every week students complete homework exercises on current topics for detailed teacher assessment. This is effective in consolidating students' learning and showing where they need to improve. Students feel well supported in their learning, especially with any difficulties they are experiencing. They know at what standard they are working and the progress they are making.

227. Pertinent and probing questioning is used to get students to make connections between new topics and previously acquired knowledge and techniques. Nearly all students are confident in exploring ideas and discussing them with others, even if unsure of the next step. ICT is sometimes used as a tool in teaching and learning, but not often enough.

228. The leadership and management of an experienced, enthusiastic team of specialist teachers are good. Written guidance for different modules is a good framework within which teachers can plan their lessons. Teachers work well together, and their subject knowledge and very good relationships with students provide a strong mathematical environment for learning. No major sixth form issues were raised in the last inspection report. Standards have improved considerably in the past six years.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Results in 2002 are significantly better than in recent years.
- Students' attitudes and relationships with teachers are good.
- The subject is well led.
- Good use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies is rather too narrow to cope effectively with the wide range of attainment of the students.

229. Standards reached by students in the 2002 A-level examinations are significantly above those reached in the last few years in which standards have generally been below the national average. No national comparisons are available for 2002, but 2001 results were above the national average. In 2002, six of the 13 students achieved A or B and only one student did not pass. For several years prior to 2001, standards reached have been below the national average and below the standards seen in other subjects in the school.

230. The standard of work of the current Year 13 seen during the inspection is not as high as that of the 2002 examination results. It is average overall, but some students attain above the national average. These students handle physical equations confidently, and use standard form accurately in calculations involving very small and very large quantities. Students whose attainment is below average have some grasp of technical language but do not use it very precisely in their discussions of, for example, amplitude modulation in the topic of telecommunications.

231. Standards in Year 12 are about average overall. Some students, whose work is above average, can apply their basic knowledge to new situations. In a lesson designed to develop understanding of how optical fibres work, some students could explain how pulses travelling down a fibre spread out due to differences in refractive index for different wavelengths. Lower attaining students have difficulty in interpreting the physical significance of equations such as that describing how electrons drift through conductors. All students in Year 12 show good practical skills in the collection and graphical representation of data and show, with some variation, capability in graphical analysis.

232. The achievement of students by the end of Year 13 is satisfactory. The results they achieve at A-level are in line with those to be expected from their achievement at the start of the course. Well-planned teaching and good relationships are major factors contributing to this achievement. Students in Year 12 also demonstrate satisfactory achievement in the relatively short time they have been in the sixth form.

233. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good features, and results in at least satisfactory learning for all students. Teachers know their subject well and plan their lessons well. Students' learning is well supported in a variety of ways. Well-prepared resource booklets, produced for each topic by the department, provide a mixture of notes, diagrams, self-assessment questions and ideas for experiments. This resource also ensures continuity of learning by linking together a sequence of lessons. Well-targeted questions during discussion sessions are used effectively to develop understanding, although teachers do not always capitalise on students' own prior knowledge, and some lessons emphasise teaching rather than learning. Good opportunities are provided for students to learn independently, particularly using ICT. In lessons in which students are working on chosen option topics, the strategy of dividing them into those being taught and those learning independently worked well for everyone in promoting good learning in different ways. The pace of learning is slower when teachers use a lecture style presentation for too long, as low attaining students, in particular, find it difficult to maintain concentration. There is not a wide enough range of strategies to meet the varying needs of students of different attainment.

234. Students' approach to learning is universally good. Relations with teachers are very mature and lessons are always conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students respond well to the opportunities to work on their own, particularly using ICT, and the proportion of students continuing from Year 12 into Year 13 in recent years is at least as good as to be expected. Students' folders show that they are capable of organising their own work in an orderly manner showing, for example, mainly tidy layout of calculations.

235. The course leader, who is also head of science, brings the same efficient leadership to physics as to science as a whole. The good support material produced is well matched to curriculum requirements. Targets are based partly on prior attainment and students are well informed about the progress they are making. No clear judgement was given at the time of the last inspection but, since then, standards have risen and there has been a significant rise in numbers taking the subject. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory improvement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology (product design).

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Attainment is above average and students achieve very well.
- Students are mature, articulate and highly motivated.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn very well and make very good progress.
- Leadership and management are good: weaknesses in product design three-dimensional have been improved.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of students gaining A-B grades.

236. Two strands in product design in this curriculum area were inspected: GCE AS- and A-level product design textiles and product design three-dimensional. The two strands are reported under the heading 'design and technology'.

237. Results in AS- and A-level courses in design and technology in 2001 are below average, and lower than the previous two years. In 2002, more students gained higher grades. The lack of a course leader and specialist teachers in product design three-dimensional has had a significant impact on retention of students and attainment in this course. Now, with a course coordinator and specialist teachers, this decline has been halted.

238. Attainment is above average. All students make substantial gains in knowledge, understanding and skills, and achievement is very good. Textiles portfolios include good sketchbooks. Manufacturing activities are very well executed and supported by good technical skills. In product design three-dimensional, high standards are exemplified by very good orthographic drawing, very good use of white space and some excellent exploded drawings. Students have a very clear understanding of the processes involved in manufacturing. They are confident in translating this knowledge into high quality products and have good manufacturing techniques.

239. Some students have no previous experience of GCSE design and technology, but all achieve very well because students learn quickly in response to very good teaching. Students respect their teachers' depth of knowledge and the way in which this knowledge is shared with them. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on generating strategies for producing imaginative design ideas, the planning including excellent exemplar sketches to provide a secure situation in which students reviewed their ideas safely, and started to use lateral thinking skills. Very good relationships also enable students to venture ideas and take risks. Teachers expect high standards of effort and attainment and students enjoy the challenge. For example, in a textiles lesson, work was rigorously assessed against strict criteria. Students discussed the quality of their work maturely and focused on what must be done to improve it. Students are confident to talk about their work and to ask questions. They learn much from talking and listening to each other, exploring and developing ideas. There is always a high level of individual support, which includes challenging students' understanding and knowledge of product design.

240. Leadership and management are good. The course coordinator has been in post since the beginning of this school year, and, in that time, the need to raise standards has

been the focus for planning. Students' performance over time is carefully analysed to keep track of progress as well as to set challenging targets, which helps in the drive to higher standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on AVCE business education. Economics was sampled, and, although small numbers make comparisons difficult, attainment is broadly average.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Students' attainment and progress are very well tracked, which contributes significantly to raising attainment.
- Good links with business organisations give breadth to the curriculum and promote understanding of the wider business world.
- Good use is made of ICT as an aid to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the informality of some departmental administrative procedures.

241. The standards achieved by students in examinations are generally in line with national averages, though there are fluctuations in results from year to year. In Intermediate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), numbers taking the final examination in the last four years have been small but success rates have been above average, though only a very small proportion of candidates has achieved the highest grades. Results in Advanced GNVQ examinations taken until 2001 were also good, with all students achieving pass grades and a significant number gaining merits or distinctions. Overall, points scored in these examinations were close to national average points scores. In the new Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) examinations taken in 2002, results were lower and no students gained higher grades. The department's open recruitment policy enables students with lower levels of prior attainment to take the subject, thus these results represent good levels of achievement. This is confirmed by students' work, particularly in assignments, which is above average.

242. Students, therefore, make good progress in their work, especially in the production of assignments, which they find challenging and enjoyable. Achievement is good and the progress students make is enhanced by effective systems to track progress and set targets for attainment and by the support and advice provided by staff. The success of students is one factor in the high retention rates the subject enjoys.

243. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Students are encouraged to play an active part in lessons and through individual research for topics and assignments. The enthusiasm and diligence with which they respond to these demands makes for good learning. In this they make good use of the exceptional ICT resources at the department's disposal. In the best lessons aims are clear and challenging, support from teachers is good and students are encouraged to draw upon their own experiences to contribute to the topic under discussion, as was seen in a lesson on consumer protection for Year 12 students. Good use is made of outside speakers to bring real business considerations into the curriculum. This was done, for example, to assist Year 13 students' understanding of the nature of business plans as they prepared to draw up plans for hypothetical businesses with the aid of information from the Internet. Homework is challenging and extends classroom work. Some teaching is less

successful. For example, in one lesson time was poorly managed and, for the majority of students, the lesson was a repetition of work already covered.

244. A significant element in students' success is the computerised record keeping system for keeping track of how students are doing. There are very good arrangements to track students' performance against set targets and other benchmarks. Marking explains why work reaches particular standards and what to do to improve, and teachers regularly monitor and record attitudes and behaviour, and measure students' progress. Students value the feedback they get from these procedures and give their own feedback through questionnaires. They speak highly of teachers' support and encouragement and value the friendly ethos and the advice about careers and their future.

245. Three features make a marked contribution to attainment and achievement. Good links have been established with local business, in particular with two well-respected national companies. Links with smaller business organisations, and visiting personnel such as the business link adviser, provide students with good insights into company organisation and management, human resources, and marketing operations, and provide a rich resource for assignments and practical studies. Very good use is made of ICT as a source of information, and an aid to presentation, analysis and application of statistics, and as a means for students to keep notes and records of work.

246. Business education is well managed. Assessment is well organised, business links are well established, and students' records are very well kept. However, the administration of the subject is too informal and needs methodical organisation. There has been good improvement since the previous report. Numbers are growing and the department is now part of a new vocational educational faculty. The new accommodation, which mirrors business standards, provides a good working environment. Assessment, marking and record keeping are very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on AVCE information and communication technology, which the school has introduced this year. The key skills course was also sampled, and the attainment of students taking a test was what is expected at their age.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Students learn well because they are consistently well taught.
- The course has been well chosen to meet students' needs.
- Nearly all students are keen to learn.

Areas for improvement

- Most students do not yet describe their work in enough detail to attain the highest grades.
- Information for prospective students in Year 11 needs revision in the light of the first year's experience.

247. This course only started in September 2002. Previously, no examination course was offered in the sixth form in ICT.

248. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Higher attaining students develop a good sense of the audience for whom their work is intended. They can explain the reasons why they have chosen to do things in a certain way, but do not go into sufficient detail when writing, which is how their work will be assessed. Students of average attainment can set up a database and link different sections effectively. Because they write only a limited description of the problem they are undertaking, they do not have a sound basis from which to evaluate it later. Lower attaining students can use a presentation package to present information, but do not keep full records of everything they do, in order for their work to be accurately assessed.

249. Students have made good progress in the four months the course has run. They started the course with levels of ICT skills below the national average. Their work is now about average for this stage of the course, and no student is producing work below the level that will pass the examination, but none of the work seen was yet at the standard for the highest grade. There is only one girl and so it is not possible to judge any differences in attainment between boys and girls. Students are making good progress in developing as independent learners because of the way in which the course is taught. They have to carry out extensive research in almost every lesson. Achievement is good.

250. Students learn well because they are well taught. Students like the structure of the course. They appreciate the regular information they are given as to how well they are doing and what they should focus upon next. They use the extensive materials to support the course on the school's computer system very well, referring to them regularly, for example, to ensure that they have met exactly what is needed for a project or to view examples of what they might produce. They particularly appreciate being able to access this material from home.

251. Teaching is good. Three different teachers teach all students during the week but this is used to good advantage because students gain from the different computer experiences of each teacher. Teachers know well what resources are available so they can guide students as needed. Teachers are very aware that few students, as yet, can analyse and evaluate their work to the levels required. One reason for this is that not all the students followed an examination course when they were in Years 10 and 11. There is effective teaching to improve the analytical descriptions students write. A good example was seen where the teacher required students to compare work they had done with a list of key words from the school's computer network, in order to improve the quality of their work by adding reasons for the features they had used. Teachers also help to prepare students for life after the sixth form. For example, one teacher took a short period of time at the start of a lesson to discuss with students how they could increase their chances of gaining a university place. Students spoke most appreciatively of the value of this. A very small number of students show less than positive attitudes in some lessons. This does not affect the learning of others but means that these students do not learn as much as they should.

252. About one third of the students who started the course are no longer taking it. This is understandable in its first year, because, when choosing the course they could not talk to older students already taking it. Now that the course is established, the information for Year 11 students needs revising to give more guidance. Currently the course does not attract many female students.

253. The subject is well led and managed. Careful consideration has resulted in a choice of course which meets the needs of students. The course is well supported by the school's intranet and the team of teachers works well together. An effective structure has been organised to assess the work of students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subject was the focus of the inspection however, courses in AS- and A-level physical education, which the school has introduced recently, were sampled. Standards are average.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subject was the focus of the inspection however, AVCE health and social care was sampled. Standards in Year 13 are average, but Year 12 students' limited recollection of previous learning depressed standards to below average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on drama and theatre studies. There are courses in art and design, and drama and theatre studies. Art and design, which includes both graphics and fine art, was sampled. Considering their GCSE results, students do as well as might be expected in the sixth form. Two sixth form lessons were observed and teaching and learning in both were very good, with standards slightly above average.

Drama and theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and students have a very mature approach, so they achieve very well.
- The department is very well managed.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that pace is maintained throughout all lessons.

254. In 2001, only 3 students took the A level examination. They did very well and two students attained A grades. This number is too small to make valid comparisons with national averages. In the previous year, however, ten students were entered, attaining results which were well above average. No national data are available for 2002. The department entered fifteen students for AS-level. Nearly all passed and 2 attained B grades. Five students went on to take A-level in 2002. All students passed though none gained the higher grades. The number of students taking drama in the sixth form fluctuates from year to year, but retention is good. Generally more girls than boys take the course.

255. Standards in the present Year 13 are broadly average. However, in Year 12, students are already reaching above average standards in both their written and performance work. Students in both AS- and A-level courses achieve very well, although some have no experience of the subject before joining the course. In both years high attaining students have a good grasp of and empathy with character and situation. They make good use of space and movement in their performance work creating good visual effects, as, for example in Year 13, where students were working on Berkoff's 'Agamemnon'. They are able to work independently and take responsibility for directing their group work. They show very good understanding of genre and can comment on and interpret demanding texts. Their writing is extensive and they explore themes in considerable depth, drawing on their personal experience to analyse, for example, language, symbolism and visual techniques. Students have produced some very good writing on 'Metamorphosis'. They are developing a good grasp of critical vocabulary. Middle and lower attaining students make a more limited and less

creative contribution to class and group discussion and in practical work demonstrate a less secure grasp of character and context. Dialogue is delivered without much power. A few students work more slowly and with less obvious involvement.

256. Students, especially in Year 12, are very positive and demonstrate a high level of commitment. They organise themselves well. They are enthusiastic and engage fully in lessons. They work hard and discussion is productive. They have developed very mature and responsible attitudes to their work. Boys are not inhibited in performance. Students respect and value each other's contributions.

257. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Two teachers with different approaches teach the subject. Both have strengths that are recognised and valued by students. Learning is very good because teachers have high expectations and insist on a disciplined approach to lessons. Teaching is founded on strong knowledge and enthusiasm, and lively and demanding texts are chosen for study. This encourages students' own enthusiasm. Relationships with students are very good, with an appropriate balance between informality and purposefulness. Students are given plenty of encouragement and constructive feedback with frequent opportunity to evaluate group work as well as reflect on individual performance, which helps them know how to improve. Lessons are well planned, though some occasionally lose momentum in the middle. Small groups and individual students learn particularly well when the teacher intervenes to explain or demonstrate a particular point in response to their needs. In Year 12 one student made very good progress in his understanding of character thanks to a brief discussion with the teacher. Explanations are clear and presented in interesting ways, which sustains students' motivation. There is a good balance between encouraging students to think and find out for themselves and providing information. There is also an appropriate focus in lessons on examination strategies.

258. This is a very well managed curriculum area. The teachers collaborate very well and keep careful track of their work. Curriculum planning is thorough, and is regularly reviewed and modified as teachers have more experience of the new examination. Examination performance is carefully analysed and very good use is made of students' attainment to plan work to move them on further. Students receive much individual support and guidance with their work and are well prepared for the considerable writing component of the course. Teachers work hard to improve their practice in the light of experience.

259. Extracurricular provision is excellent. There are visits to theatres in the region and an annual trip to Stratford to undertake research. Students are involved in various school productions and recently worked very successfully with Year 7 to present 'An Evening with Harry Potter'. There is an annual three-day residential visit to London described by one student as his most enjoyable school experience. Students attend workshops, go backstage at the National Theatre, visit the theatre museum, and see performances covering a range of genres.

260. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department has introduced a new syllabus and teachers have had some training to improve their skills. There is now greater rigour and structure in planning and a better focus on academic performance. Accommodation is good but rather shabby.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography. History, sociology and psychology were sampled. History and sociology results were above average in 2001; 2002 results are lower. In lessons observed, attainment in history, psychology and sociology was average.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Research and analytical skills are well developed.
- Students acquire good levels of knowledge and understanding, and use them with increasing independence through the course.
- Good relationships allow students to challenge without fear of getting things wrong.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the numbers of girls studying the subject.

261. Geography caters for nine AS- and thirteen A-level students. Most pupils studying have completed the GCSE course gaining varied grades, but because of the open access to the Sixth Form some are new to the subject and have support as they start new learning.

262. In A-level examinations in 2002, 90 per cent of the fourteen students entered for the examination passed, and 22 per cent gained A or B. In AS-level, 55 percent of the nine students entered passed and 14 per cent gained A or B. There are no statistics available to make comparisons with national results. Results in 2002 are not as good as 2001 results, which were very high. However, only five students entered in 2001. The retention rate from AS to A levels is high, and drop out rates early in the course are low. Most students are boys, and there are very few girls.

263. Observation of students' work confirms that the attainment of students at present following sixth form courses is about average. Their standards of work have risen since GCSE at 16, and, given the relatively low GCSE grades attained before they study at this level, achievement is good. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the topics covered in both physical and human geography. From very early in the course they increasingly use both fieldwork and the Internet to develop individual research and analytical skills. They use ICT confidently to retrieve contemporary information from both international and local sources. Year 12 students loaded photographic images of Derby on to the school's computers and used them to illustrate examples for fieldwork presentations. They develop literacy skills to underpin their competent oral work in class and are confident in statistical analysis. Some students are capable of presenting cogent arguments and evaluating and balancing geographical criteria. The benefit of learning in a technology college is much more apparent at this stage, with ICT regarded as an everyday tool.

264. Overall teaching is good. Lessons are well structured, with clear objectives. The good relationships which pervade the school make for a good ethos for learning here. The basis of mutual respect allows students to be confident in asking questions and responding to them. Teachers' good knowledge of their subject is evident in their sensitivity to how and when to intervene in discussion to guide it to successful conclusions without dampening students' enthusiasm. Recent theories such as those relating to urban analysis are introduced by imaginative means, such as a game based on the different uses of land in Los Angeles that enables students to understand how cities grow in the modern world. Students increase their understanding of geographical concepts, underpinned by using correct vocabulary. The

growth of fieldwork in this phase of their studies enriches students' knowledge of how to use primary evidence effectively. Recently introduced textbooks and a large number of library books enable pupils to widen their experience of secondary sources. They use digital imaging confidently and routinely use spreadsheets and graphical derivatives to analyse data in both human and physical geography, such as river flow and development.

265. Geography is well led and managed with expertise and enthusiasm, and with particular skills shown in the deployment of staff expertise. The introduction of more fieldwork has deepened students' understanding of geographical topics in both human and physical studies. Geography has maintained sixth form standards of attainment and achievement since the last inspection. Results have fluctuated: numbers have varied considerably, but are generally small. Staffing is now more stable than it has been over recent years, but it is still dependent on a small number of specialist teachers, one of whom has very wide ranging responsibilities elsewhere in the school, which places a heavy burden on the assistant course co-ordinator.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and German. French and English Language were sampled. English language results in 2001 are above average, and in 2002, nearly all students gained passes. Teaching and learning are good and attainment is above average. In French, AS- and A-Level results in 2001 are above average, with an above average percentage of students gaining higher grades. Results in 2002 are similar. The numbers studying French increased substantially in 2002, and the proportion of boys is higher than the national picture.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Attainment is above average.
- Good teaching and students' very good attitudes enable students to achieve well.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Attract more boys to the A-level course.
- Provide further training for staff new to A-level courses.

266. No students were entered for this examination in 2001. In 2002, all seven students gained grades B-D in A-level English literature. Although no student attained grade A, just under half attained grade B. In AS-level in 2002, over 90 per cent of students gained grades A or B, and every student passed. Eighteen of the 21 students were girls. Although fewer boys took these examinations, there is no disparity between the results of boys and girls. There are 51 students at present.

267. Observation of students' work in Year 12 at AS-level indicates that standards remain above the national average, and students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment in GCSE. Their coursework shows a sensitive, mature response to literature; perceptive judgement is supported by apt reference to the text. High attaining students show individuality of thought. Borderline students achieve well, giving clear, though less well developed responses. In lessons, students studying Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' followed the unfolding complex story, and analysed the relationship which the author wishes to form with her reader and how the narrator spreads her own feeling into her tale.

268. Attainment in Year 13 is above the national average. Students maintain the good standards previously attained in AS-level in 2002 and continue to achieve well. Their coursework reveals an increasing capacity for research and independent thinking; they focus clearly on the important aspects of the subject. For example, high attaining students writing on the work of the Caribbean poet, Derek Walcott, and the Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, give lucid accounts of the urge and purpose of demanding texts. Average attaining students show a determined thoroughness and an increasing understanding. Students have become autonomous readers showing insight into texts; in lessons they assimilated the qualities of contrasting characters in "Othello". They understand the compression of time in Shakespeare's stage world, and the dramatic use the author makes of this concept to take an audience unawares.

269. Teaching is consistently good. Relationships in class are harmonious because teachers take account of students' personalities as well as of the subject. Teachers' sensitive questioning leads to profitable discussion, as, for example, on the subtlety and precision of Shakespeare's language. Teachers possess a secure knowledge of their subject with which they nurture students' understanding. Students learn to provide reasons and evidence for critical judgements. In one lesson, the teacher provided a good example when acting as 'defence lawyer' to the maligned Desdemona, used textual evidence to prove her innocence. Another teacher's questioning during the study of 'The Handmaid's Tale' gave vitality to students' thinking about the author's presentation of character. Teachers are constructive in their assessment of students' work, giving helpful comments and questioning to point the way to further learning. Students are eager to learn and to succeed, and are willing to study conscientiously. Their response often makes the very utmost of the opportunities to learn which teachers provide.

270. Effective leadership gives the department a clear sense of direction. A scholarly approach is encouraged. The department is efficiently managed. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department used to offer the combined language and literature course at A-level. In 2001 the department widened students' choices by offering both English literature and English language as separate courses. As a consequence, the numbers taking GCE courses in English have more than doubled and retention is good. However, there are only four male students of A-level English in Year 13. Although most of the teachers are experienced specialists, those who are new to A-level work require further training. Theatre visits and literature workshops further encourage an imaginative approach; English teaching is managed in such a way that students regularly consider human issues in literature affecting mind and spirit.

German

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

Strengths

- Students' above average speaking and writing skills.
- Teachers' fluent German, and their very good use of German in lessons.
- The comprehensive advice and guidance students receive from teachers.
- The excellent working relationships between students and teachers

Areas for improvement

- Catering for the learning needs of all students, especially during teacher-led discussions.
- Linking routine marking to the individual progress students are making.

271. There were no candidates for German A-level in 2001. No national comparisons are available for 2002. Two of the three candidates gained C grades and 1 candidate failed. This continues a trend of average results and low numbers over the past three years.

272. AS-level results in 2001 were below average and there were no A or B grades. AS-level results in 2002 are better, and include one A grade. In 2001, retention was poor: of the seven candidates who started the course, three left the AS course early due to timetabling difficulties, and one left after completing the AS course as an extra subject. There are currently five students studying German in Year 12; the increasing interest in German is a result of pupils' improving achievement at GCSE German.

273. In Year 13, standards are above average; the two remaining students are working well towards predicted grades of A and C and their achievement is good overall. In Year 12 there is a wide range of ability amongst the students, although there is a larger proportion of higher attainers. Standards are average overall, but in speaking and writing, standards are above average. There is variation between the better than average standards of higher attainers and the lower standards of less able students, and achievement overall is satisfactory.

274. In Years 12 and 13, students develop communication skills well. All students speak German with very good accents and most can understand, recall and quickly re-use the language of argument well on a range of topics. This is because of the excellent model of spoken German their teachers provide in lessons. For example, in a very good Year 12 lesson, the students confidently exchanged opinions with each other on German education. Students in Year 13 understand and use a wider and more specialist vocabulary which enables them to reflect on and discuss moral issues such as racism. In writing, good grammar teaching and insistence on accuracy develop literacy. Most students incorporate authentic language and specialist vocabulary into essays and written responses in Year 12, progressing in Year 13 to expressing opinions in more complex language on topics such as crime and the distribution of wealth. Students extend their basic GCSE grammar in Year 12 to confidently using a range of verb tenses and grammatical structures. The few lower attaining students continue to make basic errors in writing and make only satisfactory progress. In reading in both years, students scan a range of texts for information and in listening they gradually gain confidence in deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words in extracts from tapes of native speakers. Students develop study skills well, for example through researching coursework topics on the Internet.

275. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Amongst the strengths are well-structured lessons and clear objectives which give clear direction to students' learning. Teachers also use discussion and questioning skilfully. For example, in a good Year 13 German lesson, the students discussed European expansion, enabled to clarify the main issues by the teacher's good questioning and her clear diagram. However, in some cases teachers are not aware enough of the learning needs of every student. In a discussion about the German education system, some students made unsatisfactory progress because they were not encouraged to take part and the key points in the discussion were not explained either in English or simpler German, nor recorded on the board for further support. Routine marking is regular and thorough, but does not provide enough individual guidance to students for them to clearly know how the standard of their work relates to examination grades.

276. Leadership and management are good and there is a strong team commitment to students' achievement. Departmental documentation is professional, comprehensive and thorough. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Course materials and student numbers have improved. Although A-level results have been average overall in recent years, standards are above average overall in the current Years 12 and 13, and standards in speaking, which were weak at the time of the last inspection, have substantially improved.