

INSPECTION REPORT

BEVERLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Beverley

LEA area: East Riding of Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 118116

Headteacher: Mr G Broadbent

Reporting inspector: Roy Hedge
2932

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th February 2003

Inspection number: 249745

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: Queensgate
Beverley

Postcode: HU17 8NF

Telephone number: 01482 881531

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Bodsworth

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2932	R Hedge	Registered inspector		
9492	J Cassidy	Lay inspector		
11044	J Hedge	Sixth form co-ordinator	English Literature	<p>School's results and students' achievements</p> <p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
2928	B Baxendale	Team inspector	French	
30702	P Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History	
17269	J Johnson	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	Business studies	
1210	W Walton	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average boys' comprehensive school of 799 pupils with a sixth form of 134 students. There is joint sixth form provision with a nearby girls' comprehensive school. The standards reached by students by the time they enter the school in Year 7 are broadly average. A below-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportions of students with special educational needs and for whom statements of special educational need are maintained are below average. The proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage is low and none are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school has experienced difficulty in appointing specialist staff for information and communication technology (ICT).

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an outstanding school. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form are all well above average and are still improving. Pupils achieve very well. The quality of teaching and learning is also very good at all stages. Leadership and management are excellent, as is the quality of provision for pupils' personal development and for their care and guidance. There is a most impressive ethos in which learning flourishes. Parents think very highly of the quality of their children's education. The school offers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school has been highly successful in creating an ethos in which learning flourishes.
- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good, principally because of very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Both parents and pupils hold the school in very high regard.

What could be improved

- The main school has no important weaknesses.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in April 1997 has been excellent. Results at all levels have improved faster than is the case nationally. The quality of teaching is better: no unsatisfactory teaching was seen this time. The school has dealt very effectively with shortcomings highlighted in the last report. Provision for modern foreign languages, design and technology and ICT has improved considerably. Lessons are now very carefully planned to allow opportunities for reflection. Accommodation has improved through the provision of new specialist facilities.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

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

In national tests in 2002 at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science, results in all three subjects were well above average; higher-attaining pupils did especially well in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools (schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals), results overall were very high – that is in the best 5 per cent of such schools nationally. Given standards on entry to the school, results show that pupils' achievement was very good. Over the last three years, results improved at a faster rate than they did nationally.

In 2002, results in GCSE examinations were well above average. Improvement over the last three years has been above the national trend. In comparison with similar schools and when compared with boys nationally, results overall were well above average. The proportion of pupils who gained at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to G was in the top 5 per cent of schools. These results represent very good achievement and exceeded the realistic targets set by governors. Results in English language, mathematics, science, business studies, history, ICT, physical education and religious studies were significantly higher than the national averages for all pupils and for boys; those in French were above average for boys and no subject results were below national averages.

In 2001 (national comparisons not yet available for 2002), results in AS and A Level examinations were well above average. Results in 2002 were even better than in 2001.

Standards seen during the inspection matched test and examination results. Pupils make very good progress in most lessons and achieve very well over time. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Outstanding. Boys of all ages and levels of attainment focus on their learning very closely. They concentrate hard and readily ask and answer questions. Almost all pupils will contribute to lessons avidly, will work collaboratively when required and are able to work very effectively in an independent way.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Inappropriate behaviour in lessons or around the school is very rare and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. There is little bullying and the school deals quickly with it if it happens.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The mature and civilised relationships between teachers and pupils, the careful planning of interesting lessons and the calm and purposeful ethos of the school successfully promote pupils' maturity and personal growth.
Attendance	Very high. On an average day 95 per cent of pupils are in school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In almost a half of the lessons seen with Years 7 to 11 teaching was very good. Nine lessons out of every ten had teaching which was at least good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In the sixth form, more than four out of every ten lessons had very good teaching and almost nine out of ten were at least good. Again, there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This represents an overall picture of very good teaching. Better than at the time of the last inspection. The school has thought very carefully about ways of making the best of its long lessons. Planning is very good – concentrating on splitting up lessons into a number of different, relevant and challenging activities to maintain pupils' focus and interest and to promote high-quality learning. In this, teachers have been heavily influenced by the National Key Stage Three Strategy. In addition, lessons have impact because teachers are very skilled at managing pupils and ensuring high levels of concentration and good behaviour. In lesson after lesson seen by inspectors, these factors in combination produced very good learning. Pupils are reaping a rich reward for the school's determination to refine and improve teaching through research, discussion, training, planning and checking on quality.

This is a school in which pupils are treated with consideration and respect, both in lessons and through the excellent system of rewards and recognition for effort as well as attainment. As a result, pupils come to lessons ready and eager to learn. These productive attitudes have been achieved through the school's long-term commitment to creating a classroom ethos in which learning flourishes. As a result, there is now no department in which teaching is weak. Very good teaching is common across the school, with all subjects and in all years. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are all very good. Literacy and numeracy are promoted very effectively. The needs of pupils at all levels of attainment are promoted very well. In the many classes where pupils are from the whole range of

attainment, careful planning ensures that work is accessible and well-matched to the needs of all pupils. Sometimes pupils are grouped according to their particular needs. In a Year 10 lesson for pupils with special educational needs, for example, a teacher working with two assistants was able to ensure that a potentially very challenging group made very good progress through careful planning of the tasks, skilful management of the pupils and the creation, obviously over a long period of time, of relationships based on high expectations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is appropriate balance in the curriculum and pupils' needs are well served. There is a little vocational work in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. In mixed-attainment lessons there is good planning to meet their needs and special classes are very well taught. Classroom assistants make an excellent contribution through their skill, commitment and enthusiasm.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Teachers are excellent role-models of civilised and mature conduct in their relationships with and care for pupils. There are many opportunities for promoting spiritual development in lessons and assemblies and through activities such as prayer and services outside lessons. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is equally strong and students respond very well indeed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. There are very high standards of care for individuals, excellent monitoring of progress and behaviour. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of this aspect of the school's provision

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Senior staff work together in an excellent team which draws on their complementary strengths. Together they have been highly successful in ensuring that standards and achievement are very good and that care for pupils is exemplary. The result of determined and cohesive management is that staff work together to bring the school's values and aspirations to fruition in the achievements of its pupils. Areas of weakness are identified and remedied with energy and sensitivity.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school well and are ambitious for its further improvement. They play their appropriate part in planning and supervising the school's development. Governors meet all their statutory responsibilities except for the requirement for daily worship for all pupils and for religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. This school is very good at using data to monitor performance and at checking on the quality of provision. Where things are found to be unsatisfactory they are put right. Shortcomings identified at the last inspection, for example, have been tackled with considerable vigour and determination and consequent improvement is clear.
The strategic use of	The school's financial planning is very good and best value is sought in

resources	all its transactions.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils make good progress.• The school has high expectations of pupils.• The school is well led and managed.• Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.• Teaching is good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of activities outside lessons

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The school is extremely well regarded by parents. Well over 200 parents responded to the inspectors' questionnaire: only one believed that their child was not making good progress; only one thought that the school does not have high expectations and only four thought that teaching is not good. Inspectors believe that there is a good range of activities outside lessons.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Grammar School makes joint provision for sixth form education with a nearby comprehensive school for girls. This report refers only to the provision for and performance of boys attending Beverley Grammar School. About three-quarters of pupils in Year 11 choose to stay in full-time education. Almost all Year 12 students complete a two year course. The number of students in the sixth form is smaller than the national average but the joint sixth form is larger than sixth forms nationally. A good range of academic courses leading to AS and A level examinations is provided. The sixth form offers no vocational courses but full advice is given to all students about the range of sixth form opportunities and students who are interested in vocational options are encouraged to continue their studies at the nearby further education college. A small number of students join the sixth form from other schools. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is broadly average for students embarking on A level courses. There are no students at an early stage of English acquisition and very few with special educational needs. Large numbers of students have part time jobs.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very successful and cost effective sixth form. In 2001 A level results were well above the national average and the standards achieved in 2002 were much better than results in the previous year, representing very good achievement given the level of attainment on entry to the sixth form.. Overall standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. Very good teaching in most subjects and the very mature and enthusiastic attitudes of students are responsible for this good achievement. The clear leadership with its commitment to very high standards exerts a significant influence on the work of staff and students. Arrangements for individual courses are generally very well managed but there is scope for improved co-operation particularly to check the quality of teaching right across both schools. Day-to-day arrangements for the management of courses are strong and the organisation and provision of individual support and guidance is of a very high standard and much appreciated by the students themselves. Students are satisfied that the range of courses offered meets their needs.

Strengths

- Standards in examinations are well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students respond very positively to teachers' expectations of high standards. The attitudes of students to their work and the school are excellent. They are mature, highly motivated and confident young people.
- The care and guidance given by teachers to students is excellent and much appreciated by students.
- Senior managers and staff have successfully created a very strong learning ethos which reflects the aims and values of the school.
- The sixth form runs smoothly because day-to-day procedures are very good.

What could be improved

- There is no single set of procedures to which both schools subscribe, for checking the quality of teaching and ensuring that courses are properly planned.

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	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very well organised and students are very well supported. They achieve well.
Biology	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. Teaching is well planned and supports students well.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. There are more strengths than weaknesses. Teaching is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory achievement. Learning is good because there are high levels of commitment by students.
Business studies	Very good. Students achieve well and reach standards which are above average. Teaching and learning are very good.
Physical education	Very good. Very well focused, challenging teaching of highly motivated students results in high quality learning and achievement. There is poor access to facilities for practical work.
Geography	Very good. Very good learning stems from challenging and very well planned teaching.
History	Good. The achievement of students is good. Teaching and learning are good and at times, very good.
English Literature	Very good. Students achieve very well because they respond very well to lively and stimulating teaching.
French	Good. Students achieve well because enthusiastic, good teaching produces good attitudes and learning. The effects on students' personal development are very good. Attainment is improving and standards are now above average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	This is a real strength. Students are well prepared for entry to the sixth form. There are excellent formal and informal arrangements to enable students to understand the level at which they are working and what they need to do in order to progress further. Students feel they are well known as individuals and value the very good personal support and advice they receive.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership is extremely successful in creating a shared commitment to high standards among staff and students. At present there is no system covering both schools for checking the quality of teaching and ensuring that courses are properly planned across the two schools and the two sets of teachers. Day-to-day management arrangements are comprehensive and function very smoothly.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The arrangements to help students settle to sixth form life are very good• Teaching is very good• Teachers are very accessible and approachable• They are treated as responsible young adults• Sixth form work is enjoyable	<p>They are no significant areas for improvement however a small number of students feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice about future options could be improved• The range of extra curricular and enrichment activities could be wider

Students speak very highly of their experience in the sixth form. They feel they were well prepared for sixth form study and the quality of teaching and support is of a very high standard. Students are treated as young adults and value the excellent relationships with their teachers. They enjoy being in the sixth form. All students interviewed both formally and informally were fulsome in their praise for the education they receive. There were no areas of criticism. Inspectors agree with these positive views especially those concerning the quality of teaching, support, and relationships between teachers and students. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school has been highly successful in creating an ethos in which learning flourishes

1. Pupils' attitudes to school and to their lessons are excellent. None of the lessons seen by inspectors was spoiled by poor behaviour or by any unwillingness on the part of pupils to work hard and give of their best. Indeed, over a half of the lessons seen with Years 7 to 11 and seven out of ten lessons seen with the sixth form were characterised by very good or excellent attitudes on the part of pupils. This strong learning culture is a key part of the school's success, of the very good achievement by pupils and the very effective progress they make in lessons.

2. The excellent quality of care for pupils and the evident respect and consideration with which they are treated are important contributory factors in ensuring that pupils like school and trust that their teachers are working hard on their behalf. There is an atmosphere of mature collaboration to promote learning inherent in the relationships which teachers forge with pupils in lessons and in the general life of the school. Inspectors did not hear a teacher's voice raised in a lesson or on a corridor during the inspection. Expectations of civilised behaviour and high standards are accepted by teachers and pupils alike.

3. The school's use of praise and rewards plays an important part in generating commitment from pupils. In lessons there is appropriate praise for good work and effort. A system of rewards focuses particularly on effort, making success accessible to all, irrespective of the standards they are reaching. Pupils' efforts can be recognised through effort certificates, the award of ties and badges, prizes awarded at Speech Day and letters to parents. "Green slips" are awarded by subject teachers and form tutors. Pupils take these rewards very seriously and they work well in motivating pupils to try hard and to focus on their learning.

4. There are excellent systems for monitoring pupils' progress and providing individual support for learning. Results of national tests and other assessments are analysed carefully to identify how well pupils are achieving. Teachers are aware of this analysis and use it in their teaching. There is extensive use of individual mentoring for pupils who are thought likely to benefit and this works well.

5. The school works very hard to promote pupils' personal development. Teachers are excellent models of calm, mature behaviour. The ethos of the school rewards similar civilised behaviour by pupils. Social education is promoted through the well planned personal and social education programme. There is considerable cultural education through the work of the art and design, music and English departments. Extra-curricular activities include a strong music programme and over 100 pupils have individual music lessons. Work which supports multi-cultural understanding is a part of the curriculum in many subjects. Pupils' spiritual education is taken seriously in assemblies, in subjects such as English and religious education and in opportunities for prayer and participation in services. All of these activities play their part in the cultivation of the strong ethos of the school and in shaping pupils' attitudes.

6. The school is very good at providing for the specific needs of the whole range of pupils. Skilful lesson planning ensures that the needs of the full range of pupils are provided for in class. Arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs are excellent. Learning support assistants provide skilful and dedicated support to teachers and pupils. The

work the school does in supporting pupils with behavioural or social difficulties is highly regarded by outside agencies with whom the school works.

7. Taken together, this range of high quality provision has a massive impact on pupils. They believe that the school works for them. They like school and recognise the benefits it brings them. As a result they take their work seriously and gain maximum benefit from what the school has to offer.

Standards are well above average and achievement is very good, principally because of very good teaching.

8. Examination and national test results at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form are well above average and improving. Given that standards on entry to the school are broadly average, this represents very good achievement.

9. Very good teaching accounts for these impressive standards, which were confirmed by classroom observations during the inspection. Teachers have obviously worked with perseverance and considerable skill over a long period of time to establish the classroom ethos described above. Pupils are managed excellently in lessons. Expectations of effort and behaviour are very high and pupils respond with enthusiasm and focus. As a result they make very good progress in lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm but authoritative.

10. There is considerable mutual consideration and respect between teachers and pupils. Pupils know that their genuine efforts will be appreciated and respected by teachers, so they are able to participate wholeheartedly, asking and answering questions readily and volunteering their views. Pupils respect each other's opinions and contributions, listen carefully and work collaboratively when required.

11. Lessons are invariably well planned. A common format for plans is used across the school. The long lessons are divided into three distinct but related activities, following the suggested pattern of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Pupils are used to this model because it is so consistently used. Objectives for lessons are shared with pupils, so they know what they are supposed to be learning. The long lessons – up to seventy-five minutes, while presenting some difficulties for timetabling, allow the time for effective discussion, for reflection and for pupils to talk at length about their work. In an excellent Year 9 English lesson about *Macbeth*, for example, a boy acting in role as Lady Macbeth was questioned about aspects of her relationship with Macbeth. Understanding of the play, of the development of plot and character, was advanced in a sensitive and sophisticated way. Boys took the activity seriously, with no hint of embarrassment and with impressive and widespread, interested participation.

12. In a very good Year 11 history lesson in which higher-attaining pupils were working on the evacuation of children from cities in the Second World War, the teacher's very skilful use of well-focused questions to stimulate discussion, gave pupils the opportunity and challenge to respond with high-level understanding of the issues. They were able to explain how sources of evidence can be influenced by social class, gender or religion and could explain their views confidently, articulately and eloquently. Then, going well beyond merely discussing sources of information, they were able to draw out implications and make judgements, evaluating the usefulness of the sources to enable an understanding of the topic. All of this was made possible, not just by the skill of the teacher in the particular lesson, but because of the habits built up by long-term high-quality management of pupils, excellent planning of lessons and high expectations of what pupils might achieve.

13. Teaching of this quality is common right across the curriculum and with all years. As a result, learning flourishes in lessons and pupils achieve very well over time.

Leadership and management are excellent

14. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The team of senior staff have complementary skills and a consistent dedication to improving the quality of provision. Taken together, they are an excellent team.

15. The ethos of the school clearly springs from the aspirations and vision of this senior team. The handbook for staff asserts that "The school believes in equality in all its forms and although we may have to recognise differences in academic ability at times, we are committed to promoting the equal value of every different student". This respect and consideration for the potential for development of all members of the school community is not mere rhetoric but is consistently evident in day-to-day relationships. Relationships between staff, and between staff and pupils, are demanding and purposeful but are also based on an appreciation of the importance of mutual respect. So teachers are supported and encouraged. They, in turn, recognise and respect the individual needs of their pupils. In lessons, teachers avoid confrontation and successfully work in partnership with their pupils.

16. There is an evident commitment to driving up standards. The consistency in teaching has not come about by accident. There has been long-term management of plans to improve the quality of learning. Teachers have adopted a common way of planning which makes maximum use of long lessons and meets the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment. Influenced by the Key Stage Three National Strategy, teachers plan lessons in detail, incorporating a variety of activities and opportunities to enable pupils to work at various levels of difficulty according to their needs.

17. Managers have been highly successful in securing the allegiance of staff to consistent ways of managing pupils, based on the principles of consideration and respect outlined above. There is consistency in everything the school does, based on its basic values of respect for the individual worth of all members of the school community and the pursuit of individual and collective achievement. Effort as well as attainment is highly prized.

18. The school is also excellent at recognising areas for improvement and putting them right. The previous inspection report outlined a number of shortcomings. These have been pursued with energy and determination. Pupils were underachieving in French: now boys do better in GCSE than do boys nationally. Some staff changes coupled with impressive support and development have led to planned, successful improvement. There is a similar story in design and technology and ICT is also much improved.

Both parents and pupils hold the school in very high regard.

19. Parents are emphatic in their support and regard for the school. Almost a third responded to a questionnaire seeking their views. Not a single parent believed that their child was not making good progress. Every parent who responded believed that the school "expects my child to work hard and achieve his best". Ninety-five per cent agreed that "the school is well led and managed". Ninety-seven per cent "would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem". Ninety-seven per cent took the view that "behaviour in the school is good".

20. These remarkably positive views were reiterated at a meeting with parents held by the Registered Inspector. There were virtually no negative views expressed. A number of parents wrote to the inspection team. One parent wrote:

“(our sons) have done well at the school and we are sure that this is a reflection of the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers and also the commitment and dedication they show every day in their work.....We totally agree with the attitudes and values that the school promotes, to have a quiet and orderly atmosphere and to eliminate all forms of bullying....which then lets (pupils) concentrate on working well together and therefore attaining their fullest potential.”

Pupils too are enthusiastic about the school. Ninety-five per cent of parents agreed that “my child likes school”. Structured discussions held with pupils, and the many informal conversations between inspectors and pupils reinforced this highly positive picture. Pupils genuinely enjoy the school and recognise the benefits it brings. On an average day, 95 per cent of the boys are in school. The allegiance of parents and pupils alike plays an important part in the ethos of the school and the success of its pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

21. The main school has no important weaknesses

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Sixth form

- (1) In order to improve further on what is a successful sixth form, governors and senior managers should ensure that, in collaboration with their partner school, there are common procedures across the sixth form to check the quality of teaching and the planning of courses, so that weaknesses in provision can be remedied.

(Paragraphs: 39, 42, 45, 63, 73)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	43
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	1	19	19	4	0	0	0
Percentage	2	45	45	10	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	16	17	6	0	0	0
Percentage	2	41	43	15	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 - 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Years 7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	665	134
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	32	0

Special educational needs	Years 7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	135	N/A	135

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	112	120	124
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	112	120	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (82)	89 (86)	92 (89)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (40)	76 (71)	66 (55)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	112	126	124
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	112	126	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (78)	93 (88)	92 (86)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (33)	77 (64)	63 (58)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	129	N/A	129

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	85	127	128
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	85	127	128
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (60)	98 (98)	99 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.6
	National	39.8

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	162	N/A	162
	Average point score per candidate	23.0 (19.8)	N/A	23.0 (19.8)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	N/A	* (17.4)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	162	N/A	162	0	N/A	0
	Average point score per candidate	23.0	N/A	23.0	0	N/A	0
National	Average point score per candidate	*	N/A	*	*	N/A	*

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

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	781	19	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	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	4	0	0
Chinese	1	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 pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	521

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2 085 504
Total expenditure	2 127 846
Expenditure per pupil	2 746
Balance brought forward from previous year	121 576
Balance carried forward to next year	(42 342)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.1

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	799
Number of questionnaires returned	236

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	45	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	39	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	50	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	53	11	3	2
The teaching is good.	53	44	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	39	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	27	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	49	6	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	64	31	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	38	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	42	11	4	6

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

22. Standards at the end of Year 13 in examinations are well above average and well above the average of boys nationally. In 2001, the most recent year for which national comparisons are available, the average points score students attained was well above average. Students did best in English Literature, though relatively low numbers of entries in individual subjects lead to some fluctuation in results over consecutive years because of the different levels of students' prior attainment.

23. In 2002, results improved further in almost every subject and overall. Results represent good achievement. Observations in lessons bear out this good picture. Standards in key study skills are very good.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Attitudes to school are excellent and an area of significant strength. Students' outstandingly positive attitudes explain in part why they achieve well. They enjoy sixth form work and relationships in class are excellent. They are enthusiastic and highly motivated to work hard. They contribute confidently to discussion and respond well to questions. They co-operate very productively and show considerable consideration and respect to each other and to adults. Students' work demonstrates that they are mature and independent learners who take full responsibility for their work and are willing to explore a range of sources to extend their knowledge and understanding. Students have opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative beyond the demands of their academic study. They readily contribute, for example to the wider work of the school through the highly successful paired reading scheme through which younger pupils improve their basic skills as well as considerably improving their confidence. Students also work in class to help younger pupils with special needs, some have worked in a local community hospital and others been involved in raising funds to support local schemes as part of the Millennium Volunteers Programme.

25. The enthusiasm and high motivation of students is reflected in patterns of attendance. Levels of attendance at school and classes are very high - much higher than national averages.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. Overall standards of teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good and together with students' extremely positive attitudes account for their very good achievement. In more than four in every ten lessons which inspectors observed, the quality of teaching was very good or excellent. In the rest, teaching was mostly good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very high expectations of their students.

27. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, ensuring for the most part that learning happens more through the active participation of students rather through passive listening. On occasions, though, the range of strategies is narrow, as for example in chemistry where there is too much emphasis on note taking and examination preparation as opposed to the kind of stimulus and excitement likely to lead to excellence.

28. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, as in English, and this effectively promotes students' confidence and progress.

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

29. Sixth form opportunities are offered jointly with a nearby girls' comprehensive school. There is a good range of academic courses at both AS and A level and most students take four subjects at AS level and three at A2. As a result, their average points score is improved. Students wishing to follow more vocationally orientated study are encouraged to do so at the nearby college of further education. Timetabling arrangements work well and are so organised that students only have to travel between the two schools on one day in the week.

30. In addition to examination courses all students have individual programmes of enrichment experiences offered jointly with the partner school. The enrichment programme is broad, well organised and offers students a range of options including an accredited Asdan course, the Sports Leadership Award, Young Enterprise and Millennium Volunteers. Students may take General Studies at AS level. The range of choices provides opportunities for students to develop skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT as well as fostering positive attitudes towards citizenship, team working and leadership. There are some opportunities for work experience and students provide very good support for younger pupils in mathematics, through the paired reading scheme and in sport. These activities make a contribution to students' personal development and provide some opportunity for reflection on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. All students follow a weekly tutorial programme which covers study skills, target setting, careers guidance and support for university applications. There are good arrangements for careers education and the careers libraries are well used and stocked. The school does not meet its statutory obligation to provide religious education in the sixth form.

31. Opportunities arise in and beyond the normal curriculum for students to participate in a range of additional activities such as field trips, visits to the theatre, musical and sporting opportunities. There is good equality of access to courses for all students. Students interviewed were happy with the courses they had chosen and felt the school offered a good variety of subjects as well as extra curricular opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

32. The procedures for assessing and checking on students' attainment and progress are excellent. They are closely linked to requirements of examinations and students' work is regularly monitored as in English and physical education through coursework and examination questions. Work is regularly and accurately assessed and students are given very good feedback on their progress and advice about how to improve. In some subjects marking is exemplary and much valued by students. There is a formal programme of mentoring and review by tutors, and targets are set together with the partner school. Co-operation between staff of the two schools ensures consistency in grading and target setting. There is much informal support and students feel they can easily approach teachers for additional help. Students have a very good understanding of the levels at which they are working and of their targets for improvement.

Advice, support and guidance

33. Students appreciate the information provided for them in Year 11 to help them to make informed choices of sixth form study. They feel they are helped by the opportunity to discuss sixth form life and work with sixth form students. As a result of effective guidance procedures only a small number of students renegotiate their course programmes in the early stages of sixth form work and a very large proportion follows the course through to examination. Although some students experience difficulty in transferring to sixth form study the high quality of individual support and guidance provided enables them to settle and gain a thorough understanding of the requirements of their courses. Observations in class, discussion with students and analysis of personal portfolios all show that students settle well and are making good progress in their work. Students meet briefly each day with their tutors. This time is used mainly for registration, routine business and as an opportunity for tutors to keep an eye on their students. There is a regular, scheduled programme where tutors meet with individual students to check on both academic progress and pastoral welfare. Teachers of individual subjects maintain a close watch on progress, regularly check on standards of work, agree targets, and advise students on areas for improvement. Students are very comfortable with these arrangements and express considerable confidence in them. Parents are kept fully informed of progress and value the information they receive. Impartial careers advice is available to all students and there is good quality information and guidance about such things as career and university applications.

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

34. Parents and students alike value sixth form provision highly. Eight out of ten students responded to a questionnaire. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety-nine per cent indicated that “teachers are always accessible for help”. Ninety-four per cent “enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it”. Only two students thought that they were not well taught and that lessons did not provide sufficient intellectual challenge.

35. No very significant areas for improvement were identified by students, although a few would like better advice about future options. About a quarter of students take the view that the range of activities available to them outside examination courses is not good enough, though inspectors saw much good work of this kind going on and take the view that opportunities are good.

36. Structured interviews with students, as well as informal discussions left inspectors in little doubt as to the high regard in which sixth form students hold the school. They consistently speak highly of their experience and readily praise the efforts of their teachers.

37. Parents also speak highly of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

38. The sixth form benefits from strong leadership and clear direction. Managers, staff and students share a strong commitment to hard work and high standards. Governors work together well with senior staff and fulfil their obligations except that there is no religious education for sixth form students. High quality leadership has established an environment in which students feel that they are valued and respected and which challenges them to take full responsibility for their work. The arrangements for joint working with the partner school work smoothly but there is no system covering both schools which ensures that the management

of subjects and performance are fully co-ordinated. There is no overview of the quality of teaching in individual subjects across the two schools, which makes it difficult to identify and improve weaker areas. Also, planning of courses is left to individual teachers and there is ineffective co-ordination and monitoring of detailed course planning across the two sets of teachers. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is very good. Systems are extremely effective and enable teachers to check easily on individual and overall progress. Information on individual options, progress, attendance and, enrichment are continually and regularly updated and monitored. In addition surveys have recently been carried out to take account of students' opinions.

Resources

39. The sixth form is cost effective and very good strategic use has been made of resources. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. Arrangements for the professional development of teachers are good and have enabled them to keep abreast of the many recent changes to the sixth form curriculum. Currently the accommodation for sixth form students is inadequate but the situation will be improved when the present building programme providing additional study and social areas is completed. Facilities for practical work in physical education, however, remain inadequate. Most courses are resourced well, though there is some lack of equipment for biology and chemistry.

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	20	85	*	40	*	2.5	*
Chemistry	17	94	*	53	*	3.0	*
Biology	22	95	*	27	*	2.6	*
Physics	14	100	*	50	*	3.4	*
Product Design	7	71	*	14	*	1.9	*
Business	18	100	*	28	*	3.0	*
ICT	19	74	*	11	*	1.6	*
Physical Education	17	100	*	35	*	2.9	*
Art and Design	11	91	*	36	*	2.5	*
Music	3	100	*	33	*	3.0	*
Theatre Studies	5	100	*	40	*	3.2	*
Geography	27	89	*	56	*	3.3	*
History	19	95	*	42	*	2.9	*
Religious Studies	6	100	*	17	*	2.3	*
Psychology	30	100	*	63	*	3.8	*
English Literature	7	86	*	57	*	3.7	*
English Language	10	100	*	20	*	2.7	*
French	1	100	*	0	*	2.0	*
German	1	100	*	100	*	4.0	*

* National comparison data in 2002 is 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	9	89	*	56	*	6.6	*
Chemistry	6	100	*	83	*	8.3	*
Biology	9	89	*	22	*	5.5	*
Physics	12	92	*	58	*	6.5	*
Full Design and Technology	4	100	*	25	*	5.0	*
Business Studies	18	100	*	56	*	7.3	*
ICT	8	88	*	25	*	3.8	*
Sports/PE Studies	10	100	*	50	*	6.4	*
Art and Design	6	100	*	17	*	6.0	*
Music	1	100	*	0	*	6.0	*
Geography	9	100	*	11	*	5.7	*
History	13	100	*	77	*	8.0	*
Religious Studies	2	50	*	0	*	3.0	*
Psychology	6	100	*	16	*	5.0	*
English Language	7	100	*	29	*	6.3	*
English Literature	11	100	*	19	*	4.9	*
General Studies	24	96	*	50	*	6.8	*
Theatre Studies	4	100	*	0	*	5.0	*
French	3	100	*	100	*	10.0	*

* National comparison data in 2002 is not yet available.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, chemistry and biology. Physics was also sampled. One lesson was observed in which the quality of teaching and learning was good. Examination results were average in 2001 and better the following year. These results represent a satisfactory achievement given students' starting point at the beginning of the course. A very high number of students who began the course continued through to the examination.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is well organised and teachers are very supportive of students.
- Students are very positive about A level work.
- They are given very clear feedback.

Areas for improvement

- Systems for ensuring the high quality of teaching in the subject.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Very Good

40. Examination results at A level over the last few years have been close to the national average. In 2001 results were below the national average but there was a big improvement in 2002. Students' attainment at the start of the course is broadly average, achievement is good and students make good gains in knowledge and skills especially in Year 13. Approximately half of students opt not to continue beyond the AS examination at the end of Year 12. Consequently, standards in Year 13 are better than those in Year 12 and are above average. Small numbers of students drop out of the AS level course during Year 12.

41. Teaching is good overall. Some aspects are very good. The A level course is very well organised, lessons are well planned and teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Teachers encourage students to actively participate in lessons. They are encouraged to ask questions and are challenged well. In a very good Year 13 lesson on proof by induction, for example, students were helped by clear exposition, pertinent questions, and very good one-to-one support. As a result students work hard, are enthusiastic about the subject, and make good progress in lessons. The relationships between teachers and students are very strong. Students very much appreciate that teachers are approachable outside the classroom and give very clear guidance. Students' views about the subject are very positive - they enjoy the A level course and value the teaching. Work is very well marked with helpful and diagnostic comment. The good practice in marking makes homework and regular testing very effective in reinforcing learning.

42. Management of the department is very good. Schemes of work are clear and links with the High School are strong, if largely informal. Assessment procedures are good with regular tests every half module. Target-setting for students is good and is currently being brought into line with the excellent practice shown in the main school where regular marks are all recorded and analysed electronically. Teachers discuss teaching strategies readily amongst themselves but at present there is no overall checking of good classroom practice across the two schools. Resources for the subject are good and teachers make good use of overhead projectors and well-prepared displays. Only A level mathematics and GCSE resit are offered in the sixth form. There is no provision for Further Mathematics and students have no choice in the modules that make up A level (and AS level) mathematics.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Thorough teaching which ensures very good coverage of the syllabus.
- High levels of student motivation which promote good learning.
- Careful, constructive marking of student work.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient focus on range of students' achievement in some lessons.
- Inadequate planning to include a range of teaching and learning strategies.
- Limited opportunities for teachers' professional development.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations	Below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

43. Teaching in chemistry is satisfactory but learning is good because of the strong focus and positive attitudes of students to their work. Teachers are well qualified; their interest in and enthusiasm for chemistry is evident. However, whilst planning for specification coverage is very good, this is sometimes at the expense of activities which stimulate and inspire students. There is an over-concentration on notes and examination questions, at the expense of a wider range of teaching strategies; these could include demonstrations, use of models, videos and ICT to support learning. Homework is well integrated into the course, and marking is careful and constructive. The pace of some lessons is slow, with insufficient challenge. Where demanding questions are set, students respond well. For example in a lesson on naming organic compounds, some questions tested the subject thoroughly, whilst others required an explanation of why certain names were incorrect. These challenged higher attainers. Other lessons provided less well for the ability range. High teacher expectations lead to good student effort and work pace. Students concentrate well in class. Where teaching does not provide for higher attainers, these students display self-motivation, proceeding with set questions more rapidly than the rest of the group and showing by their questions that they are thinking about the subject. Attitudes to the subject are very good;

students who are aiming for high grades in chemistry speak warmly of their teachers and are appreciative of the support given outside lessons.

44. Standards of work seen are above average. The work in lessons and in students' files is good, and when students have the opportunity to do challenging tasks, the standard is on occasion well above average. Although examination results were below the national average in 2001, there was a significant improvement in 2002, especially in A level results. In both years, students' results are in line with predictions based on their previous examination results.

45. The chemistry co-ordinator meets regularly with other sixth form chemistry teachers, to ensure a common approach. However, the current arrangements mean that there is no shared teaching of topics, and a given module is taught by only one teacher, with no formal scheme of work. Planning on content is in place, but there is little evidence of planning for, or use of, a range of teaching and learning strategies. This results in over concentration on examination questions, sometimes at the expense of a stimulating approach to the subject. General equipment is satisfactory, but there are limited numbers of molecular models, and little software; there is no access to the Internet from laboratories. Teachers have had little recent subject specific professional development. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is now very good planning for examination requirements, but still a lack of challenge in some work and numbers of higher-grade passes have declined.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching which supports learning.
- Effective integration of practical work.
- Very positive student attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Poor range of equipment and software.
- Limited opportunities for teachers' professional development.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

46. Teaching and learning in biology are good. Teachers know their subjects well and plan thoroughly to ensure they cover all aspects of the specification. They include a good range of practical work, which supports learning. Class management is excellent and expectations are high. A well-planned programme of homework and tests helps to consolidate learning. Good use is made of videos and slides but there is only a limited range of other up to date resources for teacher use; however, other activities such as role-play to elucidate aspects of DNA structure capture students' interest. Students work at a good pace and display high levels of concentration and interest. They are confident in practical work and

pay appropriate attention to safety issues. Attitudes to the subject are very good; students speak well of the support they receive from teachers.

47. Standards of work seen are above average. Levels of understanding of biology are good. Some students have problems spelling biological terms correctly, or writing extended answers, especially at the start of Year 13. In Year 12, there is a range of practical expertise, with some students needing help in use of a microscope. Examination results in 2002 were broadly comparable with the 2001 results, which were in line with national averages; there was some improvement in the proportion of higher grades at AS level. Students do at least as well as would be predicted from their previous results. They build on their standards in science on entry to the sixth form, resulting in good achievement.

48. The biology co-ordinator meets regularly with other sixth form biology teachers, and good links with the partner school provide opportunities for shared attendance at a range of extra-curricular lectures. Although there is a good range of lesson and practical materials, with extension work where appropriate, this has not been formally collated into a scheme of work. The limited range of resources impacts on the range of teaching methods available. For example, the department does not have apparatus such as colorimeters and a projector microscope, there is only limited sensor equipment for fieldwork, and limited biological software; the laboratory used for much sixth form teaching does not have a computer with a CD-ROM drive. There are few library books of general interest, such as on molecular biology and genetics, but the range of textbooks is good. Teachers have had limited recent opportunities for subject specific professional development. Despite the resource shortcomings the department has made good progress since the last inspection: the quality of teaching has improved and there is now a good range of types of written exercise. Provision of ICT hardware has improved.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching that leads to above average examination results.
- Very well motivated students enjoy the subject and strive for the highest grades.

Areas for improvement

- Links with local businesses are insufficiently developed.
- The range of learning strategies used is limited.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Above average
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

49. Results in the 2001 A level examinations were above the national average and they continued the upward trend of recent years. Students performed significantly better in business studies than they did in most of their other subjects. National comparisons are not available currently for 2002 but the subject's results were similar to 2001. The results at AS level are of a similar standard.

50. Standards of work are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. As students start with broadly average levels of attainment, this represents good achievement. The good understanding of the knowledge they acquire is evident in the answers of students to probing questions asked by their teacher in lessons. So, for instance, while discussing issues that a business needs to consider regarding the investments it makes, Year 13 students showed good understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of short and long-term cash flow projections. Higher-attaining students display very good levels of understanding in fluent, well written course work, in the form of a feasibility study on starting a new business of their own. In their written work, lower-attaining students sometimes fail to demonstrate convincingly what they know because their answers lack sufficient detail and relevant supporting evidence to justify their opinions. Some Year 12 answers, for example, described the issues that would concern shareholders of the newly privatised rail industry without fully analysing what factors would satisfy their expectations of the company's performance.

51. Teaching is very good on both courses and it promotes very good learning. The basis of this high quality is the deep knowledge that the teacher has of the subject, and the clarity with which the work to be done is organised. Marking is regular and informative, with helpful comments to indicate ways in which students can improve the quality of their written answers. Teacher-led lessons are a common feature, and greater use of learning strategies that challenge students to make presentations based on their research should be considered as a way of further improving this already very good provision.

52. Students are very well motivated and have very good attitudes to the subject. They speak positively about the quality of the teaching they receive and the constant availability of their teacher during lunch times and after school. They appreciate the opportunities for private study afforded by the school's resources centre and computer facilities. Students benefit greatly from visits to commercial premises such as BP, and their annual attendance at regional universities for conferences that review examination requirements and techniques. Links with local businesses are less well developed.

53. The management of the subject is very good. For instance, returns from examination boards verify efficient meeting of deadlines and excellent accuracy of the head of department's assessment of course work. Leadership of the subject is good and, with action on the issues highlighted above as areas for development, has clear potential to be very good.

54. There has been good improvement in business studies since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No subject was the focus of the inspection however, ICT was sampled. Only five students were entered for A level in 2001 making comparisons with national figures unreliable. A slightly larger group took A level in 2002. Most students beginning the course continued through to the examination. One lesson was observed. The quality of teaching and learning was good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education.

Physical education

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

- High standards of attainment and achievement.
- Very good learning stimulated by focused and challenging teaching.
- Very mature, enthusiastic and conscientious attitudes of students to their work and the school.
- High quality, consistent support and guidance for students from teachers.
- Clear leadership and shared commitment to high standards among staff.

Areas for improvement

- Access for students to practical facilities.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good
Results in examinations	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

55. Teachers and students share a commitment to high standards and hard work. Students arrive at lessons well prepared, anxious to learn and confident to contribute to lessons and share views and experiences. They are confident independent learners. Teachers are very concerned that students should do well. Lessons are well planned, properly sequenced to ensure progress and make good use of time available. Teaching is very focused on learning objectives and students are challenged continually to extend their knowledge and understanding and apply their experience to new situations. In a lesson on *sport for all* students were able to contribute their different knowledge and experience of different sports to generate a wide breadth of information on the subject. In a lesson on acquisition of skills, students spoke confidently, gave well-developed explanations and showed a good understanding of technical vocabulary. Relationships in class are excellent and students respond positively to the encouragement they receive. The written course materials produced by staff for all students are excellent and provide a very strong foundation for study. Very full marking, backed by advice and monitoring make students aware of how well they are doing against examination criteria.

56. Students take full responsibility for their work both in class and in personal study. Personal folders are well kept and provide evidence of students' diligence and their willingness to explore a range of relevant sources of information. Many students experience difficulty in coming to terms with sixth form work but all have now a firm understanding of what is required of them. The progress in AS level work is continued at A level. The achievement of current students is very good.

57. Since the last inspection there has been a very significant development in sixth form work with a parallel improvement in attainment. In 2000 A level standards were below the

national average. In 2001 they were better than the national average and in 2002 results were much better than in the previous year. National comparisons are not available at AS level but in 2001 and 2002 all students were successful and 2002 one third obtained the highest grades (A/B). Success has brought popularity and present courses are strongly supported.

58. The rigorous, enthusiastic approach of the head of department and staff results in clearly organised well managed procedures which provide strong support to students in all aspects of their work. Flexibility, use of outside agencies and expertise which resides in other parts of the school, and good use of video material have enabled the department to manage successfully a wide range of practical choices made by students. Nevertheless work has been hampered and further development will be constrained by lack of access to the limited practical facilities on site. The school has no suitable hard play area for this level of work and the only indoor facility, the sports hall, is fully used to meet the needs of the programme of students in Years 7 to 11.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subject was the focus of the inspection however, art and design and drama and theatre studies were sampled. Art and design examination results in 2001 were average. The average points score in 2002 was not as high but four of eleven students entered for AS the same year attained A or B grades. A very high proportion of students continue the course to the examination. One lesson was seen in which teaching and learning were satisfactory. In Drama and Theatre Studies there were no A level candidates in 2001. The small number of students who took AS in 2001 successfully completed the A level course the following year. One lesson was sampled during the inspection. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average and students did better at AS than the previous year group. Teaching and learning are very good and students work hard.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history. Religious studies and psychology were sampled. In religious studies the small numbers of entries make national comparisons unreliable. All students entered for A level in 2001 were successful. A high proportion of students who began the course continued to the examination. One lesson was observed in which the quality of teaching and learning was good. Examination results in psychology were above average in 2001. A smaller number of students were entered for A level in 2002 and their average points score was lower. Most students who began the course completed it. Two lessons were seen in which teaching and learning were good.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students relate well with teachers and work hard.
- Geography is a popular option subject which engages students and interests them.
- Very good use is made of case studies and fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

- Checking the quality of teaching across the two departments.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Average
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

59. Geography is a popular subject. Students with unremarkable GCSE grades and those returning to the subject are readily accepted. Nearly all complete the AS course and two thirds typically proceed to A2. Results at A level are much in line with national averages, as at the time of the previous inspection. Students often gain higher grades in geography than in the other subjects they entered indicating good achievement. In 2002 60 per cent of a large entry for AS gained the highest grades. In the module taught solely by this department, 90 per cent achieved the highest grades.

60. Students in Year 13 are able to draw on earlier work to illuminate current ideas. They can describe population pyramids, for example, and locate them appropriately, drawing on GCSE work to offer explanations, relating cause and effect to other aspects of their current work in human geography. Students speak very highly of their experiences in the subject and identify relaxed yet positive relationships with teachers at this school as the prime reason why they enjoy it. They acknowledge that teachers' expectations of them are high and are happy, and mature enough, to repay the challenge with commitment.

61. The contribution of this department to the teaching of what are fully shared courses is very good. Well-designed tasks, student participation, and challenging teaching are the key to very good learning. Teaching is enriched by the lavish use of case studies. There is skilful use of case-studies and fieldwork. Mappleton, for example, was the starting point in two very well planned lessons on the management of coastal erosion and anticipated forthcoming fieldwork. The skills of interpreting vivid aerial photographs unlocked rapid gains in knowledge and understanding. Students could deduce the direction of longshore drift because they could see the waves. They could see the threatened road, the sand piled up behind the groyne and the denuded shelf beyond which the soft clay was now being rapidly denuded by the sea. The teacher's skilful questions, to which students eagerly and accurately responded, revisited the process of erosion. Good pace driven by the structure of the lesson, depth and detail well matched to the teacher's high expectations and the combination of skills with understanding led to rapid learning. A past examination question set for homework gave students an early insight into their progress.

62. Year 13 students made excellent progress in a practical lesson which brought humour as well as urgency to contrasting the effectiveness of scattergraphs and statistical techniques for showing correlation. The lesson enriched knowledge and understanding of plant succession. Students were thoroughly prepared for independent work so that they progressed quickly and accurately and contributed fully to the discussion at the end of an outstanding three-part lesson.

63. The subject is ably managed within this school. The monitoring of teaching is strong and the department's performance is regularly and comprehensively reviewed. Leadership is shared between the partner schools and, whilst links are good, critically, there is no single overview of the quality of teaching. Some use is made of the Internet, but the wider use of ICT in teaching remains underdeveloped.

History

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

Strengths

- Effective teaching which enables students to make good progress in their study of history.
- The very positive attitudes of students to the subject.
- Very good management and leadership.

Areas for improvement

- The development of students' speaking skills.
- Target-setting and reviews of progress by students.
- Essay writing and note making skills of some students in Year 12.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

64. Results in 2001 were below the national average. In most recent years they have been well above average, especially at the higher grades. In 2001 the results of most students matched their predictions and they did relatively better in history than in their other subjects. Results in 2002 were significantly better than 2001 and matched the very good results of previous years.

65. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good. Teachers' very good knowledge of their subject enables them to plan lessons which engage students' interest and set work which challenges them to think. Students are introduced to a range of historical interpretations and encouraged to carry out independent research. They have a very positive attitude towards the subject. This is an important contribution to the effectiveness of lessons.

66. The achievement of students is good. There is clear progress in students' learning. This is evident in their growing mastery of historical knowledge, their ability to use historical sources critically and the extent and quality of their written work. Higher-attaining students on the A2 course often write with fluency and confidence in a style which shows understanding of the process of historical thinking. The work of some students in the AS course is less well-developed because they have difficulties in note-making and writing in the analytical style required at this level. The majority of students have good historical knowledge and can provide accurate factual answers to questions posed in lessons. Teachers do not always capitalise on this to encourage more developed oral responses and the exchange of ideas between students in the group. Students' written work is regularly marked and helpful comments made. There is no formal method which enables students to record and review their targets for improvement.

67. Management of the subject is very good. The department is well organised and there is a reflective approach to the management of the subject. This is particularly clear in the responses made to the evaluation of student performance in public examinations and in implementing new examination requirements in the sixth form.

68. Leadership is very good. The head of department is an experienced and committed teacher. Staff are enthusiastic about history and this is communicated to their students. Relationships in the classroom are therefore very good and contribute to the ethos of shared interest and purposeful activity.

69. There have been improvements since the last inspection in the range of teaching methods used and in the use of ICT, though this is not yet as fully utilised as it could be.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French. English language was sampled. Examination results have improved steadily over the last 3 years and standards are broadly average. One lesson was observed in which the quality of teaching was very good and students made very good progress as a result of very challenging questioning. A high proportion of students who began the course continue through to the examination.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Learning is very good as a result of lively and stimulating teaching.
- The marking of students' work is excellent.
- Students are very positive about the subject. They enjoy lessons and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Checking the quality of teaching in the subject across both schools.
- Improve the quality of curriculum planning for the subject as a whole.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good
Results in examinations	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

70. Students enjoy lessons in English Literature. They work hard and participate very willingly in discussion. They are lively, responsive and enthusiastic about exchanging and exploring ideas. They are mature and responsible learners and co-operate well together.

71. Students learn very well because of very strong teaching. Lessons are very well planned. Relationships are excellent; students feel comfortable and confident to express their ideas and opinions and are willing to experiment with ideas. Teachers strike a good balance between informality and purposefulness. There is much praise and encouragement.

Teachers know the subject well and transmit their enthusiasm to students who then enjoy the opportunity to discuss and share ideas. Humour is used well and lessons are fun. Students respond very well to stimulating and probing questions and speak very highly of the quality of teaching they receive. Expectations are high, students are frequently challenged and lessons move at a lively pace so that understanding is developed, reinforced and interest maintained. Ideas are explored through group work, in direct response to questions and sometimes by writing on to a small whiteboard, which enables the teacher to rapidly check on the range of views and ensure that all are involved. Independent research is encouraged: students are guided in the use of the school library and the Internet. Lessons have a useful focus on examination strategies and techniques so that students are clear about what will be required. After discussion about the stylistic features of a short story by Edgar Allen Poe, for example the teacher made clear how students could best demonstrate understanding of the connections between texts from differing periods and genre. Very good oral feedback is given in class and teachers are available to talk with students outside lessons. Marking is exemplary.

72. Achievement is very good. Overall standards are well above average. Examination results in 2001 were well above average but not as strong in the following year. There is some fluctuation in results from year to year. Students have very good oral skills and respond very positively in lessons. They are articulate and able to express ideas fluently as, for example in Year 12 where students discussed a review of a recent production of *Hamlet* focusing particularly on the characters of Gertrude and Ophelia. Students' written work demonstrates that they are very well prepared in lessons and work hard. They comment on text in terms of language, structure, and theme. High attaining students develop their ideas confidently, at some length and draw on the text to illustrate and support their points. Lower attaining students sometimes give very little detail and evidence from the text to support their opinions. All develop a good grasp of literary terminology over the course, begin to write critically and express themselves with increasing sophistication. They make good notes. Writing is technically accurate and some reaches a very high standard.

73. Teachers try hard to manage the difficulties which arise from teaching the subject across two schools. Day-to-day arrangements for the subject work very well. Assessment is accurate, moderated by both schools and students' targets are jointly agreed. There are good relations between the two staffs, who meet each term. Even so, there is no rigorous checking on the quality of teaching across the two schools in such a way as to encourage planned improvement, nor is the course planned in an overall way.

French

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership has produced excellent improvements since the previous inspection.
- The students' attitudes and personal development are very good.
- Teachers devise very good learning activities and most students have very good learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not check and insist on accuracy thoroughly enough.
- The sharing of good practice through consistently evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within and between departments is insufficient.

Key judgements

Standard of work seen	Above average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations	Above average
Quality of Teaching	Good
Quality of Learning	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Excellent

74. A very substantial turn-around has taken place since the previous inspection when unsatisfactory provision was reported. Excellent improvements result from senior leadership's judicious alterations and realignments of staffing and the industry of a new head of department who gives very good leadership. The department's current high morale, commitment to improvement and the students' rising interest and standards are very clear indicators of success. Within the shared arrangements, boys now do better than girls. There is still room for further improvement.

75. Teaching and learning are good. In each lesson, expected learning is shared clearly with the students at the outset. Teachers show great ingenuity in devising activities that help students to learn well. Good learning is mainly brought about by practical activities which are highly effective in stimulating students' interest, concentration and good achievement. For example, games and snippets from French newscasts were very effective warm-ups in a typical Year 12 lesson. Sorting, sticking and guessing activities surrounding a media theme made sure students achieved well in small groups and pairs. They conversed engagingly well together and with the teacher, showing particularly good fluency and accents. The highest attainers use their imaginations very well and help others to make good progress through collaboration and helpful criticisms of work. Lessons go along at a rapid pace and fill the time available well. Simple, but very effective recapitulations, using white boards, allow students to write, for example, a brief paragraph indicating what they have learned. The results show a generally good command of written French on the part of the highest attaining students especially. Sometimes, however, teachers allow too many errors in spoken French that should be brought to the attention of these able students to improve further accuracy and fluency.

76. Achievement is good. Students' files shown good improvements in the sophistication of the work they produce. Progress made by the lowest attainers is very good, showing clear improvements in knowledge of tense and usage as well as a good vocabulary. The achievement of the highest attainers is equally very good; they are able to express themselves cogently in fairly accurate French on a good range of topics that also contribute well to students' personal development.

77. Very good leadership on the part of a new head of department has brought about a big rise in standards and much greater coherence in the way the department operates. Expectations of each teacher are high and the department has demanding targets for improvement that are regularly met, so standards are now much higher; for example all 3 A-level candidates obtained A grade passes in 2002. The prognosis for the current Year 12 is equally good and recruitment prospects from Year 11 are very encouraging. The situation contrasts sharply and very favourably with that found at the time of the previous inspection. At present there is not enough sharing of good practice through mutually helpful criticism of teaching as a means of establishing, for example, training needs and of celebrating success.