

INSPECTION REPORT

DALLAM SCHOOL

Milnthorpe

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112432

Headteacher: Mr S. Holdup

Reporting inspector: Mr H. White

2795

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th November 2002

Inspection number: 249750

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian W. Walker
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd November 1997

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31171	O. Dutton	Team inspector	Music (11-16)	
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16950	C. Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
13337	D. R. Pritchard	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Community links	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Dallam School is a smaller than average, oversubscribed, mixed 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school serving the village of Milnthorpe and Heversham. There are 866 pupils on roll, of whom 151 attend the sixth form. The 50 boarding pupils come mainly from homes abroad, in particular Hong Kong and Macau; 24 have English as an additional language. Few pupils are socially disadvantaged and the majority of parents are interested and supportive. The proportion having free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is below the national average. The range of special needs includes dyslexia, physical disabilities and difficulties with learning and behaviour. Three per cent of pupils are of Chinese origin; most other pupils are of white heritage. Pupils' attainment when they start in Year 7 is above the national average. The school has an extensive Community Education programme that is an integral part of the school. The school became a Specialist Language College in 1997. The headteacher and both deputies took up their posts at the start of the current term. The school occupies two sites that are just over a mile apart.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school gives its pupils a good education. Standards in external examinations are well above the national average. Good teaching, pupils' very good attitudes to learning and good management systems enable pupils to make good progress overall. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The sixth form is good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; attainment in examinations throughout the school is well-above the national average.
- Pupils behave well, attendance is high, and they are committed to learning at school and doing well in their examinations.
- Tutors have a very good knowledge of their pupils. The good systems for monitoring the progress of pupils throughout the school help maintain the high standards.
- Good systems for monitoring the work of teachers and departments sustain high GCSE and A-level standards.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school has impressive links with its community; these provide additional curriculum and enrichment opportunities.
- There is a good sixth form.
- The new headteacher is providing very good leadership; he is well-supported by the leadership team.

What could be improved

- Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 in information and communication technology (ICT) and music.
- Strategies to raise the quality of more of the teaching from good to very good and excellent.
- Structured programmes for personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- The lack of curriculum planning in ICT to ensure the statutory programmes of study are taught in Years 10 and 11 for a small group of pupils not taking an external examination.

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 1997 is good. The school has maintained the high standards attained in public examinations. The amount of good teaching has also risen. The

major key issues from the last report have been satisfactorily addressed. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The monitoring of the work of departments is good. The new leadership team has undertaken a high quality self-evaluation of the school, prior to this inspection. Good use is made of registration periods and sixth form tutor time. The arrangements for collective worship have not been tackled. Significant improvements in accommodation have taken place through the provision of the language centre and the science, art and design and technology building.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Over the period 1997 to 2001, the results in the national tests for 14 years olds in English, mathematics and science were well-above the national average, above the national average for similar schools and improved faster than the national trend. Achievement is good overall. Results were higher in 2002. Overall standards of work seen in year 9 are above the national average and achievement is good. Standards of work seen are well-above average and achievement is good in mathematics. Standards are above average and achievement is good in English, science, design and technology, art and design and physical education. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory in other subjects except ICT and music where standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Over the period 1997 to 2001 the GCSE results were well-above the national average, well-above average when compared to similar schools and in line with targets set by the school. The improvement was above the national trend and achievement was good overall. Results in mathematics and science were well-above the national average. In English they were above the national average. Overall results remained well-above average in 2002 although the proportion of pupils gaining 5 passes at grades A*-C dropped by 9 percentage points. Overall standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Standards are well-above average and achievement is good in mathematics. Standards are above average and achievement good in science, design and technology, ICT, physical education and religious education. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory in all other subjects, including English, except art and design where achievement is good. The difference in the standards seen in English and the examination results is due to the high proportion of changes of teachers over the last three years and the relatively low attainment of boys compared to girls.

Results in the 2001 GCE "A" level examinations were well-above the national average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The students have very positive attitudes to their work and are keen to learn. Boarding students are well-integrated and committed to achieving high standards.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Sometimes a little boisterous at breaktimes but good behaviour in lessons means pupils are attentive and concentrate well on the task in hand. Exclusions were high last year but the school is working hard to reduce the need to exclude pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The school makes effective provision to ensure all pupils show and receive respect. The teachers are very well-respected and foster a genuine spirit of inclusion.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well-above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good across Years 7 to 13 and are very good in about one lesson in five. Teaching and learning in English are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics and science in years 7 to 11. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and ably prepare pupils for their external examinations. Lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Lessons include a range of activities, and have a clear focus at the start and end of lessons. Assessment of progress is good. Pupils value the way their learning is monitored across the school and the help they receive to improve their work. Pupils are committed to learning in lessons and outside of classes. Their development of subject skills, knowledge and understanding is good. They show interest in their learning and work hard in lessons. The quality and frequency of the marking of pupils' work vary between teachers. The few unsatisfactory lessons include shortcomings in planning for learning or managing pupil behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils aged 11 to 16 study a wide range of subjects, including two foreign languages. A wide range of AS and A-level examinations is available in the sixth form. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Provision in ICT does not meet statutory requirements for a small group of pupils aged 15-16 who do not take an examination course. Personal, social and health education and citizenship need better planning. Careers education is good. Links with the local community, primary schools and the local teacher training institution are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are integrated into all aspects of school life and have access to the full curriculum. Learning support staff ensure those with statements receive appropriate help. Gifted and talented pupils are not systematically identified and provision varies between subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Cantonese-speaking boarders receive additional tuition to address specific language skills such as pronunciation and grammar. Pupils make good progress due to the high quality of teaching they receive and positive attitudes to learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Social development is very good and has improved since the last inspection in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Moral and cultural development are good though more could be done through display work around the school to make pupils aware of cultural diversity. Spiritual development is satisfactory but opportunities are missed across the curriculum to develop this aspect.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The care provided by tutors is of high quality. Strengths of the school lie in the shared reviewing and target setting between pupils and their teachers. Students know how they are doing and how to improve. Child protection procedures are effective.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The school maintains appropriate and effective contact with parents and carers of the school and boarding pupils and provides good opportunities for them to find out how their children are getting on. Written reports are good, but some subjects do not tell parents what their children need to do to improve. Where opportunities exist, parents make a good contribution to the work of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Although in post for only 10 weeks, the headteacher has a clear vision for improving the quality of provision and hence raising standards further. The newly formed leadership team ably supports him. Leadership and management are strong in English, mathematics, science, physical education, religious education, design and technology and art and design and learning support but weak in music.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good The governing body knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They think strategically and hold the school to account for its results. The statutory requirement for ICT for all 15 and 16 year olds, the governors' annual report to parents, some key policies and the provision of a daily act of worship are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is an effective strategy for school self-review. Good practice is identified but it is not yet effectively shared and disseminated.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning is rigorous and the principles of best value are applied when services and goods are being purchased. Specific grants are used effectively. Provision of staffing and learning resources is good. Governors have well-developed plans for a single site school; accommodation currently is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel able to approach the school with questions or problems • They know the school expects the best from their children and this helps them make good progress. • The wide range of extra-curricular activities • Their children like coming to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not happy about the work their children are given to do at home • Some parents feel that the school does not work closely with or keep them well informed about how their child is getting on.

Inspectors agreed with everything that parents like about the school. Homework is satisfactory and effective in helping pupils to consolidate the work they have done in lessons, or to extend their learning to new situations. The school makes every effort to work closely with parents and has a wide range of strategies to keep parents regularly informed if there are concerns about a pupil's progress at the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 151 students, 91 in Year 12 and 60 in Year 13. This is slightly below the national average for school sixth forms of 166 students. Since the last inspection in 1997, numbers fell significantly to a low of 114 in 2001. They are now only slightly below the 1997 figure. Provision is predominantly GCE Advanced Level, as it was at the last inspection, together with a small number of vocational courses. The school is located on two sites just over a mile apart. The sixth form is based at the Heversham site but the teaching of art and design and design and technology takes place on the Milnthorpe site.

Entry to the sixth form is open to all students for whom there is an appropriate course. In previous years attainment of students on entry has been above average but the attainment of the current Year 12 on entry is in line with national averages. Almost all students entering the sixth form attain an average of grade C in GCSE. About 60 per cent of the students from the main school continue their education in the sixth form. Others join the school from local 11-16 schools or as new boarders. There are more girls than boys in the sixth form: 84 girls and 67 boys, a pattern that reflects past years. Few students come from disadvantaged backgrounds; none are applicants for free school meals. The student population is predominantly White British. A small number of students from Germany join the sixth form for a year and take AS levels and a small number of Chinese pupils from Hong Kong and Macau are boarders at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good education for its students. The standards achieved in A-level examinations are well-above the national average and the school is continuing to maintain high standards. Standards of attainment of the current sixth form students are above average overall and their achievements are good. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and this enables high standards to be maintained and students to achieve well. There is effective advice and support for students informed by good systems for monitoring their academic progress. The wide range of 18 A-level courses meets the needs of the current students. Very good provision is made for students' personal development through a very wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Students are prepared very well for the next stage of their education, training or employment and almost all students progress to positive destinations, mainly in higher education. The sixth form is currently cost-effective but in future years when the school is subject to reconciliation by the Learning and Skills Council for retention and achievement, it will not remain cost-effective on current levels of expenditure. The school leadership team, of which the Head of Sixth Form is a member, is currently planning to enhance provision and improve cost-effectiveness through collaborative provision with the school's Community Education Centre and with a local school and college.

Strengths

- Students' achievements are good and examination results are well-above the national average.
- The good support and guidance for students and the monitoring of their progress ensures that they have very positive attitudes to their study and to the sixth form.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good.
- Rich opportunities are provided for the personal development of students.

What could be improved

- The cost-effectiveness of provision which will be put under pressure when planning for new levels of funding.
- The range of vocational courses in an expanding and changing sixth form.
- Accommodation for practical work in science.

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. Examination results at Advanced level are very high in 2002 and are an improvement over 2001. Students' achievements are good. Teaching is very good and fully involves students in their learning.
Biology	Very good. This is a popular subject. Students attain very high standards and their achievements are very good. This is due to high quality teaching by teachers who are enthusiastic and highly committed and have a very good grasp of subject knowledge, teaching approaches and examination requirements.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are in line with the national average and students make good progress. The teaching is good. Students are enthusiastic. They design and make good quality creative products.
Information and communication technology	Good. Standards of attainment are above the national average and progress made by pupils from Year 12 to Year 13 is good. Teaching is good overall and teachers' knowledge and understanding are good.
Physical education	Very good. Examination results are high and students' achievements are good. Students are given opportunities to take a range of examination courses and recreational activities. Teaching of AS and A-level is consistently very good.
Art and design	Very Good Examination results are improving and students are currently attaining standards which are above average. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.
Geography	Good. This a popular subject. Examination results are well-above the national average and students' achievements are good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and use a good range of case studies to ensure students' understanding. A few students with below average GCSE results are making unsatisfactory progress due to insufficiently

	structured guidance.
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Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
History	Satisfactory. Examination results are below the national average. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are attaining standards in line with national averages and their achievements are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge and love of their subject. Teaching is satisfactory but some over-directive which restricts opportunities for students to debate and discuss issues. Relationships between teachers and students are good.
English	Good. Standards are average and achievements are satisfactory across a very wide range of ability. Teaching is good. Pupils work with interest, enthusiasm and effort.
French	Good. Results and numbers of students have fluctuated over the last three years. Standards attained by the current Year 12 and 13 groups are in line with national standards. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall and sometimes good as a result of good teaching overall. Students benefit from the support of a language assistant and good exchange and study visits.

Lessons in chemistry, economics and business studies, music, psychology, physics, religious education, theatre studies and health and social care were also inspected. Teaching and learning are good in these lessons reflecting the good subject knowledge of the teachers. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to their learning both in lessons and in their private study and homework times.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Students receive very good guidance and support from their form tutors, teachers and the head of sixth form that effectively promotes their academic and personal development. Procedures for monitoring attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Attainment data on entry is used to set challenging targets for each student and to provide a benchmark for monitoring progress. Reports for parents are provided three times a year, to which both students and teachers contribute. Students thus have a very good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring and support of students who are falling behind with work are very good. Students have very good opportunities for developing social and leadership skills and a very wide range of activities enriches their learning.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall. The Head of Sixth Form's management of the sixth form is very good. This has ensured maintenance of high standards and good achievement through a strong focus on monitoring students' progress and an ethos of care. The newly appointed headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision for the sixth form to broaden provision to include vocational courses and to become more cost-effective through collaborative arrangements with the community education provision on site and other providers in the area.

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"> • Courses that allow them to follow a programme suited to their talents and aspirations. • Quality of teaching and challenge • Help to study independently • Range of extra-curricular activities. • Opportunities to take responsibility through the wide range of activities offered. • Being treated as a responsible young adult. They particularly value their location on a separate site from the main school. • The school listens and responds to their views. • Advice and guidance about course choice on entry to sixth form and support for applying to higher education. • Care and support from tutors and the head of sixth form. • Review of their progress and target setting. • They enjoy the sixth form and would advise other students to join. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice about the range of future options. • Help if they have personal problems.

The inspection evidence supports the strengths identified by the students. The advice and guidance for students about their future options is good. Dedicated staff are readily available to provide support for individual pupils. Tutors and teachers know their students well and are attentive to their individual needs.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Strengths

- Results in examinations are well-above average.
- Pupils' achievement is good in relation to when they started school.
- In 2001, pupils attained their best GCSE results in science and design and technology.
- Pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and the gifted and talented achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- In 2001, pupils attained less well in art and design, English language, German and mathematics than in their other GCSE subjects.
- Standards and pupils' achievement in ICT and music are not high enough in Years 7 to 9.
- GCSE results for pupils gaining 5 or more passes at grades A* to C so that they are restored to the previous high levels.

1. Results in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were well-above average overall when compared with all schools nationally. Over the last five years, the results from these tests have improved faster than the national trend. Given that these pupils were above the national average when they entered the school, these results represent good achievement. When compared to similar schools on the basis of free school meals, these results overall are above average in English and mathematics, and well-above average in science. However, the numbers of pupils gaining level 5 in mathematics is below the average for similar schools. There was a further improvement in results for 2002; the data now available show that pupils have made good progress from their attainment on entry to the school.

2. Results in the GCSE examinations for 16-year-olds in 2001 were well-above average compared to all schools; the school reached the targets set by itself. Again the trend in these results over the last 5 years has been above the national trend. Pupils were helped by the school to perform better than might be expected and many achieved well-above expectations when compared to their prior attainment at 14.

3. Results in GCSE mathematics and science were well-above the national average and above average in English in the 2001 GCSE examinations for 16-year-olds.

4. GCSE results overall remained well-above average in 2002 although the proportion of pupils gaining 5 passes at grades A*-C dropped by 9 percentage points. Significant numbers of pupils gained D grades rather than C grades in English language, English literature and mathematics. A range of staffing issues had an impact on these 2002 results such as experienced staff leaving the school, less experienced staff joining the school and some long term illnesses which have now been resolved. The school reports that to some extent the results also dipped due to a number of less motivated boys. The school has arranged with the local college of further education for some pupils, boys and girls, to attend vocational education classes as an alternative curriculum on Fridays. The students interviewed were enthusiastic about this opportunity and reported that this arrangement was helping them focus fully on their learning in other subjects at school.

5. Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils across the age range 11 to 16 produced work that is currently above average overall. In Years 7 to 9 the standard of pupils' work is well-above average in mathematics and above average in science, design and technology, art and design, and physical education and pupils are making good progress. Standards in other subjects are average and progress satisfactory except in ICT and music where standards are below average and progress is unsatisfactory. In years 10 and 11 the standard of pupils' work is above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, physical education and religious education and pupils are making good progress. Standards in other subjects are average and progress satisfactory except in art and design where progress is good. A strength of the teaching is the knowledge teachers have of their subject and the assessment procedures for the national tests for 14 year olds and GCSE. Throughout their work, pupils are familiarised with the techniques required for examination success. This, together with the commitment that pupils have to achieving well at school, and the support from their tutors who make good use of the systems for monitoring progress to help pupils improve their work, ensures that pupils are able to achieve well-above average results in their final examinations.

6. Standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are average. Individual teachers include these areas in their teaching when necessary, but the whole school approach to raising standards has only started this term. The national strategies are well established for literacy and numeracy to raise standards in these important areas.

7. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and work indicates that they show significant improvement at all levels. They learn well and make good progress in the majority of subjects over time. They make satisfactory progress in music, but their progress is unsatisfactory in ICT and modern foreign languages in Year 7 to 9. Effective arrangements for those pupils requiring withdrawal from lessons for intensive support in literacy ensure a very good rate of progress. The most able gifted and talented pupils make good progress in most subjects where they are identified and set suitably challenging activities. Their progress is satisfactory in English, geography, history and music.

8. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. Their support teachers have a good understanding of how to help the Cantonese speaking pupils address their pronunciation problems. They make satisfactory progress in music, but their progress is unsatisfactory in ICT and modern foreign languages in Year 7 to 9.

9. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A is similar to the national average for schools in design and technology, ICT, physical education and science: the school must focus its effort to attain similar levels of success with the most able pupils in other subjects.

10. At the age of 16, the gap between boys and girls is wider than the national average; this reflects the data on these pupils at the age of 11 that shows there were more high attaining girls than boys entering the school.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Examination results are well-above average.
- Students' achievements are good overall and very good in biology and art and design.

Area for improvement

- Examination results in history and general studies.

11. All students entering the sixth form pursue AS or A-level courses. A few students also take an advanced vocational course alongside their A-levels. Almost 60 per cent of the students who attended the main school stay on to take A-levels. The proportion has risen significantly this year, having been about 45 per cent of the year group in recent years. All but a few students who complete A-level progress to higher education. A small number of German students return to Germany to pursue their education, having completed a one year AS course. A small number of other students leave school on completion of AS levels to pursue courses in further education colleges.

12. The school's examinations results were well-above national averages in 2001, a pattern which has been consistent in the previous three years. Examination results are at least in line with the national average in almost all subjects. They are very high in biology, computer studies, geography, mathematics and physics and are below the national average in history and general studies. Students do not have taught sessions for general studies. Examination results overall in 2002 are also well-above national averages. Students' achievements are good overall in 2001. In almost all subjects the proportion of students making good progress is greater than expected given the students' GCSE results on entry. This pattern of achievement is repeated in 2002. In both years, students with both high and low attainment on entry make good progress overall and some students with low attainment on entry make very good progress. Retention rates over the two years of the A-level course are satisfactory overall, but in mathematics a significant number of students having completed the AS course at the end of the first year do not progress to A-level.

13. Standards of attainment of current Year 13 students are well-above average reflecting the above average level of attainment of the students on entry to the sixth form and their good progress. Standards in Year 12 are in line with national averages due to the wider range of attainment on entry of this year group. The small number of students with special educational needs make good progress. Students with English as an additional language make good progress; all but two having attained at least a grade C in their GCSE in English. Gifted and talented students make good progress overall. They make very good progress in biology, design and technology and ICT.

14. Students do not take examinations in key skills but they have good opportunities to develop these in most subjects. In the work seen the standards are appropriate to the demands of their course. The key skills of reading and synthesising information and writing documents are of A-level standard, but their skills of making presentations and contributing to group discussion are not at the same high standard. They have good ICT skills overall. They demonstrate elements of A-level standard in their presentation of text, images, tables and graphs and in searching for information on the Internet in geography. In design and technology students' standard of ICT is above average. Students' use of ICT to support work on graphs in mathematics is also above average. Their use of mathematics in the analysis and representation of data is of an appropriate standard for the A-level courses in geography and in business and economics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Pupils' very good attitudes to their work and school.
- Very good and supportive relationships throughout the school.
- Pupils' high level of attendance.
- Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- Relationships within the multiracial boarding community are harmonious.

Area for improvement

- Reduce the levels of exclusion of pupils from school.

15. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development continue to be a significant positive feature of the school. The high standards in this area have continued to improve from the good report at the previous inspection. Pupils feel valued and recognised as individuals, so self-esteem and confidence are high and attitudes to work enthusiastic. Registration periods, inconsistently used at the previous inspection, are used effectively for ensuring pupils' attendance, checking homework diaries and updating pupils on extracurricular activities and other school events.

16. Positive attitudes to work make a valuable contribution to achievements in the classroom. Pupils have a strong commitment to work hard and they are highly motivated and keen to learn. They enjoy their lessons, listen well to the teacher and to each other, and, because teachers create an atmosphere where learning is seen as important, pupils are attentive and concentrate well. They are open, friendly and articulate and readily communicate with adults. Pupils talk confidently about their work and most respond well to the challenges teachers set. For example, in a design and technology class they responded thoughtfully and enthusiastically when questioned about the different strengths of varying structures, such as snail shells and picture frames. In a minority of classes pupils do not have the opportunity to show initiative and grow as individual learners.

17. Behaviour is good in the classroom and around school maintaining the findings of the previous inspection. At lunchtimes and break times pupils are sometimes boisterous and noisy, but there was no evidence of threatening behaviour. Occasionally in lessons when teaching is less satisfactory and pupils do not fully understand what is required of them, their motivation drops and some pupils misbehave. In most cases where pupils lose concentration and become restless, effective classroom management and good relationships ensure it does not interrupt the flow of the lesson or impact on learning.

18. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Teachers make very effective use of praise and encouragement so that pupils blossom and grow in confidence and become active participants in their own learning. For example in a Spanish class, with a high percentage of pupils needing support, every pupil felt confident enough to make a contribution by speaking. Pupils are very supportive of each other and in science, for instance, work sensibly, safely and with good co-operation on practical work in small groups. Older pupils regularly provide support to younger pupils through a system of peer mediators or mentors. The mediators take the role very seriously and carry it out with pride and some success. Younger pupils place a high value on this support, for example, in the lunchtime homework club and in talking over problems with them.

19. The high attendance of pupils and very low rate of unauthorised absence has a very positive effect on learning. This is a similar situation to the previous inspection. Punctuality to classes is good apart from the small numbers dependent on school buses, particularly through the day when moving to the Heversham site.

20. The number of pupils excluded from school for a fixed period of time last year was high compared to other schools. No pupils were excluded from school permanently. The school has reacted positively by reviewing its behaviour policy and behaviour management and is developing other innovative strategies to enable pupils to remain in school. Very good monitoring systems enable pupils to be well supported back into school following a period of exclusion.

21. Pupils with special educational needs show very positive attitudes much of the time, enjoying their work and thriving in a calm and non-confrontational atmosphere. Those withdrawn from lessons gain much confidence from the one-to-one teaching. In mainstream lessons pupils behave well and respond positively to the challenges offered them. The good and sometimes very good help given by learning support assistants is important in enabling pupils with special educational needs to play a full part in lessons and demonstrate a positive attitude.

22. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; this reflects the limited opportunities provided by the school for this aspect of pupils' personal development. Pupils successfully develop respect for themselves in Year 7 when they design their own PowerPoint presentation about themselves, include photographs and show respect for others when they are shown presentations of others in the class. Pupils develop their sense of empathy throughout history lessons when they express what it would be like to experience situations such as the working conditions of the industrial revolution and when they explain the beliefs and values of people as they deduce these ideas from source material. In art and design pupils develop their expressive and creative impulse in topics such as the study of surrealism where they explore their innermost thoughts and ideas.

23. Pupils' moral development is good. Throughout the school pupils show an awareness of and apply the school code of conduct. They are able to think through the consequences of their own and others' actions, and are very clear that good behaviour should be the norm in lessons if all are to make the most of their learning opportunities and do well in their examinations. Pupils express their own ideas and make reasoned judgements on ethical and moral issues in subjects such as geography in Year 9 where they express their views on differing stances on land use. In religious education in Year 11 they express clearly their views on prejudice and stereotyping. In science, pupils demonstrate their ability to explore their own and others' views about cloning, genetic engineering and global warming.

24. Pupils' social development is very good. Pupils recognise the importance of needing to adjust to different social contexts when they begin their first days at the school and realise how much they value the support offered by prefects and teachers to help them settle into the school. Pupils develop their abilities to relate well to others, work as part of a team, and exercise responsibility through most of their lessons and also the many extra-curricular, team events and whole school dramatic productions provided by the school. In their history lessons, pupils develop their growing respect for others' needs, interests and feelings through the frequent exploration of the theme of rights and responsibilities in a range of contexts. Pupils readily show their ability to exercise responsibility in a range of situations. They work safely in science practical sessions and take the role of "expert" to help others solder or set up machinery in design and technology lessons. Others represent their peers on the school council where they successfully make corporate decisions about financial matters. Their sense of community is first shown when they undertake projects in art and design to visually enhance aspects of the school environment in Year 7. These skills continue to develop through to Year 13 where students demonstrate their willingness to contribute to society and the world of work when creating ICT solutions for local organisations and business.

25. Pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils develop their understanding of other cultures and the impact of cultural background in a range of subjects including the stance of the aboriginal in art and design and the development of measurement and reflection in Islamic patterns in mathematics. Pupils readily explained to inspectors how the school had helped them appreciate the value of the cultural experiences of the different groups of pupils in the school. Significant numbers of pupils develop insights into other countries and their cultures through the wide range of exchange visits organised by the modern foreign languages department. Year 13 students from Germany readily help young pupils in developing their speaking skills, and these young students also develop their awareness of the German culture through listening to the German news using the satellite television.

Boarding

26. Pupils show very positive attitudes, and relationships within the multi-racial boarding community are harmonious. Students who joined the school in Years 7 to 9, many of whom come from Hong Kong, have been made to feel welcome, especially by other students. Although there is no induction programme, they help one another to become part of the House and in turn newcomers settle in quickly. Older students joining the school from England, Europe or the Far East quickly strike up friendships and clearly associate with each other well. Boarders appreciate the involvement of staff in the various activities offered in evenings and at weekends, for example help with cooking in the Muffin Club. They are polite when spoken to and willingly respond. There is no evidence of bullying and when issues have arisen in the past they have been dealt with effectively. Most students see sense in arrangements for maintaining order – only a small minority in Year 11 view some of the arrangements as restrictive. Misbehaviour is rare and antisocial behaviour is dealt with effectively and fairly, and there is no sign of rancour. A few incidents of contravening rules reflect boarders' lack of understanding of the reason for them, for example when away at weekends making changes to arrangements themselves, without ensuring the duty staff know.

27. Students make a very effective contribution to school life contributing positively to the ethos of the school while developing in independence and maturity. They are involved in a very wide range of activities. They carry out a variety of responsibilities in the main school supporting learning in the lower school and helping in the organisation of major events such as open evenings. They participate in a range of activities in the community, in local primary schools, residential homes, taking the initiative to organise these activities for themselves. They take responsibility through the sixth form council for organising social functions and they run a Young Enterprise scheme. They have opportunities through their course for residential visits, for example, to London to see a theatre performance as part of their studies in English, to undertake geography fieldwork and a French exchange as part of their A-level study in French.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Students' attitudes are very good and contribute to their good achievement
- Students make a very good contribution to the life of the school
- Students' relationships with teachers and with each other are very good.

28. The overwhelming majority of students enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They show high levels of maturity, taking a very responsible approach to their study. Their attendance and punctuality are good and they can be relied upon to use their private study time productively both in school and at home. Course work and assignments are completed on time and almost all pupils take great care to produce high quality work, using ICT very effectively to

enhance the presentation of their work. They work very well independently when given the opportunity to take initiative but can be reticent in responding to questions and in participating in discussion during lessons. Too few opportunities are provided in some lessons.

29. A significant strength of the sixth form is the quality of the relationships both between teachers and students and between the students themselves. Students work well together, are supportive of each other and integrate well both socially and in lessons. Students who are new to the school, from Germany and Hong Kong as well as from local schools, settle in well and feel welcomed and valued.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall, often very good with some examples of excellence.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and the examination requirements.
- Good teacher–pupil relationships promote good learning.
- Very good learning takes place when planning focuses on the role of the learner rather than the teacher.
- Learners make good strides in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in most lessons.
- Pupils expect to continue learning outside of lessons.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are taught well and make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The use of teaching methods which relate to the different ways pupils learn.
- All teachers do not consistently do marking to a high standard.
- Remove the limited amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

30. In Years 7 to 11, in 2 out of every three lessons teaching and learning are good. In one fifth of lessons teaching and learning are very good or excellent. Teaching and learning was less than satisfactory in 7 of the 184 lessons observed. Teaching and learning are good in English in Years 7, 8 and 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning in mathematics and science are good from Year 7 to Year 11. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall but good in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 reflecting the success of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.

31. The key strength of teaching at Dallam School is the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and the examination requirements. When teaching is good lessons are well planned and enthusiastically taught through an interesting range of activities. Lessons begin with a focused activity to engage pupils in the lesson and pupils are made aware of the learning that will result from the lesson. Lessons end with a review of the learning that has taken place. The key strengths of learning are the commitment of pupils to develop their subject knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons and to further develop these outside the classroom. Pupils are willing to work hard in lessons and concentrate when needed. Assessment is good and pupils value the way their learning is monitored across the school and the help they receive to improve the standards of their work. School self-evaluation has shown correctly that most of the teaching is good; many teachers, however, lack the range of teaching and learning approaches to move their practice from good to very good and excellent. The leadership team is planning to use the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, the department of modern foreign languages will work with Saint Martin's College to develop the teaching of thinking skills and also relate their teaching approaches to current knowledge of how the brain works

This exciting development will involve the department in higher education institute level action research into teaching and learning. The proposal to include GCSE vocational leisure and tourism from next September will further widen the teaching and learning approaches available at the school.

32. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables GCSE physical education pupils to learn about the different types of training activity and relate them to different sports. A very good explanation by way of introduction was developed through video sequences, worksheets and personal activity. In science, a very good explanation of the elements of planning, observation and analysis in science investigation preceded experimental work in which the teacher regularly reinforced these aspects through skilful question/answer sessions with individuals or groups of pupils. In the end-of-lesson review, the fourth aspect of investigations, evaluation, was effectively introduced. In history in Year 7, the importance of the historical skills of writing notes and how to research a topic were very well-taught. Skilful use of video clips, focused tasks, and resource sheets enabled pupils to make brief lists under specific headings on Roman life and ensured that pupils made very good learning gains in terms of both their historical and their literacy skills. In modern foreign languages subject knowledge is visible when lessons cater for all aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In Year 11 French a lesson on recycling in France began with pupils watching a video sequence, which was frequently stopped to allow the teacher to lead discussion in French. A very well constructed support sheet then required pupils to read related text and to produce extended writing. The pace was maintained by the brisk use of French throughout the lesson, and pronunciation drills help improve pupils' quality of speaking.

33. Good teacher-pupil relationships are central to high quality teaching. In Year 11 English, lessons to develop pupils' wider reading skills and the very good rapport between the teacher and their pupils resulted in pupils being willing to work with effort and creativity. They were interested in the task that had been carefully planned for them, concentrated well and were willing to think independently. In Year 9 geography, when categorising different tourist environments, the enthusiasm of the teacher together with the excellent relationship with the class results in pupils being very interested in the topic they are studying and valuing geography as a subject. In Year 11, when religious education pupils were studying prejudice and discrimination, such high quality relationships enabled the teacher to use the white board to structure their notes using a spidergram and to develop the difficult concepts involved through sensitive questioning and discussion. Moreover, a pre-arranged role-play in which the teacher compared him/herself with a pupil not only provided excellent reinforcement, but was so inspiring to the class that both the teacher and the pupil received a spontaneous round of applause at the end of the activity. In Year 10 English, relationships are such that the teacher, when teaching product placement in film sets, was able to say, "I know this is difficult but I know you can do it. In fact nobody leaves the class until they can!" The lesson then included a wide range of activities which involved class teaching, paired discussion, individual support, presentations and role-play.

34. Several examples were observed where the lesson focused on the role of the learner. In Year 10 games lessons, pupils regularly analyse each other's performance and discuss each other's strengths and weaknesses. In Year 8 mathematics pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils working on symmetry are expected to check their own answers, use correct terms and explain difficulties as and when they occurred. Those working on an ICT database were expected to use the software to group data and produce meaningful graphs to show the mode value of holiday costs. They printed their results as a summary of the work for that lesson. High quality teacher demonstrations enabled pupils to demonstrate their own learning of the skills they had been shown during the lesson. In design and technology, pupils shown the use of software to control a display sign were very well motivated and quickly moved to design their own work in small groups. In art and design and

textiles, once pupils had been shown how to make pots (Year 7) and undertake machine embroidery (Year 10) through high quality teacher demonstrations, pupils were keen to embark on these new activities and explore their own ideas and they produced work of a very good standard.

35. There is an expectation that pupils will continue their learning outside of the classroom. Homework is set regularly and pupils respond well to the tasks set. Some homework does require pupils to complete work started in lessons, however much is set to extend and consolidate learning; pupils who had drafted poems in Year 11 were expected to redraft them for homework. The culture of doing homework is well supported by a range of homework clubs that take place at lunchtime. These sessions are well supported by teachers and learning assistants (who are sometimes helped very successfully by older pupils). In the best lessons, homework tasks were set that required the pupils to search the Internet for information and pictures that they could use as a resource for the next lesson. Year 11 science pupils made good use of the information they had previously found out about global warming and acid rain. Year 7 pupils similarly made good use of their internet search on Aboriginal Art as a source of ideas when making their clay pots.

36. There is not currently sufficient discussion about the different ways pupils learn. However some interesting practice was recorded during the inspection. In Year 11 English, a class of top attaining boys benefited from the playing of background music while they wrote their own poems. In Year 8 geography, pupils were able to watch short video clips of Brazil whilst Brazilian music was playing and this led to high levels of engagement in their work. In Year 7 Spanish, singing is used for learning numbers. In science, published materials are used to help pupils improve their scientific thinking skills quickly in Years 7,8 and 9. These are clearly areas of good practice on which the school can build its study of teaching and learning.

37. There are two key areas where teaching needs to improve.

- There is an inconsistency between teachers both in the frequency of marking and the quality of the comments that are made and this limits the progress of the pupils concerned.
- Unsatisfactory teaching should be eliminated by ensuring that
 - all staff have sufficient strategies to manage the behaviour of the most challenging pupils and the intentions of all lessons are well-thought-out in terms of what the pupils will know, understand or be able to do after the lesson has ended
 - activities stimulate pupils' interest, make pupils think and involve pupils actively in learning.

38. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully taught almost entirely in classes alongside other pupils in the school. Care is taken to ensure that teachers attend to each pupil's learning needs through having their individual education plans. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of individual education plans to help structure lessons. For example, teachers in design and technology make good use of alternative evaluation frameworks designed to be more easily used by pupils who need additional support with reading. Alternative books and written materials are available for use in geography and religious education lessons. Individual education plans could be used more productively and good practice in departments such as English, mathematics, science, geography, history and religious education deserves to be shared to enhance arrangements elsewhere, in modern foreign languages particularly. Effective arrangements for grouping pupils based upon assessments of their ability allow lower-attaining pupils to have more help from Learning Support Assistants. Assistants work well with teachers to know the content of the lesson and hence give effective support to pupils with a range of special needs within classes. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils with physical difficulties are

well-supported through additional help. The common practice in lessons is for the whole class to be engaged in the same activity and the teacher, and support assistant if present, to give different levels of support to individual pupils. However, teaching would benefit further if more guidance could be given to share the best practice that is seen on working with learning support assistants. A small number of pupils with specific literacy needs are withdrawn from some lessons for intensive support and make very good progress with reading and spelling. For example, in a lesson with a Year 8 group excellent learning resulted from excellent teaching and support that successfully incorporated activities using published home-school reading materials, a commercial computer application about reading for understanding, reading and writing comprehension, and group reading.

39. The procedure for withdrawing pupils with English as an additional language from a small part of the timetable is an efficient and effective means of providing specialist teaching support and they make good strides in their learning. The clearly-defined language aims for each lesson are shared with the pupils at the start of each lesson. Relationships are warm and friendly and there are high expectations that pupils will answer in full grammatical sentences.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their expositions and explanations are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for students to take the initiative in lessons and participate fully in discussion.

40. Teaching and learning are good overall and effectively meet the needs of all pupils. They are at least satisfactory in the overwhelming majority of lessons. In three-quarters of lessons teaching and learning at least good and in one-third teaching and learning are very good or better. Teaching is very good in art and design, biology, mathematics and physical education and good in English, design and technology, ICT, geography and French. Teaching is satisfactory in history. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in English, biology and physical education.

41. Teaching was most effective in an English lesson when the teacher promoted excellent personal responses to a poem by carefully matching the level of difficulty of the work to the ability of the students so that all were able to comprehend and analyse the poem at a level appropriate to their abilities and experiences.

42. In the vocational course on health and social care the teacher skilfully met the learning needs of students through excellent use of a wide range of resources from newspapers, textbooks, videos and the Internet to stimulate discussion about complex ethical issues.

43. In a lesson in economics and business studies, the teacher secured students' understanding of market equilibrium through careful step by step explanation, probing questions, and exemplification through good use of the whiteboard in drawing graphs. Likewise in a biology lesson the teacher developed diagrams of the carbon cycle and skilfully questioned students to secure their understanding of its complexity. Excellent use was made of a range of contemporary newspaper articles to support learning.

44. In an excellent physical education lesson a Year 12 class made detailed observations of primary school pupils undertaking physical activities, prepared a report and made short presentations.

45. The good quality of teaching contributes to the good levels of achievement overall. Students have good opportunities to develop the key skills of communication, application of number and information technology in their lessons. Their written communication skills are better-developed than their oral and presentation skills. They acquire a good critical vocabulary in English and write with relevance. Their ICT skills are good overall and support their learning. These skills could be further developed in physical education.

46. The particular strengths of teaching are the high level of staff expertise and enthusiasm for their subject, the very good relationships between the teachers and students, good planning in general and effective preparation for examination courses. Teachers have high expectations of students, manage students' learning well and provide very good support and guidance. The quality of teachers' assessment and marking is generally good with constructive comments on how work could be improved.

47. In return the students have a very positive attitude and response. They work with interest and concentration, both in lessons and during private study, responding very well to the challenging homework set, particularly coursework assignments. When given the opportunity they take the initiative and respond to the challenge of independent work. For example, they regularly travel to the main site to use the specialist facilities available in design and technology and art and design during their lunch hour to undertake coursework.

48. While the quality of teachers' exposition and explanation is good and often very good, there is an over-emphasis on whole class teaching. For example in history there is insufficient focus on questions to extend and check students' understanding and on group discussion. In geography some students are too dependent on teacher support and would benefit from more structured written guidance to ensure good progress.

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

Strengths

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced and the options in Years 10 and 11 are carefully structured around students' needs.
- Pupils of all ages can take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs across the curriculum.
- Careers education is good and there are growing links with partner organisations and schools.
- The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The social aspects are particularly well-developed through both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for community education is very good.
- Leisure activities contribute to the social development of boarding pupils.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- The full statutory programmes of study in ICT are not provided for a small group of pupils in years 10 and 11.
- Citizenship and personal, social and health education need further attention.
- There is not enough emphasis on the study of other cultures, especially in music and in displays around the school.
- The work-related curriculum is at an early stage of development.
- There is no structured approach to personal development for boarding students to complement the school's programme for personal, social and health education.

49. The school provides a range of good quality learning opportunities. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 provides extra time for the study of modern foreign languages whilst allowing pupils to study a broad curriculum. There is a good balance in the time allocations for different subjects, with the exception of the reduced time given to ICT and citizenship. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 allows pupils to study the full range of expected subjects at GCSE because it is carefully constructed around the needs of pupils. This meets the statutory requirements with the exception of a small group of pupils in Years 10 and 11 not taking an external ICT examination.

50. The effective planning for English, mathematics and science is a strong feature of the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and provides a secure platform for the successful teaching of these subjects. This planning covers all the expected elements of the statutory programmes of study. Provision in the other National Curriculum subjects enables the school to provide a wide range of experiences. This is well illustrated by opportunities to experience graphics, ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture and design in art and design. Pupils studying geography participate in a varied and relevant fieldwork programme and there is a good range of activities in physical education.

51. Whilst overall curriculum provision is good there are a number of areas for improvement. More emphasis needs to be given to investigative work across the curriculum. This includes focusing on enquiry-based work in each subject and making better use of the library. The teaching and application of specific information and technology skills requires further attention, both in ICT itself and in other subjects. The music curriculum is not broad enough and does not sufficiently allow pupils to experience and explore music for themselves or study the music of other cultures. In physical education pupils are only able to take part in swimming in the summer. The citizenship provision is developing, but does not yet meet the requirements of the programmes of study. A co-ordinator for personal, social and health education and the health and sex education programme has been appointed to tackle the shortcomings in this curriculum area.

52. The school has embraced some important elements of the National Strategy for 11 to 14 year olds, particularly in the core subjects, and has recently established a significant group to co-ordinate effective approaches to teaching and learning across the curriculum. This process is being supported by the careful use of the recommended audit in selected subjects. However the school has yet to make effective use of all of the materials designed to boost pupils' progress and discussions about the use of summer schools and learning mentors are at an early stage.

53. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught in English and mathematics. Examples of good teaching of these skills were seen across the curriculum during the inspection although opportunities were missed to develop these skills in other lessons. A whole school approach to ensure the systematic development of literacy skills across the curriculum has been developed but, as yet, is insufficiently extended throughout the curriculum. At present

there is no such whole school approach to numeracy, although the leadership team have this on their long-term plan for the school.

54. The curricular provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. There is a whole-school commitment towards providing a curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils. Teachers work hard and successfully to ensure that the school's principles of equality of access and opportunity for all are fully in place. Careful grouping arrangements in each year enable the creation of classes that facilitate the deployment of learning support assistants so that pupils receive effective support.

55. The school provides a very varied programme of extra-curricular activities across the curriculum. This is illustrated by the residential visits to Borrowdale and France. There is a full extra-curricular programme in English with two Shakespeare presentations, theatre trips, a visit to Wordsworth's Cottage, a poetry day and a book week. In art and design pupils are able to visit galleries and exhibitions and there is a regular art and design club. There is also a good range of extra-curricular activities in physical education, including rugby, soccer and hockey teams and provision for outdoor pursuits such as skiing, climbing, horse-riding and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. There are also weekly opportunities to attend bridge and chess clubs, the junior orchestra and senior band. Each term there is a major student production: this term *The Tempest*.

56. There is also good equality of access and opportunity across the curriculum with this being a particularly strong feature of science provision. The grouping arrangements are working well in most subjects and departments are successfully adapting the work to the needs of different groups, as is illustrated in mathematics, history and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

57. Careers education and guidance starts in Year 7 with units on self-awareness where students are encouraged to identify particular strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes and interests. It becomes more focused as students begin to consider choices and options with sessions on subject choice, vocational opportunities and careers. In Year 9 there is effective guidance on career choices on a one-to-one basis, with the careers co-ordinator, year heads and tutors. Trips are also arranged to raise awareness of career opportunities. For example, Year 9 go to the Army Training Centre.

58. In Year 10 the focus is on work experience preparation. A speaker from the Cumbria Business Education consortium (CBEC) advises on potential placements as well as the health and safety issues associated with the work place. Students are encouraged to find their own placements, using a database of potential work experience places. There is a structured programme of guidance, monitoring and support both prior to, during and after the placement. Evidence of success in the placement is provided from the employer and the students' personal work experience diary and this goes towards the Record of Achievement. Year 11 pupils focus on preparation for Post-16 whether that be education, training or employment. A career convention is organised to provide relevant information on post-16 courses at Kendal College. The school works well with Connexions who gather data on destinations for the school, although there is a large time lapse. Overall the careers provision is good and allows individual needs to be supported and catered for.

59. The school has plans to build on these links to introduce a more flexible work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 through, for example, the study of vocational GCSEs such as leisure and tourism and this aspect of the curriculum is currently underdeveloped.

60. The provision for community education is very good and is a strength of the school. A wide range of adult education classes is offered and the take up is high. This helps to create

a culture of 'lifelong learning' within the community, with the school being the focus for much of this activity. Sixth form students are able to take advantage of the community education programme and extend their curricular opportunities either for academic or recreational purposes.

61. The school is also involved in outreach work and as part of its role as a language college good links have been established with local primary schools to introduce modern languages to Year 6 pupils.

62. The school works well with other partner institutions. Pupils in Year 10 are involved in an 'Increased Flexibility Project' and speak with enthusiasm about the vocational work at Kendal College. The school has provided modern language training for local businesses and strong links have been established with local sports clubs. The recreational facilities at the school are used extensively and pupils benefit from outdoor pursuit activities in summer camps and an annual residential experience for all Year 8 pupils.

63. The provision for community education is well-managed and plans have been drawn up to develop the existing programme through, for example the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and to gain recognition as a Centre for Vocational Excellence.

Boarding

64. Leisure activities available in the evenings and at weekends contribute to the social development of boarding pupils. There are opportunities to take part in a good range of sports afforded through facilities in the games room for table tennis, the sports hall for basketball, badminton and indoor soccer, tennis in the adjoining shared use facility, and swimming at school and in Kendal. Older students would like a wider range of leisure activities. Shopping and leisure visits to Kendal or Lancaster take place each weekend. Occasional visits to the cinema and theatre, to leisure parks. Outdoor activities are also arranged but the rich local environment of the south Lake District is not exploited as much as it could be. Without an analysis or profile of boarders' interests and aptitudes, the arrangements staff make to accommodate broad cultural interests and differences are more a reflection of their own interests than those of the students. There is no structured approach to personal development for boarding students which complements that provided within the school generally. Instead there is reliance upon the provision made within the whole school embracing all aspects of personal development, including sex and drugs education which is now being addressed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

65. Overall, provision for these aspects of pupils' education is good with social development being particularly strong. The role models provided by adults contribute to a positive climate for learning in which each of these aspects is developed.

66. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies provide an occasion for pupils to reflect upon issues such as self-sacrifice – in relation for example to Remembrance Day and the significance of the poppy. However assemblies are brief and do not always contain an act of worship and this limits the opportunities for spiritual awareness. The theme of spiritual understanding is picked up in lessons across the curriculum. In a geography lesson, for example, pupils were moved by the teacher's eloquence and emotional sincerity in describing the Aberfan disaster. In science lessons pupils were led towards an appreciation of the wonder of nature, the universe and the process of evolution. More opportunities for reflection along similar lines could be built into lessons and tutor periods. A compact disk 'Missing You' produced by pupils to commemorate the death of a classmate made a very special contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

67. Provision for moral development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. It is reinforced by the positive behaviour code established in the school so that pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Moral issues are worked into humanities lessons in an effective manner. In geography for example pupils were encouraged to bring a moral perspective to bear on issues related to land use. History lessons explored the morality of working conditions during the industrial revolution and the basis on which the slave trade was established. Outstanding work was observed in a religious education lesson where the teacher used a range of well-structured discussion techniques to explore the concept of justice within Christianity. The morality of war and human conflict in general was referred to frequently in assemblies and religious education lessons and this was linked to the commemoration of Remembrance Day. Pupils responded with respect and consideration of these deep issues.

68. Provision for social development is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. The community dimensions to the school's work enriches the curriculum and contributes to the development of pupils social skills. For example the outdoor pursuits residential experience for Year 8 enabled pupils to become involved in team-building exercises and forming new friendship patterns. A sample of pupils, who had recently participated in this event, enthused about its social value and access for all. Older pupils make very good progress in their social development. A group of Year 10 pupils commented on the social skills they had learnt in their vocational studies courses at a local college. A number of sixth form students attend adult education classes for the local community that are run by the school and find that this experience helps them to develop their social skills in relating to older people. Social skills are also encouraged in lessons where teachers encourage paired and group discussions to address complex issues such as prejudice and racism. The value of these social interactions is evident in the deeper understanding of the issues and the respect given to different points of view.

69. Provision for cultural development is good. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and sixth form students are able to access the adult education programme that includes both academic and recreational classes in languages and the arts. Effective use is made of exchange visits and themed weeks in school to explore the language and culture of other countries. The school has a well-established programme of dramatic presentations and concerts and these are well-attended. Frequent visits are made to museums and galleries. In following the locally agreed syllabus, religious education studies enable pupils to learn about and learn from different religions. In one lesson for example pupils explored the concepts of 'Equality', 'Justice' and 'Community' as expressed through different faiths. The school is keen to develop an 'international ethos' and the presence of a significant number of Cantonese-speaking pupils, who board at the school, makes a positive contribution to this aim. However the displays around the school and the resource material in the library do not sufficiently reflect or celebrate the cultural diversity of British society.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The range of A-level courses provided is very good for the size of sixth form.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.

Area for improvement

- The range of vocational courses to meet the individual needs of students in an expanding and changing sixth form.

70. The range of AS and A-level subjects offered is wide for the size of sixth form. This enables students to gain the qualifications and skills required by higher education, to which

almost all who complete A-level aspire and progress. Otherwise the range of courses offered is limited. There is a small amount of provision for vocational courses that should be expanded to meet the needs of a wider range of students and to respond to the local circumstances in a community where tourism and farming are strongly featured. Currently fewer than 60 per cent of students progress to the sixth form from main school and there is potential to increase this number through the provision of a broader range of courses.

71. There are some links developing with the Community Education Centre on site. Students attend art and design classes and some students take courses in the evening. A few adults have joined the sixth form advanced level group in a modern foreign language. There is considerable potential to extend collaborative arrangements with both the Community Education Centre and with other local schools and colleges. The recently appointed headteacher is committed to developing collaborative provision and is in discussion with his governors and other providers to achieve this objective.

72. There is good provision for the development of key skills in most subjects, though more could be done to develop ICT skills in English and physical education, and key skills generally in art and design. There is some additional teaching provided in the application of number and there are some good opportunities in the tutorial programme for students to develop their communications skills in making presentations. Students are well-supported in using ICT, but none is entered for the key skills examination as the majority of students take four AS courses and thus have an extensive examination schedule. About one-quarter of the Year 12 group take the A-level examination in general studies at the end of Year 12. The lack of teaching in this subject has led to results that were below national average in recent years. There is clearly a need for teaching provision if students are to achieve their full potential in this subject.

73. Two-thirds of students take four AS courses in Year 12 and all but a few students take three A-levels in Year 13. This is in line with the national pattern. There are five students in Year 13 taking four A-levels. In addition about a quarter of Year 12 students take the A-level examination in general studies. The aspirations and aptitudes of the students are taken into account in making decisions about the number of AS or A-levels to take. For some students their courses were adversely affected last year by difficulties in recruiting a teacher for psychology, a situation that has now been resolved. Students have an adequate range of suitable places in which to undertake private study in school. Some make very good use of specialist facilities in the main school and teachers are very supportive in providing access to these. They can also study at home during the school day. A good tutorial programme in study skills helps students to manage their own learning effectively.

74. Students who take AS and A-level art and design and design and technology travel to the school's main site, and staff also have to travel between sites. The management of provision on two sites is good and students' learning is not adversely affected, due to the mature attitude of students in continuing to work on those occasions when teachers have to leave lessons 10 minutes early to travel to the other site. Students benefit from excellent provision for art and design and design and technology in a new teaching block on the main site.

75. There are some anomalies in the time allocations for AS and A-levels. Where there are very small groups, as in German and music, students receive less taught time: three hours per week for German and two hours for music. Students consider that this is inadequate for them to cope with the demands of the course, but there is insufficient information to make reliable judgements about the impact of the reduced teaching time on standards and progress. In languages the additional support from a foreign language assistant helps to mitigate any effect from the reduction in time. There are also differences in

the allocation of time across subjects in Year 13 with some subjects being taught for four hours per week instead of the normal five hours. The school recognises these anomalies and plans to move to equalisation of time allocations from September 2003.

76. Provision for a small number of students with special educational needs is good and they are achieving well in relation to prior attainment. Provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory overall and there are some very good features. Very good support from the Head of Sixth Form and tutors extends the general learning of this group and they receive particularly focused support in applying for and preparing for higher education. Across the range of subjects, almost all gifted and talented students made at least satisfactory progress between GCSE and A level in 2001. Not all gifted and talented students, therefore, maximise their potential in all subjects and the school should continue to ensure that such students are carefully monitored and supported and appropriately challenged in their A-level subjects.

77. Students' personal development is very well-fostered through the tutoring system and the wide opportunities for taking initiative and developing leadership skills. The weekly tutorial period encompasses a good range of relevant activities such as study skills, making presentations on topics of their choosing, setting individual targets and reviewing progress. It also includes an extensive programme of support in applying for the next stage in education or training. In one tutorial lesson observed students worked with interest in identifying their preferred learning style, though they were unsure of how this knowledge might affect how they studied.

78. Students' learning benefits from a wide-range of extra-curricular activities offered in the school and by the Community Education Centre, in some of which they take the lead. For example they run a successful Young Enterprise Scheme: at the time of the inspection a group of enthusiastic and committed students were developing craft products to sell at a forthcoming Craft Fair. This Scheme provides very good opportunities for students to develop leadership and management skills. In the meeting observed the student director demonstrated a good range of such qualities: listening to suggestions, summarising decisions, allocating tasks and seeking votes on issues where a range of views was expressed. The student members took their responsibilities of running a business seriously and were developing varied problem solving skills, all in a cordial, collaborative atmosphere.

79. Students run a sixth form Council that also makes a significant contribution to their personal development. Sub-groups of the Council organise social activities. At a meeting observed the Council agreed to establish a sub-group to raise funds for charity, a decision which took some tenacity on the part of the proposing student to achieve. Meetings are conducted in a cordial atmosphere but the students would benefit from some training in how best to manage a large meeting to efficiently secure decisions.

80. Students take advantage of the wide range of programmes on offer such as taster classes in Italian, Spanish and Japanese, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and an extensive range of sports such as squash, mountaineering, hockey and aerobics.

81. A wide-ranging programme of weekly lectures extends students' learning and makes a contribution to their understanding of their role as citizens. Lecture topics include the work of magistrates and politicians, perspectives on the Middle East, world religions, recycling and the sustainability of resources, as well as practical issues such as understanding tax and National Insurance. Students respond very positively to this programme. They listen with interest and ask searching questions. They have little opportunity in the context of a lecture theatre presentation to discuss in groups the issues raised or to contribute to such presentations. Ways should be sought to provide such opportunities.

82. There is no daily act of collective worship and thus the curriculum for the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements. There are opportunities during the weekly assembly for an act of worship. The assembly observed provided a very good opportunity for religious reflection in the context of a moving address by the Head of Sixth Form on why students should wear their poppy with pride. The sixth form meets the statutory requirement for religious education to be taught for a reasonable amount of time. A small number of students take an A-level course in religious education. Opportunities are provided for all students to further their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other principal religions and philosophies through assemblies, the weekly tutorial programme and the weekly lecture programme.

83. There is an effective programme of careers education and guidance. This encompasses for appropriate students the higher education application process, preparation for interviews and visits to higher education institute open days. There is also appropriate support for students preparing for other destinations. This programme forms a major part of the weekly tutorial period for students in Year 13. Students generally feel well supported by the careers officer, in whose advice they have confidence and with whom an interview can readily be arranged.

84. Overall, the experiences provided through the advanced level courses, both in lessons and through visits, together with the day-to-day interactions which students have with others from a wide range of cultures and the extensive range of enrichment activities, provide good opportunities for students' personal, social, moral and cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- Procedures for monitoring academic progress and personal development.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance.
- Procedures for checking boarding students' attendance at evening prep and at breakfast.
- Catering and bedroom accommodation for boarders are good.

Areas for improvement

- Personal, social and health education.
- Monitoring the progress of minority ethnic groups, gifted and talented pupils and boarding pupils.

85. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection continue to be effective. A high value is placed on providing a caring and supportive environment. There are a number of supporting structures within a strong pastoral system that help create self-confidence in a caring community. For example very good induction procedures help Year 7 settle quickly into school, with further ongoing support from Year 11 peer mentors. Assessment and monitoring of academic and personal development are good. This is an improvement on the previous inspection.

86. A good range of policies and procedures provide a systematic and structured way for the school to operate successfully. The policies for racial discrimination and inclusion are still to be ratified by governors. The school and education welfare officer form a very effective partnership for monitoring attendance, with a series of strategies in place to identify any pupil whose attendance level gives cause for concern. As a result attendance levels are very good with few pupils absent without good reason.

87. Pupils are clear on what constitutes good behaviour and are aware of what the rules of the school are. The code of conduct is informative about how pupils should behave but it lacks practical guidance of managing, monitoring and recording behaviour and the use of rewards and sanctions. There are clear practices successfully working in some areas of the school but they are not being consistently used. Procedures for monitoring, recording and improving poor behaviour are very effectively carried out through the individual behaviour plans and the very good "Review, achievement and tracking" file kept for all pupils.

88. Arrangements for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory and a number of staff have up-to-date training in first aid. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory, with a keen sense of awareness by staff in science and design and technology where risk assessments have been carried out. In other areas of the school risk assessments are still to be carried out along with regular reviewing of the health and safety policy. The present procedures will be significantly strengthened as the school carries out plans for the involvement of staff in risk assessment, and raise their awareness of health and safety issues.

89. A new co-ordinator has just been recruited to evaluate and develop the personal, social and health education programme. At present the programme is unsatisfactory overall and is not recognised as a specific programme of study along-side other subjects. It is taught mainly through science, religious education and tutorial time and has had no one responsible for assessing its implementation and content. Visitors to the school very successfully support personal, social and health education. Examples of this are the theatre groups presenting workshops on depression and drugs and the plays presented by wheelchair users on the right to be heard.

90. The school's procedures for monitoring students' performance are good overall. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has made very good progress in a short time in improving the quality of analysis through the good use of comparative national data on tests and public examinations. The school has a good understanding of the strengths and weakness in the attainment and achievement of pupils. It now needs to develop its systematic procedures for monitoring the attainment and achievement of groups of pupils, particularly boarding students and minority ethnic groups.

91. Option choices for Year 9 pupils are clearly structured and good support is given pupils to plan their next two years of study. The careers programme gives effective support to students to help them decide the next stage of their education including a well-monitored monitored work experience programme. Very good opportunities, particularly for older pupils, are given for personal responsibility through school council, work experience and mentoring. Opportunities for younger pupils are limited.

92. Effective systematic procedures are used in most departments for assessing how well pupils are doing in their work, helping to ensure teachers have a clear understanding of each child's progress and what is needed for improvement. In the smaller departments this is not fully developed. In some subjects, such as art and design, self-assessment gives pupils a role in monitoring their own performance and setting targets for the future. One of the results of this is that pupils have a much better understanding of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve further. Information from assessment is used effectively for placing pupils in sets according to their level of attainment and for identifying those with special educational needs. Work is regularly marked but grades vary across subjects and feedback is inconsistent. At present the school does not monitor the results of assessment to track the achievements of different ethnic groups or boarding pupils.

93. The good practice of form tutors moving years with their class ensures a very good knowledge of their pupils' personal development and academic progress. Tutors meet with each individual pupil in their tutor group at least once a term, to review and set targets for how they can improve in their work, personal development and, where appropriate, behaviour and attendance. As a result, pupils have a very clear idea of what they have to do to achieve the best they can, learning is encouraged and higher standards are successfully promoted. Interim reports provide helpful information for parents on their child's progress as part of the review. They also provide good ongoing reminders to keep pupils on track to achieve their grades. Annual reports are more detailed and very informative in most subjects but they do not always identify what a pupil needs to do to improve. The work of form tutors is overseen by heads of year through regular meetings where problems are quickly identified and appropriate action taken. Records of achievement provide another useful element in the support and guidance provision for pupils to take with them when applying for jobs or further education.

94. The school meets the statutory requirements for provision outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs. Pupils are carefully assessed on entry using cognitive abilities and reading tests and in turn are identified accurately for support. The new Code of Practice is in place and the learning support department ensures it extends throughout the school, for example in the use of individual education plans that recommend appropriate additional approaches to support pupils. The special educational needs register is up to-date, reviewed regularly and revised. The progress of those on the special educational needs register is carefully tracked and reviews of individual education plans and statements are carefully planned, dated and carried out.

95. The school makes good provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language). Detailed assessments of pupils' individual language needs of pupils are used to fashion an appropriate support programme for each child and tracking procedures are in place to monitor progress. Improving pupils' speaking and listening skills, particularly pronunciation, is justifiably given a high priority.

Boarding

96. Child protection procedures are appropriate with arrangements in hand to ensure recently appointed staff receive relevant up-to-date training.

97. Supervision procedures are good with close checks made on students' attendance at evening prep (homework) and at breakfast. Procedures to deal with any issues are clear and efficient, for example there are good care arrangements to look after individual students who are ill in bed, and to share information between care staff. Names of staff on duty and a point of contact are prominently displayed each day. Clear procedures ensure staff know the whereabouts of older boarders who leave the House, to visit friends at weekends for example, or when students leave for half term holidays and there is evidence of effective practice for dealing with any issues arising.

98. Catering arrangements and the quality of meals are good. A catering committee involves students with catering and care staff in raising issues and requests, but many are ruled out on grounds of expense. Students can make hot or cold drinks in the dining area and in the senior common rooms. There are effective arrangements for dispensing medicines, for ensuring students receive appropriate medical care from local doctors, dentists, opticians and the local hospital, and for promptly informing their parents.

99. Arrangements to encourage pupils to study are satisfactory and homework is supervised appropriately. Support for academic work is satisfactory. Students in Years 7-9 are helped with homework together in the dining hall. Although there is an abundance of table

space, the lighting is dim. Years 10 and 11 work in a well-lit classroom on site. Both groups are well supervised by care staff on duty. Older students work in their bedrooms and a check is made each evening as part of the attendance monitoring procedures. Older students can obtain permission to use the school's computing facilities in the sixth form teaching area for their work. However, there is no quiet area for private study or reading other than bedrooms, where, in shared accommodation, there may be distractions from room mates.

100. Bedroom accommodation is good overall. All rooms are suitably-sized with no overcrowding. They are clean, warm dry and with new windows. Boys in Years 7 to 9 have individual cubicles in recently refurbished accommodation and in Years 10 and 11 most share three-bedded rooms, some of which have also been recently refurbished. Sixth form students have individual rooms. Younger girls share two-bedded rooms and sixth form students have individual rooms. Although some occupants are untidy, the rooms are clean and bedding is washed appropriately often. There are comfortable separate common rooms for older boys and girls, and a general common room for anyone, each with television, video and hi-fi equipment. Floor coverings are well worn but clean. Two pay-telephones are available in different lobbies although they do not have hoods and neither is in the girls' accommodation wing. However, effective arrangements are in place for the use of mobile telephones. The care staff maintain a register of students' numbers and have sensible rules for them so that contacting home and friends does not disrupt activities such as meals or prep.

Sixth form

Assessment

Strengths

- The analysis of students' attainment and progress is good.
- Students are set challenging targets for achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Assessing students' individual learning needs.
- Monitoring the attainment and progress of groups of students, in particular minority ethnic groups and boarding students.

101. The procedures for monitoring students' performance are good overall. The head of sixth form undertakes a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress, making very good use of comparative data on the attainment and progress of students nationally to provide a context for evaluating the students' and school's performance. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the attainment and progress of groups of students, in particular, minority ethnic groups and boarding students

102. The procedures for assessing students' subject performance in departments is good overall and is very good in design and technology, geography, art and design and physical education. Subject faculties undertake detailed analysis of students' performance overall and by gender. Some faculties, for example English, analyse the results by teaching group. The unexpectedly poor results achieved by some students in aspects of some A-level courses resulted in teachers attending training courses provided by the examining bodies and in appropriate changes to their teaching plans. The school overall and each department, therefore, have a good understanding of the attainment and achievement of students and make good use of this information in analysing and evaluating the strengths and weakness in their provision.

103. The diagnosis of, and provision for, the individual learning needs of students is good overall. Insufficient attention is given to ensure the needs of all students are met when

classes includes students with a very wide range of ability. Such support is particularly needed for some students in Year 12. Provision of support is currently too heavily dependent on teachers' one-to-one guidance.

104. Reporting procedures are very good. Parents receive reports three times a year, two interim reports and a full end of year report. Both students and teachers contribute to these, in which there are frank expressions of strengths and weaknesses by both.

Advice, support and guidance

Strengths

- The head of sixth form and tutors provide very good support and guidance to students which enables almost all to complete their course successfully and to progress to higher education or more advanced training.

Areas for improvement

- Seek students' views periodically, including about the provision of advice, support and guidance, and address areas of concern.

105. Students in the sixth form are very well supported by committed and caring staff who work hard to ensure that they are appropriately cared for and their needs are met. They have a weekly tutorial period for one-hour, the main day-to-day support and guidance being provided by the Head of Sixth Form and his deputies. Tutors make arrangements to see students at other times during the week, notwithstanding the need to travel between school sites. Apart from a small minority, students generally appreciate the care and concern shown to them and report that they feel secure and valued and there is always someone to go to for support.

106. Guidance and support for students by tutors is informed by careful monitoring of their academic progress. Students know how they are progressing and which aspects of their work needs improving. They are set challenging targets informed by national data about the grade that they should expect to attain given their results in the GCSE examinations. Their progress is monitored in relation to this target. At weekly meetings the Head of Sixth Form and the tutorial team discuss and agree action to address any unsatisfactory progress of individual students. Gifted and talented students are identified and a programme of support, is provided to ensure they maximise their potential for success.

107. There is an effective programme of careers education and guidance. This encompasses, for appropriate students, the higher education application process, preparation for interviews and visits to higher education institute open days. There is also appropriate support for students preparing for other destinations. This programme forms a major part of the weekly tutorial period for students in Year 13. Students generally feel well advised by the school and the careers officer. They have confidence in the careers officer, with whom an interview can readily be arranged. A minority of students, in response to the students' questionnaire, tended to disagree that they were given helpful advice about what they should do in the sixth form and when they left school. The evidence from the inspection is that the quality of career guidance for students in both Year 11 and the sixth form is good. The practice of providing taster sessions in A-level courses for Year 11 students considering joining the sixth form is one good example of how students are helped to gain an insight into the nature and demands of A-level provision. The school should periodically seek the view of students as to the quality of the guidance they receive and address areas of individual or collective concern.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- The commitment of staff to develop an open relationship with parents.
- The provision of good information about the school and pupils' progress.
- The good induction programme for pupils entering school at eleven.
- Care staff in the boarding house maintain diligent links with parents.

Area for improvement

- The development of links to reach the small but significant minority of parents who do not feel the school works closely with parents.

108. The school has maintained the good support from parents reported in the previous inspection. Just over a fifth of parents replied to the questionnaire and results show that they are happy with the school's work. They say their children like school and make good progress. Parents think the teaching is good and that there are lots of interesting activities provided outside lessons.

109. The school conveys a willingness to work with parents and looks for opportunities to involve parents in the many decisions to be made about their children. There is very good contact where there are difficulties over behaviour or unsatisfactory attendance. A good example of the school's openness to involving parents is the work of the newly developing attendance panel formed to identify problems before they become serious. The school is also keen to contact parents to tell them of good aspects of a child's work. Phone calls are made to enlist parents' help, in art and design for instance, if homework is not being done or targets are not being met. This has a very positive effect on pupils who are given extra support and encouraged to attend booster classes to help raise achievement. A number of parents at the pre-inspection parents' meeting were keen to express their praise for the work of the staff with pupils with special educational needs, particularly for the good support and successful confidence building.

110. Information for parents is good. The parents' prospectus is a clear, informative guide into aspects of school life and very relevant issues of interest to parents including a broad outline of curriculum subjects. Parents' and students' handbooks produced for each year provide help to ensure parents and pupils know early on what their timetables of study will be for that year. Included in this is the homework timetable so parents can monitor what their child is to do each night. A significant minority of parents answering the questionnaire did not feel the school was setting the right amount of homework. During the inspection inspectors found homework to be satisfactory. Parents are not provided with a copy of the behaviour policy nor do they share in the development of school procedures. There is no structure for listening to parents and taking their views on board to feed into school planning. A regular friendly newsletter helps parents appreciate all that is going on and to share in the pride at pupils' successes in and out side school

111. A number of parents in reply to the questionnaire felt they were not well informed about their child's progress. Inspectors do not find this to be the position. Homework diaries are an effective daily means of communication between home and school. Parents receive two interim reports that provide snap-shot views that inform them clearly of the grades their child has been awarded for effort and attainment in all subjects. This is a good barometer to enable parents to monitor progress over a period of time, and is part of an impressive reporting and review system in which pupils evaluate their own progress. Annual reports provide a clear review of what pupils have learnt through the year in each subject. The reports are good in that they are mainly informative rather than anecdotal but are inconsistent in highlighting weaknesses where pupils need to improve. A parents' evening allows parents

to get to know teachers and to discuss their child's progress. Parents' evenings are well attended. They give good support for learning at home and work well with the school in encouraging their children to gain high examination results.

112. Curriculum workshops have been set up on occasions for parents to help them in understanding the work their child is doing, but have not been well attended. A very good induction programme helps parents prepare their child for the school and ease them in gently so they settle quickly. A number of parents attend community courses run by the school and around twenty Year 6 pupils enjoy an after-school art and design club with teachers and parents. A number of Dallam pupils from Years 7,8 and 9 attend as well so that a valuable early link is formed with the school for potential parents and pupils. Opportunities for the school to work closely with parents are limited as a small minority of parents highlighted in the questionnaire. Small numbers support the Duke of Edinburgh Award, help with paired reading, charity fundraising and as members of the active and successful parent-teacher association.

113. Parents of pupils on the special educational needs register are kept informed of all developments regarding their support and progress. They are invited to all reviews and many attend.

Boarding

114. Care staff are diligent in maintaining links with all parents. Academic assessment and reports to parents on academic progress are part of the general school procedures for all students. Boarding management staff receive copies of interim reports, as well as any assessment information relating to pastoral matters such as misdemeanours and sanctions. The reports on boarders lack detail about their involvement and personal and social development in the Boarding House.

115. The boarding management ensures that parents are fully informed of all matters appertaining to their child, for example, of activities and their consent to participation is sought. Parents are assiduously kept abreast of any behavioural difficulties and incidents as well as health related matters. Full records of all correspondence are available in each boarder's personal file.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- There are good processes for reviewing the work of teachers and departments.
- There is a whole staff commitment to continuous improvement.
- The Governing Body is committed to providing a high quality of education and high standards.
- The school is well staffed and resources for learning are good.
- The school makes good use of its financial resources.
- There is good leadership in learning support and for pupils with English as an additional language.
- Monitoring the attendance of boarders at study and breakfast are effective.
- The head has developed a clear vision for the school in the short time since his appointment.
- The head has given priority to developing a high performing leadership team at the school.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership in music is unsatisfactory.
- The procedures for reviewing the work in modern foreign languages, geography and music.
- Some lack of compliance with statutory requirements.
- Procedures to share and disseminate good practice are required.

116. Leadership and management are good overall.

117. The school has good processes in place for reviewing the work of teachers and departments. A programme of classroom observations is undertaken, each teacher's work is thoroughly reviewed and systems are in place to ensure they receive appropriate training. Future reviews will be able to link professional development to the imminent training on the different ways pupils learn. In September heads of department discuss the examination results with the line manager who is a member of the leadership team. Targets and action plans for development are decided. These reviews are collated and this ensures the leadership team has a good overview of departments; an overview that is then presented to governors later in the same term. There are regular reviews of all aspects of sixth form work with the sixth form tutors, and the sixth form council makes regular feedback into this process. Very good procedures are in place for supporting teachers who are new to the teaching profession. At present the process for sharing and disseminating good practice across the school is not fully developed and policies to underpin the self-review process are seen by the headteacher as a vital part of school improvement and the establishment of consistently higher-quality teaching and learning throughout the school.

118. Throughout the school staff are fully committed to pupils attaining well in their examinations and these high standards have both been maintained and improved at a faster rate than nationally over the last five years. In their analysis of the school, the leadership team have rightly identified a key issue at the school as the need for all teachers to develop a wider repertoire of teaching and learning strategies. The national strategy for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the work with the local higher education institute are appropriate ways forward. The leadership and management of subject areas are very good in science and physical education. It is good in English, mathematics, design and technology and art and design and religious education. In other subjects leadership and management are satisfactory except in music where they are unsatisfactory. Where leadership and management are strong, there are appropriate strategies for evaluating the effect of curriculum developments on the quality of teaching, learning, standards and progress. Such evaluative work is unsatisfactory in geography, modern foreign languages and music.

119. The governing body has a high level of educational and managerial expertise. They are very supportive of the headteacher and the staff and they are committed to providing a high quality of education and the high attainment of pupils. They have effectively begun the process of moving from a split-site school onto a single site. This has required a long-term strategic view of which the provision of the Language Centre, and the recently completed science and technology block are essential components. Costed plans are in place to establish a single-site school, but at present the finances are not available. Governors give of their time generously to attend meetings and have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the boarding house. A Curriculum and Staffing sub-committee met during the inspection. Governors were skilful in the questions they asked, checking out any areas where there had been under-performance or staffing related issues in previous years. When the possibility of teaching a vocationally-focused GCSE in Leisure and Tourism was discussed the governors explored the need for such a course within the local community and whether the current staff had the knowledge and skills to deliver such a course to the current high levels. The Governing Body has begun to discuss performance

targets with the new headteacher; a school improvement plan must be presented to the Governing Body in January 2003 in the light of the headteacher's self-review of the school and the OFSTED report. The expectation is that the plan will embrace the needs of the main school including the Language College, the Boarding House, and the school's interface with community education.

120. The governing body does not currently fulfil its statutory obligations regarding:

- A daily act of worship – an issue in the last report.
- The annual report of the Governing Body to parents does not include references to the progress on key issues from the last inspection or specific information on access for and treatment of the disabled.
- The policy for Inclusion has yet to be ratified by the Governing Body.
- Not all pupils are guaranteed access to the full ICT curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

121. The provision of teachers is good and meets the needs of the curriculum. Classroom support staff and technicians make an effective contribution to the quality of teaching which pupils receive. Most of the accommodation ranges from very good to satisfactory. A considerable amount of refurbishment had been completed before the inspection and further work is planned to take place after the inspection, particularly in the English suite and various office accommodation, together with redecorating of stairwells and corridors. There is insufficient science accommodation at the sixth form site and, although music accommodation is sufficient for current practice, it does not have a technology studio, sufficient storage for instruments or instrumental practice rooms. The major difficulty is the split site nature of the school; pupils and teachers lose valuable time travelling between sites and some management costs are duplicated. The level of resources for learning is good overall. There are shortcomings of ICT facilities in English and religious education and music needs resources for music technology.

122. The school makes good use of its financial resources. Since the ending of Grant Maintained status, the school has had to deal with a deficit budget. Governors have ensured that the management of this deficit should have minimal impact on teaching and learning; no reductions were made in the levels of teaching or support staff or resourcing to departments. Grants to support the training of teachers have been well used for GCSE and A-level updating. The funding for the national strategy to improve teaching and learning of 11 to 14 year-olds is leading to an improvement in the planning and delivery of English, mathematics and science lessons. Most departments make good use of ICT to support learning in lessons and this reflects the expenditure on training in this area although the use of ICT in English, music and religious education is currently unsatisfactory. The school has good systems for financial management; heads of department are well supported by the finance manager. When necessary, he joins the leadership team to give timely financial guidance. The main recommendations of the most recent auditors' report have been acted upon.

123. Leadership and administration of provision for special educational needs are good and have clearly improved since the previous inspection. Thoroughly detailed policy documents and information about the revised Code of Practice form an important part of the school's guidance for teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very ably supported by a committed and well-trained group of specialist teachers and learning support assistants. Diligent procedures fully meet the statutory regulations and requirements. Good deployment of learning support assistants ensures that pupils with statements receive appropriate help. There is very good liaison between the department, the local education authority and a range of outside agencies to support and develop work in the school. Subject departments liaise informally with the learning support department, but the management and

quality of the provision would be improved by a more formal system of monitoring teaching and support assistance and of review meetings with departments.

124. Leadership and management of English as an additional language is carried out with a "light touch" by the head of learning support. Leadership is effective because tutors are well organised and very capable. Organisation and management operate smoothly. However the high level of expertise held by the tutors of English as an additional language could be used to provide further guidance to teaching staff and learning assistants in order to develop techniques to support learners of English as an additional language during mainstream lessons.

125. The headteacher and both deputy headteachers took up their posts at the start of the term of the inspection; the inspection took place in the tenth week after they commenced their duties at the school. The headteacher and one of the deputies were appointed from outside the school and the local education authority area.

126. In this very short time the headteacher has demonstrated very good leadership. He has developed a clear vision for this complex split site school. The vision embraces the need to raise standards further by extending the range of teaching and learning strategies used in classrooms. The headteacher has begun discussions with a local secondary school, the local college of further education and the school-based community education manager to explore the advantages of collaboration. The headteacher has clear ideas regarding how better curriculum co-ordination can be achieved, how teaching resources can be better shared and how the curriculum can be extended particularly in the areas of work-related learning and vocational courses for pupils aged 14 to 18. As a specialist language college, the development of an international ethos is paramount.

127. The headteacher has recognised the importance to this vision of developing a high-performing leadership team within the school. The headteacher has weekly meetings with each member of the team – deputies, assistant headteachers, community education manager and school finance officer. At individual level each has a clear remit which makes the best use of their skills such as implementation of the national strategy for improving teaching and learning for 11 to 14 year olds or analysing data. At a corporate level there has been the responsibility to prepare the school for the inspection, The recent leadership team review was very thorough, produced a high quality analysis of all aspects of the school and an effective strategy for further improvement of the school in place.

128. Taking into account:

- The well-above average attainment of students
 - The high levels of pupils' positive attitudes to their work, behaviour, pupils' personal development and attendance,
 - The good quality of teaching and learning, curriculum provision and care for the pupils
 - The good leadership and management throughout the school
 - The good improvement since the last inspection
 - The favourable context of the school in its local community,
- Dallam School is a very effective school.

129. Given the low unit costs per pupil compared to schools nationally, and the overall cost effectiveness of the sixth form, the school is judged to give good value for money.

Boarding

130. Leadership and management of the Boarding house are satisfactory. Monitoring arrangements for day-to-day administrative matters are efficient. Clear records of sanctions used and of the dispensing of medicines enable patterns of behaviour or illness to be quickly

identified. Effective communication systems share information about boarders between staff going off and coming on duty, and with the site management staff about defects. Personal files for each boarding student are complete and up-to-date. Each student is given an up-to-date handbook linked to the staff handbook. Although some information in the latter requires bringing up-to-date, all aspects of policy and routines described are evident in practice. Arrangements for vetting staff providing care of boarders and for providing appropriate staff training are satisfactory.

131. At present there is no management or development plan for boarding provision relating to the current year. The school does now have a long-term strategic vision for future expansion of boarding facilities. The business plan seeks partnership in a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid with the state boarding schools information service (STABIS) but there is no time scale for completion within the foreseeable future.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

Strengths

- The sixth form is very well-managed and well-led.
- Very good management ensures high levels of attainment and good achievement and progression in education and training.

Areas for development

- Planning for provision in an expanding and changing sixth form.

132. Leadership and management of the sixth form by the head of sixth form and his two deputies is good overall. Day-to-day management by the Head of Sixth Form is very good. There is a strong focus on raising standards through the analysis and evaluation of examination results and the monitoring of students' progress. The monitoring of sixth form teaching is encompassed in the school's processes for performance management. The head of sixth form is a member of the senior management team and has management responsibilities for the performance of two subject departments.

133. There is beginning to be developed a vision of the educational direction of the sixth form, led by the newly appointed headteacher, which is now expressed in strategic development planning. The headteacher is working in collaboration with local schools and colleges with a view to making provision collaboratively where appropriate, and also ensuring there is no unnecessary duplication.

134. Provision is predominantly in A-levels and is of a very high standard. Students are well prepared for the next stage in their education, which, for almost all students, is in higher education. A small number of students from Germany who attend the school for a year or less, successfully progress in education on return to Germany, some having achieved AS levels.

135. The number of students has increased this year, encompassing a wider range of ability than in recent years. This increase and a vision of further expansion renders it urgent to develop a plan for provision which will meet the educational and personal development needs of all students in an enlarged sixth form.

136. Governors are fully involved in sixth form developments. They are committed to expanding provision in the sixth form. At a meeting of the governing body observed during the inspection they considered future development of the 14 to 19 curriculum, identifying the

benefits for students and the local community and the implications for the school of provision in such vocational courses as Travel and Tourism. The governing body does not currently fulfil its statutory obligations regarding a daily act of worship.

137. Funding is appropriately deployed in the sixth form. Group sizes are generally good; none is too large and there are fewer small groups than in previous years. The additional support of a language assistant has been provided this year where the time allocated for small groups in languages is below average. This support is effective in meeting students' learning needs. The sixth form provision is currently cost effective. The school is aware that in future years the Learning and Skills Council will fund for courses provided rather than those planned. This makes it important that the school should implement plans to maintain cost-effectiveness. The intention to develop collaborative provision with the school's Community Education Centre other local providers aims to address this issue.

138. Taking into account:

- The above average attainment of students
- The good progress
- The good quality of teaching and learning
- The very good monitoring of students' progress
- The positive attitudes of the students to learning,

The school has an effective sixth form.

Resources

Strengths

- Teachers are well-qualified and have a high level of expertise in their subjects.

Areas for improvement

- Science accommodation for practical work.

139. Students benefit from teachers who are well qualified and are very knowledgeable about their subject. Teachers attend a range of training courses, particularly those provided by the examining bodies, to ensure they are well-briefed for teaching the AS and A-level course. The recent appointment of an appropriately qualified psychology teacher resolved the unsatisfactory provision in this subject.

140. Accommodation in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, but is unsatisfactory for science practical work. Numbers have increased this year and some rooms are small for the size of groups and some are not arranged to effectively maximise space. Display work is satisfactory but uninspiring and more could be done to make the teaching rooms attractive.

141. There is a good-sized social area with computers and a sixth form careers library that contains higher education prospectuses, appropriate computer advice programmes and up-to-date publications such as national employment periodicals.

142. There is a separate small library which functions predominantly as a study area and an additional computer room which has been made available this year and provides enhanced study facilities. There is a very limited stock of books in the library: most are maintained in departments, where resources are mainly judged to be good overall. Learning resources are good in mathematics, science, design and technology and ICT and are excellent in art and design on the main school site.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

143. In order to improve further the standards achieved by pupils and sixth form students; the governors, the head teacher and staff should seek to:

- (1) Raise standards in Year 7,8 and 9 in ICT and music
 - For ICT by:
 - ensuring the full programme of study is taught to all pupils throughout Years 7, 8 and 9
 - providing high-quality teaching and learning which is based on clear learning outcomes and matched to the different abilities of pupils.
 - improving the co-ordination of ICT across subjects through joint curriculum planning and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, the progress being made and the levels of attainment being reached.
 - For music by:
 - ensuring curriculum balance by including more composing and performing and thus reflecting the requirements of the National Curriculum.
 - broadening the teaching and learning approaches to include more practical activities including the use of technology which give pupils opportunities to learn about 20th century and world music and different ways of composing.
 - improving the use of homework and the availability of library books to encourage research
 - improving the monitoring and marking of pupils' work
 - developing accurate systems of teacher assessment which can be used to inform curriculum planning
 - improve the leadership and management of music, to include developing links with the county music service to enrich instrumental and extra-curricular opportunities.

(Paragraphs: 5, 229, 233, 234, 246, 250, 251, 255)
- (2) Develop strategies to raise the quality of more of the teaching from good to very good and excellent by:
 - implementing the plans to use the National Strategy to improve teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9, and the links with the local higher education institute to improve pupils' thinking skills and the use of assessment in planning learning
 - identifying good practice when the work of teachers is reviewed and sharing this good practice across all subjects and teachers
 - developing a culture of talking about how pupils learn and the implications for teaching throughout the whole body of teachers and classroom assistants

(Paragraphs: 31, 36, 117)

- (3) Produce structured programmes for personal, social and health education and citizenship by:
- ensuring all staff have a knowledge of the main themes in the citizenship programmes of study
 - incorporating these themes into a coherent and well-resourced teaching programme for Years 7 to 11
 - identifying coherent links between the different aspects of citizenship provision.
 - co-ordinating the personal, social and health education programme in a coherent and effective manner across Years 7 to 11.
- (Paragraphs: 49, 51, 64, 89, 200-204)

The Governors should also attend to the following statutory requirements

- To provide a daily act of worship
(Paragraphs: 20, 21, 66)
- To ensure all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to the full curriculum for ICT.
(Paragraphs: 49, 120, 232)
- To ensure the Annual Report of the Governing Body includes references to
 - Progress on key issues from the last inspection
 - Information on access and treatment of the disabled
(Paragraph: 120)
- To ratify the policy for Inclusion
(Paragraph: 120)

Sixth form

Governors, the headteacher and staff should seek to improve:

- (1) cost-effectiveness by:
- implementing plans to enhance provision through, for example, collaborative arrangements with the school's Community Education Centre and with a local school and a college.
- (Paragraph: 137)
- (2) the range of provision in vocational courses in an expanding and changing sixth form.
(Paragraph: 70)
- (3) the accommodation for practical work in science so that students have sufficient laboratory time for their A-level course.
(Paragraphs: 140, 280)

COMMUNITY LINKS

144. The provision for community education is very good and is a strength of the school. The elements that are already in place and the plans for their further development go a long way towards meeting one of the school's stated aims, that is: "to develop strong and mutually supportive links with the wider community and to be an integral part of that community".

145. The community dimension of the school is strongly supported by the headteacher and the governing body. The Head of Community Education is a member of the school's leadership team and this helps to ensure that the community dimension is integral to the work of the school and not an 'add on'.

146. The community education programme offers a wide range of courses and classes throughout the day and in the evening. There is a very high take up. Most of the adults who attend are members of the local community and many are parents of pupils in the school. These classes help to establish a culture of 'lifelong learning' and this has a positive impact on students' attitudes to study. Many sixth form students attend these classes either to extend their curriculum opportunities for example, by studying additional modern languages, or participate in classes for recreational purposes for example, life drawing and watercolours. Some pupils use the classes as an opportunity for additional support in studying for re-sit examinations.

147. As part of its work as a Language College the school has developed a community dimension to its work in modern languages. Outreach work in local primary schools has enabled Year 6 pupils to experience a modern foreign language and themed language weeks and summer schools, that are run by the school, reinforce this. The impact of this work has been carefully monitored and the feedback forms from primary headteachers and an analysis of pupils' opinions testify to the success of this initiative.

148. The links with primary schools are not confined to modern languages. A meeting with primary headteachers during the week of the inspection provided evidence of good working relationships. Arrangements for transfer and induction of new pupils are well-organised and these include bridging units of work, outreach work in primary schools and opportunities for primary pupils to participate in activities which make use of the facilities and expertise on the Dallam site.

149. The school works well with other institutions. In partnership with the local Kendal College a number of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils participate in vocational courses organised as part of the Increased Flexibility Project. These courses have a significant motivating effect on pupils and while the tuition takes place away from the school site and is carried out by college staff, pupils' work and progress is closely monitored by Dallam staff.

150. Vocational courses and work placements organised by the school help to establish close links with local businesses and industry. The school has also organised language training for local companies involved in international trading and won a Trade Partners UK Languages for Export award.

151. The school has plans to apply for a Centre of Vocational Excellence award with an emphasis on Outdoor Education. Strong community links have already been established in this area. Many sports clubs use the Dallam site facilities throughout the week and the physical education department runs a successful Sports Camp which attracts Dallam pupils and also pupils from local primary schools. Many of the adults taking classes for Outdoor Pursuits are required to build up a log of coaching experience and pupils from the school and

other members of the local community are able to take advantage of the opportunity for free tuition which this affords.

152. The school continues to see community education as an area for further development. A draft Development Plan for Community Education has been prepared which includes the further development of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, increasing the participation of sixth formers in adult education courses and adults in sixth form classes and a greater involvement of local community expertise in the enrichment of the school curriculum. These plans are ambitious but realistic and now need more detail to enable them to become a valuable working document.

153. In setting out to be a resource for the wider community the school already makes very good provision and has begun to use the community as a resource for its own work. The dual use of accommodation and resources for learning by both the school and the Community Education Programme during the school day, in the evenings and at weekends is a very efficient use of the combined investment of school and Community Education funding. The development plan and discussions with key staff indicate that the school has both the desire and the capacity to build on its existing community strengths.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	138
	Sixth form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	3	23	63	43	5	1	0
Percentage	2	17	46	31	3	1	0

Sixth form

Number	3	11	22	9	1	0	0
Percentage	7	23	49	19	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	715	151
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	32	1

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	32	1

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	55	71	126

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	38	39
	Girls	59	55	57
	Total	95	93	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (79)	74 (76)	76 (82)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (45)	56 (48)	48 (52)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (48)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	47	45
	Girls	63	61	63
	Total	99	108	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (74)	86 (79)	86 (80)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (37)	48 (54)	55 (52)
	National	31 (31)	32 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	61	69	130

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	37	57	59
	Girls	48	62	65
	Total	85	119	124
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	65 (52)	92 (86)	95 (91)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49.7 (44.2)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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	23	18	41
	Average point score per candidate	18	21.4	19.5 (21.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4 (18.2)

		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	23	18	41	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	18	21.4	19.5 (21.6)	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4 (18.2)	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

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	750	51	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	30	1	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	66	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	327.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2 560 243
Total expenditure	2 515 054
Expenditure per pupil	3 113
Balance brought forward from previous year	1 772
Balance carried forward to next year	11 587

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.8

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	866
Number of questionnaires returned	182

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	46	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	60	5	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	58	10	4	5
The teaching is good.	32	59	3	0	7
I am kept informed about how my child is getting on.	38	47	10	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	34	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	12	2	7
The school is led and managed.	35	47	3	0	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	49	2	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	42	2	1	4

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Results in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen-year-olds are above average and the national literacy framework in Years 7 to 9 is being well-implemented.
- The schemes of work are well-planned and provide good coverage of the National Curriculum and addresses weaknesses in speaking and written work.
- Very effective management of behaviour creates a good learning environment in lessons.
- Pupils are always made aware of the objectives of lessons and these are reviewed and reinforced well at the ends of lessons.
- The attitudes and response of most pupils are good, ensuring concentration and effort in lessons.
- Good leadership and management, which ensures good overall assessment of pupils and uses the information well.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to develop spoken English, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Greater emphasis on improving the basic skills and standards of pupils' written work.
- Consistency in marking that includes advice on ways in which pupils can improve.
- The wider use of ICT in the teaching and learning of English.
- Continuing to develop strategies to improve the attainment of boys.
- Higher expectations of the more able pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11.

154. Pupils enter the school with above average skills in literacy. By the end of Year 9, attainment in the national tests in 2001 was well-above average, with girls performing significantly better than boys. Compared with the results of pupils in similar schools, standards were average. In the provisional results for 2002, attainment remained above average compared with national standards and average compared with that of similar schools. Standards have remained consistently good for the last three years. Observation and scrutiny of written work during the inspection reflect this good standard of attainment and show that pupils are making good progress by the end of Year 9, as a result of the strong and relevant planning for this phase and the growing implementation of the national strategy for literacy.

155. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results in 2001 in English were above the national average. In 2002, the number of pupils attaining Grades A* to C fell to average, though 100 per cent attained Grades A* to G. Results in English Literature were also above average in 2001 but here, too, fell to close to average in 2002. Inspection evidence shows that progress is satisfactory for pupils currently in Years 10 and 11, but their attainment is not as high as it should be considering their Year 9 results. The two main reasons for this are the very high proportion of changes of teachers in the past three years and the relatively low attainment of boys when compared with that of girls. Over the last three years, standards have risen slightly until 2002, when they fell significantly.

156. The majority of pupils speak informally, with appropriate tone and vocabulary. Their spoken responses are usually relevant and perceptive, though short. When pupils are alerted to the need for presenting themselves well in a more formal situation, they can rise well to the occasion, as seen in a Year 10 lesson, in which the teacher was making an oral assessment for GCSE coursework. In this lesson, pupils presented their own visions of an ideal Youth Club, in groups, answering questions on their ideas with confidence and relevance. It was clear that pupils had worked hard on drafting and refining their presentations and were aware of the need for communicating their ideas in a spontaneous, yet formal, manner. Some very good work was also seen in a Year 11 class, composed entirely of boys, where very skilful teaching stimulated the pupils to write their own poems in response to a Kathleen Jamie poem, 'The Way We Live' from their GCSE anthology. The pupils took pride in reading out some of their poems, and were encouraged to express their thoughts in an appropriate manner, with great success. Pupils are very willing to answer teachers' questions and teachers provide them with good role models for their speech. Throughout the school, pupils listen well to each other and to their teachers. Because little curriculum time is devoted to drama in Years 7 and 8 and none in Year 9, drama is not used to full effect to supplement oral skills, although this has been addressed by next year's curriculum plan.

157. Basic reading skills are generally good. Pupils read accurately with good word building skills, largely because of the very good use to which literature is put in teaching English throughout the school. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils explored Seamus Heaney's 'Mid-term Break' with great response and a level of sensitivity rarely seen at that age, clearly inspired by the careful choice of poem. When reading aloud, most pupils read accurately and comprehend what they read, though reading often lacks fluency and expression. They understand the plots, events and characters well in the texts they study. Most are able to see beyond the superficial level of meaning in their reading of stories and novels. This was observed clearly in a Year 11 lesson in which pupils were comparing Thomas Hardy's 'Jude the Obscure' with Andrea Ashworth's 'Once in a House on Fire'. The level of understanding and empathy was high and pupils were sufficiently absorbed to begin to think for themselves and advance their own ideas. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the school is successfully using the national strategy in literacy to encourage pupils to become familiar with a wide range of styles and contexts such as drama, poetry and prose. This was demonstrated in a very good Year 7 lesson on writing a newspaper article, in which pupils showed grasp and understanding, with humour and interest, of different ways of presenting the same piece of information. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11, however, find it difficult to formulate their own ideas and to express them in writing with personal response and understanding of writers' style and technique.

158. Levels of attainment in writing are generally average. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils write eagerly and responsively, for the most part. They are provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. In Years 10 and 11, a good quantity of written work was accomplished in a lesson on poems by Simon Armitage set as GCSE texts, but written work is often limited in length and there are often many technical inaccuracies of spelling and punctuation. Much emphasis is laid on the importance of drafting and re-drafting coursework assignments, but less time is given to writing in preparation for examinations. It is clear from observation of lessons and an analysis of written work that boys generally attain at a lower level than girls. The school has tackled this problem and has put in place strategies designed to raise boys' attainment.

159. The quality of pupils' learning is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are eager to participate in lessons, they answer questions readily and respond well to teachers' high expectations. In Years 10 and 11, although still responsive in lessons and wanting to succeed, pupils are too ready to accept the teacher's version and to duplicate it in their own work, so that, at the end of a lesson, pupils have produced no written work other than notes dictated to them during the lesson by

the teacher. Too few of the more able pupils carry out any research for themselves or write more than the minimum expected of them. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good strides in their learning because of the support they receive.

160. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen and in the majority of lessons teaching was good, very good or excellent. A major strength of the teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is the way teachers plan clear sequences of activities which are both appropriate and clear to their pupils, enabling them to make good progress. Here, the influence of the national strategy in literacy can be seen clearly in the breadth and scope of the work and the imaginative units which have been devised to absorb and interest pupils. Teachers share the aims of the lessons well with pupils, so that pupils are never in any doubt as to the purpose of the lesson and what they should be able to do at the end of it. In Years 10 and 11, planning is too dictated by the demands of the examination syllabus and is, at times, limited in scope because of teachers' desire to teach specifically for the examinations. Teachers give clear explanations to their pupils and give much praise and encouragement in class. Behaviour is managed well, allowing most lessons to take place in a purposeful and workmanlike atmosphere. Lessons contain a good balance of activities, thus ensuring pupils' concentration. There is, however, scope for the further sharing of good practice among teachers. Teachers know the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs well and work effectively, often with learning support assistants, to help them to make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also given good support by teachers, who take great pains to provide them with suitably graded tasks, so that they, too, make good progress.

161. The English department is well-led and managed. There has been, in the last few years, a period of very substantial staff changes, but the situation has now begun to stabilise and the department works well as a team under the committed, organised and good head of department. New schemes of work introduced by the head of department provide a good balance of skills and activities for pupils and her enthusiasm for literature is clearly seen in the effective way in which pupils are taught all aspects of the subject through drama, stories, novels and poetry, as well as newspapers and magazines. There are, however, too few opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills. There is, at present, too little scope for the use of ICT in learning and in enhancing written work, although this situation is about to be rectified as part of the school's refurbishment programme. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development through the extensive use of literature and the provision of many visits to theatres and other literary activities. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' work and progress and the progress of individual pupils is monitored and tracked well. Pupils are encouraged to make clear evaluations of their own learning and to help to set their own targets for improvement. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources for teaching the subject are good, with the exception of ICT.

162. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although there has been a fall in attainment by the end of Year 11 in the last year, pupils had made good progress until that time and are still doing so in Years 7, 8 and 9. The quality of teaching has been maintained, despite the many staffing changes of late and planning has improved. The department is using many strategies and intervention techniques to help pupils to improve their attainment.

Drama

163. Provision in drama is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, but unsatisfactory in Year 9, where no drama lessons are timetabled. It is good in Years 10 and 11, where it is an optional GCSE subject.

164. It was not possible to see any drama lessons in Years 7 and 8 in the week of the inspection, but study of the planning of units of work for the course demonstrated some good, demanding activities, which are aimed at enhancing pupils' personal and social skills, as well as their dramatic knowledge and understanding.

165. Standards attained in GCSE drama in recent years have compared well with national averages. Only one Year 11 lesson could be observed, but the level of work seen was at least average and progress was good. Pupils were improvising on the theme of 'War and its impact on family life', devising situations which caused tensions within the family as a result of war. Although pupils' performance skills were not fully developed, they were able to use improvisation skills well to explore and sustain character and dramatic tension. They worked with thought, enthusiasm and interest and were constructive in evaluating their own and others' performances. Pupils showed some knowledge of dramatic conventions and most were confident in performance.

166. Teaching in this lesson was good, with the teacher creating a good working atmosphere which engaged all pupils. Much good encouragement and advice was given and pupils were constantly aware of their development and progress.

Literacy

167. The head of English has effectively managed the development of literacy in English. Teachers provide good models for oral work, reading is widely encouraged and written work is often stimulating especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. In these years, in particular, the national literacy strategy is clearly having an effect on the progress made in the acquisition of literacy skills.

168. When literacy is taught to small groups of pupils with special language needs, it is very good, fostering good learning of all necessary skills and aiding pupils' ability to understand their work.

169. In other subjects of the curriculum, the development of literacy skills is not yet systematically organised. In many subjects, opportunities are missed to develop the use of speaking, listening and writing. Although there are some good examples in science, mathematics and history of an emphasis on key vocabulary, specific to the subject, there is little other indication of a comprehensive, whole school approach to literacy skills. The school has developed a policy to encourage this approach, but it is, as yet, insufficiently extended throughout the curriculum and teachers are not all trained in its development.

170. Oral skills are not encouraged sufficiently in many subjects. Pupils have too little sense of presentation or appropriate tone when speaking and tend to answer in unstructured speech. Reading is much stronger and is well-promoted by most subject areas, so that pupils read with some fluency and much understanding. Writing skills are the least well-encouraged. In many subjects, written work is too brief, technically inaccurate and limited to the immediate demands of the curriculum or forthcoming GCSE examinations. Marking of written work is inconsistent throughout the school, with mistakes frequently remaining uncorrected.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good throughout the school
- Standards throughout the school are good overall
- Pupils make good progress

Areas for improvement

- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and should be used to give effective support to teaching and learning
- The link between priorities in the departmental development plan and the finances available

171. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are well-above national averages. In 2001 in national tests at the end of Year 9, attainment in mathematics was well-above the average for all schools and above the average for similar schools. Attainment followed a rising trend above the national average from 1998 to 2001. In 2001 attainment of girls was higher than that of boys but over the four year period there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Attainment in mathematics was below that for English and science. Attainment in 2002 showed a significant rise in comparison with 2001 and is related to the more stable staffing during that year.

172. In 2001 in GCSE, attainment was well-above national averages overall. The proportion of pupils obtaining the higher grades A* to C was well-above national averages and the proportion obtaining all grades A* to G was slightly above national averages. Some lower-attaining pupils were entered for the certificate of achievement course as well as GCSE and a small minority of pupils completed their course at Kendal College. Attainment in mathematics was comparable with that in English and below that in science. The results in GCSE showed a decline from those in 2000 but the number of pupils obtaining the highest grades A*/A showed an increase in 2002 compared with 2001 and was comparable to the number of highest grades in science.

173. Pupils achieve well in mathematics throughout the school.

174. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment at the end of Year 9 is well-above national expectations. In a Year 9 lesson pupils showed good understanding of the method for obtaining an estimated mean value of a large range of data. In another Year 9 lesson, higher-attaining pupils learnt for the first time how to enter formulae into a spreadsheet and replicate formulae. They were impressed by the speed of calculation. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils worked in pairs on two alternative topics. They extracted data on holidays from a database and were able to realise the importance of grouping of information to obtaining meaningful graphs. Other pupils plotted diagrams using co-ordinates and rearranged them by enlarging, rotating and reflecting them. Pupils co-operated and took full advantage of the opportunities for independent learning. In general, work on calculation shows improvement from Year 7, where simple numbers are used, to later in the course when algebraic expressions are used. While pupils in most cases are able to relate the lengths of right-angled triangles, methods of working are not always clear and there are errors in intermediate calculation steps. Pupils' work is presented tidily in general but spelling errors of mathematical terms are uncorrected in some cases. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

175. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the end of Year 11 is well-above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils show good progress in the use of graphical work which is concluded with an effective summary. Quadratic equations are solved graphically and by alternative methods. Pupils make good use of co-ordinates and vectors in the transformation of shapes. Average attaining pupils show increased confidence in number work when finding the squares and square roots of numbers, percentage and decimal values and the value of angles in diagrams. In a lesson for lower-attaining pupils in Year 11, pupils checked on the correct order for carrying out calculations with the use of a computer and a calculator. In a Year 10 lesson, lower-attaining pupils found initial difficulty with basic algebraic re-arrangements but standards of accuracy increased considerably during the lesson. Standards of coursework are above national averages. Pupils attempt a range of investigations related to their prior attainment, for example finding how the price of cars varies depending on their age and other features. The results are presented graphically. An alternative investigation included the cost of laying carpet in a given floor area. Standards of extended writing vary considerably from accurate extended writing to single sentence statements. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

176. Pupils with special educational needs English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented make good progress because of the provision for them. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are supported in class and in the case of some pupils in Year 8 are given support outside of normal lessons. Provision is made for gifted and talented pupils through investigation.

177. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. There are no significant differences in learning between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Teachers have secure knowledge, good class management and their good relationships with pupils encourage them to succeed. In many lessons, teachers give clear explanations about mathematical processes and teachers use good questioning techniques that stimulate pupils to think about problems. There are inconsistencies in the marking of work. Marking does not always give enough guidance to pupils to improve the work. Not all errors in the middle of mathematical processes nor wrongly spelt mathematical terms are corrected. Mathematics has a very good system for recording and assessing the attainment of pupils and setting targets for future attainment. Improvement in marking will give enhancement to this process. Homework is set on a regular basis that is relevant to the content of the lesson. Appropriate revision exercises for tests involve pupils in answering questions in preparation for the test. Opportunities for the development of numeracy skills are improved with the adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have good listening and speaking skills but answers to teachers are brief instead of giving detailed explanations. Behaviour in most lessons is very good apart from a minority of potentially disruptive pupils.

178. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. All teachers work as a team and want their pupils to succeed. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of mathematics and gives strong positive leadership. A newly appointed inexperienced teacher has received good support. Schemes of work have been revised throughout the school in response to changes in national policy, but they have yet to be combined with the ICT scheme of work. The work of the department is monitored by forecast summaries of lessons each half term and by teachers' analysis afterwards. All pupils have a textbook for which they are responsible and computer resources are used well to provide teaching of ICT and its application to mathematics. An appropriate departmental plan has been written, but it is unclear how it will be financed. Mathematics has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity for further improvement.

Numeracy

179. Provision for the development of numeracy is satisfactory overall. Teaching approaches in mathematics take into account the National Numeracy Strategy. Teaching of numeracy in mathematics is linked effectively to using ICT in all years of the school. ICT relates to shapes in Year 7 and the use of spreadsheets in Years 9, 10 and 11 in mathematical statistics. There are examples of the use of statistics in religious education, science and design and technology. There is not a co-ordinated approach to the teaching of numeracy across all subjects. During the inspection week there was little evidence of number work in lessons in geography but exercise books indicated a significant focus on well-presented climate graphs. Measurements are taken accurately in science to one or two decimal places and graphical work is used effectively, for example in an investigation into the vibrations of a spring. In a Year 7 lesson calculations were practised in Spanish after learning numbers in that language. There was one observed example in the use of number in history with an investigation into death rates in Kendal during the nineteenth century. In design and technology great care is taken to secure accurate measurements. Some but not all subject documentation makes reference to cross-curricular numeracy so that not all subjects contribute as effectively as mathematics and ICT to a coherent number policy.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good** with some very good features.

Strengths

- Pupils attain standards that are well-above national averages.
- Pupils are making good progress.
- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management of the science faculty are very good.
- The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Areas for Improvement

- The quality of marking is too variable.
- The presentation of written work of some pupils, mainly boys, is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient emphasis on teaching the skills of scientific enquiry in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9.

180. When pupils come to school in Year 7 their levels of attainment are above the national average. As a result of good teaching, together with their own hard work and positive attitudes they make good progress and by age 14 results in the national tests are well-above the national average. Pupils' performance is in line with similar schools. In 2001 girls performed slightly better than boys. The proportion of pupils attaining very high standards is well above the national average and better than in similar schools.

181. Pupils continue to make good progress in Year 10 and very good progress in Year 11. Results at GCSE are well-above average and because of their positive attitudes and good teaching many pupils attain better grades in GCSE Science than they do in other GCSE subjects. Standards are well-above both the national average and also the standard in similar schools. Girls did better than boys in 2001 but 2002 results indicate that boys' and girls' attainment is more even.

182. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved by pupils because of good teaching and pupils' good attitudes and behaviour in lessons. In Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 pupils' knowledge and understanding of the biological, chemical and physical sciences is above average. Their skills of scientific enquiry such as

planning investigations, controlling variables and considering experimental results are less well-developed developed and are in line with the national average because they are not sufficiently emphasised in the scheme of work. By the end of Year 9 the most able pupils show a very high level understanding of some complex scientific concepts. For example, they can relate the process of photosynthesis to the structure of the leaf, they can write and explain chemical equations and they can use formulae to answer problems about speed and pressure. Pupils are confident in carrying out practical work in a safe and well-organised way.

183. In Year 10 and Year 11 the standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. The majority of pupils have a secure understanding of all the aspects of the GCSE syllabus. Their skills of carrying out a scientific investigation are well-developed. The most able pupils in Year 10 can use their knowledge and skills to plan and carry out an experiment investigating the factors affecting the oscillation of a spring. They use mathematics well in calculating averages and in drawing accurate graphs of their results.

184. With continued good teaching and pupils' determination to do well in their examinations, the above average standards seen in Year 9 and 11 are a good basis on which to maintain and build on the high examination results of previous years.

185. In Year 11 pupils are developing a good understanding of all aspects of the GCSE syllabus. They can use their knowledge of living things to explain the consequences of acid rain, they know that some metals are more reactive than others and they can explain how forces act on both moving and stationary objects.

186. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Year 11 it is very good. As a result of this good teaching the quality of learning is good and pupils are making good progress in Year 7, Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 and very good progress in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for, teachers have a good understanding of their individual needs and in some lessons good support is provided by teaching assistants. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are fully integrated and achieve equally well. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well and the number of pupils gaining the higher grades at GCSE is above the national average.

187. All science teachers have a very good understanding of their subject that helps them explain concepts clearly and supports pupils' learning. The teachers have very high expectations both of what the pupils can achieve and of their behaviour and motivation. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a very good balance of teaching methods to help pupils develop their scientific knowledge, understanding and skills. Practical work is used well to ensure pupils have first hand experience of scientific techniques, and of collecting and interpreting results although the organisation of some practical work could be improved to prevent pupils queuing to obtain materials. Teachers are beginning to use computers more in their teaching, for example, when helping pupils to use the internet to find out information about global warming. Homework is well used both to extend and consolidate class work.

188. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Some work does not have enough comments about what pupils should do to improve their work. Pupils' literacy skills are good and there is a good focus on scientific vocabulary in some lessons. The presentation of work of some pupils, mainly, but not always, boys is unsatisfactory with insufficient care and attention being given to the work. There is an increase in the mathematical aspects of science as pupils move through the school. By Year 10 and Year 11 all pupils can use simple formulae for calculations and can plot and interpret graphs.

189. Leadership and management of the faculty are very good. The head of faculty is a very good leader; he has high expectations of his colleagues and has a clear vision for further

developments. There are clear aims and well-thought-out policies that are all clearly documented in the impressive science handbook. The curriculum is well organised and schemes of work, although variable in quality, are in place and provide good support for teachers in planning lessons. A significant number of classes in Year 7 and Year 8 have two science teachers. This makes lesson planning and working relationships with pupils more difficult. Arrangements to monitor the work of teachers and procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the faculty are well established. Teachers and technicians have good access to training opportunities.

190. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. There is now a very good process for monitoring pupils' progress in science throughout the school. There is also more use of ICT by both teachers and pupils to support learning and further developments are planned.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Accommodation for art and design is excellent.
- Standards of attainment are above average in Years 7 to 9.
- There are very good opportunities for gallery visits and extra curricular art and design classes.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and are well-behaved in lessons.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their own work and that of others.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' extended writing and numeracy skills.
- Further develop the use of sketchbooks focusing on the recording of ideas both visually and with evaluative annotations

191. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. In the 2001 assessments by teachers 90 per cent of pupils by the end of Year 9 achieved level 5 and above, which is above average and continues the improvement seen over recent years. Teacher assessments for 2002 (unvalidated) indicate a steady increase to 92 per cent, continuing this positive trend.

192. In the 2001 GCSE for grades A*-C, 69.6 per cent of pupils succeeded in gaining results significantly above the national average. GCSE results in 2002 are not as good, with 58 per cent of candidates gaining at least a C grade. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, achieving grades in line with their peers.

193. Pupils come to the school with a varied level of previous experiences. All pupils make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. Those choosing to study art and design for GCSE make good progress compared to their other chosen subjects. This is the result of consistently good teaching and the positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils leading to effective learning.

194. Pupils quickly learn the essential elements of line, tone, colour and pattern, acquiring new skills and learning techniques using a good range of media. They achieve high

standards of drawing, painting, graphics, printing and ceramics, understanding contextual studies, learning about different artists and art of other cultures. Pupils experience moral and ethical debate, developing peace posters. Year 7 pupils are introduced to clay work, learning how to prepare clay, model and shape pots and decorate them with ideas based on Aboriginal art. In Year 8, pupils study the work of William Morris, Van Gogh and Bonnard. By Year 9, pupils learn about 20th century architecture, African art and Pop art building on graphics, ceramics, relief work and construction. The process of research and realisation is well practised, although written work is minimal and pupils' range of vocabulary, spelling and ability to build sentences is limited. Many pupils are able to research using the Internet and produce a wealth of high quality display for use in school. There are insufficient opportunities to develop numeracy.

195. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Relationships with teachers are very good. There is a respect for the work of others both in the art and design rooms and displayed around the school. Most pupils listen well in lessons and contribute to conversations about artwork. Opportunities to discuss critically and contextually their own work and that of others are limited and little extended writing or debate has been seen.

196. Art and design books, sketchbooks and notebooks are handled carefully. Most pupils respect materials and equipment and handle them safely. Teachers have high expectations and set appropriate tasks which maintains a constant level of positive attitudes and enthusiasm for art and design. The teachers are very well respected and both foster a spirit of inclusion.

197. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. Achievement over these two years is good and pupils develop independent research and learning skills. For example they know about surrealism and create imaginary scenes and studies based on the works of Ernst, Khado, Magritte, Dali and Oppenheim. Pupils can successfully use watercolour and acrylic paints, pastels, collage and printing techniques to represent ideas and graphic studies for still life and book illustration projects. Observational work is good, utilising visits to galleries and local exhibitions. Pupils are able to produce series of works demonstrating scale, perspective, composition and the juxtaposition of images. Plans are well developed to offer photography as a unit for study in the future.

198. Teaching and learning of all pupils is good. Teachers' subject knowledge and quality and use of assessment are very good. Planning, teaching methods, use of resources and the teaching of basic skills are all good. This in turn enables pupils to acquire new skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding in art and design. Assessment and recording of achievement are used effectively and teachers use a wide range of tracking and target setting to move pupils on. Pupils are aware of how they are doing and successfully apply intellectual and creative effort to class work and homework. Reports to parents identify what pupils need to do in order to improve. In lessons seen throughout Years 7 to 11 there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in lessons aided by effective learning support staff.

199. Leadership and management of the art and design department are good; effective planning and documentation are in place and regularly reviewed. Targets and procedures are very thorough. There is good use of resources and adherence to best value principles. Art rooms are very well-organised and displays are very good. There is a very experienced partnership established with effective liaison and departmental collaboration. The open access lunchtime sessions, art and design clubs and visits to galleries make a very positive contribution to the quantity and quality of work produced. There are positive links to community education and a very successful art and design club with pupils from primary

feeder schools. Excellent use is made of the art and design technician who works collaboratively with the teaching staff to improve learning materials and prepare resources. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The citizenship modules in Years 7 and 8 are well-taught
- The new school co-ordinator has a clear view of the key components of effective citizenship education

Areas for improvement

- The school has not yet agreed on a range of practical strategies for incorporating elements of citizenship education into the tutor guidance programme
- Subject departments need clearer guidance on the aspects of citizenship they are responsible for teaching
- The proposed whole school strategies, such as themed weeks and off-timetable days, are not well-developed at this stage
- There is no clear plan for the assessment and reporting of progress in citizenship

200. The standard of pupils' citizenship work is below average and achievement unsatisfactory overall because the programmes of study are not yet fully in place. However where aspects of the National Curriculum have been introduced, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, the standard of the work is above average. Pupils take two citizenship modules, one in Year 7 and one in Year 8, and they demonstrate above average skills in presenting and organising their work. They produce reflective work on topics such as the events of September 11th 2001. Pupils are also able to analyse and comment on different perspectives about the effectiveness of the European Union and display good speaking and listening skills. Whilst pupils demonstrate above average attainment in these two citizenship modules their overall progress is restricted because they only study the subject for one third of the year. The topics therefore lack depth and this restricts overall gains in understanding.

201. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to identify focused citizenship teaching in a very small number of lessons. This sample included the teaching of citizenship in the above two modules and a Year 9 tutor period about different types of jobs. The teaching and learning were good in all the lessons observed. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Key strengths include good use of music to help pupils to reflect on difficult events, well-chosen resources, well-planned activities to clarify significant concepts and good reference to local examples. Teachers have appropriate knowledge of the topics and lessons are well-paced. As a result pupils are well-motivated and learn from each other. The main weaknesses in these lessons include a lack of opportunities for pupils to carry out their own research and insufficient challenge for more able pupils.

202. Good features of provision observed in other subjects include the effective study of other cultures in art and design, a consistent focus on different views of environmental issues in geography and regular opportunities to reflect on social and moral issues in religious education and English. However the contribution of different subjects is not fully developed. Subject co-ordinators have completed an introductory audit of potential links to the citizenship programmes of study but have not identified how citizenship skills and values will be developed in their schemes of work. There are therefore not enough opportunities for pupils to develop the skills that are needed to investigate, discuss and debate contemporary issues using a variety of different media, including newspapers and Internet.

203. The school provides a number of important opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of participation and responsible action, most notably through residential experiences in Borrowdale and France, the Year 11 peer mediation scheme, charity collections, the work of the school council and the well-supported Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Discussions with pupils indicate that these are well regarded. There are insufficient opportunities to develop these skills in the tutor guidance periods and selected topics in the subject curriculum. There is insufficient reinforcement of both the investigative and participative skills of the subject through whole school or year group activities, such as themed weeks and off-timetable days. Further attention also needs to be given to consistently developing an awareness of different cultures across the curriculum.

204. The responsibility for co-ordinating the subject has been recently allocated to a new member of the senior management team. She has a clear vision of the potential contribution of citizenship and has made a good start in identifying a range of strategies to tackle the current weaknesses in provision. However at the moment the school has not been able to adequately identify the ways in which the subject will be taught through the tutor guidance programme and assessment is at a very early stage. The school has therefore not yet made enough progress in implementing the new programmes of study in Years 7 to 11.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils respond to the good teaching with commitment and enjoyment - attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Good use is made of assessment information - pupils understand how to improve their work.
- The wide range of interesting modules motivates pupils and helps them make good progress.
- Accommodation and resources are good and have a positive effect on the teaching and learning that take place.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop the use of ICT - build the use of the new resources for computer-aided design and manufacture into schemes of work.
- Monitor the performance of particular groups of pupils e.g. to enable more gifted and talented pupils to achieve grade A* and to improve the attainment of boys.
- The demands of the Year 7 and 8 design folders need to be better matched to pupils' abilities.

205. Results in 2001 of all pupils taking a GCSE course in design and technology were much higher than the national average. Overall, pupils did well in their design and technology courses achieving up to three-quarters of a grade higher than in most other subjects that they took. The attainment of both boys and girls is higher than the national average, but girls did slightly better than boys. The results are improving each year. The results for 2002 remain above average although slightly lower than in 2001. Pupils undertaking Food, Textiles, Graphic Products and Systems and Control courses do particularly well with high levels of attainment. Those undertaking the Resistant Material course attain levels that are slightly

better than the national average and make very good progress in design and technology when compared with their performance in other subjects.

206. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. All pupils make good progress between Year 7 and Year 9 and by age 14 are attaining levels that are higher than expected for pupils of this age.

207. Good teaching, good access to resources, good monitoring of pupils' progress, a wide range of challenging activities and pupils' very good attitudes to work mean that learning is good and progress takes place.

208. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve high standards of work because they undertake a very wide range of activities with enthusiasm and commitment. They produce good quality products in a range of materials. For example in Year 7 they design and make jewellery and learn to cast metal using wood moulds created on a computer controlled lathe. They adapt traditional recipes to create new food products to meet specific requirements. In Year 8 they work with acrylic material, build a range of structures and test them to destruction. They learn to control a buggy. By Year 9 they are increasing their knowledge and skill in using new textile technology. They design and make signs and make a circuit for an alarm. When making products pupils are confident working with new tools and equipment, they apply the knowledge and skills they have been taught; they persevere with care and attention to detail and achievement is consistently good. When designing, especially in Years 7 and 8 attainment is more varied between subject areas. At times work in design folders is left unfinished and aspects of the design process are not completed. By Year 9 design folders are more consistently completed and pupils demonstrate that they can undertake research; use their research to help to develop design ideas, evaluate their work and test and evaluate the effectiveness of their product against the criteria for its design.

209. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average and pupils continue to make good progress. Pupils are well prepared for the requirements of the GCSE courses by the opportunities offered in Years 7 to 9. By the age of 16 the number of pupils attaining levels that are higher than the national average is good. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of the materials, tools and equipment they have chosen to work with and develop their skills as designers. In response to a design brief they design and make good quality products; prototypes of their design ideas and models to represent and promote their ideas. The most able pupils take responsibility for their work, choosing areas that are of interest to them that require the design and manufacture of products or systems to meet a real need. They work independently, are committed to achieving good results and know how to improve their work. Design folders show that they have undertaken relevant and thorough research, have lots of ideas and can develop aspects of these ideas into a specification for a final design and working drawings. The design folders of lower-attaining pupils, whilst less thorough and mature, show that they understand the principles of the design process. They make good progress from the end of Year 9. All pupils are beginning to use ICT to improve the communication of their ideas and the presentation of their work. Some pupils are beginning to use ICT to help with the manufacture, for instance, of graphic and textile products.

210. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two lessons. Teachers plan well and classroom organisation is good. Lessons start promptly and pupils take responsibility for collecting the materials and tools they need and setting up equipment for their work. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and are enthusiastic and this motivates pupils and enables them to learn. Teachers use a similar approach when teaching pupils to design and this means that pupils continue to progress as they move around the subjects within design and technology. Skilful management of

behaviour and good relationships with pupils mean that a working atmosphere is established and pupils settle quickly to their work and concentrate throughout the lesson. Teachers understand the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE courses that they teach. They have high expectations of pupils, monitor their progress and use assessment information to provide helpful feedback to pupils. This means that pupils too have high expectations and strive to do well. Pupils know the level they are working at and how to improve their work to reach a higher level. Teachers give good support to individual pupils as they undertake project work and this increases confidence and enables all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, to succeed. Learning support assistants and the department technician work well with teachers, understand what is required and provide additional support to those pupils who need extra help. Teachers are confident in using ICT and encourage pupils to use computers to improve and extend their work even when the use of ICT is not a planned part of the work. This helps pupils to reach higher levels of attainment.

211. Pupils' very good attitudes to work and good behaviour contribute to the attainment of high standards. They respond well to the good teaching and the challenging tasks. They take the opportunity to learn a wide range of knowledge and skills and enjoy practising new skills and techniques. They respond well to the opportunities that they are given to apply their creative skills and personalise their designs. They listen carefully to instructions and demonstrations and are careful in their work, concentrating on achieving the best result that they can. They work well together. They support one another, for instance in resistant materials 'experts' in using equipment were helping those that were less confident to use soldering irons; drilling and sanding machines. They work well in teams, for instance when using alternative protein foods to create new products and set up tasting tests. At the end of each design and make task there is a range of good quality individual products. Pupils want to do well and are proud of their work.

212. The quality and range of the curriculum is very good. As a result pupils make good progress. In Years 7 to 9 there is a carefully planned range of modules that allows pupils to work with different materials, tools and equipment and requires pupils to undertake new and challenging design and make tasks. Pupils learn new knowledge and a wide range of processes and skills. Literacy skills are satisfactory and are used well. The increased use of ICT at school and at home is helping pupils to improve their skills as they use the Internet for research and word processing, and publishing programmes to present text in a variety of ways and forms. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and applied when measuring and weighing, annotating working drawings and marking out. Graphs are produced using ICT to help to analyse findings from research and product testing and evaluation. The levels of reading and writing in design folders are too demanding for pupils with special educational needs and some for whom English is an additional language.

213. Leadership and management in design and technology are good. The department is well organised and teachers work well together to develop a common set of policies and procedures. There is a shared commitment to improvement. Results are carefully studied and the information is used for curriculum planning. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised. Very good assessment and recording procedures enable teachers to help pupils in Years 7 to 9 to improve. Good accommodation and resources are effectively used.

214. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards and accommodation have improved; the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been revised and improved; examination courses for Years 10 and 11 have been changed to enable better progression from Year 9; new equipment for computer-aided design and manufacture has been purchased. The department is well-able to undertake further improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject.
- There is a broad geography curriculum supported by a varied fieldwork programme.
- Teachers have secure relationships with pupils and as a result lessons are orderly and purposeful.
- A high percentage of pupils opt for the subject at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient variety of learning methods, including those that help pupils to develop important literacy skills.
- Some lessons are too slowly paced and there is insufficient focus on what is to be achieved at the start and end of lessons.
- Tackle the drop in GCSE results in 2002.
- There is not enough systematic monitoring of teaching, pupils' work and examination performance.

215. The GCSE results were well-above the national average in 2001 and were consistent with the way that the same pupils performed in other subjects in the school. However there was a significant drop in the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 2002, many pupils made unsatisfactory progress and did not achieve the grades that might have been expected given their performance in the Year 9 tests for English, mathematics and science.

216. Pupils in Year 9 attain average standards. Pupils show good skills in producing annotated maps and can draw clear diagrams to explain the processes that lead to waterfalls, river erosion and earthquakes. Most pupils draw a variety of accurately labelled graphs, which assists their numeracy skills. Pupils make well-organised notes and present their work carefully demonstrating that they have a positive attitude to the subject. They therefore take appropriate responsibility for their work. As a result less able pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9. More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and consequently they make satisfactory rather than good progress. All other pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. In the work seen there is too little opportunity for pupils to produce different types of writing, such as extended pieces, and for pupils to undertake more independent investigations.

217. Year 11 pupils are working at around the national average and there is some very good work. The most able pupils are able to explain the reason for geographical changes and their likely future impact, as is indicated in their work about changes in the location of certain industries. They also show a good appreciation of the links between people and the environment, for example in their work about the issues related to tourism and quarrying in national parks. Less able pupils continue to take responsibility for producing a basic framework of notes and organising their work. Achievement overall is satisfactory; it is good for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.

218. Teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and was very good in 40 per cent of the lessons that were observed in Years 7 to 9. This is a result of teachers' very good subject knowledge and the secure relationships that they have carefully constructed. Pupils

therefore work diligently and have a positive attitude to the subject, as is demonstrated by the high proportion of pupils who opt to take the GCSE course.

219. The very good lessons in Years 7 to 9 were characterised by lively and engaging exposition, good use of humour, a variety of activities, opportunities for pupils to explore their ideas through group talk and crisply paced tasks. For example pupils in an introductory lesson about Brazil listened to a CD of national music, watched a brief video clip and then quickly completed a basic fact file using the Internet. In a lesson on tourism pupils actively explored their ideas about different types of holidays in small groups and displayed good speaking and listening skills. Some of the weaknesses observed in lessons include overlong introductions, slowly paced tasks, insufficiently challenging activities and not enough use of a variety of different types of resources. There is too little emphasis on the development of literacy skills along with the exploration of ideas through purposeful talk and not enough attention is given to the discussion of what should be achieved at the start and end of lessons.

220. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department manages the subject in an enthusiastic and supportive manner. The department devotes considerable energy to providing a varied and effective fieldwork programme. The new geography room has good ICT facilities and the department has regular access to a second network. However the checking of teaching, pupils' work and examination performance are not systematic enough, there is too little joint planning for the teaching of the GCSE course and there are not enough opportunities for more independent investigative work by use, for example, of library resources. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection, particularly in the introduction of more structured assessment in Years 7 to 9 and the emerging development planning progress.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching in Year 7 is good.
- The monitoring of students' progress is good.
- New schemes of work are of good quality.
- There is a good rapport between students and their teachers.
- There is effective use of ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- The underachievement of boys by the age of 14.
- The marking of pupils' work does not give sufficient guidance on how they might improve.
- The forward planning in the department does not identify key areas for improvement.
- There is a lack of challenge, particularly for the more able, and insufficient opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.

221. Overall standards in history are in line with the national average. In 2001 GCSE results were average. However, students did less well in history than their other subjects. In the unconfirmed 2002 GCSE results girls outperformed boys, which reflects the national picture. These results are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. The trend in GCSE results over the past three years is in line with that nationally.

222. In 2001 standards, based on teacher assessment, at the age of 14 years were also at the national average. The 2002 results however were slightly higher. Boys significantly

underachieved when compared to the girls. This was an issue in the previous inspection report.

223. Standards are average. Students enter the school in Year 7 having had a range of different experiences in history. Their knowledge and understanding is satisfactory but their ability to use sources and interpret historical data is weaker. During Year 7 they make good progress. This is due to the good quality teaching. There is a clear focus on the use and interpretation of historical sources and the development of basic literacy skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students were shown how to take notes from a text by underlining key words, highlighting relevant phrases and drafting notes. They are also given clear guidance on how to use and question historical material. They used a range of different types of historical evidence – narratives, extracts from books, posters and diaries. Students quickly learn the importance of evidence. As one Year 7 student commented, 'sources are like individual pieces of the past'. This good progress in Year 7 is also due to the introduction of the 'National Key Stage 3 Strategy'. Progress is less marked in Years 8 and 9, although it is satisfactory overall. At times work in Year 8 and 9 lacks rigour and challenge to meet the needs of the more able students. By the age of 14 years the majority are able to make comparisons between different periods they have studied. Low attaining students still find it difficult to understand chronology. This is not sufficiently reinforced and there are no timelines in the classroom against which particular events and dates can be referred. Handling of historical sources is good. Students are able not only to use but also make judgements about their usefulness and relevance. For example in a Year 7 lesson on the Romans, students were able to watch an extract from the film 'Gladiator' and distinguish between facts, which could be checked against other available sources, possibilities that could have been true but which have no collaborating evidence, and pure Hollywood. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. This is due to the support given by learning support assistants. These staff are not only used to giving guidance to individual students but also to share ideas with the subject leaders about progress and appropriateness of the work. They provide a good service and enable students with learning difficulties to be fully involved in lessons. As a consequence the achievement of students with special educational needs, in relation to their ability, is good. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress.

224. The standard of work achieved by the age of 16 is at the national average and reflects the GCSE results. Achievement is satisfactory. High attaining students can make valid judgements and interpretations from a range of sources. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students were able to establish the change in nature of medical practice during the middle ages. At times, however, they are not given sufficient challenge to enable them to reach the higher levels of attainment. Lower-attaining students have a sound knowledge of the basic facts, but their work is often descriptive and lacks evaluation.

225. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well-planned, contain a range of strategies and teachers usually share the learning intentions with the students so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for the subject is communicated in lessons. This contributes to a good learning atmosphere in lessons. Relationships are good and students are confident in asking questions. Expectations, however, are at times too low. Too often all students are expected to do the same task, in the same way, with the same resources, at the same time. Furthermore tasks often only require short written responses and the opportunity to develop independent learning skills are missed. Classroom management is good. Students work harmoniously, co-operatively and constructively, respecting each other's ideas and opinions. Their attitudes to work are good. Lessons are often very teacher led and there are insufficient opportunities for more work in pairs and small groups. On the occasions when it happens the level of discussion between students is high. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on life on the

American Plains, students discussed the hardships of daily life but commented that people would tolerate this because 'it was their land they were free and responsible for their own success or failure' In most lessons students had to do a lot of listening and writing and there was not enough time for more open ended investigative and discussion work. This approach results in boys making less progress than girls.

226. The use of ICT is a strength of the department although at the time of the inspection room changes had restricted access to computers. Pupils' work showed that they had been using ICT to enhance their presentation skills, both through word processing and, in some cases through the use of power point. They had also prepared work for the department's own website and conducted investigations via the Internet.

227. The quality of marking is inconsistent and whilst there are some very good examples of diagnostic marking far too often students are unable to identify clearly what is needed to improve further. While they were given targets many were unable to identify strategies on how best to achieve them. Teachers generally used the time in lessons well and there were many instances when the pace of lesson was maintained by giving precise time targets, for example 'you have ten minutes to ...'. However, on other occasions insufficient time was given at the end of lessons for pupils to review adequately what they had learned.

228. The management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department is very supportive of his colleagues and good practice has been built up over the years. Noteworthy is the attention given to the revision of the schemes of work, changes to assessment and recording of pupils' achievement and the use and development of ICT. There is, however, insufficient identification of the department's long-term strategic objectives that would give more direction to the future success of the department. There is an action plan but this needs to be more focused and about how the department plans to bring about improvement over time in standards, teaching and learning and the underachievement of boys. Responsibility for history in Years 7 to 9 has recently been delegated to another history teacher and this has coincided with the development of the National Strategy for Years 7, 8 and 9 in the school. This is leading to improvements in the teaching but there is still insufficient monitoring, sharing and dissemination of good practice. Overall improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The attainment of pupils taking GCSE is good, and pupils show good response to teaching in these courses.
- The ratio of pupils to computers is above the national average.
- Teaching staff have completed the national training for ICT.
- Good use is made of ICT in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in Years 7, 8 and 9; there is insufficient teaching time.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met in Years 10 and 11.
- Develop the ICT policy further to include guidance on the use of ICT rooms and teaching group size.
- The use of ICT in English, music and religious education.

229. Standards by the age of 14 are below the national average, and pupils of all abilities demonstrate unsatisfactory achievement. All pupils are taught ICT lessons for 13 weeks in Year 7 and Year 8. The rotation of lessons for ICT with citizenship and religious education, limit the time available for taught ICT, making it difficult for pupils to retain knowledge, sustain their understanding, and apply their knowledge and skills. Since the last report, when attainment at in Years 7 to 9 was in line with national expectations, progress has been unsatisfactory.

230. In Year 7 pupils use software to draft and refine text in a newsletter and discuss images, or use a presentation package for a similar activity to develop their ideas and present to the class. In Year 8 they can search for weather data using an Internet web-site, and type data collected into a spreadsheet to create a bar chart and line graph. This is incorporated into a set of web-pages. Most pupils understand the need for care in framing questions when finding, and collecting information, and they are beginning to use ICT to re-structure, refine and present information in another form. Less able pupils struggle with searching for images using the internet, or incorporating image with text. A high ability group can use spreadsheet software effectively in Year 9 mathematics lessons to plot a frequency and cumulative frequency graph. Pupils learn how to enter data, formulae and generate the associated graph. In design and technology they are taught to control a buggy.

231. In 2001, GCSE pupils were entered for the full GCSE and standards were above the national average. In 2002, all pupils were entered for either the full or short GCSE course. Results were well-below the national average, reflecting the various staffing difficulties encountered during the course.

232. Standards of work seen are above average in Years 10 and 11 by pupils taking GCSE ICT, Applied GCSE, and GNVQ ICT. The achievement of most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, is good; the achievement of gifted and talented pupils is very good. However, no curriculum is planned for the small number of pupils not studying ICT at GCSE level; their achievement is unsatisfactory. In Year 11, pupils following the full GCSE course are able to suggest answers for GCSE examination questions on 'what is a virus?' and work towards completing their design or implementation section of a major project. In Year 11, pupils following the short course set up database tables, review them critically and suggest appropriate modifications.

They make good use of technical language and successfully write at length about their work. In Applied GCSE Year 10 pupils create bar charts and line graphs, learn to use chart wizard, setting scales, and discuss advantages and disadvantages. They use layout, content and purpose to evaluate documents. In addition they work with a formula and function with a spreadsheet, replication, relative cell referencing, percentage and apply it to a business cash-flow model with tax and inflation. In GNVQ Intermediate part 1 they can design web pages creating specific graphics and writing HTML. Samples of pupils' work show the development of a data handling project based on a leisure centre.

233. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is limited by the time for teaching the curriculum. However, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons inspected in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory; pupils make satisfactory progress and their work is at the national average. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show good subject knowledge and competence in their teaching. They use display projectors effectively for whole class teaching and demonstration. Work is marked effectively.

234. Some material from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is being successfully implemented. There is little time for teachers to develop practical work with pupils. Pupils are managed well but objectives are not always clear, nor work matched to different abilities. In some lessons, group size and accommodation problems limit the range of teaching strategies that can be used. Teaching in Year 9 takes place across the curriculum. It is not well co-ordinated and the quality of teaching varies between subject areas.

235. There is good use of resources to support teaching and learning. ICT is well-used to support learning in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. However its use is unsatisfactory in English, music and religious education.

236. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. Strategic use of resources is very good in the development and general provision for wide subject use. Accommodation, staffing and learning resources are mostly very good. One computer room is inadequate for large groups and teaching and learning are impeded by the difficulties the teacher has in moving around the room. Insufficient use is currently made of ICT to provide more challenging learning opportunities through the use of e-learning, collaboration and information exchange in local, national and international activities.

237. Longer term development planning and more guidance on teaching and learning for supporting the use of ICT resources across the curriculum are required. Currently, there is insufficient co-ordination, joint planning and monitoring across subjects. Professional development of staff has enabled a national training scheme to be successfully completed, supported by the head of department, and put to good use in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

238. The provision of fast networks and a higher than average pupil-computer ratio has been a good improvement from the last inspection. Training for staff has expanded rapidly and one able technician provides support.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- There are signs that standards and quality in modern languages are improving.
- Relationships and behaviour in lessons are generally good.
- The quality of accommodation and resources in the Language Centre is high.
- Schemes of work are being revised very carefully to focus more on the acquisition of language.
- The programme of visits and exchanges abroad is good.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE examination results, particularly for boys, are not as high as they should be.
- Teaching is not yet good enough overall to ensure that all pupils make consistent progress.
- The amount of time provided for the learning of two languages by almost all pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been inadequate in recent years.
- Many groups contain a wide range of attainment and the needs of all pupils are not always met.
- The entry rate to GCSE examinations in languages is well-above-average, which makes it difficult to make valid comparisons about quality in national terms. In 2001, although not in 2002, pupils did considerably better overall in GCSE than predictions based on the cognitive ability tests national sample suggested they would.

239. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations is satisfactory overall, although the 2001 results were stronger than those in 2002. In 2001, the French results were just above the national average, and in Spanish and German were close to the average. The difference in performance between girls and boys was wider than is the case nationally: girls achieved better than boys in German in particular. Boys did less well in this than in their other subjects although they performed better in the following year. A small group of six students took Russian and three gained A*-C grades, which represents satisfactory achievement. In 2002, although the entry rate for GCSE languages was much lower than in 2001, results in French fell to just below average, and performance in German and Spanish was similar to the previous year. Boys performed better compared with girls in German but, overall in languages, the difference between boys' and girls' performance remained wide.

240. In Year 9, standards in lessons and other work seen are satisfactory. Nearly all pupils study two languages. This has allowed less time for a main language than if only one language had been studied, although the curriculum for next year has addressed this problem. Year 9 pupils have in the past had less time for their main language than those currently in Years 7 and 8. This has affected the progress of Year 9 pupils. In addition, a wide choice of languages has meant that groups contain a broader range of ability than is usually found in schools using sets. Under these arrangements, the lessons seen indicated that higher-attaining pupils are not challenged consistently enough to develop fully their language skills, particularly in writing and speaking. In Year 9, the higher-attaining pupils have met the past tense from Year 8 onwards. However, they need to do more extended writing to demonstrate their control of this aspect of grammar. The work of middle and lower-attaining pupils is not sufficiently varied or active. The literacy skills of good presentation and accuracy in writing are developed unevenly. In the lessons seen, the higher-attaining pupils tended to answer in reading and speaking activities before the larger number of middle-attaining pupils. Lower-attaining pupils frequently lack the intensive language practice suited to their particular needs and, as a result, are often very hesitant in using the foreign language. Pupils with

special educational needs do not always make adequate progress, especially when there is no classroom assistant to support them, as is sometimes the case. Finer setting will, however, be made possible by the new curriculum structure being introduced.

241. Standards in lessons and other work seen in Year 11 are at least average overall. Pupils' progress improves in Years 10 and 11 because of the increased amount of time allocated to languages, because of more effective teaching overall and because of teachers' concentration on examination requirements for written coursework and the speaking test. Good practice was observed. In a Year 11 second-language French group, for example, higher-attaining pupils responded enthusiastically to good teaching and made good progress in all language skills, watching a video on the re-cycling of waste in French-speaking Africa. They listened carefully and many reported well in French on what they had observed. However, some pupils do not catch up all the lost ground. Overall standards are not yet what they should be in a Language College. For example, in a wide-ability German group in Year 11, only the few higher-attaining pupils could recall vocabulary and work done in previous lessons. Other pupils made slow progress.

242. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are examples of very good practice, but also weaknesses. Teachers plan carefully, so that pupils have opportunities to encounter most language skills in each lesson. Teachers often set clear objectives at the beginning of the lesson so that pupils are fully aware of what is expected of them. However, 'plenary' sessions at the end of lessons are rare, and in consequence pupils do not have enough chances to reflect on their own contribution and learning. Teachers have good knowledge of the languages they teach and several have made great efforts to become fluent in their second or third language. Even so, teachers do not always ensure that they use the language sufficiently in the classroom, to enable pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills effectively. Pupils are not always sure of the phrases they should use for simple classroom requests, and there is little display of the relevant terms in each classroom. Some game and fun activities were seen, but not enough of the vigorous and intensive language practice sessions that really enthuse pupils to make efforts to overcome shyness and inhibitions. The competitive element in learning is often missed, as are the visual and 'hands-on' approaches, which would meet the needs of many pupils. Nevertheless, a few teachers use such techniques very well. Although there is good practice in marking, it is of variable quality and regularity across the department, and teachers have differing expectations concerning literacy practices and 'settler' activities at the beginning of lessons. Teachers generally manage pupils well but on a few occasions, control of boys' behaviour is not firm enough, particularly when the boys are not occupied sufficiently. Several teachers captured the interest and concentration of many pupils through good practice in ICT but less was seen overall than might be expected in a Language College.

243. The management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department organises the detail and everyday functioning of the department well. Documentation is meticulous and mostly very helpful, and the schemes of work are used appropriately as working documents to be revised over time. Although progress is being made in this regard – she does not yet provide clear enough leadership in monitoring teaching and exercise books as a means of raising standards. Research for more up-to-date and appropriate textbooks is in hand. The range of visits and exchanges is good, but e-mail links and projects with schools abroad are not yet in place. Much hard and effective work has been done to overcome recent staffing difficulties and the new foreign language assistants already provide valuable support.

244. There are promising signs for the future and staffing difficulties have been largely overcome. Nevertheless, at present improvement since the last inspection remains unsatisfactory overall. Although planning for improvement is increasingly purposeful and well informed, GCSE results have not yet shown the intended enhancement in standards. The

purpose-built Language Centre is very much better than the previous accommodation. The newly established school leadership team demonstrates a strong commitment to raising standards of achievement within the languages department and across the school through the further development of the language college. Their phase 3 language college application represents an ambitious yet achievable plan for radical improvement. In this, the high quality support from the local Higher Education Institution will be particularly significant.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Consistently good results in GCSE examinations.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Large numbers of pupils involved in instrumental tuition.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress is inadequate.
- The numbers of pupils opting to continue the subject after Year 9 are small.
- Leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

245. Standards of attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9 are below national expectations. Levels of attainment in performing and composing are generally below and at times well-below expectations for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Although work of a good standard was noted in instrumental and extra curricular work, some of the written and recorded work observed reflected an absence of care on the part of pupils and low expectation on the part of the teacher. Departmental assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that overall, pupils who achieve level 5 or beyond are about 15 per cent fewer in the school than the national average.

246. GCSE results in the past three years have been consistently above average. The trend has been for the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C results to be much higher than the national average but group sizes have been small and there is an absence of attainment at grade A*. Instrumental examinations reflect good and very good standards of attainment by the school's instrumentalists and vocalists.

247. There is a significant disparity in the level of knowledge, skills and understanding which Year 7 pupils bring with them from their various partner primary schools. These different starting points create problems, particularly in performance and composition activities. Although fewer pupils than the national average reach the expected standard at the end of Year 9, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory progress overall.

248. Progress by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Progress of pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language is satisfactory because of the way which teachers support and provide for them. Similarly, the achievement of pupils who are gifted and talented is satisfactory.

249. Teaching is satisfactory in years 7 to 9. At times, teaching motivates pupils and produces good levels of learning. Often there is a good pupil and teacher relationship. Teachers support pupils' particular needs successfully through materials which are well-matched to pupils' needs. Conversely, the teaching style is sometimes too limited and this fails to motivate pupils, and limits their learning in the subject. Opportunities to teach through musical demonstration are sometimes missed and opportunities for pupils to learn through experiencing and exploring music in a variety of ways are not abundant. For example,

although there is classroom percussion and music technology equipment available, this is not used to advantage. Teachers' expectations sometimes fail to sufficiently challenge pupils with a consequent impact on their learning and overall attainment. The department staff have good subject knowledge and well-developed skills in many areas. However there is a need for professional development to enable a high level of performance in all areas of a contemporary secondary school music department. The quality and use of ongoing assessment and marking, and its use for planning is unsatisfactory.

250. The curriculum is outdated and needs to contain more reference to 20th century composers and ways of composing for example, minimalism/ music for film, video or advertisements. More opportunities for whole class or group practical activities, such as singing or percussion work, together with a variety of composition experiences would enhance pupils' experiences in music. The current curriculum does not adequately support pupils' personal development through the subject. Homework is not used regularly to reinforce learning or to encourage research. The quantity of music books in the Library is inadequate for class research activities. There are opportunities for pupils to take up or continue instrumental and vocal tuition; here the quality of teaching and learning is good.

251. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. It reflects good subject knowledge, is concise, more appropriately focused and successful, although opportunities to use the available music technology equipment, for example to record and play back short compositions, are not exploited. With the change in syllabus it is important that teaching skills and activities are correctly focused on the requirements of course work and examination papers. Pupils studying music after Year 9 are able to have free tuition to support the course.

252. The quality of pupil's learning in Years 7,8 and 9 is satisfactory overall. In several lessons pupils concentrated well and worked at least at a satisfactory pace to make progress in their learning. Pupils in Year 8 show a confident understanding of variation in a tune, following simple notation successfully. Year 7 pupils enjoy listening to and successfully identifying waltz and marching music extracts and Year 9 pupils learn how to play syncopated phrases on the keyboard in a ragtime piece. However, because of the imbalance of the time allocated to performing and composing, the overall extension of their knowledge, skills, and understanding in these areas has been unsatisfactory. In many cases, but not all, the range of apparently inadequate musical opportunities in pupils' previous schools has compounded this. The monitoring and marking of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory. Pupils need feedback regarding their level of attainment with strategies on how they can improve and accurate feedback can only come from regular monitoring. Behaviour in the department and pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory. Pupils often concentrate well and have a good relationship with the teacher, reflected in the relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Because of the appropriate support provided for their learning, pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language have made at least satisfactory progress in their learning

253. Pupils learn well in their GCSE lessons. Pupils in Year 10 learned successfully how to compose short phrases using a serial technique and Year 11 pupils learned about modulation, the relationship and significance of new keys. Several pupils demonstrated successful learning in their aural test. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good relationships with the teacher and are developing a real love of music through their successful learning.

254. The department is well established but has a low profile in the school and community. Ninety-seven pupils are involved in instrumental and vocal tuition and five regular extra-curricular opportunities are available. These ensembles need expanding in number to involve all pupils having tuition, led by visiting instrumental teachers. Links with the County Music and Advisory Service would bring many benefits to enrich the department. The annual musical production links with drama and art and design to offer further performance experiences and enhance the artistic ethos of the school. However, there are still unresolved leadership and management tasks from the previous inspection, which detract from the quality of opportunities for pupils. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' work is still under developed. The use of music technology is still not part of pupils' regular experience in the department and homework is not used to advantage. Information about pupils' achievement is not readily available and needs to be used for planning to raise the levels of attainment of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 in particular. Some of the deadlines in the most current development plan, 2001-2002, have been missed and some fundamental departmental documentation needs updating. Additional accommodation and resources are needed if the development of music technology and rock music is to be successful.

255. Since the last inspection report in 1997 the improvement has been unsatisfactory. Some areas of provision have deteriorated. Some pupils make progress but still need more development to fully exploit their potential. Appropriate challenging musical opportunities for pupils at all levels are needed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department.
- Good teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils' interest and attitude towards physical education.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in GCSE theory by increasing the amount of pupils' own work for their files.
- Units of work to be longer and have more detail to enable better development of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Make more use of National Curriculum levels in assessment of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

256. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in physical education aged 14 in 2002 indicate that pupils are achieving above the levels expected for their age.

257. GCSE results, which have been above the national average in the previous two years, were just below national average in 2002 with half of the pupils gaining A*-C although all gained a grade.

258. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11, although in some practical activities, such as GCSE badminton, standards are above levels expected for their age. In Year 7 basketball, girls are making good progress in dribbling and passing after only three lessons in this new activity. In Year 8 orienteering pupils understand how to orient a map and pick out landmarks as reference points. They are able to plan simple routes, taking into account high ground and the need to

conserve energy during a race. Pupils are aware of safety issues and emergency procedures in the event of accidents when out on a course. In Year 9 basketball standards are good, with the majority of pupils working above levels expected for their age. Girls make good use of their experience in netball to use passing and defending skills in basketball. Boys show good development in lay up shooting as they improve their success rate. In GCSE badminton in Year 10 standards are good, with pupils able to hit high clears with sufficient depth and make use of drop shots effectively. They understand doubles formation and scoring. In GCSE theory in this year, pupils understand the variety of training for different sports, and the aerobic and anaerobic elements needed in a range of sports. In Year 11 GCSE pupils have a satisfactory understanding of training methods and psychological and physical attributes affecting performance and participation in sport. In the short GCSE course in this year pupils show a good understanding of the influence media has on sport. Standards of work of pupils not taking a GCSE course in physical education are average and pupils make satisfactory progress. In badminton, pupils understand basic tactics, can produce a range of strokes and make satisfactory progress as they practise and refine their skills during the lesson.

259. Teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them to learn new skills and improve existing ones. Lessons are well planned, with well-selected and appropriate practices, for pupils of all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs. Classes are very well-managed, pupils well-behaved in all lessons and good relationships contribute to pupils learning. Teachers make good use of question and answer, which help pupils share ideas and learn effectively in both classroom based lessons as well as in practical ones. In years 7 to 9, insufficient use is made of the National Curriculum levels as a basis for monitoring pupil progress. The use of a video camera in teaching badminton in GCSE practical sessions allows pupils to evaluate their own and others' performances. In GCSE theory, there is good range of teaching styles, making effective use of selected video, paired and group work which encourage pupils to think about issues and use their own experiences. Pupils receive considerable amounts of information in the form of work sheets and notes. However pupils do not produce much of their own work in the form of notes and diagrams for their files. In most lessons, teachers lead warm up effectively, but pupils could take more responsibility for this at the start of lessons. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good.

260. In all lessons, pupils of all attainment levels make progress in learning new skills and improve and refine existing ones as they increase their knowledge and understanding of a variety of activities. Pupils build on skills year by year, and achievement is good by Year 9. Practical performances in GCSE for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are good, but this is not always matched by their standards in the theory of the subject. However achievement is satisfactory as pupils' work matches their predicted grades.

261. There is very good leadership and management of the department with a shared vision to provide good experiences in physical education for all pupils. However schemes of work lack information about progression in activities, and some units of work are too short to develop skills, knowledge and understanding. The indoor accommodation is satisfactory on the Heversham site, but when large numbers of pupils are timetabled for physical education at the same time the accommodation is insufficient. Extra curricular opportunities are very good with a wide range of teams and clubs, as well as the annual Dallam Sports Camp. The physical education department is committed to providing opportunities for all pupils, including gifted and talented through these activities and receives valuable help from many other members of staff. This extensive range of extra-curricular activities is strength of the school.

262. Since the last inspection satisfactory progress has been made with standards of attainment, teaching and pupils' attitudes remaining good. However in Years 10 and 11 pupils taking GCSE physical education courses do not get any core physical education, this is unsatisfactory and was an issue in physical education in the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is a high proportion of good and excellent teaching.
- Teachers provide very good support for pupils taking the GCSE short course.
- There is a consistent focus on the teaching of religious and moral issues.
- Lessons have clear objectives and activities are crisply paced.

Areas for improvement

- The study of other faiths is insufficiently developed and pupils do not see this is a strength of religious education.
- There is not enough emphasis on the teaching of literacy and ICT skills.
- Some tasks are insufficiently challenging, especially for the more able pupils.

263. Standards in Year 9 are average. Standards are highest when pupils are learning from religion, as illustrated by their reflective personal responses to the differing religious views of key international figures and their thoughtful analysis of their surveys of views about life after death. Attainment varies when pupils are learning about religion. Their best work in this aspect of the subject contains explanations about religious beliefs and actions, as in their notes about rites of passage and Judaism. However pupils do not always try to explain why followers of a particular religion act in the way they do. More able pupils are capable of more challenging tasks and therefore make only satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9. Less able pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and take care over the organisation and presentation of their notes.

264. The standard of the work is above average in Year 11. The most able students produce work of a very high standard and make good progress in Years 10 and 11. The high quality of their personal reflection about subtle and complex issues, such as differing views about creation or the problem of suffering illustrates this. The tasks are carefully adapted for less able students and this enables them to make good progress in considering some difficult ideas. They are not however given enough opportunity to structure and develop their own notes. The GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 were significantly above the national average and this pattern is consistent with the high proportion of good and excellent teaching observed during the inspection. The proportion of A*-C results dropped significantly in 2002, although this can be explained by a number of timetable and organisational difficulties.

265. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. They work in an orderly and diligent manner and take responsibility for their studies. They clearly value the opportunity to discuss religious issues but make less reference to the benefits of learning about other faiths and cultures.

266. Teaching and learning are good overall. The evident strengths include teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and effective planning. These result in the careful explanation of key objectives at the start of lessons and crisply paced activities. There is good use of audio recordings to engage students. Key concepts are reinforced by the effective use of diagrams to structure learning. Pupils are also given very clear and succinct revision notes to

help them to prepare for the GCSE examinations. The excellent lessons, such as a Year 11 lesson focusing on the concepts of equality and justice, are characterised by creative teaching, excellent use of humour to engage and motivate pupils and reflective and perceptive questioning. The main weaknesses observed in the teaching and learning included setting insufficiently challenging work for more able pupils in Years 7 to 9, not providing enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on gains in understanding at the end of lessons and not paying sufficient attention to the development of writing and ICT skills.

267. The department is ably led by a thoughtful and reflective co-ordinator who has a clear grasp of the key elements of effective teaching and learning. There is therefore good management of the subject. The school is using carefully adapted versions of nationally produced schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and is piloting new approaches to assessment in Year 7. This now needs to be extended for Years 10 and 11. The monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is not systematic enough. The programme of visits to local places of worship should be restarted and there is not enough use of the school library to support investigative work in the classroom. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, especially in helping pupils to prepare for examinations and improving the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9. Important improvements have also been made in the pace of lessons and the assessment of pupils' work.

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

In the inspection, 10 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	1	-	62	-	15	-	1.5
Biology	1	100	52	-	2	3.0	0.8
Chemistry	1	100	43	-	5	1.0	0.8
Religious studies	1	100	85	-	26	1.0	2.4

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	6	100	87	67	43	7.0	5.8
Biology	17	100	88	41	34	6.2	5.3
Chemistry	5	100	90	40	43	6.0	5.9
Physics	8	88	88	63	40	6.8	5.7
Other sciences	3	100	90	33	30	6.0	5.1
Design and technology	7	100	91	29	30	5.1	5.4
Economics	8	88	89	50	36	6.0	5.5
Computer studies	13	100	86	23	23	5.7	4.6
Sport/PE studies	7	100	92	14	25	5.4	5.1
Art and design	2	100	96	-	46	4.0	6.6
History	7	57	88	29	35	3.1	5.5
Geography	9	100	92	56	38	7.1	5.7
Religious studies	3	100	92	-	38	2.7	5.8
Sociology	4	100	86	50	35	5.5	5.3
General studies	23	78	85	26	30	4.0	4.9
English literature	5	100	95	40	37	6.0	5.9
French	1	-	89	-	38	-	5.6

Other languages	4	100	93	75	56	8.5	6.8
Spanish	4	50	89	-	39	2.0	5.7

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology. The work in chemistry and physics in the sixth form was sampled during the inspection. There is good provision for A-level chemistry although student numbers in Year 13 are small. Teaching is good and students are developing a good understanding of Chemistry. Standards achieved are above the national average. There is very good provision for A-level physics. Teaching is very good. The supported self-study approach which includes a good balance between independent working and teacher support, together with detailed marking of work and checking of notes, is very effective in helping pupils attain very high standards in their final examinations.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and fully involves students in their learning.
- Standards in GCSE A-level in 2001 are very good and improved in 2002. Standards in previous years are consistent with those in 2001.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students continuing with mathematics from Year 12 to Year 13.

268. The GCSE A-level examination results in 2001 were well-above national averages. Attainment in the three-year period including 2001 was similar to this for the number of candidates that varied between six and nine. In 2002 the number of candidates increased to eleven and in both 2001 and 2002 all candidates obtained passes with approximately two thirds of then obtaining A and B grades. In relation to their GCSE results, pupils improved in attainment. Attainment in GCSE AS level at the end of Year 12 showed a significant improvement from 2001 to 2002. In 2001 approximately two thirds of students passed and in 2002 almost all attaining A and B grades. Retention rates to completion of A-level are low as a significant number of students having completed the AS course at the end of the first year do not progress to A-level

269. The standards of current students are above average and achievement is good. Students in the present Year 13 have attainment higher than that predicted by previous GCSE performance. In all three observed lessons in Year 13 students took a full part in their learning. In one lesson, students combined trigonometrical expressions and in another plotted algebraic equations graphically. In both these lessons the teacher made good use of computer support. The third lesson ensured that work on quadratic equations was reinforced and extended.

270. There is a wider range of attainment of the twenty-two students in Year 12 in comparison with the smaller group in Year 13. However, attainment is above average and consistent with previous GCSE results. Some overseas students have a different mathematical background from those students previously in Year 11 and find difficulty with the language used in statistics problems. In a long lesson on statistical probabilities, students applied basic properties of areas of geometrical shapes to investigate probabilities in some depth. In another lesson, algebraic expressions were displayed on a computer screen so that the slope of the graph was investigated in detail. In another observed class, students gained in confidence in GCSE work prior to retaking that examination.

271. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers bring students successfully into their learning by using good question and answer techniques. Teachers make good use of the support given by computer displays to demonstrate or to check graphs. They have sound knowledge of mathematics. Teachers have high expectations and they try to make challenging topics interesting so that they secure the full co-operation of students. Good use is made of homework to give opportunities for further study, This work is marked in detail by teachers. Teachers are aware of the difficulties faced by overseas students and give them individual support.

272. Students learn well. They respond well to teachers' questions and support each other in class discussions. They plot points or outline graphs for the benefit of the whole class on computer screens. Students have a modern textbook to support their independent learning. The improvement in standards as students' progress through the course is matched by increased understanding and confidence in individual lessons. Students have access to computers and their work is presented tidily.

273. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. Teachers combine a range of experience with new ideas from younger staff. All have a common approach that is effective. Schemes of work have been revised in keeping with syllabus changes to meet the requirements of the new examination structure. There is a focus on topics in pure mathematics and statistics that is appropriate to the needs of these students. The attainment of students is tracked from GCSE, GCSE AS-level to the final GCSE A-level grade to monitor the progress made by them.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision for biology is **very good**.

Strengths

- A-level Biology results are well-above national averages.
- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers have a detailed understanding of their subject, of how to teach it and of examination requirements.
- Students' notes are of high quality and they provide a very good basis for further study and revision.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient specialist accommodation for teaching science on the Heversham site and this limits the laboratory time available for this very popular subject.

274. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well-above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. These high standards are achieved because of the high quality teaching and support they receive from their teachers. The students often get better results in A-level biology than they do in other A-level subjects. They make very good progress over the two-year A-level biology course. Retention rates over the two-year A-level course are satisfactory.

275. The standards of work seen during the inspection week match the very good examination results. Students are developing a detailed knowledge and understanding of biological topics. They apply their knowledge and understanding very well to explain scientific issues, such as using their knowledge about the carbon cycle to explain how people's actions affect the environment.

276. Students in Year 12 are only in the early stages of the course but are already achieving well. They have a very secure and detailed understanding of enzyme action in the human body.

277. Teaching and learning in biology are very good. A-level biology teachers are very knowledgeable and have a good awareness of recent research. They are highly committed and enthusiastic about their subject and they have very high expectations of their students. The students respond very well to their teaching. They listen attentively and are confident in answering questions and presenting their views and ideas. The use of a recent and relevant newspaper article 'Crayfish find sex traps a dead end' was particularly effective in teaching students how to use their knowledge to interpret recent research.

278. A good range of teaching approaches is used. They are very effective in helping the students learn. Teachers' explanations and questions are very good. Their use of annotated diagrams and flow charts helps students to develop detailed understanding of complex biological processes. Students make detailed and comprehensive notes that provide a very good basis for further study and revision. The regular use of past examination questions also supports students in attaining highly in their public examinations.

279. Level biology provision is managed very well. The teaching programme is well organised and staff are clear about their responsibilities. There is insufficient laboratory accommodation for A-level science on the Heversham site which limits the time available for practical work.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The AS and A-level course allows students to design products in areas of interest to them.
- Students' attitudes to work are very good.
- Students make good progress from their GCSE courses.

Areas for improvement

- Supporting the most able students in order to achieve grade A.

280. Standards in A-level design and technology in 2001 were in line with the national average. All students gained grades A-E. In 2002 all students gained a grade B or C and made at least the progress expected from their GCSE. All improved on the grade they attained in their AS level design and technology course. The trend over the last three years shows improving examination results. No student attained grade A. Retention rates over the two-year A-level course are satisfactory.

281. The standard of work seen from Year 13 students is better than average and achievement is good. They are working hard to improve on the AS level grades they achieved last year. There is a wide range of ability in the Year 12 Advanced Subsidiary (AS) group and all students are making good progress. Students are working at the level expected and attaining standards that are average at an early stage in the course.

282. Good teaching, good resources and the students' very good attitudes to the work means that learning takes place and progress is good.

283. Teaching in the sixth form is good. The teacher has very good knowledge of the subject and the skills to support the range of activities that are undertaken by the students. Lessons are well-structured with time well-used to allow for individual work as well as whole class teaching of activities that help students to extend their knowledge and skill. Students are given the support they require to take responsibility for the progress of their major project. As a result they work independently to plan and proceed with the different stages of their product design. They extend their learning through individual research. They listen carefully to the individual advice they are given in class for further development and improvement. The teacher monitors the progress of students' work. Discussion with the teacher helps students to extend their thinking and the breadth and depth of their work. Year 13 students were working on their final design specifications and discussions with the teacher showed that they were thinking very carefully about what they wanted to do. They were considering the requirements of their client, factors like size, style, form, shape and colour as well as technical issues related to the materials they might use and the manufacturing processes. Some were beginning to model their ideas to check out particular aspects of their designs. Some were preparing final drawings to discuss with their client showing the effects, for instance, of different colour ways. The teacher has very good knowledge of the requirements of the examination and students understand the basis on which their work is assessed.

284. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and, Which contributes to their very good achievement. They enjoy their design and technology activities; work enthusiastically and with commitment; they are hard-working and ambitious; they want to do well; they understand the deadlines they need to meet and undertake significant amounts of work independently at home. Their research is very thorough and is used well to help them to develop ideas; they are creative in their ideas. An examination of design folders from Year 12 and Year 13 students shows high-quality work. Students are using their literacy, numeracy and drawing skills to present information well and put a lot of time and effort into communicating the progress of their designs. The use of ICT enhances their work. Finished products and models show precision and a good understanding of the processes used to work with the materials they choose.

285. There is one course in AS/A-level design and technology, which allows students to identify areas of personal interest in which to undertake product design. This motivates pupils and leads to working solutions to real problems and quality models and products. Project briefs often arise from work experience, work in the community or leisure activities and a range of people from the local community support the students' work. There is a wide range of individual responses to the requirements of the course. One student is designing and making a portable backdrop for a local band. She had discussed ideas with members of the band and was looking at web sites of national bands to help to finalise her design of the logo. She had undertaken research and given considerable thought to the technical issues of construction so that it would be flexible enough to use in different venues. She intends to use the logo to design promotional material as well. Students are challenged by the activities they undertake and design folders and finished products show the good progress they make and the high standards they achieve.

286. Leadership and management are good. The course is well organised and resourced. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on ICT.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well-above the national average; achievement is good at AS and A-level.
- Teaching is good and teachers show good knowledge of the subject.
- Students work well and create complex ICT applications.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of gender take-up of AS/A-level.
- More first-hand experiences for students of uses of ICT by organisations outside the school.
- Further development of opportunities for all students in the sixth form to improve their ICT knowledge and capability.

287. AS and A-level examination results are well above the national average. Results have improved since the last inspection. Retention rates over the two-year A-level course are very good.

288. Standards of students' work seen were above the national average. An AS project had an initial specification draft for a project developing a solution for a mail-order company with a single retail outlet of a product sales system. The student produced a good data-flow diagram and a prototype with advanced spreadsheet features. Higher-attaining A-level students' have produced a specification for a company selling flights and a complex booking system using a database management system. They have also studied case studies of warehousing and the London ambulance system.

289. Teaching and learning are good on AS and A-level ICT courses. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Planning is very effective, expectations for all students are very high and very good use is made of the time in lessons. Good on-going intervention and support are provided to help students to improve their practical work, undertake problem-solving activities and complete case studies. Students' work includes coursework projects using links with end-users working in contexts such as a guitar pricing system for a manufacturer and an insurance quotation system. Teaching includes whole class demonstration of techniques in the context of a problem to be solved. Reference is also made to real-life problems and recent headline news regarding high profile failed information and technology applications. This helps students to consider improvements in their own projects.

290. Students have learned to use spreadsheet macros and application programming routines to a high level. They trial their ideas and are able to apply new teaching to the context in which they are working. Teaching enables all students to develop projects further and incorporate ideas and strategies, for example: security techniques in saving files. Expectations are high and all students are expected to pass the AS/A-level courses, including those who have not completed GCSE ICT. All students continue to develop their projects at home and transfer their files via floppy disc.

291. Students' attitudes and responses are good overall. Students complete complex projects by working independently after initial introduction to concepts. All are engaged in tasks and show interest in their projects. They are keen to explain the background and relevance of the projects. Students work individually, without discussion, talking with the teacher and explaining their project. They are engaged in a problem-solving approach with their projects. There is a quiet, intense working atmosphere in the lessons.

292. All sixth form students overall have access to the ICT facilities. Their use of these facilities is not monitored nor are all sixth form students taught ICT at the equivalent level of key skills unless they are taking an ICT course to examination level. In design and technology in Year 13, there is good use of ICT to support the A-level project design folders: students effectively use word processing, digital cameras, redrafting and the school intranet to enhance their projects. Use of ICT in other subjects is variable. Satellite television to see German news is available in the Language Centre; this facility is not well used as the sixth form are not based at the same site as the Language Centre. Parents from abroad to communicate with staff and students sometimes use E-mail.

293. Since the last inspection Internet and e-mail facilities have improved and the number of computers has been increased. There is good Community Education provision for ICT in the Sixth Form and this can be used during evenings and weekends by boarding pupils.

294. Leadership and management of ICT is satisfactory. The courses are well organised but there are insufficient first hand experiences for students of the uses of ICT by organisations outside the school. The head of department is based at the sixth form centre. A key skills course in ICT is planned for introduction to the sixth form in Autumn 2003. Overall, very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

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**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department.
- Very good teaching.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Students' positive attitudes towards physical education.

Areas for improvement

- More use of ICT in teaching.

295. Results in AS and A-level courses are above the national average. In the AS course in 2001 two-fifths of students gained A/B grades, which was above the national average. Of these all but one student continued with the subject in the A-level course and a quarter of these students gained A-B grades. Standards in 2002 AS improved on the previous year and in over half the modules taken over half were A-B grades. Retention rates over the two-year A-level course are satisfactory.

296. The standards of work are above average and achievement is good. In AS in 'Contemporary Issues' students have satisfactory understanding of what is meant by

physical education, and how elements such as games, fitness and aesthetic activities contribute to the subject. They have knowledge of more advanced anatomy and physiology, particularly relating to muscular and skeletal systems and how these work in conjunction to produce movements in sporting activities. Students have satisfactory knowledge of training methods and are making good use of this as they plan their personal exercise programmes. They are able to describe the relationship between recovery rates and fitness levels, although some students who did not take the full GCSE physical education in the previous year are uncertain about threshold and training zones. In A-level 'History of Sport', students have knowledge of popular recreation, mob games and the 'codification' of games. In their study of the influence of the public school on sporting activities, students are learning about athleticism. They understand issues such as fair play, moral integrity and teamwork. In the psychology section of the courses students are aware of how personality influences sports performances.

297. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations, which helps students make progress in their understanding of the subject. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, which is evident in lively, well-planned lessons. Good ranges of teaching styles are used, making use of video, paired and group work. Tasks are challenging as in a Year 12 class where students made detailed observations of primary school pupils in the sports hall, and shared information to explain concepts of physical education. Students' positive attitudes are a significant factor in their learning. They are very interested in the subject, and keen to increase their knowledge and understanding. Students enjoy their AS/A-level lessons, and value the subject. Many have selected it as a qualification to contribute to their career aspirations of physiotherapy, sports science and teaching. Students' work is well marked, and teachers' good grasp of the examination requirements helps students to understand what is required of them to get good marks in examinations. Some use is made of digital cameras and heart monitors, although more use could be made of computer technology in presenting students with information. The annual weekend outdoor activities course held locally gives students the opportunity to take mountain activities as a practical activity for their course work. The established residential course at Cardiff University provides students with very good revision opportunities for their work in anatomy and physiology and skill acquisition.

298. Students are making good progress in the subject, as they increase their knowledge and understanding, building on their GCSE work. Students who have not taken GCSE make particularly good progress as they catch up to other students in their class who have the foundations of the subject through GCSE experience. There was good achievement in AS in 2002 with many students gaining results above their predicted grades. A-level results in 2002 were in line with the national average and based on the AS scores in 2001 there was satisfactory achievement by these students.

299. The subject is very well led and managed. The curriculum is well-planned and meets the requirements of the examination syllabus. Additionally students are also able to take Community Sports Leaders Awards, and there is a wide range of recreational activities at lunchtime and during sixth form recreation lessons, where students can take part in traditional games, outdoor activities and riding. There are school teams for rugby, soccer and hockey, providing further opportunities for higher-attaining and talented students.

300. There has been good progress since the last inspection, with good curriculum opportunities in both examination and recreational courses. The quality of teaching is very good and students have very good attitudes towards the subject, which contributes to the good progress they make.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Attainment is above average.
- Accommodation is excellent.
- There are very good extra-curricular opportunities to visit galleries, local exhibitions and access to high-quality community adult education art classes.
- Students' attitudes to art and design are very good with a sincere commitment to producing high-quality artworks.

Areas for improvement

- Development of sustained and extended critical writing.
- Consistent use of advanced aesthetic and technical art vocabulary.

301. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because of the consistent very good teaching and learning. Staff are supportive, teach and intervene sensitively to discuss progress and development. Students' positive attitudes and conscientious approach to study enable their learning in art and design to be very good. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their aesthetic and technical vocabulary, particularly through sustained and extended critical writing.

302. In 2001 very few students took A-level and AS level and examination results were average. The 2002 examinations involved higher numbers of students and results improved with half gaining A* to C grades. All students achieved a pass grade.

303. In Year 12 students are able to develop a series of preparatory designs and studies for still-life mixed-media project stimulated by visits to the Tate and Walker galleries. The students use acrylics and oil paints very well; they can control different effects from thin watery paint to overlaying colour and media. They can achieve high standards in large-scale artwork inspired by different artists such as O'Keeffe, Matisse, Kandinsky, Woodroffe and Diego Rivera. Drawing skills are good and sketchbooks reveal sensitive studies undertaken at the galleries and based on learning about Lowry, Degas, Spencer and Hockney. These works are supported by some pastiche and written contextual work. Development of sustained and extended critical writing and the consistent use of advanced aesthetic and technical art vocabulary could be improved. Three students also attend life-drawing classes within the community programme. This work, focusing on field and figure, the meeting of positive and negative space is of a very high standard and skills learnt are clearly applied to coursework and homework.

304. In Year 13 standards are above average. Students are able to investigate primary source material and develop work demonstrating a vast range of skills and techniques. Projects include the use of unusual stimuli such as microbes, Tarot cards, moral issues and the use of text in art and design. These projects have supportive preparatory studies triggered by a variety of sources. Artists studied are varied and include Mark Francis, Chris O'Fili and Stanley Spencer, Gottelier, Mullican and Armstrong. Local artists are studied and

William Delvaux's eclectic art. There is a rich folio of resource material used in conjunction with the skills and techniques. Students also access additional life-drawing and oil painting classes in the community.

305. Achievement in both years is very good and is helped by the good oral and written feedback from teachers. In addition, teachers are able to sensitively intervene to challenge and inspire students on a range of topics such as research, the work of professional and local artists, the use of different and more-challenging media and so enhance students' knowledge and understanding of art and design. Very good use is made of visits to galleries at the Tate and Walker, Abbot Hall and exhibitions, extending students' critical and contextual understanding about art and design and exploring its codes and conventions. There is a well-organised, structured learning atmosphere during lessons.

306. Students have a mature approach to their work and attitudes to the subject are very good with strong personal development and effective relationships with peers and teachers. The students' views about art and design are well articulated with a clear respect for the subject knowledge and guidance given. They know how to evaluate their work and they respond well to challenge and criticism, making informed judgements in advancing their studies.

307. The sixth form art and design programme is very well led and managed. Both teachers are committed to self-evaluation and promote independent learning along side a creative and intellectual study of art and design. This is an exciting department and strength of the school.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Examination results at Advanced Level are well-above the national average.
- Students make very good progress from GCSE to A-level.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and the requirements for the A-level examination.
- There is very good monitoring of students' progress and challenging targets are set.
- There is a good range of case-study materials, fieldwork and other investigative assignments to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching methods should be extended to ensure all students actively participate in lessons and consolidate their learning.
- More structured support should be provided for less-able students to ensure they make good progress.
- Schemes of work should be further developed to identify teaching strategies, resources and time scales.

308. The provision in geography caters for 44 students following AS and A-level courses. It is one of the most popular subjects in the school. In 2001, however, only 9 students were entered for A-level and in 2002 there were 10 candidates. This was a significant drop

compared with previous years when numbers typically exceeded 20 students. This drop in numbers partially reflects the fall in numbers entering the sixth form. Enrolments for geography A-level have risen this year with 25 in Year 12 and 19 in Year 13.

309. Examination results in 2001 and 2002 were well-above national standards, a pattern which reflects results in 1998 and 1999. In 2000 attainment was in line with national standards. Students achieved very well in each of the last two years. Retention rates in the subject appear low but this is predominantly due to students from Germany joining the school for a year. A few students leave school at the end of their AS course to pursue courses in further education; otherwise retention rates are good.

310. Observation of students in lessons and analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards achieved by students are above average overall. The current Year 13 group of 19 students is attaining standards that are above national standards and the majority of students, particularly the most able students, are making good progress. There are, however, a few students who are currently making unsatisfactory progress. These students do not have a sufficiently thorough understanding of the introductory physical geography unit on changing landforms and their management. Fieldwork assignments are of a consistently high standard. For example, students have a clear understanding of the factors which determine changes in vegetation on a fell: they can formulate their area for investigation clearly, collect, present and represent data appropriately, analyse and draw conclusion. Those attaining the highest standards are able to draw on a wide range of evidence to draw coherent and well-founded conclusions.

311. The attainment of students on entry to A-level courses has been above average in recent years, but the attainment on entry of the current Year 12 was below average. The majority of these students, nevertheless, is making good progress, and is responding particularly well to the demands of their coursework assignment. However, a few students, with below average grades at GCSE, are making unsatisfactory progress.

312. Teaching is good overall and all of it is at least satisfactory. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and of the requirements of the A-level specifications. Whole-class teaching has many good features. Teachers' explanations are clear, supported by good use of diagrams, texts and in some cases, videos. They exemplify concepts with reference to case studies, which helps to secure students' understanding, for example a study of the Aberfan disaster, analysing the causes, response and impact of mass movement on a slope. Students' work is regularly marked and feedback is helpful in enabling students to improve. Challenging fieldwork assignments enable students to develop a wide range of geographical skills of data collection, representation in tables and graphs, analysis and evaluation. There is very good use of ICT in the presentation of fieldwork and other investigative assignments. Some less-able students do not receive sufficiently structured support in order to make good progress: this need cannot be effectively met solely through individual tutorial support from the teacher during the lesson: too much time is lost waiting for help. Insufficient use is made of structured worksheets and model answers. With the exception of fieldwork and other investigative assignments, teaching is dominated by whole class teaching: exposition and explanation followed by students undertaking written exercises. There is insufficient opportunity for students to respond to probing questions and participate in class discussion. Students learn well. Their attendance is good: they listen attentively to their teacher, even through lengthy explanations. They respond well to the challenge of independent work and use the Internet and other external resources with confidence to enhance the quality of their assignments. Most have a secure understanding of complex geographical concepts and can give reasons for geographical patterns. The most-able students can talk authoritatively about what they have learned, write fluently and present well-reasoned analytical and evaluative reports. A few low-attaining students are finding it

difficult, without additional structured guidance to produce analytical and evaluative reports of A-level standard.

313. Leadership and management of sixth form geography is satisfactory overall and has a number of good features. Students' progress is well-monitored and challenging targets are set. Examination results are carefully analysed and strategies identified and implemented, such as teacher attendance at training provided by the examining body and better preparation of students for the synoptic unit. There is a very good range of fieldwork assignments and a good range of case study materials in texts and videos to support learning. Schemes of work lack detail on the range of teaching and learning strategies and the resources that will support teaching. They are limited to a list of topics with key questions for each term. ICT resources are good and students have access to good class texts and a range of reference books but there is an insufficient range of other resources such as photographs and fieldwork equipment.

History

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

Strengths

- Attitudes to learning are good and contribute to the progress made.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- Teachers have good detailed subject knowledge.
- In the best lessons, teachers make good use of open questions to encourage debate and check understanding.

Areas for improvement

- The current provision of resources which is insufficient and restricts wider independent reading by students.
- The variable quality of marking between staff.
- More opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.
- More guidance to students on organisation of files, use of key questions to further guide their note taking and ensure ease of revision.

314. In 2001 standards in A-level and 'AS' level are below the national average which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. However numbers taking A-level are low and direct comparisons with national standards are not therefore reliable. In 2001 students average point scores were low compared to achievement in their other subjects. There were two only two A-level candidates in 2002 and both obtained pass grades. Those taking 'AS' in 2002 attained pass grades but slightly lower than those predicted by the department.

315. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national averages and students make satisfactory progress in relation to their achievement at the age of 16. Students in Year 13 demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the period they were studying. For example, they could identify and analyse the key factors that led to the industrialisation of Britain and the inter-relationship between them. As one student expressed it 'Mechanisation required a more skilled work force, this meant better pay which ultimately led to the recognition of the need for a better educated work force'. At times, they remained too dependent on the teacher as the source of information and there was little evidence of individual investigative work.

316. Students in Year 12 have made a good transition from their GCSE studies and are producing promising 'AS' level essays. The work on Mussolini showed a clear understanding of the factors influencing his rise to power. Some of the low attaining students were less confident in the writing style required and used more descriptive approaches. In one lesson students were able to discuss the nature of Mussolini's dictatorship and the importance of propaganda to Italian fascism.

317. Teaching overall is satisfactory. In some lessons it is very good. Explanations are clear. Students are rigorously questioned to ensure that they have understood, and are ready to move on to associated practical work. These lessons include clear opportunities to review and consolidate their work. In other lessons the teaching is over-directive and the majority of talking is by the teacher. Consequently students have restricted opportunities to debate and discuss issues for themselves. Teachers have a very good knowledge and love of their subject and this is communicated to the students. Relationships between teachers and students are good.

318. The standard of marking of work is variable. At its best, it gives a clear diagnostic comment which enables students to identify strategies to further improve their work. Indeed on some occasions students are actively encouraged to evaluate the work of fellow students as well as consider the occasional 'model/exemplar' answer provided by the exam board. This is effective in helping students identify the key differences in levels of A-level answers. On other occasions comments are not beneficial in helping students move forward and does little to promote improvement in answers.

319. Work is generally well-organised in folders although in some cases there has been insufficient guidance from the teacher on the structuring of these notes. Past questions are not sufficiently well-used as a guide around which they could be structured. Time is well-used in lessons and students have the confidence to raise questions and ask for help as appropriate.

320. Students' response to the subject is good and they are very supportive of one another. For example, they frequently prompted and encouraged less confident students often adding to and supporting their answers. They were also able to give clear and succinct answers to summarise key events. As one Year 12 student commented on the murder of a socialist opponent of Mussolini 'Matteoti protested against fascism because it opposed freedom of speech – the fascists killed him which tragically proved Matteoti's point. This had an adverse impact on Mussolini's drive to dictatorship'

321. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Although course materials are well-structured and prepared, there is only limited monitoring of the subject. For example, there is insufficient consistency in diagnostic marking, in the monitoring of pupils' folders, the different teaching styles of staff and the nature and range of learning opportunities. The department has finally identified recruitment and retention into the sixth form as a key issue in its current action plan. It is important the good practice inherent within other aspects of the sixth form provision are effectively shared and disseminated.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and French. In English the focus was on English literature. The school does not offer any courses in English language. Drama was sampled during the inspection. One lesson was observed, in which the teaching developed the students' improvisational skills, sense of characterisation and understanding of text and context well. Performance in the examinations in 2002 show that attainment and progress are good. Spanish and German lessons were also sampled. Russian and Italian lessons in

Year 12 were not seen. Numbers taking German and Spanish have been low in recent years. In 2001 and 2002, only five out of nine students taking these subjects obtained a pass grade, and most performed below expectations based on their GCSE grades. Currently, in Year 13 two students study German and seven Spanish. The range of attainment is wide, but all these students are achieving satisfactorily.

English

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

Strengths

- Good quality teaching, which is often very good or excellent.
- Students have positive attitudes and approach their work with interest and enjoyment.
- The subject is well led.
- The quality of assessment and advice to students and its impact on their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing of expectations of students for confident, independent learning, especially those who are higher-attaining pupils.
- Greater provision for the very wide range of abilities within the classes.
- The use of ICT.

322. Standards close to the national average have been achieved in the AS and A-level examinations in English literature in 2001 and in 2002. In 2002, the proportion of students reaching the highest grades was lower than in 2001. The level of attainment at GCSE for students taking advanced courses is, overall, average. Students achieve satisfactorily overall in relation to their GCSE grades and there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Retention rates over the two-year A-level course are satisfactory.

323. Work seen in observations of lessons, discussions with teachers and students and a scrutiny of students' work reflects this picture. In Year 12, students at this early point in the year have a good understanding of the structure of the course and of the objectives of each module of work undertaken. Their written work is well-organised and shows a great deal of effort, both in coursework assignments and in students' notes. They understand the skills demanded by each of the modules and do their best to acquire them and put them into practice. The abilities of pupils are, however, very wide, ranging from students who have the potential to attain A grades to those who are currently working at E grade level. There are also some students from abroad who are only following the course for a short time and will not be sitting the examination modules. As a result, it is very difficult for teachers to answer the needs of the lower-attaining students at the same time as raising those who are more able to their full potential, so that the latter are not always enabled to make the advance of which they are capable. In a Year 12 lesson on Tennessee Williams's 'A Streetcar Named Desire', it was clear that the progress of many students was inhibited by their lack of social, historical and cultural background knowledge, despite the best efforts of the teacher to explain these contexts,

324. In Year 13, students demonstrate a secure knowledge of their set texts and most can form a coherent argument, supporting it with reference to the text, though with varying degrees of sophistication. More-able students show good understanding of the meaning and contexts of their texts, as was observed in an excellent lesson on Tennyson's 'Lady of Shallott', in which the teacher took great pains to match the level of difficulty of work to the ability of the students, so that all were able to comprehend and analyse the poem at their own level. In a Year 13 lesson preparing for coursework of a comparative nature on Jane Austen's 'Emma' and Ian McEwan's 'Atonement', students responded with interest and enthusiasm to

an interesting and innovative choice of texts, could evaluate them well and understood the critical concepts concerned. Students make very detailed and thorough notes, making good use of the additional resource material and notes supplied to them by teachers. The style of written work varies a great deal in fluency and competence. The breadth of vocabulary is also very variable. However, as in most Y12 and Y13 lessons observed, only the most-able students showed independence of thought and approach or real intellectual curiosity. Lower-ability students preferred to listen to and accept the teachers' ideas, albeit with interest and effort. In written work, it is clear that the difference between stronger and weaker work is usually linked to students' knowledge of literary context and the degree of personal research and initiative demonstrated by individual students.

325. Students' attitudes and response to the subject are good. They work with effort in lessons, are interested and work collaboratively and co-operatively. A good feature of lessons is the degree of concentration which students show, even when they find concepts and critical ideas difficult. They are always prepared to tackle work given them by the teachers and to listen intently to the ideas of others, even if they feel insecure in offering their own contributions to discussions.

326. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching has many very good features and is at its most effective when teachers encourage initiative and independence in students' attitudes to work. Teachers plan well for a variety of activities in their lessons, including whole class work, paired and group work, practical exercises and sections of written work. In this way, they harness the interest and concentration of students well, challenging them to work productively and with thought. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and are able to explain difficult texts with clarity, as observed in a Year 12 lesson on 'Hamlet', where the aim was to carry out a detailed study of the 'nunnery' scene. Teachers work hard on the teaching of Key Skills, ensuring that pupils acquire a good critical vocabulary and write with relevance and support. Work is regularly and very effectively assessed and marked, giving students direction on how they could improve their work, as well as much encouragement and praise for good progress. Teachers make frequent reference to assessment criteria, helping students to make the best possible use of their knowledge and understanding. There is insufficient use of information technology to aid students in undertaking more independent research for themselves.

327. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is fully aware of the problems posed by the very mixed range of ability in classes and has a good, clear vision for the development of the subject. The curriculum is well-managed and the head of department and the team of teachers who share the teaching with her provide a good programme of AS and A-level studies. The success of the course is demonstrated by the rapid rise in numbers of both boys and girls taking the subject in Year 12 and Year 13. Good use is made of the range of information that is available on students' progress to ensure that all are making the advances of which they are capable. The department ensures that students' studies are enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as theatre trips relevant to their courses. The use of many well-prepared background resources by teachers is most impressive.

328. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the number of students choosing the AS and A-level courses has risen significantly in the intervening years, demonstrating the popularity of the subject and the interest of students.

French

Strengths

- Students' attitudes towards the subject are positive and relationships between teachers and students are very supportive.
- The flexible teaching arrangements among teachers work well.
- Year 13 students have good additional support from a French language assistant, and will take part in an exchange visit before their A-level examinations.
- In 2002, A-level results improved compared with the previous year.

Areas for improvement

- Results have fluctuated considerably in recent years and numbers have often been low.
- Teachers do not log and monitor rigorously enough students' independent listening, reading, or use of ICT.

329. A-level results have fluctuated over the last four years. Numbers taking French have generally been low, making secure generalised comparisons with national results difficult. In 2000, six students made good progress and achieved results well-above national averages. In 2001, the single student under-performed and did not obtain a pass grade. In 2002, results improved and three out of five students received an A or B grade, with all students performing in line with their GCSE grade.

330. Overall, the standards in lessons and work seen in Year 13 were slightly above average. The range of attainment in the class is very wide but all students achieve at least satisfactorily. In the two lessons seen, the most talented students responded well to teaching that demanded much of them. Other students lack the vocabulary and fluency in speaking and writing to complete the same tasks as successfully, but nevertheless perform as well as expected, given their GCSE grades; they made good progress in the lessons seen because of their consistent concentration and attention to homework assignments. One less talented student made a good effort to participate, and received appropriate support and guidance from the teacher. Students are expected to use the Internet for research, but there is very little evidence of word-processing. Past work in students' files is well marked and there is clear evidence of progressive improvement in writing.

331. In relative terms, overall standards of Year 12 students are lower than those in Year 13. Most of the Year 12 students gained lower grades in GCSE than the Year 13 students. Nevertheless, Year 12 students achieve satisfactorily because of effective teaching. The students are only a little way into their course, but they made good progress in the lesson seen. Most have begun to tackle the greater concentration on grammatical accuracy well. They keep methodical lists of new vocabulary and all have regular tests of their learning. However, many lack confidence in speaking French and are not fluent in expressing themselves. They work well in pairs, though, and respond well to their teachers' corrections. Their attitudes towards French are good. One more talented student is quick to learn new vocabulary and grammar, and his writing already shows fluency and maturity of ideas. During the lesson, the teacher provided appropriate extension work for this student immediately he had finished an easier task, so that he could maintain his good progress. Although there are variations, particularly in Year 12, the standards reached in the work and lessons seen in both years represent satisfactory and often good achievement overall. Girls outnumber boys in both years, but the boys achieve appropriately, as do the gifted and talented students.

332. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen are good. Teachers use French all the time to develop students' listening and speaking skills. They plan their lessons carefully and adopt a flexible arrangement whereby they share and change the focus

regularly on differing aspects of the language. Teachers have clear objectives for each lesson and use a wide range of approaches and resources, including videos of recent films and newspaper articles. Teachers generally mark students' work carefully, but they do not require students to redraft work, or use word processors as a means of learning key skills. Teachers support their students well and work hard to promote students' good attitudes towards the language. All students have valuable opportunities to develop their speaking skills with the language assistant and most are taking part in an exchange visit to France before their mock A-level examinations.

333. The leadership and management of the subject are good. A new scheme of work effectively reflects the examination requirements. Teachers share ideas and good practice regularly. There are, however, no arrangements for the logging and monitoring of students' independent listening and reading work and their use of the Internet. Average-attaining students in particular need this monitoring. Students can access materials themselves, but not all students take advantage of this opportunity to the same extent. Students have been encouraged to help pupils younger than themselves in French lessons; several do this as part of their community service to the school and this is beneficial.