

INSPECTION REPORT

FARLINGAYE HIGH SCHOOL

Woodbridge

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124836

Headteacher: Ms Sue Hargadon

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 18th - 21st November 2002

Inspection number: 249751

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ransom Road
Woodbridge

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr David Caddick

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2918	Marjorie Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9163	Geoffrey Humphrey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21954	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
17269	Jean Johnson	Team inspector	Physics Religious education	
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20709	Douglas MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History	
23569	Daphne Nicholl	Team inspector	German Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Now good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector		
10941	Renee Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology Health and social care	
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector		
20497	Vernon Williams		Business studies Leisure and recreation Sociology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated on the edge of the small Suffolk town of Woodbridge. It is a community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18. With 1539 pupils on roll, it is much bigger than most secondary schools and has grown by about a quarter since the last inspection. There are fairly equal numbers of boys and girls overall. During 2001-02, the numbers leaving and joining the school were much the same as nationally. The school is oversubscribed, in the current Year 7 taking an additional 16 pupils. Four out of every ten pupils travel to school by bus from outlying villages. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language. Pupils' special needs mainly concern learning difficulties, dyslexia and behaviour difficulties; there is an average proportion of pupils with a statement of special needs, while overall, the proportion with special needs is lower than in most schools. The school serves pupils from widely differing backgrounds, whose circumstances overall are broadly average, while their eligibility for free school meals is lower than nationally. Overall, on entry, pupils' overall attainment is average.

The school received a School Achievement Award for excellence in 2000 and 2001. It was awarded specialist status as a Mathematics and Computing College from September 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Farlingaye is a very good school, where results are very high. Very good teaching on GCSE and A-level courses, combined with pupils' very positive attitudes to their work, leads to very good achievement. There is exceptional leadership and management by the headteacher, ably supported by very effective senior and other staff managers, and the governing body is extremely strong. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong vision and commitment drive the school, focused on learning and personal development
- The school knows how to make improvements and sustain them
- Rigorous processes for self-review strengthen the effectiveness of staff managers
- Relationships within the school and its wider community are excellent
- School life is enriched by the exceptional quality of activities outside lessons
- The school's care for the young people it serves is outstanding.

What could be improved

There are no significant areas for improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1997, improvement is very good, with excellent improvement in standards. The issues, most of which related to financial management, have been dealt with very well, although the issue of compliance with the requirements for collective worship is not fully resolved.

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	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	N/A	A*	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

- A-level results in 2001 were in the top five per cent (A*) of schools nationally.
- High standards were achieved in the 2001 Year 9 tests; results were well above average overall and in each of the three subjects, English, mathematics and science.
- In comparison with similar schools, English results were well above average, while those in mathematics and science were in the top five per cent nationally.
- Results have risen at a higher rate than they have nationally.
- The school's GCSE targets were broadly met for the average points score, and slightly exceeded for the challenging targets for five or more higher grades A*-C and one or more grades A*-G.
- In the sixth-form subjects inspected, standards in the work seen are well above average overall and in six subjects: mathematics, design and technology, physical education, art and design, religious education and German.
- Students' achievement is very good overall, and never less than good in individual subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils show clearly that the school is a learning community in which being determined to improve feels stimulating and 'cool'.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils are thoughtful and courteous, move around the site efficiently and settle to work speedily in lessons. This does not mean they are subdued!
Personal development and relationships	Very good, excellent in the sixth form. The effect of the school's approach to personal development shows in the remarkable progress evident between Years 7 and 8. Pupils develop into self-motivated and mature individuals who are aware of their responsibility to other people.
Attendance	Good; very good in the sixth form where it is higher than in Years 10-11.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

- There is significant improvement across the school since the last inspection.
- No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
- In the main school, out of 59 lessons, learning and teaching were at least good in nearly nine out of every ten, and very good or better in just over half; eight excellent lessons were seen.
- In the sixth form, out of 61 lessons, learning and teaching were at least good in nine out of every ten, and very good or better in nearly two thirds; nine excellent lessons were seen.
- In Years 7-11, very good teaching was seen in English, good in mathematics and satisfactory in science; in each subject, there were excellent lessons.

Sixth form

- Teaching is a sixth-form strength: all aspects are very good, including the teaching of key skills and the way the needs of all students' are met.
- The same is true for the quality of student's learning: all aspects are very good, in particular students' mature motivation, focused interest and independence.
- The quality of learning and teaching is excellent in physical education and German.
- Excellent lessons were seen in mathematics and leisure and recreation.
- There is excellent assessment in English, while in physics, assessment is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good, with excellent attention to ensuring that all pupils receive an equally good deal, and in the sixth form, to meeting students' needs and wishes. Excellence in additional activities. Preparatory courses for the sixth form on study skills and preparation for work placements need further development in a small number of advanced courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, excellent in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good for the extremely small number of pupils. They benefit from the school's care for individuals.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. These aspects of pupils' personal development are central to the school's values. For moral and social development, provision is a strength, while good for spiritual and cultural development. The school does not comply fully with the requirement for collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Exceptional care for pupils, excellent arrangements for assessment, for tracking and feeding back on individual progress, and for checking that planning is ensuring that pupils achieve their best.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher leads with a remarkable combination of vision and energy and is an exceptionally competent manager. She delegates very well to a very effective senior team. Subject leadership and management are nearly always very good, with excellence in art and design, German and physical education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent: governors' commitment to the school is high and they know it well. Their working in partnership with senior staff is notable.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent: this is carried out with exceptional clarity and thoroughness and is extremely effective in stimulating continuing development.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent deployment of very good resources for staffing, equipment and accommodation; very good overall in the sixth form, although information and communication technology (ICT) improvement is needed in design and technology, mathematics and modern languages. Library resources for the sixth form need strengthening.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectation for hard work. • The good leadership and management. • The range of additional activities. • The quality of the teaching. • The progress their children make. • How their children are helped to become mature and responsible. • The good behaviour. • The school's close working with them. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer adherence to the homework timetable. • The information about how well their children are getting on.

The inspection team agrees with parents views, all of which are extremely positive in the questionnaire return, the return on homework and information about children's progress being the least positive. Inspectors find that homework arrangements are good, and very good in the sixth form. Some pupils, in all years, commented that homework 'bunches' sometimes. Inspectors found the arrangements for pupils' annual reports to be very good, but that not all subjects follow the school's guidelines consistently.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 242 students on roll, including fairly equal numbers of female and male students, the sixth form is larger than most. Numbers in Year 13 have grown by about a fifth since the last inspection, partly because more pupils are staying on and partly because students are joining the school from elsewhere: 13 in Year 12 and three in Year 13. As in the main school, there are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Students enter the sixth form with above average prior attainment overall, although this incorporates a broad range and currently includes a small number with special needs. A wide range of advanced academic courses is offered, with increasing provision of advanced vocational courses. Entry to courses is determined by the subject concerned, where a GCSE grade B is usually expected for A-level courses, but a grade C can be accepted. Four GCSE C grades are expected for AVCE courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very good sixth form which meets the needs of students very well. It is led and managed very well, with vision and determination. Results are very high and have improved excellently since the last inspection. Because learning and teaching are very good, students achieve very well. The cost-effectiveness is very good.

Strengths

- Students' exceptional maturity and independence as learners
- Excellent support and guidance for students
- Assessment arrangements of extremely high quality
- Excellent provision for physical education and German.

What could be improved

There are no areas for attention as key issues for the sixth form.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good: standards are well above average; students achieve very well due to very good learning and teaching and because their attitudes are excellent.
Physics	Good: standards are above average and students achieve well; they have good attitudes to work and learning and teaching are good, although the quality of marking is not consistently good.
Design and technology	Very good: standards are well above average and achievement is very good; students learn very well due to very good teaching and their

	excellent attitude to their studies.
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Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business studies	Very good: standards are above average and overall, students achieve well, some very well; learning and teaching are very good, as are students' attitudes.
Physical education	Excellent: students achieve very well, reaching well above average standards; learning and teaching, and their attitude to work are all excellent.
Leisure and recreation	Very good: students reach average standards and achieve well to do so in relation to their GCSE results; learning and teaching, and their attitude to work, are all very good.
Health and social care	Good: standards are average and represent good achievement; learning and teaching are good, and students have excellent attitudes to their work.
Art and design	Very good: standards are well above average, students achieve well, very well in some aspects, have very good attitudes to their studies, and learning and teaching are very good
History	Very good: standards are above average and achievement is good overall, but not equally good for male students as it is for female students; good learning and teaching are supported by students' very positive attitudes to the subject.
Religious studies	Very good: standards are above average; students achieve very well due to very good teaching and learning and their very good attitudes to their work.
Sociology	Very good: standards are above average and students achieve well overall, many, very well; learning and teaching and students' attitudes are very good.
English	Very good: standards are above average; students achieve well due to very good teaching and learning and their very positive attitude to their work.
German	Excellent: students achieve very well, reaching well above average standards; learning and teaching are excellent and students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Exceptional care for students, excellent arrangements for assessment, for tracking and feeding back on individual progress, and for checking that planning is ensuring that students achieve their best.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. There are excellent procedures for using the information on students' progress to set improvement targets for their learning as well as for subject provision and teaching where necessary. Notable attention

	is given to ensuring that each student is able to follow a programme which meets their needs and wishes.
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STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The accessibility of their teachers to give help.• The good, challenging teaching.• The encouragement to work independently.• The sixth-form prospectus and course information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The careers advice about what to do after leaving school.• The advice about what to do in the sixth form.• Being kept better informed about how well they are doing in reaching their targets.

The responses are mostly extremely positive, eight out of every ten students completing a questionnaire. Inspectors agree with students' positive views. They do not agree that advice and guidance, concerning careers, option choices in the sixth form, and feedback about their progress over time, are not strong. Their finding is that these areas are good, the school making every endeavour to respond to the individual needs of all its students.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Strong vision and commitment drive the school, focused on learning and personal development

1. Underpinning all that the school does is the aim 'for all students to achieve their very best in a stimulating environment which promotes quality teaching and learning'. The vision for an 'inclusive school' which meets the individual needs of all its pupils and students, is exceptionally well realised. In particular, through the range of courses being developed in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form; through the consistent standard of good teaching established from Year 7, with improving quality over the stages; and through the excellent care provided for pupils and students. The head and other members of the leadership group (school management team) are tireless in their attention to the detail which ensures that the vision can be put into practice to the maximum effect. Meetings of the team are organised to maintain a balance between the detail and the vision for development, a significant feature of the team's success.

2. The vision for the school is shared by the governing body, with a strong lead from the chair. Governors carry out their responsibilities to excellent effect and have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and needed developments. They are often in school. Their personal expertise and experience, and their links with the local community, support the school well.

3. An imaginative feature of the school's care for its pupils and the focus on personal development is the newly established 'On track' mentoring project, involving Year 8 boys, with boys in Year 11 as their mentors. Both mentors and mentees speak appreciatively of the project and feel they are gaining from it. High numbers of pupils and students benefit from mentoring during the year and from the range of additional study activities offered by the school, such as the support for reading, provided in a breakfast club, which is funded by local business. All these activities seek to improve learning, and consequently pupils' opportunities, through enhancing personal development.

The school knows how to make improvements and sustain them

4. There is an established schedule for monitoring and evaluation. Within faculties, it involves termly lesson observations and sampling of work. For senior managers, it involves validation of faculty self-reviews on a rolling programme, covering two faculties each year. This is an area of excellence: the monitoring is rigorous, and the self-review requirements are demanding and comprehensive. There is a school-wide understanding that improvements can only be made from a basis of secure information about current practice. The schedule achieves this very well. Records of recent lesson monitoring and faculty review show that the focus on learning and individual achievement is sustained, through looking at provision in terms of its effect on pupils and students. The reviews are rigorous, for example, analysing results by teaching group, but are always supportive and encouraging, providing helpful suggestions for the way forward.

5. Paperwork for lesson observations usefully incorporates in detail what the school expects to happen in lessons. What is observed is noted in a tick box. This approach does not allow for the observer to show where there are differences in quality, although on occasion the evaluation being expressed by entering two ticks instead of one. To move the quality of teaching firmly towards excellence, such differentiation is an essential.

6. The school's use of new technology to track individual progress is very good. Results are compared in detail with those in the local authority, although not as thoroughly with national results, and provide the basis for setting and checking individual targets for improvement.

7. Two documents in particular, communicate the Farlingaye ethos of making and sustaining improvement: the bid for specialist school status and the self-evaluation form, S4, prepared for the inspection.

Rigorous processes for self-review strengthen the effectiveness of staff managers

8. A development target in the current academic year is to ensure that the school is reviewing its progress to the maximum benefit of students. The succinct, but comprehensive document, 'Approaches to self-review', summarises action in three sections: how do we know what is going on in the school; target setting – for students, for the staff/whole school; and strategies for improving attainment. In each section the school's findings from its own checks are listed under strengths and weaknesses. Expressed clearly in a straightforward way, the lists show rigorous evaluation and communicate an attitude of continuing review.

9. This document, together with those for faculty self-assessment and the middle manager responsibility packs for year coordinators and heads of faculty, is ensuring that subject studies and assessments are being managed at least well, and, overall, very well. Excellent leadership and management show in art and design where the focus is on the strengths and needs of individuals; in physical education, where all aspects of assessment are being strengthened; and in German, where the checks on teaching and sampling work are strong features.

10. During the illness of the then deputy head, when arrangements for professional development were on hold, the guidance and procedures for review have provided excellent development opportunities for all staff. Good arrangements are being set in place to build on these by ensuring that staff can gain from the good practice in other schools, as well as to check that all have had an equal opportunity for updating their expertise.

Relationships within the school and its wider community are excellent

11. Relationships between students and staff are reported in the section on sixth-form English as a 'partnership'. Half a term into the school year, such a partnership is sometimes evident in Year 7 lessons, and usually evident from Year 8 onwards. Pupils benefit from and contribute to it. In history, pupils with special needs enjoyed humorous exchanges with their teacher, and in another group, all pupils easily handled an open-ended brainstorming session on how to get rich quick. Pupils work together well in pairs and groups, sometimes single sex groups, sometimes mixed. In religious education, the quality of relationships enabled pupils to probe the difficult issue of institutionalised racism, first through pair work and subsequently in a plenary session. In biology, their interest fired by the teacher's enthusiasm and command of the subject, pupils asked questions confidently about kidney diseases. High expectations and a relaxed atmosphere combined to give them the confidence to pursue their interest.

12. The partnership with parents works extremely well. It shows in the high level of response to the parents' questionnaire. The level of response has been sustained since the last inspection, but the views have become more positive, particularly about pupils' personal development and behaviour. Parents are consulted regularly, and formally through questionnaires, and are very appreciative of this. The school has responded to their concerns about the inadequacies of the 'pupil courier service' by posting newsletters (every three weeks) and other communications to pupils' homes. Governors judge that the benefits to

home-school relations far outweigh the costs. Strong appreciation of this was expressed at the pre-inspection parents' meeting. The school puts effort into establishing opportunities which have significance for parents' knowledge of their children's work and progress. For example, it holds a 'school experience' day, when parents sit in on lessons. From the spring term 2003, parents of pupils in the main school will be invited to their child's 'dialogue' (review) with their subject teachers, for which the timetable will be suspended. This is an extension of the successful dialogues already running in Year 8. The established sixth-form dialogues, which take place every term and are reported to parents, are an example of excellent practice.

13. Strong links with local primary schools pave the way for Year 7 pupils to settle in well. Staff visit year 6 pupils and teach 'sample' lessons. Every parent of a Year 6 pupil has a meeting with a senior member of the Farlingaye staff, and Year 6 pupils visit Farlingaye for activities such as a humanities day. Links with local community groups and the police provide up-to-date advice for staff and parents on drugs-related issues. Links with local businesses support the development of vocational courses, and local businesses fund the two reading club sessions each week.

School life is enriched by the exceptional quality of activities outside lessons

14. A very high proportion of the parents responding to the questionnaire, 97 per cent, rate the school's activities positively. So do pupils and students. The school's impressive listings show 70 clubs, 60 support-for-revision clubs, 50 trips, 10 residential visits abroad and two annual productions ('Grease' was rehearsing during the inspection), and an activities week at the end of the summer term for which choices were being registered in November. To make it possible for pupils who are bussed home to join in activities, the school funds late buses on three evenings a week. Added to which, the many ICT spaces around the school are in constant use. For the sixth form, the focus is on activities promoting specific skills, such as debating; a session preparing for a bar mock trial was observed. In discussion, Year 13 students commented that they would like to see greater public recognition given to staff for their commitment.

15. The school has found that (two-day) residential opportunities for GCSE revision are highly motivating and very effective. Parents confirm this, to the extent that some said their son's view of study changed to 'cool' as a result. In 2002, half the 160 involved were boys. These opportunities are now offered to pupils across the range of attainment, although at first the focus was on raising D grades to Cs. The school's analysis shows that the residential make a measurable difference to pupils' results compared with those of pupils who do not participate.

The school's care for the young people it serves is outstanding

16. The remarkable feature of care at Farlingaye is the expectation, realised successfully, that all members of the school community will contribute to its quality. Despite the size of the school, teachers' knowledge of their pupils is unusually good, and strengthened by the shared involvement in additional activities. Their knowledge of individuals enables the staff to make early interventions to prevent any emerging difficulties from hardening into disaffection. Through an extensive programme of mentoring activity, pupils both receive support and give support to others. For example, the school's mentoring involves weekly meetings between a pupil and her/his teacher-mentor; through the Compact scheme, external mentors visit weekly to support individuals in Years 10 and 11 with their coursework; about 50 students in Years 12 and 13 are trained as 'buddy mentors' to support pupils in Years 7 to 9 over such issues as teasing and bullying; the new 'On Track' project involves Year 11 boys as mentors for boys in Year 8, the pairings carefully considered in relation to shared problems and

interests; the school employs a counsellor for pupils of all ages. 'Adopt a teacher' is a scheme through which students use some of their non-contact time to help in lessons, clubs and teams; the scheme currently involves about 40 students. Older pupils are asked to sit with younger ones on the buses when the risk of harassment emerges and pupils make use of the readily available forms for reporting any concerns about harassment. The schools strongly affirms the rights of individuals, as sixthformers commented, it is 'ok to be different'.

17. There is no prefect system and no head boy or girl. The school's expectation is that all older pupils will act in a mature, responsible and caring way to support others, and so provide good role models for younger pupils. Older students are very comfortable with this approach and think it works well. It does, extremely well. When asked about the good things at the school, younger pupils talked about the good atmosphere and that 'older pupils help'. The arrangements for individual support and mentoring are firmly underpinned by the school's excellent procedures for pupils' welfare and for rigorous checking of their personal and academic development. This is a feature of the school which parents value highly.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

18. There are no significant issues for improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	59
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	8	23	20	8	0	0	0
Percentage	13	39	34	14	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	9	30	17	5	0	0	0
Percentage	15	49	28	8	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1287	242
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	131	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	128	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	114	130	244

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	89	100
	Girls	109	113	104
	Total	190	202	204
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (75)	83 (72)	84 (72)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (33)	57 (43)	58 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	80	86
	Girls	107	103	97
	Total	185	183	183
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (71)	81 (72)	81 (74)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (36)	59 (50)	51 (38)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	114	106	220

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	70	110	114
	Girls	77	102	104
	Total	147	212	218
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	67 (64)	96 (97)	99 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.5 (47.8)
	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	37	62	99
	Average point score per candidate	23.1	22.3	22.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	36	53	89	4	11	15
	Average point score per candidate	22.2	24.6	23.6	13.5	7.1	8.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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	1481	31	4
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	26	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	90.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	439

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4 269 456
Total expenditure	4 316 119
Expenditure per pupil	2 908
Balance brought forward from previous year	(46 663)
Balance carried forward to next year	189 605

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1539
Number of questionnaires returned	874

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	54	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	65	4	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	60	14	2	1
The teaching is good.	35	60	14	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	47	8	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	38	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	49	7	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	63	34	2	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	50	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	36	2	0	1

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

19. The very high results in 2001 have been maintained since 1998, an excellent improvement since the last inspection when results were reported as average. Overall, female and male students both gained high results in 2001, the results of the female students in the top five per cent of schools. German results were outstanding in 2001, and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Other 2001 A-level results showed standards:

Well above average in	biology, chemistry, drama, general studies, history, mathematics, music, religious education and sociology
Above average in	art and design, economics, English literature, French, geography, physics:
Average results in	design and technology.

20. Results in the post-16 vocational courses were average in leisure and recreation, below average in health and social care, and well below average in business.

21. The work seen in the 13 subjects inspected reflects these high results, where overall, standards are well above average. In vocational courses, where students now take advanced courses, the work seen shows notable improvement in the standards in business studies and improvement in health and social care. Standards in key skills, communication, applying number, and ICT are good, and excellent in business studies and physical education. In the subjects where students were observed who have special needs or for whom English is an additional language, these students achieved as well as their peers. Gifted and talented students do very well. The sixth form is growing and a high proportion of students continue into Year 13 and complete their courses.

22. Students' achievement from their GCSE standards is very good. The reason for this could be described as the 'Farlingaye effect'. From the beginning of Year 7, pupils become part of a community focused on learning, so that by the time they reach Year 12, they are skilful at studying and highly motivated. They benefit from the very good subject expertise of their teachers, who have excellent knowledge of examination requirements, and the school's excellent arrangements for assessing their work and tracking their progress.

23. The effect shows in high quality, rapid and accurate thinking in mathematics, in the effective application of number skills in physics and effective researches for design briefs in design and technology. Good critical thinking shows in case studies in health and social care, in the analysis of governments' ethical policies in business studies, in the weighing up of evidence in sociology, in perceptive probing of sources in history, and in the depth and sophistication of thinking in religious education. Projects are skilfully and professionally accomplished in leisure and recreation and work journals in art and design demonstrate excellence in elaborate illustration. In physical education, techniques for managing physical stress are applied very successfully to improve performance in competitions. Original ideas for theatrical presentation are very effectively developed and explained in English, and in German, sophisticated ideas are expressed in complex language. Rigour, insight and scholarship are characteristics of students' work.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Sixth-form students' attitudes towards school and their learning are very good. They show an impressive capacity to reflect on issues and express balanced, well-formulated views. These skills were exemplified well in discussion on media censorship in general studies. Attitudes are excellent in mathematics, design and technology, physical education and health and social care. In mathematics, students are thoroughly involved in their learning, enjoy the challenge and work with considerable effort to achieve successful outcomes. Across the courses, students plan their work effectively, show very good independent learning skills and enjoy discussing controversial issues.

25. Relationships throughout the sixth form are excellent. Year 13 students speak appreciatively of the commitment of their teachers and of the help and support they give willingly. They reciprocate by contributing much time and effort towards a wide variety of additional activities in school and the local community. In a tally among pupils and students from Years 7 to 13, sixth formers reported equal weekly involvement to everyone else, in about five activities. Throughout the day, students can be seen making good use of the learning resources and ICT facilities in their study time.

26. Students develop as self-motivated and mature individuals who respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They are supportive towards each other and towards the younger pupils in the school for whom they provide good role models. A significant number volunteer to provide, in their own time, individual support to younger pupils through the school's 'Buddy' system. For some, this has been a personally uplifting experience, directing their thoughts towards future careers associated with the care of others. For many younger pupils, this support is invaluable and often makes the difference between achieving success or losing direction and becoming disaffected.

27. Attendance in the sixth form is very good, significantly higher than in Years 10-11, which in turn is above average. Students usually arrive promptly to lessons. Their response has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was judged as good.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. The last inspection reported good teaching across the school. The improvement since then is significant. In all the sixth-form courses inspected, the quality is at least good, and in the large majority, very good, with excellence in physical education and German. This is true for learning and teaching. Just five of the lessons seen were satisfactory rather than good. Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding. They learn to analyse critically and in depth and pull ideas together cogently. These skills were evident in sociology where students analysed statements on power and the state and matched them to different sociological positions. In religious education, students weigh up arguments in complex debates on medical ethics and evaluate the contribution of Greek philosophers to western culture. Both parents and students rate the teaching highly.

29. Students show a high level of independence and focus in their work, and set themselves a good working pace. They make very good use of the study facilities round the school, especially ICT. They catch teachers' enthusiasm in mathematics and respond to the challenging teaching in design and technology and English. Their learning is supported by the good attention to key skills, which in mathematics, leisure and recreation and English is very good, and in business studies and physical education, is excellent. However, greater attention to applying number in their work is needed in business studies and art and design. Students with special needs, those with special talents and those for whom English is an additional language, are taught equally well as other students so that they build effectively on

their previous learning. In most lessons all students participate confidently, although on occasion in history, some show reticence. In physics, the standard of marking is only satisfactory because students do not receive sufficiently helpful comments to know clearly how to make improvements.

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

30. The school's commitment to providing equally well for all sixth-form students is exceptionally strong and the arrangements for those with special needs are excellent. There are very good arrangements to make sure that students from differing backgrounds are well integrated into the sixth form. The distinctive feature of the school's attention to study clubs, residential study opportunities and conferences continues into Years 12 and 13. With the extensive and well-supported range of other additional activities, these offer excellent opportunities for enrichment.

31. A wide range of academic and vocational courses builds effectively on GCSE courses, with some subjects new to students at this stage, such as business and economics, sociology and the very successful general studies course followed by most. This very good provision gives students more choice than at the time of the last inspection and ensures that students of different previous attainment have opportunities for sixth-form study, for example, through providing intermediate as well as advanced vocational options. Courses are timetabled to ensure that a mix of A-level and AVCE courses can be taken, currently the choice of about 30 students. The required study of religious education for all students is approached in a stimulating way, for example, through annual two-day 'themed' conferences. These arrangements meet requirements. However, there are not enough fieldwork visits to leisure centres for students on the leisure and recreation course. Study skills support is not always provided where needed as part of the induction period at the start of Year 12. The school responds quickly and effectively to students' requests, in the current year putting on additional options in French, geography and sociology in Year 12; AS and A2 courses in ICT and psychology are planned for the future. Within the provision for key skills, additional ICT groups were put on in the current year. A high proportion of students goes on to higher education each year.

32. Moral and social values are a strength and permeate the school's day-to-day work. For example in mathematics, an excellent framework of values regulates students' behaviour in lessons and all respond fully; the principles of right and wrong are embedded in the teaching. Social responsibility is a major issue explored in health and social care for example, concerning the family, and in business studies, where the ethics of third world coffee production are considered. There are good opportunities for spiritual development, particularly in religious education where students explore values and beliefs and are encouraged to discuss 'ultimate' questions. However, assemblies do not make the most of the opportunity to contribute to students' spiritual growth. Students' cultural experience is good, while particularly rich in art and design and in English where students attend conferences, for example, on Blake, and engage with a wide range of poetry, prose and drama from differing cultural traditions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

33. The care for sixth-form students at Farlingaye is exceptional, and the improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be good, significant. Despite the fact that the school is larger than most, nonetheless it retains a family atmosphere in which students are very well known to the staff. The increased staying-on rate, very good attendance and high involvement in school activities are clear indicators of how highly the students and their

parents rate the sixth form. The quality shows tellingly in the imaginative way in which some individual course programmes, which could be considered 'unorthodox', have been tailor-made to foster specific talents and interests. Nothing is too much trouble.

Assessment

34. In the sixth-form courses inspected, assessment is usually very good, and excellent in physical education, English and German. It leads to very effective, detailed analysis of areas needing attention, true of nearly all subjects, which are followed up rigorously. Precise targets are agreed and students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve them. This is done excellently in physical education and art and design. It is not as effective, although good, in physics, health and social care, and religious education. The very good quality of nearly all marking enables students to take control of their own improvement, while knowing that staff are always ready to help if this wavers.

35. The information from assessments and results is put to very good use in school-wide planning as well as in course-specific planning. It is a requirement of faculties that the annual review of results identifies where action is needed. Practice is exemplary in physical education and German. It is least strong, although satisfactory, in religious education.

Advice, support and guidance

36. There is excellent tracking of students' academic and personal development in the sixth form. The findings of this are pulled together in student reviews. Carried out over two weeks, twice in each Year, 12 and 13, these involve students in a 'dialogue' with each subject teacher to discuss strengths and weaknesses, and to pinpoint steps for improvement. Records of the dialogues are kept and copies posted to parents. Such high quality tracking is possible because assessment is a strong feature of the sixth form. The thoroughness and rigour of the procedure is enhanced by teachers' knowledge of their students. Students are 'warned' that staying at the school will mean that they will be chased if their standards or effort slip and speak appreciatively of this.

37. The very good careers guidance is provided in a number of ways: through routine visits to colleges of further education and universities; very good support during the application process; and through an annual conference evening for students and their parents at which invited speakers give advice on the financial and other implications of undertaking university courses. The current lack of a formal induction programme for all students prior to the start of their sixth-form courses, although provided in the past and currently in some courses, is a shortcoming for a small number of students, especially for some lower attainers who need initial support with the study skills needed for more demanding work. This applies particularly in business studies, leisure and recreation and sociology. In health and social care it applies to preparations for visits and work placements.

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

38. Parents and students think very highly of the school. The school works on the basis of close partnership between parents, students and subject teachers. Every opportunity is taken to share information on all aspects of individual progress. The information supplied to parents is very good and helps them support their sons and daughters in their studies at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The effectiveness of leadership and management

39. The three stages in young people's education are managed very effectively by the school to ensure increasing personal and academic maturity. This is done through organising studies in an appropriate way for each stage, with notably few transitional blips. Students' achievements, whatever their prior attainment, and the growing numbers staying on or joining the sixth form, reflect the success of the approach. So do the very high numbers completing their A-level course, and those who complete AS courses before going on into employment or to institutions providing studies or training not offered at Farlingaye. The students themselves are excellent ambassadors for the school's work.

Leadership and management

40. The school manages its provision as a whole, so that its aim and values relate to the sixth form as they do to the other stages. The approach is coherent and effective. Governors have an exceptionally clear knowledge of the sixth-form operation and guide development wisely. However, although improved since the last inspection, the requirements for daily worship are not fully met. Governors carry out their responsibilities for financial management very efficiently, managing the sixth-form budget to be responsive to need and the development of new courses, while ensuring that it breaks even. The principles of best value are put into practice as a matter of routine.

41. An effective sixth-form staff team contributes effectively to the very good leadership and management of the sixth form. The team is backed up very well by subject managers. There is vigilant oversight of students' well-being and progress, supported by good administrative procedures for routine recording of concerns and special circumstances. The school's expectations of students are very high. It appears very difficult for them to avoid the monitoring eye – a characteristic of the sixth form about which there were appreciative comments by students and parents. The students feel this gives them every support to do really well, and they are right.

Resources

42. Students benefit from the very good subject expertise of staff and the sixth form covers its staffing costs from income. Good learning resources are provided overall, with strengths in art and design, leisure and tourism, physics, physical education and religious education, but weakness in design and technology where computer-aided equipment is lacking. There is inadequate access to ICT in German, mathematics and religious studies. The library is not stocked well enough for advanced work, particularly for English, design and technology, German, health and social care, leisure and recreation and religious education. With the appointment of a new librarian for the current academic year, the school has been planning improvements to rectify this weakness. Accommodation serves the needs of courses well, with strength in art and design. Accommodation for business studies is spread widely round the site which makes for inefficiency and limits collaboration between different groups.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 2001.

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	100	62	-	15	2.0	1.5
Music	3	100	84	33	29	3.0	2.4
Sociology	1	100	84	-	7	3.0	1.2
Business Post-16 VQ	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.0	10.4

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	27	85	87	59	43	6.7	5.8
Chemistry	6	100	90	50	43	7.3	5.9
Biology	11	91	88	64	34	6.6	5.3
Physics	11	100	88	36	40	6.4	5.7
Design and technology	14	93	91	36	30	5.0	5.4
Economics	21	95	89	33	36	6.1	5.5
Art and design	20	100	96	55	46	7.2	6.6
Music	5	100	93	60	35	8.4	5.7
Drama	12	92	99	83	38	8.2	6.6
Geography	5	100	92	40	38	6.0	5.7
History	13	92	88	54	35	6.8	5.5
Religious studies	14	100	92	57	38	7.4	5.8
Sociology	23	91	86	61	35	6.8	5.3
English language	1	100	92	-	30	2.0	5.3
English literature	49	100	95	33	37	6.2	5.9
French	5	100	89	60	38	6.8	5.6
German	5	100	91	100	40	9.6	5.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.6	10.0
Health and social care	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.4	10.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and physics. No lessons were observed in other subjects. The inspection covered those modules in the A-level course offered by the school. In Year 12, these are mathematical methods, pure mathematics and statistics; in Year 13, discrete mathematics and further modules in pure mathematics. There is sufficient flexibility in the management of the course to allow individual students to study an alternative module, mechanics, in place of mathematical methods, for example. The further mathematics course was also inspected.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards now being sustained
- Very good teaching leading to very good achievement
- Students' excellent attitudes helping them to learn very well
- Very good leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Not always enough use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics because of restricted access to computers.

43. The mathematics department does very well for its sixth-form students. Standards have risen from below average at the last inspection to well above average now, an excellent improvement. The quality of students' oral and written work is well above average. Students have a good understanding of basic pure mathematics as a result of detailed study in mathematical methods, for example, for the process of finding the gradient of a curve. This provides a very good foundation for further learning, as in the differentiation of complicated trigonometrical functions. In statistics, very good foundations are laid because the basic definitions are given very effective prominence in the teaching. Achievement is very good. Well above average standards are being maintained, and students are already showing good gains in comparison with their average standards at the start of the course.

44. In 2001, results were well above average with three of every five students gaining the higher A-B grades. In 2002, all students obtained a grade at A-level, an improvement on 2001, with the number gaining the higher A-B grades well above average. The performance of the further mathematics students was notable, each gaining the highest grade. The take-up of mathematics is greater by male than by female students, but overall their results are similar. Results in AS-level mathematics at the end of Year 12 indicate that the upward trend at the end of Year 13 is set to continue in the next year. These standards are confirmed by the work seen in lessons and students' files. Nearly two-thirds of students continue their studies into Year 13 and all complete the course successfully.

45. Standards in further mathematics are high, as in Year 12, where the students think quickly and articulate their ideas clearly in group discussion. Year 13 students can differentiate complicated functions mentally and accurately. They are quick to notice relationships between functions. Achievement is very good as high standards are maintained through the course.

46. Students have excellent attitudes to their work. They concentrate very well and enjoy the challenges they face in the solution of problems. They work hard and know what they have to do to improve because they are given appropriate targets to aim for. Support from the teaching staff is always available, supplemented by a weekend revision course towards the end of Year 13. Students enjoy their work and develop very good learning skills.

47. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. This, together with the excellent attitudes students have to their work, results in very good learning. The strength of the teaching is in the excellent challenge to students' thinking skills and the excellent management of the learning process. Learning skills are in the process of being enhanced visually through the introduction of interactive white-boards (computer-controlled boards). There is scope for extending this provision in order to ensure access for all students. Teachers have very good subject expertise, often referring to matters outside the immediate lesson, for example, to famous mathematicians from the past. This adds to students' interest and strengthens their learning. The pace of lessons is very good, maintaining students' concentration and a very good rate of learning. The infectious enthusiasm seen in the excellent teaching has a very positive effect on students' learning and adds to the enjoyment of lessons. Male and female students work equally well together and with their teachers. The teaching of basic definitions in mathematics widens students' horizons very well, through the processes of calculus and on occasion through the effective use of computers.

48. The leadership is very good. It provides a very good focus for the work of the department through very good use of test data to determine the planning and the approach to the curriculum. The very clear aims are to raise standards at the end of Year 11 so that more students can qualify for the A-level course, and to ensure that the gifted and talented students are even better prepared than is currently the case. This, if successful, has the capacity to raise the achievement of students still further.

49. Since the last inspection, improvement is excellent.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Consistently above average A-level results
- Enthusiastic subject specialists
- Good and improving use of ICT in practical teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient comments by teachers on marked work
- No planning for, and little evidence of spiritual, moral and cultural development.

50. Standards of work seen are above average, both in Year 12 and Year 13. Many more male students than female students choose physics; the female students do slightly better in examinations but no difference is identifiable in their work. There are no students from ethnic minorities. Students have very good numeracy skills, exemplified in theoretical and practical work on the extension of springs. Their communication and study skills are good and they use ICT with confidence. For example, they can set up a data logger to receive data from a light gate in an investigation of Newton's second law, and use a computer program to compare terminal velocities.

51. In 2001, all students gained an A-level grade and one in three gained higher grades; between 1999-2002, only one entry was ungraded. The proportions of higher grades obtained are consistently near to or above national averages. Overall results, both at AS- and A-level, are above national averages. The proportion of students continuing from Year 12 to 13 is very high and all students who enter Year 13 complete the course. Students must have grade B or above in GCSE science to study physics, and most in Year 12 have A or A* grades. Nevertheless, the majority of students reach their target grades based on GCSE performance, and a significant minority have improved significantly compared with their test scores in Year 7. Well over half of the current Year 13 students have applied to study physics or engineering at university.

52. Students' achievement in the work seen is good. Students maintain the above average standard they have on entry to Year 12. Those who are underachieving benefit considerably from attendance at study weekends. Extension work is regularly available to challenge higher attainers. The comprehensive induction programme at the start of Year 12 provides a good grounding in the numerical aspects of physics.

53. Students' attitudes are good. They are interested in lessons and maintain a good rate of work. Their enthusiastic approach to practical work shows that they enjoy it. A small minority was observed arriving late and losing concentration, and had not completed the homework on time. The cooperation necessary in practical work provides good social development, but there is currently little opportunity for spiritual, moral or cultural development. Students consider that the department is very good because their teachers are qualified in physics, mark work quickly and are willing to give up their own time to help students.

54. Learning and teaching are good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm have a positive effect on learning. Their very high expectations lead to good effort by students. Teaching is managed well and this stimulates students' interest and enthusiasm. Opportunities for using ICT are good and improving. Planning is very good in the best lessons. In some others, learning targets and the criteria for evaluating success are insufficiently linked, and the separate sections of lessons are not integrated well. Assignments for homework and classwork challenge gifted students, while tests and re-tests ensure that all reach an acceptable standard. However, while there is insufficient written feedback on marked work, students have an individual target card which identifies what they need to do to improve.

55. Leadership and management are good. Committed leadership ensures a clear direction for the course and there is good planning for developing the curriculum. Staff are well qualified. Resources are very good and ICT is being increasingly integrated into the work in lessons. However, the department has not identified where there are shortcomings in the marking. The quality of lesson planning is variable, and opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not integrated into schemes of work.

56. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Examination results have improved significantly. There is now a satisfactory range of sixth-form library books. However, the quality of marking has not been sustained.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students' very good achievement
- Very good learning, the result of very good teaching
- Very well motivated, enthusiastic students.

Areas for improvement

- Students' lack of experience of computer-aided design and manufacture
- Insufficient library resources for advanced work in the subject.

57. Standards are well above average and reflect recent examination results. Achievement is very good, both in the Year 12 AS course and the Year 13 A-level course. Students sustain their GCSE standards, building on their prior knowledge and skills to produce solutions to more complicated problems. They learn the specific skills needed for completing their very individual projects well. Students research very effectively using the Internet and other sources, for example, looking into issues that affect design, such as ergonomics, aesthetics, economics, safety, the environment and other moral and social considerations. They carry out rigorous investigations into the suitability of materials for producing their designs, for example, woods, metals and acrylics, which are well documented. Students work independently and consider their designs carefully, discussing them in detail with teachers and fellow students. Discussions are particularly effective because students select their own 'design problem'. These include, for example, a fishing boat with a canopy for use in different weather conditions, equipment for a fitness centre, and storage items and seating for their own room. Students' freehand sketching and graphics are very good, particularly in the work of higher attainers. Their very good ICT skills are evident in well-presented coursework. Students' literacy skills are very well developed and they use technical language accurately to annotate designs. Lower attainers' work is well presented, but lacks detailed substantial research and clear structure.

58. The students enter advanced courses with well above average GCSE results. They sustain this very good standard in their work in product design, achieving very well to do so. The A-level results in 2001 saw nearly all students gaining A-E grades. Female students did particularly well, with five of the 14 on the course gaining B-C grades. In 2002, results show a similar proportion of students gaining higher grades as in previous years. All students gained A-D grades and nine out of every ten gained grades A-C. Female and male students attained equally well. The take-up for the course is good. A high proportion of students continue into Year 13 and complete the course.

59. Students' attitudes to their work are excellent. They are attentive, make very good effort at all times and respond well to their teachers. A small number are reluctant to answer questions or voice their views until prompted by their teachers. Students are capable of organising their own work well and enjoy opportunities for independent learning. They are appreciative of each other's work. Students are willing to explore and innovate, and they enjoy creating new and unusual products. Both male and female students talk eagerly about their ideas, they enjoy the subject, and plan to continue in design work for their careers. The supportive atmosphere that teachers create in lessons fosters this.

60. Students are challenged by very good teaching. They take their work seriously because teachers have high expectations of them. The quality of their work over time indicates that teaching has been very thorough. Teachers check for weaknesses in learning very closely and take swift action when required. Their high quality feedback prompts students to consider what they need to do in order to gain higher marks. Students have a very good knowledge of how they are getting on because of this regular feedback. Deadlines are very clearly indicated, and this helps students' preparation. In Year 12, lessons on modelling and testing products are very well planned and organised. All students are included well in lessons: their individual needs are well known by teachers and there is a high level of support, both in and outside lessons. Such teaching encourages a mature approach from students. They benefit considerably from teachers' very good subject expertise, so that in Year 13 they have well-developed knowledge of the design process. The analytical skills of the highest attaining students are well advanced.

61. Leadership and management are very good, with a clear direction for the work of the subject. Teaching is very well organised by staff who have good qualifications, good experience in design, and an industrial background. Students' talents are nurtured very effectively. They show good insight into the cultural values surrounding the subject and the images through which these are represented.

62. Since the last inspection, very good standards have been maintained and new courses have been successfully introduced. The weaknesses are the lack of computer-aided design and manufacture in all students' work, and in the sparse library resources for AS- and A-level design and technology.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on AS- and A-level economics and business, and AVCE business. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Economics and business, AVCE business

Overall, the quality of provision in economics and business, and in AVCE business, is **very good**.

Strengths

- Above average standards of work and examination results
- Students' good achievement in relation to their prior attainment
- Very good learning and teaching
- Very effective leadership and management
- Very thorough monitoring of students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of adjacent specialist accommodation
- Not enough attention to study skills at the start of the course
- Not enough use of case studies and application of number in course work.

63. Standards across the range of business courses are above average. Students' work shows that they are making good gains from their average standards at GCSE, and their achievement is good. Some students achieve very well. Some, without a background in the subject, find the course challenging, and technical terms, difficult. Their reading is not wide enough. Year 13 students have good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Most work confidently on their own, collect data and form well-considered judgements from a

range of sources. For example, AVCE students used information from a visit to a local store to investigate the key features of the Christmas promotional campaign, drawing on the responses to their own questionnaire survey. They describe the campaign activities very well and explain effectively why they were chosen. In an enquiry assessing whether 'Globalisation is Ethical', A-level students analysed issues critically and thoughtfully questioned the ethical policies of governments. They developed a very good understanding of the complex nature of decision-making. Students apply number suitably, but their graphical presentation, for example to show the effect of the fair price policy on the supply and demand of a product, is not always accurate enough.

64. In 2001, in separate economics and business courses, results were above average. The proportion of students gaining higher A-B grades was average. All students who completed the AVCE course passed but none achieved the higher grades. At AS-level, results were above average, but the proportion of students gaining the higher grades was below average. The 2002 results show significant improvement. At A-level, two-thirds of students gained the higher A-B grades. All students on the AS-level and AVCE courses gained a grade, almost half gaining the higher grades. These results show very good achievement compared with students' standards at GCSE. Most students continue their studies into Year 13 and complete the course.

65. Most students have a very good attitude to their studies, show real interest and work conscientiously. Those with a limited background in the subject persevere well to understand quite challenging work early in Year 12. While students are generally well motivated, they do not always prepare themselves well enough for lessons or consolidate their previous learning sufficiently. Relationships are very good and provide the basis for productive learning. Students find the course satisfying and think that their personal targets are helpful; but they feel there should be an introduction to study skills at the start of the course.

66. Learning and teaching are very good, especially on the AVCE course. The teachers' good subject knowledge underpins class discussions and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Work is well planned so that students at different levels of attainment make good progress in lessons. Students have a good introduction to the course but the degree of rigour with which they tackle their work varies according to their prior attainment. Over time, for a significant minority, this slows their gains in knowledge and understanding although their learning in lessons is very good. Overall their achievement is good, rather than very good. Some lower attainers lack sufficient structure for their learning. Topics are well illustrated with examples that are within the students' experience. Students learn effectively because lessons have clear purpose, a good mix of activities and high quality materials. Teachers have high, yet realistic expectations that successfully meet individual needs across the range of attainment. Students work productively, at a good rate. They do so very well in AVCE lessons where they have opportunities for independent work. There is very good assessment of students' work and their progress is monitored well.

67. Leadership and management are very good. The subject has a very good sense of direction, shown in the well-planned curriculum for each course. There are very productive links with local industry. The work of the department is continually being reviewed to seek improvements. Resources generally are good. There are very good ICT facilities to support independent study within the AVCE course, which includes an intranet link. This link is not yet being used as a resource, for example through installing case studies for use in lessons. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because it is widely dispersed across the site and so limits collaborative work between groups.

68. Since the last inspection, there have been staff changes, and the range and specifications of courses have changed. However, the recent improvements in the work of the department are good. There is a clear commitment to further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT is not currently offered as an advanced course, but will be from September 2003. All students undertake ICT training as part of the provision for key skills. No lessons were observed.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education and leisure and recreation. The double award AVCE course in leisure and recreation and the A-level course in physical education were first offered in September 2000, with the first group of students completing their course in summer 2002.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leading to very good achievement
- Excellent leadership and management ensuring that the needs and aspirations of all students are met
- Excellent monitoring and assessment of students' progress
- Excellent attitudes and motivation of students.

Areas for improvement

No significant areas for improvement were identified during the inspection.

69. The department has a flexible entry policy based on academic and personal criteria and the numbers taking the course range between 14 and 19 each year. About twice as many male as female students study the subject. All students who studied at AS-level are continuing in Year 13. Standards of work seen are well above average. In relation to students' average GCSE results, this represents very good achievement. Year 13 students have a very good understanding of sports psychology, and can apply stress-management techniques to improve their performances in competitive trampolining. Year 12 students are beginning to grasp the intricacies of muscle location and action at the major joints of the body. They are developing an understanding of technical terminology as they strive to demonstrate control to their peers and partners, such as flexion of the ankle and the stabilising influences on the shoulder joint during a throwing action.

70. In 2001, half of the students gained grades A-C at AS-level; in 2002, this improved to almost half of the students gaining grades A-B. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students.

71. Students' attitudes are excellent. Students respond very well to the stimulating environment created by purposeful teaching. They pay close attention to teachers' guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm to explore, challenge and develop their own ideas. They offer thoughtful responses to searching questions, are tolerant of different viewpoints, and are prepared to modify their opinions and views in the light of argument and experience. Relationships are excellent, and this contributes strongly to the very good progress in lessons. Students work well, both individually and in groups; they are mature, affable and

determined to succeed. The quality of the timetabled provision, and the range of extra-curricular activities, result very many opportunities for competitive activities as well as those arising from personal interest. Most students give support in lessons in the lower school (adopt-a-teacher scheme), and are fully involved in supporting internal competitions through organising and refereeing matches. They have very positive views of the subject and of the support they receive from their teachers, both inside and outside lessons.

72. Learning and teaching are excellent. All teachers have secure expertise and much enthusiasm. Year 12 students make very strong intellectual efforts to improve their knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology. Year 13 students are inspired to investigate, both practically and theoretically, the physiological and behavioural responses to stress induced by competition. Detailed lesson plans support comprehensive schemes of work. Teachers work hard to raise standards in key skills, and there is extensive and innovative use of ICT as a tool for learning. Class management is excellent, and gives all students many opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Learning targets shared with students, allied to very searching questions to probe their understanding and knowledge, ensure good progression. Teachers challenge students to work hard and have consistently high expectations that they will succeed. Students consistently meet these expectations.

73. Leadership and management are excellent. The staff form a well-balanced team; they share a clear vision of the standards they wish to achieve, and know how to reach them. The subject contributes significantly to maintaining the school's values. Considerable energy has recently been put into establishing systems to ensure that students' learning is effectively tracked. Detailed marking of work, together with good arrangements for assessment and reporting, provides accurate information on students' performance. Students negotiate their challenging targets with staff, and they know how well they are progressing to meet these targets. The formal monitoring of teaching is not yet in place, however.

74. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The department now provides advanced study options, and assessment procedures are detailed and comprehensive. The information gained is used in the planning for all aspects of teaching, learning, reporting and developing the curriculum. Leadership and management are sharply focused on raising standards even further.

Leisure and recreation

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and recreation is **very good**.

Strengths

- Improving standards and good achievement from students' prior attainment
- Very good teaching and very motivated students resulting in very good learning
- Very good leadership and management
- Excellent marking and support for students.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough attention to study skills at the start of Year 12
- Insufficient fieldwork through visits to leisure and recreation centres
- Lack of adjacent accommodation limiting collaborative work between groups.

75. Standards in the work seen are broadly average. Since most students started the course with below average GCSE results, this represents good achievement. Students' knowledge and understanding are good. They collect information from a variety of sources and form sound judgements from the data. When assessing customer services in the leisure

and recreation industry, students balance their sound theoretical knowledge with a very competent array of practical experiences, including work placements. The best project work is skilfully and professionally accomplished, requiring students to plan and organise an event, for example, a Year 12 drama visit to the Adelphi Theatre in London and a visit to Disney Land Paris. Students use ICT skills very competently; their very good coursework presentations are word-processed. They use the Internet well, but few question the accuracy and reliability of the data they download. They apply number only in a limited way in their coursework. In 2002, all students attained an A-E grade and a small proportion, the higher A-B grades. The subject is more popular with male students than female students. Most continue their studies into Year 13 and complete the course.

76. Students' attitude to their work is very good and most show strong interest in their studies. Students speak very highly of their teachers, whose readiness to give time to helping them they value. They appreciate the freedom they are given to study independently. Students gain considerable benefit from fieldwork and related activities and would welcome more group visits to workplaces. They feel they would benefit from a study skills course at the beginning of Year 12 to add to the helpful skills support they receive throughout the course. There is a noticeable growth in their maturity over the two years of the course, both in oral and written work. There is very good development of personal and learning skills through independent study that is a main feature of the course.

77. Learning and teaching are very good. Teaching is never less than good, and some is excellent. Teaching is satisfactory on the GNVQ course. Excellent relationships and trust between teachers and students form the basis for productive learning. The best teaching incorporates very good, regular checks on students' knowledge and understanding, for example, of key definitions and principles, such as the private sector, the public sector and the voluntary sector in the leisure and recreation industry. This has a very positive effect on students' management of their own learning which is helpfully emphasised in lessons and given good support. Students listen very attentively and say that they find the content very relevant and interesting. They are good at taking part in discussion and, with a few exceptions, join in readily through the effective encouragement of teachers. The regular marking of work assignments is a model of the very best practice: it is very detailed, thorough, accurate and helpful in informing students how to improve further. This is the major factor in students' achievement over Years 12 and 13. However, their achievement over time is not as good as their learning in and between lessons. Many students find the range and level of skills required for the course very challenging. The very good teaching, together with the very good quality of marking they receive, helps them to overcome these the difficulties so that they achieve well.

78. The AVCE course runs effectively and is very well led and managed. Individual targets give students clear goals and realistic expectations of the standards they can expect to achieve. There is very good monitoring of students' progress. Learning resources are very good, with excellent ICT provision, but inadequate facilities such as a white-board, overhead projector and video monitor. There are satisfactory stocks of reference materials within the department, but not in the library.

79. The subject was not reported at the last inspection. However, since 1997, there is clear evidence of very good improvements in course provision and standards.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was on the AVCE course in health and social care. Single and double award AVCE courses are offered.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching encouraging good learning, well-supported by ICT
- Good personal development raising students' self-esteem
- Very good use of the community as a resource
- Students' clear understanding of career opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of opportunity for progression with the suspension of the intermediate course
- Not always enough rigour in the preparation for students' work placements
- Insufficient resources for the course at a suitably demanding level in the school library.

80. Standards are average overall in the double award course. This represents good achievement from students' below average standard at the start of Year 12. Some students achieve very well. In lessons, both Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in developing knowledge and theoretical understanding and applying this in new contexts, such as visits into the community to nursery and infant schools. Year 12 students make good headway in developing their study skills and have a very clear understanding of the criteria used to evaluate their assignments. Students' coursework in Year 13 is thoughtful and well presented, utilising good ICT skills. Higher attainers show good critical thinking in their work. For example, work on the Early Years, aimed at an 'A' grade standard, is fluently presented, showing good consideration of possible improvements to the services offered to clients in a local organisation. What is learned in lessons is related well to the practice encountered in work situations. While the work of lower attainers and students with special needs is lacking in depth, it is well presented and shows understanding of the criteria needed to obtain an E grade. Literacy standards are good: articulate, confident students speak easily about their work placements and what they thought of them. Students use technical language well, with terms such as 'asthma, cardiovascular system, arteries' appearing in the unit on Physical Aspects of Health. Listening skills are good, but numeracy skills are only satisfactory because of limited usage. Good ICT skills are used to investigate and enhance work. Most students in Year 12 in 2001-2002 continued their studies into the current Year 13.

81. In 2002, of the eleven students entered, seven gained grades above the predictions based on their prior attainment. The 2002 results have been analysed well by the department. It is not possible to identify trends as the AVCE is a new course and different in structure from the GNVQ in health and social care taken previously. The 2001 results in health and social care were for the GNVQ course, and were below average.

82. Students have excellent attitudes. They have been well informed about the course in advance. Their personal development is very good and both Year 12 and Year 13 students manage their own learning independently. Relationships between staff and students are very constructive and support good learning. Attendance is good. Students see the relevance of the subject to their future career aspirations in the caring services, as midwives, nurses or social workers.

83. Good teaching encourages good learning and this is raising students' achievement. Detailed planning, good subject knowledge and the selection of work that is suitable for students' needs are key features of the lessons. Because teachers give clear guidance on course requirements, students' work is well planned and accurate. It is assessed well. Helpful, written feedback from teachers is personalised, accurate and to the point, and acted upon by students. Teachers give students regular opportunities to think about complex

issues. In Year 13, through good questioning, teachers enable students to gain confidence in thinking aloud; for example, supplying detailed responses about the services available to families, particularly at a time of crisis. This work led to individual and group research on the categories of family services. There is scope for strengthening the preparation for work placements and visits, in order to support learning more effectively.

84. Leadership and organisational management of the courses are good. Teachers of health and social care are well qualified and there is a good team approach to the subject. There is a clear vision as to the purpose of the courses and how to teach them. Good use of ICT supports learning well, but the library lacks sufficient texts at a suitably demanding level for advanced study.

85. The course was not reported at the last inspection. However, developments since then are good. The numbers taking the course have improved since the introduction of AVCE. Courses match students' aspirations and potential very well. The department has rightly identified the need for an intermediate level course in health and social care.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design. No other lessons were observed.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Excellent leadership and management of the department
- Very good learning and teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planned provision for numeracy.

86. Standards by Year 13 are well above average. Higher attainers and gifted and talented students attain an excellent standard in elaborately illustrated work journals and in artworks that often combine elements of painting and sculpture. They achieve well, from an already high base, in absorbing influences from other artists' work to enrich their own. Lower attainers find expression through a broadening range of media that compensates for their weaker drawing skills. Students with special needs benefit greatly from individual teaching that makes most effective use of their skills and interests and have the potential to reach very high standards in their chosen fields. Achievement is good overall. Very good achievement is evident in students' knowledge and understanding of artists' works and their manipulation of materials. In drawing, painting and ICT however, achievement is satisfactory for middle and lower attainers as recent beneficial changes in staffing, training and resources have yet to show a positive effect.

87. In 2001, A-level results were above average, with just over half of students gaining the higher grades compared to just below half of students nationally. In 2002, two thirds of students gained the higher grades; a significant rise from only one quarter at the last inspection. Female students do slightly better than male students overall, although both are represented across the full range of attainment. A fair proportion of students taking the subject in Year 12 continued their studies into the A-level year 2001-02. Three out of very four completed the course.

88. Standards in key skills are good overall. Students write extensively in their journals,

using an appropriate art vocabulary to evaluate their work and record their researches into the work of artists. Those on the photography course measure time and quantities with accuracy, but the art and textiles students have insufficient opportunities to develop and apply numeracy skills. Standards in ICT are good. Students capture and manipulate images well, although the full potential of the department's new ICT suite has yet to be realised and staff training to be completed.

89. Attitudes and personal development are very good. Students enjoy their art and design lessons and respond very well to guidance. They express some concern about the amount of work required but their progress is carefully monitored and they cope well. They relate very well to teachers and each other, co-operating well and showing care and respect for the many pictures and displays around the rooms. Students on the photography course are positive and supportive in their appraisals of others' work.

90. The quality of learning and teaching is very good. Lessons are very well prepared and presented, generating an enthusiasm to experiment with new techniques. Teachers use well-targeted questioning and tightly scheduled exercises to include all students in whole-class activities. Very good individual support encourages students to reflect on the subject of their artwork and find an appropriate medium and style to express their feelings. Very good cultural provision includes many opportunities for students to engage with artists, through workshops in school and visits to exhibitions, that have a strong impact on their own work. Among the staff there is a very good breadth and depth of knowledge of art and design processes which allows students' particular strengths to be recognised and cultivated. Very good procedures are in place for recording students' attainments and setting appropriate targets through regular reviews, so that students feel well informed about their progress. Guidance on courses is good but does not sufficiently promote careers in art and design.

91. Leadership and management are excellent. The department is very well documented with all policies in place and very well organised resources. There is a very clear ethos, with a focus on the strengths and needs of individuals which builds on strong teaching of techniques. The introduction of photography and textiles courses has broadened students' options, enabling them to take two art and design A-levels. Recent appointments have strengthened the teaching of fine art skills. Very high quality work is featured throughout the school and the displays in the art and design rooms create an excellent teaching resource and environment for learning.

92. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. There has been a very good rise in the proportion of students gaining higher grades at A-level and in the facilities for ICT.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history, religious education and sociology. No other lessons were observed.

History

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

Strengths

- Significant improvement in standards and teaching since the last inspection
- Good learning and achievement as a result of good teaching
- Very good leadership and management of the department
- Very well motivated and enthusiastic students and very good relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Male students not achieving as well as female students
- Not enough opportunities for all students to engage in discussion and enquiry work.

93. By Year 13, standards in the work seen are above average. Students in Years 12 and 13 have a good knowledge and understanding of the key features of the periods studied. Year 12 students use their good communications skills to read sources critically on the Night of the Long Knives in Nazi Germany. They fluently ask insightful questions to extend their investigation further. Students with special needs evaluate evidence well and express ideas clearly. Year 13 students identify change and its causes over a century of Russian history. Higher attainers make perceptive links between the contributory political, economic and religious factors, and in a mature way, discuss the impact of war as a major factor in bringing about change. A small number of students lack confidence in discussion. Students write well-structured essays, supported by evidence from a variety of historians. The extended writing of lower attainers, however, is insufficiently developed, especially in Year 12. Students are competent in numeracy and ICT; they word-process essays and use the Internet for research. Nearly all AS students in 2000-01 took A-level in 2002.

94. The above average standards seen reflect the A-level results in the last three years. Results in 2001 were well above average and showed marked improvement on previous years. They were among the best in the school, with many students exceeding expectations. Since 1999, female students have done significantly better than male students, especially at the higher grades, although there was no significant difference in the work inspected.

95. Students achieve well from their GCSE standards. Gifted and talented students develop strong skills of critical analysis, and show mature essay-writing and speaking skills. Students with special needs make good progress in developing these skills, especially in oral communication, as a result of the considerable support they receive from teachers.

96. Students' attitudes are very good, encouraged by the school's strong ethos and the teachers' high expectations. Most students are highly motivated to succeed. They work independently very well on investigations and readily cooperate in pairs and groups. They ask perceptive questions and challenge each other and the teachers in lively discussion. Relationships are very good and students greatly appreciate the helpful guidance and very thorough marking they receive. However, teachers' methods do not always encourage the more reticent students to participate.

97. Teaching and learning are good. There is good improvement in teaching since the last inspection. Students' skills of enquiry, organisation, analysis and interpretation of evidence are strongly developed, due to the careful planning of challenging activities by well-qualified and experienced staff. These skills showed in students' debate of the extent of stability in Russia from 1906 to 1917. Students work enthusiastically at a brisk pace and their output is good, stimulated by teachers' high expectations and the deadlines for tasks. They know what they are doing and why, because the learning targets are clearly explained. Teachers' questioning is effective in checking their understanding, but does not involve less forthcoming students sufficiently. From early on in Year 12, students are fully aware of their predicted grades, their current performance and how to improve, due to regular monitoring of work and thorough and helpful marking. Progress in essay-writing is under constant review in relation to examination requirements, although the checks on male students' work are not rigorous enough.

98. Leadership and management are very good overall. There is clear direction in the departmental development plan which reflects the school's priorities and is successfully identifying targets for improvement. Learning and teaching are regularly monitored and evaluated and the many examples of good practice are shared, although not yet ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in lessons or, regardless of gender, to achieve equally well.

99. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards and the quality of teaching have significantly improved, as have assessment procedures. Individual targets are now set and students' progress is tracked, although results are not analysed by gender. Revised schemes of work emphasise skills of analysis and literacy appropriately. Positive effects of these improvements were reflected in the very good achievement shown by students' well above average results in 2001.

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Consistently well above average A-level results
- Detailed, supportive marking
- Wide range of textbooks supporting learning and teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient recent revision of the scheme of work
- Limited use of ICT for students' assignments.

100. Standards of work, both in Year 12 and 13, are well above average. Many more female than male students choose the course, but there are no significant differences in performance. No students have English as an additional language. Students have very good communication skills. However, they make limited use of ICT: essays are often handwritten and websites are rarely quoted. Year 12 students can evaluate scholarly criticisms of traditional arguments for the existence of God. Year 13 students study religious language. Their depth of thinking is evidenced by questions such as 'Does Dawkins like Wittgenstein?' Since 1996, all students have achieved an A-level grade and in 2001, the proportion gaining higher grades was well above average. The standard in Year 12 examinations is comparable to that in Year 13. Every student gained an A or B grade in 2002. The proportion of students continuing from Year 12 to 13 is high, and all students who entered Year 13 completed the course. Most students do as well as would be expected from their

GCSE results, and on average better in religious education over the last four years than their other subjects.

101. Students' achievement in the work seen is very good. On entry to the sixth form, standards are above average, and students improve on these standards. The work of lower attainers benefits from detailed lesson notes, well-planned class discussion and frequent homework tasks. As a result of challenging assignments, higher attainers regularly produce work which is well above the standard required for the highest A-level grade. All students refer to several textbooks, while gifted students frequently quote from a wide range of authors. Students are confident in expressing the views of the scholars they have met at national conferences.

102. Attitudes are very good. Students respond very well in lessons and show interest by their questions. The interest and positive group dynamics generated by teachers help to establish this attitude. Enthusiasm for the subject is shown in the large increase in Year 12 numbers. The philosophical and ethical modules studied, and the enthusiasm of teachers, help to ensure very good personal development and provide many opportunities for spiritual, moral and cultural development. Students are able to evaluate the contribution of Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle to western culture. Students rate the department very highly because teachers are knowledgeable and experienced, and have made a good choice of examination course.

103. Learning and teaching are very good. Stimulating teaching ensures high levels of interest. All lessons are planned well, and the best have a wide range of activities. Occasionally, the planning of lesson time is not considered well enough to ensure that all the material is covered. Teachers, most of whom have good specialist knowledge, have very high expectations, so that students develop very good knowledge and understanding. Homework is used constructively and students research thoroughly for the many essays set. Marking is detailed, with very helpful guidance on what students need to do to improve.

104. Leadership and management are good. In the interim situation which has resulted from recruitment difficulties, good lesson planning is being maintained. Both students and teachers have continued to attend relevant national conferences. The range of textbooks is good, but there are insufficient library copies for the increased student numbers. Teachers regularly refer to websites. The course supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, for example through debates on medical ethics, although opportunities to reinforce this provision are not documented. The Year 12 scheme of work has not been sufficiently modified to reflect the wider range of attainment among current students, and ICT is not fully integrated into teaching.

105. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The good examination results have further improved, and the quality of learning and teaching is now very good. Students' attitudes are very positive, resulting in high numbers choosing the course in Year 12 and continuing into Year 13.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Above average standards and good achievement
- Very good teaching, excellent relationships and well-motivated students leading to very good learning
- Very effective leadership and competent management.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough attention to students' study skills at the start of the course
- Students' skills in using quantitative data not sufficiently developed.

106. The subject is popular, especially with female students. Standards of work seen are above average and consistent with recent A-level results. Overall, students show good achievement over Years 12 and 13 from their standards at GCSE, which indicate a wide spread of previous attainment. Many students achieve very well. Year 12 students have made a very good start to the course. They understand the different theoretical positions relevant to the topics. They show sound skills of critical analysis, for example when evaluating Marxist and Functionalist theories of the nature of society. Few students, however, critically evaluate statements in a broader sociological context, although their thinking skills are very well developed. Some students are not selective enough when taking notes and summarising texts. Year 13 students have a good understanding of the course requirements. Higher attainers analyse very well and have good skills in weighing up evidence to reach well-considered conclusions. Average attainers can assess well the work of individual theorists on the politics of voting and the state. Lower attainers do not develop their conclusions and their evaluation is weak. Students' use and analyses of quantitative data are not sufficiently developed, which has a limiting effect over time on the headway they make.

107. The A-level results in 2001 were above average, while a well-above-average proportion of students gained the higher A-B grades. In 2002, all twenty-one students gained a grade, with over four in every ten gaining an A-B grade. Students generally performed much better than their GCSE grades would have indicated. A high proportion continues into Year 13 and completes the course.

108. Students' attitude to learning is very positive and some show real enthusiasm in their studies. Their contribution to discussion is very good, with both female and male students participating positively. There are excellent relationships. Students express a very high level of satisfaction with the course that they find stimulating. They feel they would benefit from a study skills induction programme in Year 12

109. Learning and teaching are generally very good. Teaching is never less than good. Lessons are well planned and presented in a structured and focused way so that students clearly understand what they are doing. Strengths are teachers' very secure subject knowledge, the good organisation, and lessons aimed at developing students' independence as learners. A blend of good humour and academic rigour characterises the climate in lessons, and provides the foundation in some for very good learning through inquiry, although this is not a feature of all lessons. Students benefit from the dialogue with teachers that extends their knowledge and understanding of topics. Teaching is intellectually challenging as seen in Year 13, where students critically analysed a number of statements on 'power and the state' and matched these to nine sociological positions. Expectations are high and work is appropriately demanding. Assessment, including monitoring and setting individual targets, is very good, although there is some variation in the quality of marking which is not always as

detailed and helpful as it should be.

110. The course is very effectively led and competently managed. Teachers work well together and their combined strengths promote good standards. Resources are good. ICT facilities, linked to the Internet, are close at hand, providing ready access for independent study.

111. Since the last inspection, improvement is good. Standards have been maintained. Good recent developments have led to highly motivated students who are set on improving their AS grades in Year 13 as well as studying for the A2 examinations.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and German. No other lessons were seen.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Above average standards at AS- and A-level
- Very good learning and teaching
- Excellent marking and guidance to students
- Very strong partnership between students and teachers
- Excellent procedures for tracking individual progress and setting targets.

Areas for improvement

- Only one English course offered within the subject area.

112. Standards in Year 12 are above average. The most capable students show a very high standard of literary criticism. In their study of 'Volpone', they relate this seventeenth century play to modern issues such as marketing. They write in a confident and coherent style. The ability of all students to comment on character and themes and relate them to their wider reading is above average. Most make close reference to the text to justify their judgements. Students with special needs are very perceptive and write with growing confidence and maturity. Those with a talent for English often take the lead in lessons, for example casting and directing a scene from a play or giving a talk to the class on a new book they have read. Above average standards are sustained in Year 13. Some of the highest attainers draw detailed and well-illustrated comparisons between books from different ages with a common theme. All students make thorough background studies and use them effectively for example, in their analyses of Christina Rossetti's poetry. They are particularly good at developing and explaining original ideas for the theatrical presentation of characters in 'The Merchant of Venice'. In the key skills of written and oral communication, standards are well above average, and students' use of ICT to present and enhance their work is above average in quality.

113. English is an increasingly popular subject. Standards have steadily improved despite larger numbers of students, representing a broader range of prior attainment. In 2001, results were above average. In 2002, all students gained a grade and standards were maintained. Although in a minority, male students have reached a higher level than female students in every year but one between 1998 and 2002. The achievement of all students during Years 12 and 13 is good. Nearly all complete AS-level and continue their studies into Year 13. The quality of learning and teaching seen during the inspection is likely to enable students to

reach well above average standards in their examinations, and so achieve very well.

114. Attitudes to English are very good. Students prepare thoroughly for lessons and arrive promptly, ready for work. Their involvement in tasks and discussions is total, and they show a keen interest in and respect for each other's ideas. They have a very constructive partnership with their teachers, responding positively to challenge and advice. Teachers encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and consequently they show independence in their research and enquiry. Very good moral and social development is shown by their ability to discuss serious issues, such as sexual morality and racial intolerance, with maturity and perception. They show intellectual curiosity and are willing to consider different points of view. The subject is valued, both for its interest and its usefulness to them, now and in the future.

115. Learning and teaching are very good. Students with a broad range of attainment at GCSE make good progress in their literary studies because they receive excellent advice from teachers who know them well as individuals. Students have confidence in teachers' very good subject knowledge. Their thinking and knowledge are extended because teachers challenge them and give them frequent opportunities to test out their ideas in discussion. Excellent marking of students' work is detailed, analytical and closely related to examination requirements. Students enjoy the variety of teaching approaches and find the teachers' enthusiasm infectious. By providing them with a rich diet of literature from different ages and cultures, English makes a very valuable contribution to students' personal development.

116. The English department is very well led and managed. The staff team is given clear and specific guidance, while the unique contribution of each member is recognised. Constant review and development of learning and teaching have led to steadily improving results. The open entry to the English course and very close monitoring of individual progress, reflect the school's aim of enabling all to reach their full potential. Although departmental resources are adequate, the library is under-stocked with books for background research. Many students compensate for this however, by using the Internet.

117. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have improved from a strong position in 1997, and learning and teaching are now more varied, flexible and enjoyable. It should be possible however, in a very popular subject, to offer more than one course at this level.

German

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

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leading to high attainment in the subject
- Students' very good attitudes to the subject
- The emphasis on independent learning
- Excellent procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress
- The excellent leadership and management of the faculty.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient access to ICT resources on a regular basis
- Inadequate stock of books in the library to support students' learning.

118. Standards in German in Year 13 are well above average. There is little difference in the performance of female and male students. Excellent teaching and learning ensure that students work hard to sustain and build on their good results at GCSE. Their achievement is very good. Students express sophisticated ideas and opinions using complex language, both

orally and in writing. They show very good understanding of German in a variety of forms. They read a wide range of texts which give an up-to-date picture of life in Germany. These challenge them to explore and develop opinions about moral and social issues. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Most students reach high standards in reading and listening, but some are not always accurate when speaking and writing. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported well and they make very good progress.

119. Numbers taking German in the last three years have been too low to make comparisons with national averages. All who begin the course go on to take the examination and generally gain high grades. In 2001, the results at AS- and A-level were very high indeed. This represents very good achievement for these students. Numbers taking the subject are increasing and results have improved over the last few years.

120. Students have very good attitudes to German. They know that they have to work hard, but appreciate the fact that teachers plan to make learning fun. Relationships between students and with teachers are excellent, demonstrated by a strong sense of working together. Students are encouraged to develop as independent learners. They practise their understanding of spoken German by listening individually to tapes. They enjoy researching topics they are particularly interested in for their coursework.

121. Learning and teaching are excellent, and never less than very good. Teachers use their very good command of German as often as possible in lessons. This provides a good model and helps students to develop very good accents. Lessons are carefully planned. A good variety of activities systematically builds students' knowledge and skills. Students respond well to teachers' very high expectations for the quality and quantity of their work. Regular marking of work with helpful suggestions on how to avoid mistakes gives students a very clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The teacher marks some of their writing by recording on a tape line-by-line correction of mistakes, with reminders about grammar and comments about quality. Students find this effective and thorough method of assessment very helpful. Teachers generally make very good use of resources, but ICT is not well used because of problems of access to computers. In addition, the library does not have sufficient books, magazines and newspapers to support the course.

122. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The strong team of teachers is committed to refining their practice and improving results. There is regular monitoring of learning and teaching, including frequent analysis of students' work. The department has a flexible approach to its entry requirements to the sixth-form course. Although students are usually required to obtain the highest GCSE grades before they join the course, exceptions are made in special circumstances.

123. The previous report contained few references specifically to post-16 students. However, standards then were described as average, and now they are well above average. All the areas for development in the school as a whole have been successfully dealt with. This constitutes very good improvement since the last inspection.