

# INSPECTION REPORT

**LYTHAM ST ANNES HIGH TECHNOLOGY  
COLLEGE**

Lytham St Annes

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119740

Headteacher: Philip Wood

Reporting inspector: David Morton  
13154

Dates of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2002

Inspection number: 249759

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Worsley Road Lytham St Annes
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Clark
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
13154	D Morton	Registered inspector	Citizenship Theatre studies (sixth form) Educational inclusion	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19374	W Sheehan	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?
23926	D Howorth	Sixth form co-ordinator	Vocational education (11-16) Travel and tourism (sixth form)	
10160	R Bagguley	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30512	M Bailey	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Physics (sixth form)	
11190	M Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
2932	R Hedge	Team inspector	Geography (11-16)	
14521	J Hibbert	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form) Sociology (sixth form)	
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Physical education	
19915	P Hooton	Team inspector	History	
4483	J Kirkland	Team inspector	Business studies (sixth form) Psychology (sixth form)	
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English (11-16) English literature (sixth form)	
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) French (sixth form) Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
13189	P Walton	Team inspector	Design and technology	

8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lytham St Annes High Technology College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 and sixth-form students. It is bigger than most secondary schools, having 1842 pupils, including 325 sixth-formers. Girls outnumber boys in all year groups except Year 10; in Year 13 there are significantly more female than male students. The school is well situated to provide comprehensive education for the towns of Lytham and St Annes, and neighbouring districts; over ten per cent of pupils travel from Blackpool. The background of pupils and sixth-form students is more favourable than the overall national picture; the percentage entitled to free school meals, nine per cent, is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, 2.4 per cent, is also below the national average; of these, 0.7 per cent, have English as a second language but no pupils are at an early stage in learning English. The percentage of pupils, including one sixth former, with special educational needs, 4.4 per cent, is also below the national average and only 1.9 per cent of these have statements to help them with their learning or behaviour. This, too, is below the national average. The overall attainment of pupils when they start in the school in Year 7 is above average. The school has gained status as a specialist college of technology. It has achieved Investor in People status and has been granted the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

**Lytham St Annes High Technology College is a good and rapidly improving school that has a number of outstanding features.** There is a trend of rising standards in response to good teaching. Pupils and sixth formers achieve well. The leadership of the school and that of the sixth form ensure that the school evaluates key aspects of its work and strives to improve on its previous best. As a result, **it gives good value for money.**

#### What the school does well

- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding; pupils, sixth-form students and all staff are expected to strive for the highest possible standards. Almost all respond to these high expectations.
- National curriculum tests and examination results improve steadily; in 2002 results were significantly better than those of previous years.
- Standards seen during the inspection are above average and better than those at the previous inspection.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and often very good.
- Pupils achieve well because they bring very positive attitudes to their learning and develop good relationships with each other and members of staff. They are proud of their school.
- There is a good sixth form with a clear sense of purpose and direction due to its very good leadership.

#### What could be improved

- The demands for the school to provide the highest quality of education and strive for excellence are not pursued rigorously enough by some of the leadership group and some heads of subject.
- Teaching in around a quarter of lessons, whilst largely satisfactory, is not as good as the majority of teaching in the school.

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



## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The Library and Resource Centre is an outstanding feature of the school. It was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection in April 1997; improvement in this area has been impressive. It is well used, especially by sixth formers. This resource has been significant in encouraging independent learning and contributing to the raising of standards. There remains scope to increase further the number of fiction and non-fiction books.

Further approaches to improving standards have been undertaken recently with some success if not always with sufficient rigour; however, rigour is now demanded within new key school policies that are in the early stages of implementation. Teaching, too is better than in 1997; it clearly is a major factor in the steady improvement in standards. The school still does not meet requirements for a daily act of worship for all pupils, although it provides well for pupils' spiritual development through other means. Overall, improvement has been good since the inspection of 1997.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

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

### In national tests in 2002 at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science:

- results in all three subjects were above average; higher-attaining pupils did especially well in mathematics;
- in comparison with similar schools (*schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals*), results overall were well above average;
- given attainment on entry to the school, results show that pupils' achievement was good;
- girls performed better than boys, although there are signs that the gap is narrowing;
- over the last three years, results improved at a faster rate than they did nationally.

### In 2002, results in GCSE and GNVQ examinations:

- results overall improved significantly in 2002 and were above average;
- in comparison with similar schools, results overall were above average;
- girls performed better than boys, but the gap narrowed at this age, too; pupils performed especially well in English;
- results show that pupils' achievement was good; however, there are pockets of underachievement amongst some boys;
- governors set realistic targets that were exceeded in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades, but just fell short when all pupils' performance was taken into account;
- GCSE results have improved steadily since the previous inspection, with a significant improvement seen in 2002;
- results in English language and literature, art and design, business studies, German, mathematics and science were significantly higher than the national average; those in French and geography were below national averages;

- results in vocational courses were average overall.

**In 2001 (national comparisons not yet available for 2002), results in AS and A Level examinations:**

- results were above average at AS and average at A Level;
- results were highest in art and design and biology;
- students achieved well in relation to their GCSE results;
- results in 2002 suggest that further improvement has been very significant overall.

**Standards seen during the inspection:**

- standards are above average and largely match national test and examination results; these standards reflect pupils' and students' good achievement – that is they make effective progress;
- usually good, and frequently very good, teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils and students accounts for the steady and secure improvement in standards;
- increasingly, pupils and sixth formers work independently, putting the resource centre to good use;
- basic skills of literacy and numeracy are above average; the emphasis given to them is effective in most subjects.

**PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very Good. Pupils are very positive about school, enjoy attending and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There are very few incidents where behaviour is inappropriate; The atmosphere about school is secure and conducive to effective learning and personal development.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are valued and fostered, by pupils as well as staff. As a result, these, and effective teaching, ensure that pupils achieve and learn well.
Attendance	Good. Pupils come to school willingly and are hardly ever late.

**TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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

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

**Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection:**

- around a third of all teaching is very good and occasionally excellent; the school's policy and its development plan, with their focus on learning, have helped pupils and sixth formers to get to know how they learn best, to work independently yet also to participate actively in their learning;
- in the best teaching pupils are encouraged to think for themselves; examples of 'spoon-feeding' are far less frequent than previously;
- lively teaching and learning are particular features of art and design and design and technology in Years 10 and 11; less effective teaching occurs sometimes in French in Years 7 to 11;

- in Years 7 – 11, the teaching and learning in English and mathematics are good, as they are in science in Years 10 and 11. This teaching is notable for the variety of methods used as teachers try to meet the differing learning needs of individual pupils;
- teaching and learning of the small proportion of pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants and these pupils achieve well;
- not enough is planned at present for those pupils the school is beginning to identify as having special gifts and talents;
- the skills of literacy are well taught in most subjects, those of numeracy are developing, but there is scope for more widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning across subjects;
- the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good and appreciated by the students.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is wide, lively and enjoyed by staff and pupils. There is not enough use made of ICT in some subjects in the main school, but teachers are getting better at using it as more equipment becomes available to them. The opportunities provided for vocational education are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The quality of provision for these pupils means that they make good progress, fully participate in the life of the school and enjoy success in examinations.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language are provided with good opportunities to progress and their English is good and assists their effective learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are given good opportunities to consider difficult thoughts and feelings about themselves and their relationships with others. Together, they ponder world, national and local events and form opinions of what these mean to them as they mature and in the way they conduct their lives.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school gives significant importance to make sure that the day-to-day wellbeing of pupils is maintained. One feature of this is the excellent care taken to keep the school clean (except for the physical education areas), bright and cheerful so that pupils feel the good atmosphere that is created and so learn effectively.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents consider the school to be approachable and progressive – an excellent place to send their children: they are expected to work hard and make progress. Parents are very happy that this is the case.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The leadership of the new headteacher is excellent; the policies he and his deputies have put in place aim to meet the needs and aspirations of individual pupils and sixth-form students, through systems of quality control and development. Key areas of responsibility of the leadership group are managed effectively but in some instances lack the rigour the policies require. Heads of subject are mostly good and effective. Non-teaching members of staff ensure the smooth running of the school through the very good maintenance of daily routines.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. After a difficult few years, the governing body is now very effective. Governors know the school well and raise questions of management to ensure that aspirations are well thought through.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and his leadership group have identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement over the short and longer terms. The school's self-evaluation is clear in an excellent development plan that recognises that the better the teaching and learning the better the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Within tight financial constraints, resources are managed effectively, staff generally suitably deployed and financial planning is prudent. The school continues to seek best value in all aspects of its work and through its purchasing policy.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Most parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children make progress and work hard</li> <li>• teaching is good</li> <li>• the school is approachable, and</li> <li>• the school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<p>A small minority of parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is too much or too little homework</li> <li>• they don't know enough about how their children are getting on</li> <li>• the school does not work closely enough with them.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive comments of parents. They believe the school encourages parental involvement and that systems are in place to keep parents informed – there are well-produced newsletters, *Headliners*, and letters are sent home to parents about anything involving their children that is different to the daily routine. Inspectors feel the right amount of homework is usually set and has purpose. However, not all teachers in all subjects set homework consistently; this makes it difficult for parents to keep track of it.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **LYTHAM ST ANNES HIGH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is popular and expanding. It is much larger than most with 325 students on role. In Year 12 there are almost equal numbers of male and female students but in Year 13 two thirds are female. There are four students from ethnic minority backgrounds who speak and write English well. There is one student with a statement of special educational needs. There is a very wide range of academic and vocational subjects at AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A2 (Advanced) level supplemented by an extensive range of enrichment activities. Half of pupils in Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form and about a fifth of the students join from other schools. The sixth form is open-access but students are expected to have a minimum of five grade Cs at GCSE in order to begin advanced courses. Standards at the start of Year 12 are average overall.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form provides a good standard of education; it has some very good features. It is successful and cost effective. Results in advanced examinations have improved considerably and in 2002 were the school's best ever. Students achieve well in response to good teaching and very good advice, support and guidance. Students regularly gain admission to highly respected universities, including a few to Oxford and Cambridge.

#### **Strengths**

- Standards have improved and are above average in most subjects. The most recent results reflect these standards. Standards are highest in art and design, biology, business studies, psychology and theatre studies.
- Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good.
- Students have very good attitudes and relationships that contribute to the good progress they make.
- Advice, support and guidance are very good and have a positive impact on personal development.
- An excellent strategic plan underpins the improvements that are taking place.
- The curricular provision, enrichment and careers education are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- The use of modern technology to support teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

*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	<b>Good.</b> Results have improved. The subject expertise of staff leads to good teaching and as a result students achieve well.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Achievement is very good. Very good teaching and student's attitudes to learning secure well above average standards.
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Results have improved at advanced level but have fallen at AS level. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very effective and leadership is very good.
ICT	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching is good. Standards are below average because of the low knowledge and skills of the students at the start of the course.
Travel and tourism	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Standards are average and results are gradually improving.
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> Achievement is very good in response to very effective teaching. Standards are well above average despite the limited enrichment activity.
Music	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. They are improving because of good teaching and a shared enthusiasm for the subject between staff and students.
Theatre studies	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average because teaching and learning are very good. Leadership is very good and students achieve very well.
Geography	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are average. Teaching and learning are good and as a result students achieve well.
Psychology	<b>Very Good.</b> Standards have improved and are well above average. Teaching and learning have some excellent features such as the degree of challenge.
Religious studies	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. There are no male students on the course.
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> Results and standards have improved. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good.
English literature	<b>Good.</b> In Year 13 standards are above average overall. Students achieve well and learn effectively because of their positive attitudes and good teaching.
French	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are above average in writing, listening and reading but the development of speaking is less secure. Attitudes to learning are positive.

In 14 other subjects 18 lessons were seen. Teaching was very good in design and technology, electronics and further mathematics. It was good in English language, government and politics, history and music and satisfactory in chemistry, communication studies, computing, economics, engineering, German and sport studies.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Very good.</b> Advice, support and guidance are valued highly by students, and the use of assessment to check progress makes an effective contribution to standards and achievement.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Very good.</b> There is a clear sense of direction and purpose in the sixth form. Results are evaluated and governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses. Plans are directed at improving learning, standards and results and there is a clear vision for further development. Management is good but there are a few areas of concern that require urgent attention to avoid underachievement.

## 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"> <li>• They feel comfortable and like being treated as adults.</li> <li>• Teaching is very good.</li> <li>• They enjoy the atmosphere and sense of community.</li> <li>• They value careers and educational guidance.</li> <li>• They appreciate the quality of advice and support.</li> <li>• They believe their personal development is very good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They think that more administrative help to speed up the process of UCAS application is needed.</li> <li>• A few feel that the information on the variety of courses in higher education in the performing arts is less extensive than in other areas.</li> </ul>

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors feel that students' positive views are justified with the exception that teaching is good in most subjects rather than very good. They have no evidence to substantiate what students feel could be improved.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. By the time pupils reach Year 9, results in national tests in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were above average and well above those of pupils in similar schools. Over the last three years girls have outperformed boys and their results have exceeded the national average by a significantly bigger margin than those of boys. However, the performance of boys has improved over this period. Overall, improvement by all pupils has been more rapid than that found nationally.

#### **Results in tests at the age of 14 in 2002**

Subject	School results in relation to national results	Trend over last three years
English	Above average	Improving faster than most schools
Mathematics	Above average	Improving at a similar rate to most schools
Science	Above average	In line with national trend of improvement

#### **Examinations at GCSE level in 2002**

2. GCSE results have improved steadily over the last three years. **In 2002 results improved markedly.** Boys' results have been close to the national average whilst those of girls have been above average. There are pockets of underachievement amongst small groups of boys. Average points scores have risen steadily since 1997, with the best improvement in 2002. There has also been a steady rise over the same period in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades. This improvement has been in line with the national trend.

3. The 2002 GCSE results show that most pupils with special needs achieve at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to G. Pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy in the lower sets in English and mathematics. The few who are withdrawn for special help with reading make good gains in reading age. Similarly, those pupils who have motor-skill problems benefit from the extra help they receive in the handwriting and keyboarding clubs.

#### **GCSE results for all pupils in 2002**

Subject	School results in 2002 compared with national results	Trend over recent years	Comments
English	Well above average	More rapid improvement than nationally	Substantial improvement by boys
English literature	High	Holding steady	More than 2 out of 5 pupils not entered
Mathematics	Well above average	Improving	Consistent
Science	Well above average	Steady improvement	Significant improvement in boys
Arts and design	High	Upwards trend	Very big improvement 2001>2002
Business studies	Above average	Consistent	Good teaching
Design and technology	Above average	Consistently improving	New staff beginning to have impact
Drama	Above average	Upward trend	Slight dip in 2002
Geography	Below average	Falling	Difficulty in 2002 through staffing; 2001



			results above average
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Subject	School results in 2002 compared with national results	Trend over recent years	Comments
History	Above average	Slight decline	Changes in exam should lead to rising results
ICT	Below average	Declining	There has been no taught ICT in Years 7 to 9 until September 2002
Modern languages French	Below average	Sharp decline	Insecure leadership and management
German	Well above average	Significant improvement	New appointment having impact
Music	High	Improving	Small entry
Physical education	Average	Above average in 2001	Grades in 2002 as predicted
Religious education	Close to average in full course	Decline on previous year	New teaching staff

### **Standards of work seen during the inspection**

4. **Standards overall are above the national average in most subjects.** Teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves and enable most to reach the levels expected of them. By the time they reach Year 9, pupils' standards are above average as they are in most subjects by the time they reach Year 11. In mathematics, higher-attaining pupils respond well to the challenges given them by teachers. Standards are well above average in most practical subjects. Pupils, especially boys, respond to the type of learning where they are actively doing things.

5. Standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are above average and allow pupils to do well in most subjects. Skills of ICT are under-developed but the school has now introduced discrete lessons in Years 7 to 9 in order to raise standards.

Standards	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Well above average	Mathematics,	Mathematics, art and design, design and technology, drama, music
Above average	English, science, art and design, German, history, music, physical education	English, science, German, history, religious education.
Average	Design and technology, geography, religious education.	Geography, physical education.
Below average	French, ICT.	French, ICT.

6. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is above average. A range of additional data makes clear that pupils achieve well and make good progress by the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11, since standards seen in lessons largely match the improved examination results in 2002, overall pupils achieve well during these two years; that is, their progress is good overall. Teaching and learning in French are going through a period of transition and as a result standards have dipped. The school is aware of the changes caused by staff movement and is striving to support the subject towards returning to its previous eminence.

7. ***Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.*** They succeed in all subjects at the same rate as other pupils. In all subjects achievement is at least satisfactory; it is good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, art and design, music, physical education and religious education.

Achievement	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Very good		Art and design, design and technology, drama.
Good	English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, German, history, music, physical education.	English, mathematics, science, German, history, music, physical education, religious education.
Satisfactory	Geography, ICT, religious education.	Geography, ICT.
Unsatisfactory	French	French

## Sixth form

### Results

8. **The Advanced Level results improved very significantly in 2002 and were the school's best ever.**

- The total average points score for each student rose from 16 to 24.
- Almost 50 per cent of the passes were at the higher A and B grades.
- The overall pass rate improved from 90 to 98.5 per cent.
- Three students gained recognition for being in the top 5 candidates in the country: two in art and design and one in general studies.

9. This improvement is the result of a number of factors. The new courses and modular examination structure have led to more effective curricular planning, as in psychology. A recent focus on improving learning has had a positive impact on the determination of the students to do well and has been supported very effectively by most staff. New facilities are another reason. Not least is the fact that these students' average GCSE scores were the highest of any year group to date.

10. In 2000 and 2001 A-level results were average. The results of female students were higher than those of male; however, their achievement was similar.

### Results in the 15 focus subjects:

Subject	Trend over the last three years up to and including 2001	Result in 2001 compared with national results	Comments about unvalidated 2002 results
Mathematics	Declining	Average	Improved and more higher grades
Biology	Improving	Well above average	More higher grades
Physics	Below average	Below average	Significant improvement and more higher grades
Business studies	Fluctuating	Average	Significant improvement and more higher grades
ICT	N/A	N/A	First examination in 2002
Travel and tourism	Fluctuating	Below average	Improvement but no higher grades
Art and design	Generally well above average	Well above average	Slight decline but still a large percentage of higher grades
Music technology	No information	Average	Similar with no higher grades
Theatre studies	No information	Well above average	Declined but still a large percentage of higher grades
Geography	Improved	Average	Similar with a low percentage of high grades

Religious studies	Fluctuating	Well above average	Similar with low numbers of students
Sociology	Fluctuating	Average	Significant improvement and more higher grades

Subject	Trend over the last three years up to and including 2001	Result in 2001 compared with national results	Comments about unvalidated 2002 results
Psychology	No information	Average	Significant improvement and more higher grades
English literature	Fluctuating	Below average	Significant improvement and more higher grades
French	Generally above average	Above average	Improved

11. In other subjects the results improved very significantly in chemistry, computing, economics and history. They improved significantly in communication studies, general studies, government and politics and sport and physical education. The results improved in German, remained the same in English language and food technology but declined in design and technology. A small number of students achieved high results in electronics.

12. The results in the new AS examination at the end of Year 12 were above the national average points score in 2001. Similar results were gained in 2002.

### **Standards of work seen during the inspection**

13. **Standards were above average overall.** These standards are reached because the students achieve well in response to good teaching and they have very positive attitudes to their learning.

Standards	Subjects
Well above average	Art and design, biology, business studies, psychology and theatre studies.
Above average	English literature, French, mathematics, music technology, physics and religious studies.
Average	Geography, sociology and travel and tourism.
Below average	ICT.

14. The overall achievement of students is good. Attainment at the start of the sixth form is average. Given this starting point, standards improve and students achieve above what might be expected in relation to their GCSE performance. Therefore, learning is effective.

Achievement	Subjects
Very good	Art and design, biology, business studies, psychology and theatre studies.
Good	English literature, geography, mathematics, music technology, physics, religious studies, sociology and travel and tourism.
Satisfactory	French and ICT.

15. Students with learning difficulties and those from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve well.

16. Course completion rates are high, except in ICT, and 88 per cent of students move into higher education. Seven students have gained admission to Oxford and Cambridge colleges in the last three years. However, the continuity from AS to A Level courses is low in design and technology, French, history, ICT and mathematics.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are very good.
Pupils have very good attitudes to work and behaviour around school is generally good.

17. ***Pupils have very good attitudes to work.*** Pupils are proud of their school. They are interested in the many and varied activities that the school has to offer. In lessons the majority are keen to participate and are eager to give answers to questions. These good attitudes contribute to the positive learning in the school. They work well independently and in paired and group activities. Pupils work sensibly with those of the opposite sex and help and support each other in lessons.

**+++** *A Year 9 citizenship lesson enabled pupils to work effectively as teams to solve different puzzles. They listened carefully to each other and willingly offered suggestions to support their learning.*

18. Generally, behaviour is good and contributes to the learning atmosphere in the school. At lunchtimes and break-times pupils are remarkably tolerant considering the lack of space. In lessons, most pupils behave appropriately. They listen to others and respect and value their opinions.

19. In previous years there has been a considerable number of exclusions, but with the introduction of new behavioural procedures and an improved involvement of parents in the process, the number of exclusions has begun to decline. In discussions with pupils, they recognise that bullying does occur from time to time, but know there are staff they can talk to who will listen and take action on their concerns.

**+++** *Year 8 pupils have been trained as anti-bullying mentors to help support Year 7 pupils. This contributes to an atmosphere of older pupils caring and supporting younger ones.*

20. ***Relationships are very good.*** Pupils become aware of the friendly atmosphere soon after starting in Year 7. Although this is a larger than average school, teachers know pupils well. The introduction of the form tutor and head of year structure has given the opportunities for teachers to build working relationships with pupils. The respect and care afforded to all members of the school's community, the enjoyment teachers create in lessons and the pupils' keenness to learn and question new ideas are an indication of the school's concern for the spiritual development of pupils.

**+++** *In a Year 11 drama lesson, pupils took responsibility for their own learning by helping each other improve their performances and therefore created an atmosphere where they wanted to learn and succeed.*

21. Pupils' personal development is good. Through opportunities, for example in religious education, drama, history and English lessons, pupils reflect on moral and social issues that improve their thinking and debating skills and develop in them their emerging values and principles. Pupils are encouraged to develop as well-rounded people, who are equipped to face life and its challenges. Pupils show awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship and an appreciation of how society works through the working of the school council.

**+++** *In a lesson in Year 9 pupils reflected on how well people need to work as a team. They suggested how important it is to communicate clearly and openly with each other. They showed an awareness that good team work required them to exercise the skills of give and take. Pupils acknowledged that key ways of communicating could be in a variety of media such as poetry, music, drama or art and design; they recognised there are several ways of getting a message across.*

22. In most aspects of school behaviour is good. In lessons observed, behaviour was good or better in four out of five in the main school and nine out of ten in the sixth form. The behaviour of a small minority, usually boys, is challenging and requires expertise to handle; sometimes this expertise is shaky and lessons that lack pace or a clear purpose lead to some misbehaviour.

23. Attendance is good overall. The majority arrive on time. The large site makes moving between lessons difficult but pupils move quickly and calmly.

### Sixth form

Students have very good independent learning skills and display mature study skills.
Students' views of the school are very positive.

24. **Students have very good attitudes to learning.** There are frequently many students in the library and they show very good self motivation. In lessons they show a strong commitment to achieving their best and willingly share their ideas with others. Students grow in maturity through:

- Their increasingly mature contribution and opinions in lessons
- Their willingness to participate in a wide variety of social activities outside of lessons
- Their generosity in giving up time to help other pupils
- Their positive approach to learning.

**+++** *In discussion, students felt they were treated as mature young people and that teachers encourage them to have their own ideas. Students state that teachers are good at motivating them.*

25. The majority of students attend regularly and are punctual to lessons. This good attendance reflects students' positive and independent attitudes to learning. However in certain subject areas, for example engineering, attendance is less consistent.

### HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Overall quality of teaching	Good	Good

26. Teaching and learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Over 90 per cent of the teaching was at least satisfactory, and in over 68 per cent of lessons, teaching and learning were good or better. Almost a third of teaching and learning was very good and sometimes excellent.

27. The big improvement is largely the result of the school's particular emphasis on teaching and learning over the past twelve months. A thorough and focused policy for improvement has been written after full consultation across key members of staff. This is supported by a new school development plan that has teaching and learning at its heart. Members of staff, almost with one voice, recognise that quality control and improvement measures are part of professional development rather than a threat or encumbrance. Teachers are thinking more creatively about how different groups of pupils learn effectively. Subject teachers are aware of the range of teaching and learning styles they can bring to their work. For example, they realise the value of practical activity, lively presentation, working in groups and imaginative planning. There is a climate in which experiment is encouraged and affirmation of proven methods given. Teaching is consistently good and varied in most subjects; as a result, pupils achieve well, for they make progress lesson by lesson. The improved GCSE and A Level results in 2002 are evidence of this improved teaching.

28. Examples of **excellent practice** are:

**+++** *In a games lesson with Year 7, the aim was to develop some basic skills of netball. The teacher used demonstrations of good practice skilfully to improve the performance of all pupils. The nature of tactics and team play were emphasised and a key feature of the lesson was the use of ongoing assessment to group pupils so that they were working at demanding levels with other pupils of a similar standard.*

**+++** *In history in Year 9, lower-attaining pupils were enthralled with a lesson about the Home Front during the First World War. The teacher timed well the use of source material skilfully presented to show that, horrific though the trenches on the Somme were, people at home suffered badly with the effects of war on their daily lives. Through narration and the use of video, this teacher moved the pupils to a felt understanding of the issues involved; they empathised with events of the past.*

**+++** *The conflict of reality and fantasy in 'Billy Liar' caused Year 11 drama pupils to draw upon their skills of characterisation and presentation. The subtlety of showing Billy's desire to run off to London with Liz with his uncertainty whether he could cope away from home was demanding for the pupils. The excellence of this lesson rested in the teacher's sensitive intervention to help pupils draw on previous learning to find ways of expressing layers of meaning.*

29. **Occasionally teachers' repertoire of skills is not finely enough tuned** to draw on appropriate techniques to encourage the most effective learning. This was sometimes a feature in just less than 25 per cent of lessons in which teaching, though satisfactory, did not succeed in arousing pupils' full engagement in learning. Teachers could not find techniques to help pupils put ideas into words or the objectives of the lesson were never clear to pupils. They did not know what they were trying to achieve. In recalling previous learning, not all teachers remind pupils of key skills, knowledge or approaches that they might bring to their new learning. So, short-term goals for a lesson were not always set.

30. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Their needs are included in the schemes of work in all subjects except geography and modern foreign languages. The Pupil Directory, produced by the learning support department, is very useful in providing easily accessible information about pupils' special needs to all teachers. Consequently teachers generally provide pupils with work that is suited to their ability. For example, in some subjects writing frames are used so that work is suitably simplified for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. When the learning support assistants have prior knowledge of what is required of them they provide very effective help. However, some teachers fail to give adequate information before the lesson and on these occasions the support is less effective. The good advice contained in the learning support department's document for teachers needs further highlighting. When pupils are taught either individually or in very small groups, teaching is good: teachers or learning support assistants help pupils through their programme in an encouraging, pleasant and business-like atmosphere.

31. Pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties receive good support both from teachers and learning support assistants. There are occasions, however, when a number of such pupils are in the same class and there is no learning support assistant. In these instances their behaviour is sometimes poor and little learning takes place.

## **Sixth form**

32. **The strength of the teaching in the sixth form is in the scholarship of the teachers and their enthusiasm for their subjects.** Students respond positively to this and for some, a life-long interest is engendered in a relatively small number of lessons that capture imagination. Students of theatre studies were engrossed in the acting approaches of Stanislavski and became highly motivated in trying to work on sub-text to draw out deeper



meanings. In a less practical way but with equal engagement, students in religious studies research on the Internet to further their understanding of world religions. A very successful art and design student discovered a close affinity with Japanese art. An almost observable feature of this effective learning is that students are feeling for the knowledge and skills they acquire; through this the knowledge and skills become a part of them. Teaching that evokes such a response is rare on a daily basis yet was seen several times during the inspection. It features active learning, good questioning and well-planned, structured lessons from which students learn well:

**+++** *In English literature, pupils engaged with text and the ways in which writers use language to get particular meanings across to the reader. This activity was rigorous, intellectual, demanding yet rewarding for sixth formers.*

**+++** *In psychology and business studies – two apparently disparate subjects – a very wide range of teaching and learning styles were successfully employed. Some activities in psychology seemed almost childish but were a vehicle for quite complex learning. The teacher successfully teased out key principles from such activity.*

**+++** *Similar active learning was seen in an excellent biology lesson about diffusion and osmosis with Year 12. Students recalled learning from a previous lesson accurately. They applied this understanding to predicting the outcome of their practical work. The teacher had provided a very clear structure for the lesson with its objectives fully understood by the students. Quick, sharp excellent questioning kept the learning at a good pace.*

**+++** *Year 13 students were completing individual projects in art and design. They had developed the skills of independent working and had a clear focus on their own expectations. The skill of this teacher rested in the way he listened to students individually as they talked about their work and had the professional knack of moving them on in their expression without imposing his own creativity on them. The teacher finds ‘a window on the student’s world and how she or he is thinking’. The student is in the foreground of such discussions and the student’s learning needs are addressed with care and sensitivity.*

33. These examples pinpoint the differences between the best teaching in the sixth form and good teaching in the earlier years. They illustrate how the learning needs of individual students make demands on the teaching expertise and the knowledge of the subject that the teacher has to bring for a successful learning encounter. During the inspection, a third of all teaching was of this sophisticated quality. It provides a clue to the very significant increase in the average points score in the 2002 sixth-form examinations. It is also a pointer to why some individual students do so well and become amongst the top students in their subject in the country. Not enough use is made in some teaching of the modern technology that adds an extra dimension to direct learning experience.

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

The curriculum is developing to match the needs and aspirations of pupils and sixth form-form students.
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The curriculum meets requirements and is responsive to local circumstances.
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34. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum, although physical education does not provide the same opportunities for boys and girls. Despite this one weakness, equality of access is achieved through the careful matching of pupils to suitably accredited courses. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good; good relationships exist between the school, partner primary schools, local colleges of further education and local companies that accommodate work experience for pupils in Year 10.

35. In Years 7 to 9 all national curriculum subjects are taught and programmes of study have good breadth and balance.

36. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are fully included in all parts of school life and follow the same curriculum as all other pupils. For example, a pupil with difficulties of motor control was seen playing a full part in a physical education lesson. A very small number of pupils is withdrawn for specific help in literacy; this is managed in such a way that they do not fall behind in other parts of the curriculum.

37. Lower-attaining pupils are in smaller groups; this can lead to some underachievement in over-large classes in Years 7 and 8 and puts pressure on some average and above average sets in, for example, English. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 study both French and German, although the take-up of a second language in Years 10 and 11 is slight.

38. The government's strategy giving emphasis on developing a new framework for English, mathematics and science is established and an impact is being noted in improved standards.

39. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow an appropriate curriculum of key subjects and choose two further subjects from a wide range of options. Most follow eight subjects to GCSE level, including at least one foreign language. Very good provision of vocational courses exists; this extends the range of subjects available to pupils and leads to GNVQ qualifications. Some pupils attend the local further education college to follow courses in hair-dressing, vehicle-maintenance and construction to NVQ level. Higher-attaining pupils extend this range by taking, for example, statistics as an extra subject in their own time.

40. Not all statutory requirements of the national curriculum are being met:

- in ICT, despite improvements made in the department, units of study are incomplete;
- in physical education girls and boys do different activities within the programmes of study as noted at the time of the previous inspection;
- in design and technology the rotational arrangements are still affecting the continuity of learning for some pupils.

41. ***There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.*** Pupils and their parents rightly consider this provision to be a strength of the school. Take-up by pupils is good.

## **Sixth form**

42. ***The curricular provision is very good in the sixth form.*** The statutory requirement to provide religious education is met. An extensive range of 28 academic AS and A Level courses and 3 Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCEs) courses provide a very wide choice for students.

43. Options provide opportunities for students to select up to five subjects suitable to their needs and aspirations. In Year 12, most students take four subjects to AS level and a few take five. In Year 13, most continue with their studies in three subjects to A Level but a small number take four or more, including general studies. The breadth and relevance of the education of students are, therefore, assured. The general guideline that students must have a minimum of five grade Cs at GCSE for entry to the sixth form is applied flexibly and on an individual basis. Thereafter, there is equality of access and opportunity.

44. There is a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. These promote very good relationships and make an excellent contribution to students' personal development. Many take part and organise activities themselves. The range includes fund raising events, day trips, skiing holidays, drama productions music groups and several sports. There are opportunities to take responsibility for younger pupils by supporting them in lessons and acting as prefects and librarians.

45. Gifted and talented students achieve well but additional provision for them is not fully in place. For example, there is no life drawing and only limited enrichment activity in art and design; there are few master classes. The need to extend this provision is recognised in the planned developments.

46. A recent development of the sixth form curriculum is a discrete tutor period. This very well planned programme includes target-setting and reviewing of progress by tutors, study skills, action planning and health education.

*+++ In two good lessons seen during the inspection students were learning effectively, mainly through direct class teaching, how to improve managing their time in relation to coursework and projects. They found a section on the possible outcomes of plagiarism a lesson worth learning.*

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and sixth-form students**

Very good opportunities for social development are provided for pupils and sixth formers.
The school strives to promote positively all aspects of personal development.
The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of corporate worship for all pupils and sixth formers. However, spiritual development is a key feature in many subjects.

### **Years 11 to 16**

47. Pupils are given good opportunities to consider difficult thoughts and feelings about themselves and their relationships with others and what they see in the world. Acts of collective worship offer good opportunities for reflection. In lessons there are often appropriate moments in which pupils' spiritual awareness is encouraged.

*+++ In a Year 8 history lesson pupils were given the opportunity to challenge stereotypes of Native American and reflect on their quality of life and customs. In religious education lessons, pupils consider faiths and viewpoints other than their own and investigate prejudice and discrimination.*

48. The school is effective in teaching pupils right from wrong. Consistently high expectations of behaviour from staff promote a purposeful atmosphere. For example, ICT project work demonstrates the impact of computers on society, thus promoting good opportunities for pupils to reflect on moral issues.

49. All members of staff foster very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and themselves. In lessons teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively

and collaboratively in pairs and groups. Extra-curricular activities provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and work with others. The recently established school council enables pupils to better understand the democratic process. Pupils are actively involved in raising monies for charity and helping to foster a sense of a caring community.

50. Most subjects promote cultural development well. Through religious education, pupils investigate the major religions. The music of different cultural traditions is analysed, including Indian and African. In history, issues relating to the Native American Indians and the slave trade are explored. However, in some subjects there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to increase their awareness of the rich cultural diversity within present-day Britain.

### Sixth form

51. To help understand moral dilemmas, students participate in an Ethics conference that investigates moral issues relating to science, technology and genetics. In lessons, too, social and moral issues are part of examination specifications:

*+++ In a Year 12 government and politics lesson, students gave presentations based on their own research. Three students sensitively raised important issues of support and bias in the work of Amnesty International, the background to racial tension in East Lancashire and the pros and cons of censorship in the media. Each student spoke with quiet authority based on careful gathering of information.*

52. The social development of sixth-form students is enhanced through their active take-up of extra-curricular activities. A very wide range of social opportunities contributes to students' personal development. They willingly organise charitable events with enthusiasm and drive.

*+++ At the time of the inspection, students organised a fashion show for charity. They gave time to rehearsal so that the event had style and skills of presentation, and they brought business acumen to promote the event amongst friends and the community.*

53. Students act as prefects in the main school and effectively help to support pupils' learning. They offer considerable care and consideration for younger pupils and students are good role models for pupils to emulate.

### HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Pupils always have somebody to talk to through a good network of care and support.
Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are improving, following the introduction of electronic systems.

54. ***Teachers know their form pupils very well and spend time learning about them.*** This helps to promote a good caring atmosphere.

55. The procedures for the management of behaviour have been revised following detailed research involving parents, teachers and pupils. It is too early to judge their full impact although early indications are that they are helping to improve the monitoring of any pupil's behaviour across all subjects.

56. The school has introduced a computerised system of attendance. The initial learning curve was steep but now teachers and tutors are starting to see considerable benefits from the quality of additional information it can provide.

57. The Progress Centre is used effectively to support pupils who for various reasons need time out of their ordinary lessons, either full time for a week or two or for a number of lessons per day. It provides for pupils who have health problems or who have problems of attendance or whose behaviour is giving cause for great concern. It copes successfully with such a wide range of pupil needs because the emphasis is upon supporting the individual. To this effect there is good liaison with outside agencies. However, an area in the Progress Centre is used to accommodate pupils who have been withdrawn from lessons because of disruptive behaviour. This is managed quite separately from the Progress Centre but there is a danger of the two being associated in pupils' minds. This is harmful to the purposes of the Progress Centre.

58. Health and safety procedures are mostly good. The governing body is involved in monitoring procedures around the school and have sensibly requested a full health and safety audit from external advisors in the spring term. Risk assessment procedures are followed. Pupils on work experience are given detailed health and safety advice prior to their work related opportunities.

59. Pupils' knowledge of their own health and safety is good. In personal and social education lessons they learn about personal hygiene and the requirements for healthy living. In a Year 7 lesson one pupil said: 'I knew personal hygiene was important and now I understand why'. Through the citizenship programme pupils develop an understanding of drug abuse and its consequences.

60. Child protection procedures are good and the school ensures all staff new to the school are aware of them.

### **Assessment**

61. The use of technology to store, retrieve and analyse assessment data is strong. Senior management recognises the need for a more open policy of sharing data with teachers and in turn of them involving pupils more in the assessment process.

62. The assessment coordinator and the newly-formed assessment group have made very good progress in a comparatively short period of time. This is evident in the beneficial changes that have taken place as a result of the monitoring of assessment and marking procedures in subjects. Teachers have been provided with training in using assessment data and understanding value-added graphs. Not all teachers however, feel comfortable with statistics and some departments need more support. The sharing of levels and minimum targets with pupils is evident in all subjects, although pupils in physical education and music for example, are still not clear of the level they are working at or what it means.

63. Whole-school and subject assessment policies have been identified as in need of review. The need for including pupils more in the assessment process, by way of self-evaluation and sharing minimum target grades, has already started to have a positive impact on learning, particularly in religious studies and vocational education. The school however, recognises that this is an area for further development. The inspection findings confirm missed opportunities in many subjects. In both a Year 7 art and design and Year 11 English lessons, for example, the gifted and talented were not involved in self-reflection before or after an activity. As a result they were prevented from identifying what constitutes quality in their own work against the learning intentions identified by the teacher. These pupils are capable of working more independently of the teacher, providing they are given the challenge and opportunities to know not only what success might look like but also when it has been achieved.

64. There are good assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational need are carried out in accordance with the regulations. All the requirements on the statements are fully met. Individual education plans have suitable targets and the Pupil Directory is a very useful and handy way of ensuring that all teachers know them. However, the school does not analyse its data on pupils who have special needs and consequently does not measure the success of its policy or identify areas of overall strength and weakness. However, it does assess very closely the progress of individual pupils.

65. Assessment information has identified the under-achievement of boys and has led to improvement in standards in for example, science. Strategies for improving boys' learning have also begun to have a positive impact in English. In this subject written feedback to pupils is particularly good. Seating arrangements and teaching and learning styles have been altered to take account of gender differences in learning. A more open policy of reporting levels and grades to parents is about to be implemented.

66. Weaknesses in assessment procedures within teaching lie mainly in Years 7-9 with procedures better in Years 10-11. However, since the previous inspection, individual and group target-setting has been established. A good start has been made with changing the culture from assessment being something that is done to pupils to something which involves them more and ensures they understand the value for their own learning.

### **Sixth form**

Students receive very good induction procedures and careers guidance.
Advice and personal guidance are strong features valued by sixth formers.

### **Assessment**

67. Students are active in assessing their own learning, as rather more traditional approaches to assessment are gradually being replaced. Under the visionary leadership of the head of sixth form, assessment is now more closely linked to active teaching and learning styles. Variations in assessment strategies are more to do with the subject discipline than to weaknesses in the assessment system. The exceptions were in engineering and modern foreign languages where more consideration should be given to the needs of the students rather than the requirements of the syllabus.

68. Good induction arrangements to Year 12 include getting students to convert their GCSE grades into UCAS points. This shock tactic makes them realise the importance of getting good grades for their future career choice. No work has yet been done on tracking students' experience of assessment from Year 10 to 12. The needs of the gifted and talented students are only just being considered. Records of achievement include student profiles with a self-assessment statement for each subject studied. Good procedures exist for tracking individual students and for seeing they keep on track to achieve the highest standards possible.

69. Good active teaching and learning result in students being more actively involved in assessment. They reflect regularly on their own learning.

**+++** *In psychology and art and design students regularly assess their own performance. There is good peer-group assessment evident in theatre studies.*

70. Interviews with students about preferred study skills did not reveal significant differences between male and female students although one male student admitted being

better organised in Year 13 than in Year 12, as a result of understanding the need to do so.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

71. The programme of careers advice and support and guidance for higher education is very good. It is taught in a discrete period and frequently includes visiting speakers who share their experiences and expertise with the students to good effect. A regular contributor is a school governor whose experience includes working in university admissions department. In response to student and parental wishes this programme has recently been revised to balance the input between employment and higher education opportunities.

72. There is a very clear induction process for students entering the sixth form involving both parents and pupils in Year 11 as well as prospective pupils from other schools. A useful handbook and planner provide guidance and support for students during their time in sixth form.

*+++ In discussion, sixth formers felt they were given very good day-to-day support and careers advice. The school ensures that suitable advice is given for both students going on to higher education and for those seeking employment.*

73. At present there is no formal work experience programme for students in the sixth form although many students use time in holidays and during free periods in the week to extend their learning experiences.

74. There is a strong commitment to ensure that students attend school. Attendance is monitored carefully and any unexplained absences followed up with students and parents.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

Parents have very positive views of the school.
The school surveys parents when considering improvements to the school's procedures.
Annual reports to parents are being updated. Year 9 reports are good in consequence.

75. Parents have positive views about the school and the majority of parents feel their children like school. The school has continued to maintain the good relationships with parents reported at the previous inspection.

76. The Parent Teacher Association actively supports the school. From only a small number of parents a few years ago it is growing in support and involvement. The association provides a number of opportunities to financially help the school. For example, they have raised money to further improve computer resources.

77. The school works closely in partnership with parents. Meetings are arranged prior to pupils joining the main school and the sixth form.

78. The learning support department works very closely with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs. They are properly involved in the annual review of statements of special educational need and are consulted on the setting of targets on individual education plans. There is a regular time after school each week when parents can visit the learning support department but in fact staff are on hand at any time. In many cases liaison with parents begin when their child is still at primary school so that the change of schools will be as smooth as possible.



79. The quality of documentation provided for parents is good overall. Pupils' annual reports to parents are beginning to include more detailed information about pupils' national curriculum levels and target GCSE grades. At present, they vary considerably in the way they report pupils' strengths and targets for improvement. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well-written, informative and meet statutory requirements.

80. The school is very keen to involve parents in the consultation process of new school developments. For example, questionnaires have been sent to parents about behaviour and the annual reports. This inclusion of parents in the process ensures a cohesive approach to all new initiatives. Over two-thirds of parents regularly attend parents' evenings, reflecting a high level of interest in their children's progress.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Necessary changes are tackled sensitively yet rigorously. As a result, it is an improving school.
The governing body itself has enjoyed a renaissance. Therefore, key members are playing a full part in shaping the future development of the school.
New initiatives are reviewed thoroughly through quality assurance measures that have been put into place. These measures make sure the developments are doing the job intended. Improving even further the quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of the school's future planning.

81. ***The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school should develop.*** Senior managers provide loyal and committed support, although in a few cases new skills have to be acquired and practices that have served their time, replaced. Whilst management tasks are carried out very effectively, some senior managers require support and training in developing appropriate skills of leadership.

82. The school senses its exciting future – as one senior manager remarked: ***'This is going to be the best comprehensive school in the north of England'***. It is a journey that most are ready to take. The governors have much to offer in support through probing questioning and fulfilling their roles as critical friends.

83. In spite of difficulties in recruiting teachers in some curricular areas that match such aspirations, senior members of staff give good support to teachers; teams of teachers are increasingly working together, sharing good practice and their expertise. The professional development of staff is another central plank within overall school developmental planning.

84. ***In all, the emphasis is rightly on raising standards of teaching and learning.*** All staff are asked to see the management of teaching and learning as their concern. This motivates the majority and leaves a minority feeling wary. Key members of staff welcome being able to influence the shape of the school's future. Senior managers are beginning to appreciate their role in supporting and extending those that are wary. The headteacher sets the tone by frequently being around the school, talking to pupils and listening to them with interest; he is a role model for the type of open dialogue that is a part of the school's objectives. He is active in supporting teachers or departments experiencing particular difficulties.

85. ***The excellent school development plan shows that great care has been taken to identify the way ahead.*** Suitable strategies are in place to effect necessary change and development. Management has a new perspective since the previous inspection. Teamwork within the management team, faculties, subject departments and year groups has a sharper edge, with a focus on creating an environment that encourages excellence in learning.

86. ***The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.*** The learning support department is very well organised. All legal requirements associated with statements of special need are met. Communication with other departments of the school is efficient. The work of the learning support assistants is organised according to suitable priorities. Above all, there is a pervading atmosphere of team-work that greatly aids the smooth running of the department. The governors carry out their responsibilities towards pupils with special educational needs through the agency of a link governor who has close knowledge of the department and supports it strongly.

### **Finance**

87. The school's finances are well managed. The school benefits from its business manager's wide and appropriate financial skills. He has been very successful in raising large amounts of additional income for the school. This is being used mainly to improve the buildings.

**+++** *Renting the school field to a caravan club is a good source of income for the school.*

88. Governors have a good oversight of the school's income and expenditure. The school works hard to make sure it gets the best price for purchases. There are good measures in place to ensure that school money is accounted for judiciously. The school uses its money for the intended purposes and provides good value.

### **Staffing**

89. Most subject areas have sufficient and suitably qualified teachers and support staff to teach the curriculum. This is having a positive effect on the standards pupils are achieving. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the support of well-trained learning assistants. New teachers and those recently qualified speak highly of the support received from the school in the early days. However the school has been unable to resolve totally the staffing of the geography department. Too many teachers are without relevant expertise in the subject, and classes shared between teachers in Year 8 result in standards in geography not being as high as they should be.

### **Accommodation**

90. Accommodation is satisfactory for the main school. The school has some good features that include an attractive drama theatre, a lecture theatre, good facilities for ICT, mathematics, art and design and the library. However, some lessons have to be held in classrooms not specifically designed for that subject, for example, history. The dining accommodation is wholly inadequate and is virtually non-existent during examination times. This results in pupils eating in corridors or outside and leads to unsightly litter-infested areas after lunch.

### **Resources**

91. The quality and range of resources are satisfactory and meet the needs of subjects. The school has made considerable investment in ICT in recent years, and the ratio of computers to pupils of 1 to 5 is better than seen in the majority of schools nationally.

## Sixth form

### ***Leadership and management***

92. ***Leadership of this large and successful sixth form is very good.*** Its popularity has led to its growth since the previous inspection. It provides equal access to a very wide variety of AS, A Level and AVCE level courses for all the students who meet its minimum entry requirements. The sixth form implements the school's mission statement and is 'A learning community in pursuit of excellence'.

93. There is no complacency in the improved results, but a clear educational direction that is firmly rooted in further improving learning, standards and results. This is the very essence of an excellent strategic plan.

94. Care, guidance and support are very strong. The monitoring of students' achievement is good. Personal development is supported and encouraged, for example through the enrichment programme.

95. ***The head of the sixth form provides a clear sense of purpose and direction.*** An experienced team of two assistants, 15 tutors and a clerical assistant support his open and consultative style of management. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and have recently been extended to include monitoring learning and teaching within and across all subjects. These new responsibilities, including those of the leadership group, need time to take effect. At present, some of the team tend to respond to situations that arise rather than put in place practices that positively seek to support students' learning.

**+++** *Although management in the sixth form is good overall, there are concerns in engineering, French, and geography that require tackling urgently to prevent under-achievement.*

96. The examination results are analysed in detail and followed by subject reviews. Governors know the strengths of the sixth form and areas that require further development; they are effective as its critical friend.

97. Improvement has been good overall and good or better in most of the focus subjects.

### ***Resources***

98. ***The sixth form is cost effective.***

99. The use of resources for the sixth form follows the school's overall principles of seeking best value. Intentions are clear in striving to provide students in this large sixth form with opportunities that match their aspirations. Staffing is carefully applied for maximum impact and, although there are some concerns in French and geography, arrangements make best use of available personnel. The new five-hour time-tabled day has had a positive impact on the quality of sixth-form lessons.

100. Since the previous inspection there have been very good improvements in the library and resource centre, with increased range of resources such as computers with Internet access, books, journals, CD-ROMs, video tapes, and information packs to support curricular projects in the sixth form. Students make good use of the resource centre for independent study.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

101. In order to help in the journey towards further improvement, governors, headteacher and staff should continue to implement fully the excellent new teaching and learning policy, school development plan and the quality assurance measures, and thus maintain and increase a focus on:

- (1) pursuing with rigour, through the day-to-day work of the leadership group and heads of department, the excellence that is central to the school's vision of its future: providing the highest quality of education;  
(Paragraphs: 81, 84, 85, 95, 124, 150, 153, 167, 173, 200, 216, 233, 234)
- (2) improving around a quarter of the teaching so that it strives to be as good as the best in the school;  
(Paragraphs: 29, 30, 115, 122, 134, 147, 164, 177)

### **Sixth form**

- (3) develop the use of modern technology to support teaching and learning.  
(Paragraphs: 33, 197, 204, 205, 216, 218, 231, 245, 250)

Additional concerns:

- Take all possible measures to provide suitable dining facilities for pupils.  
(Paragraph: 90)
- To respond to health and safety concerns discussed during the inspection.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	129
	Sixth form	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		77

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	10	30	48	31	9	1	0
Percentage	7.7	23.2	37.2	24.1	7.0	0.8	0.0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	23	35	16	1	1	0
Percentage	4.0	29.1	44.3	20.2	1.2	1.2	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1517	325
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	136	5

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	132	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	56

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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	2002	168	152	320

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	124	124
	Girls	129	116	112
	Total	250	240	236
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (83)	75 (77)	74 (79)
	National	66 (65)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (59)	57 (58)	40 (49)
	National	32 (31)	45 (42)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	115	133	126
	Girls	130	128	119
	Total	245	261	245
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (82)	82 (78)	77 (82)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (59)	52 (58)	44 (55)
	National	32 (30)	43 (41)	34 (32)

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
	2002	150	145	295

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	83	130	140
	Girls	94	134	140
	Total	177	264	280
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (57)	90 (94)	95 (98)
	National	57 (50)	89 (89)	95 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.8 (39.7)
	National	34.6 (34.3)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	71
	National	N/A

### 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	111	168	279
	Average point score per candidate	21.4 (14.5)	25.4 (17.2)	23.8 (16.2)
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

		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	56	77	133	3	9	12
	Average point score per candidate	300.9	336.1	321.5	133.3	120.0	123.3
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

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

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1798	101	3
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	15	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0



No ethnic group recorded	15	0	0
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*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It 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)	104.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	646

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.3
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4 963 922
Total expenditure	5 095 145
Expenditure per pupil	2 827
Balance brought forward from previous year	290 033
Balance carried forward to next year	158 810

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	31.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30.15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	1842
Number of questionnaires returned	241

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	52	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	65	8	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	62	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	32	59	3	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	50	21	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	45	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	53	20	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	51	4	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	54	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	44	4	0	5

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

**ENGLISH**

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is good across the department so that all pupils learn well</li> <li>• GCSE results are consistently above average</li> <li>• Pupils enjoy English and work hard in lessons</li> <li>• Pupils improve their literacy through good teaching of basic skills.</li> </ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A smaller than average proportion of pupils is entered for GCSE English literature.</li> <li>• Pupils are not always shown clearly the criteria for good work.</li> </ul>
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**Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	Above average	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

  

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

**Commentary:**

102. **Work in English is above average for pupils in all years.** Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are usually confident when speaking in class and they cooperate well when working small groups. In Years 10 and 11 they show above average oral skills when speaking and listening in interviews, dramatic performances, presentations and formal discussions. Reading is generally good. Pupils of all attainment levels are invariably keen to read aloud. They read clearly using varied expression to convey meaning effectively. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 show their enthusiasm for reading in very good activities based in the library resource centre, such as the Year 8 Book of the Year competition. Writing throughout the school benefits from the very good work on basic literacy skills that is a feature of all English lessons. Levels of accuracy are higher than average though in Years 7 to 9 the written work of all but the highest attaining pupils can be sketchy and undeveloped. In Years 10 and 11 writing is more consistent. All pupils can produce the lively and focused written responses that enable them to achieve above average examination results.

103. **Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9.** They enter the school with above average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9 they are achieving standards that are above average and available data indicates that within this judgement there is improvement compared with attainment on entry; that is the department is adding value to pupils' achievement.

104. ***By the end of Year 11 pupils attain standards that show similar good achievement*** compared with their levels of attainment when they entered Year 10. The attainment of boys has lagged behind that of girls in recent years but provisional GCSE results for 2002 indicate that the gap has narrowed substantially. Pupils with special educational needs build equally well on their levels of attainment.

105. Teaching and learning are consistently good. The department has readily adopted the national strategy for teaching literacy. As a result all pupils are very well supported in developing their skills in reading and writing. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. They have high expectations and choose texts and tasks that offer pupils appropriate challenge. Pupils therefore enjoy their learning and make rapid progress. However, pupils are not always shown the criteria that identify when their work is good.

*+++ In an excellent Year 8 lesson pupils focused on persuasive devices used in writing. In an initial bingo style game they reinforced knowledge of terms. Small groups then each looked for evidence of particular persuasive techniques in a transcript of Earl Spencer's funeral address on the death of his sister. The whole class then watched a video recording of the speech and discussed its impact. The high quality analysis in individual pupils' comments showed how well they had learned about persuasive techniques.*

106. Pupils are invariably very well motivated in lessons. They enjoy the work and seldom misbehave. They are enthusiastic about working in groups or giving presentations. Books show that pupils are usually conscientious and try to do their best.

107. The head of department and other staff with areas of responsibility make a good contribution to raising the achievement of pupils. They ensure that schemes of work are well planned and regularly revised to take account of changes in the National Curriculum and other initiatives. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for examinations, although a much lower proportion than usual is entered for English literature. All areas for development identified in the previous inspection have been improved.

***Basic skills: contributions made by other subjects to pupils' competence in literacy***

108. ***Overall, pupils have above average standards of literacy.*** There is a literacy coordinator for the school and a focus group that meets each half term. All departments have developed a literacy plan for Year 7 pupils and this will be extended to Year 8 pupils from January 2003. Reading in Years 7 and 8 is encouraged through the use of book boxes in tutorial time and through library based activities such as the Year 8 Book of the Year competition. National strategies for the teaching of literacy skills are well embedded in all English lessons.

109. In other subjects there is evidence of good practice overall yet scope for improvement in some subjects. In design and technology, geography and religious studies pupils have good opportunities to read aloud. In modern foreign languages pupils are well supported in their reading and are taught skimming and scanning techniques. Additional help is given to pupils with learning difficulties in music. Elsewhere there is little support for the development of pupils' reading. In mathematics pupils are not well supported in the use of technical terms. In religious education pupils in Years 7 to 9 have few opportunities for extended writing, although there is a good range of writing from pupils in Years 10 and 11. In history pupils' writing is well supported by outline frames. Higher attaining pupils are given additional opportunities for writing. In design and technology pupils have a good range of writing tasks.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; as a result pupils achieve well.
- Results in both national tests at 14 and in GCSE are well above average; GCSE results have improved significantly over recent years.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well.

### Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys does not match that of girls.
- Lower-attaining pupils are under-achieving.
- The use of the new approaches to learning in Years 7 to 9 are underdeveloped.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	Well above average	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	good

### **Commentary:**

110. Teaching and learning in mathematics are good. Teachers' good knowledge of the subject helps them explain new concepts and skills well. Good lesson planning ensures that work is provided that helps pupils learn and stretches them appropriately.

**+++** *In a Year 7 class with 16 lower-attaining pupils, half of them with special educational needs, the teacher provided a practical activity to develop pupils' understanding of using tally charts to record information. In addition, a framework for writing down answers was given to pupils so that all pupils were able to concentrate on the mathematical skills.*

111. This is an example of effective teaching that helps such pupils make progress that is no different from that made by other pupils.

112. During lessons, teachers regularly check the work of each pupil. Skilful questioning helps any pupil who has made an error. They tell pupils how well they are doing. Work in exercise books is well marked and teachers' written comments are usually helpful in telling a pupil what progress they are making or how to do better. Teachers regularly ask pupils to explain their answers. This helps pupils understand what they are doing. By explaining this to the rest of the class, they gain confidence in talking to a group of pupils and using appropriate technical language. This helps them in their mathematics and in other lessons. Pupils listen with respect to each other.

113. Good emphasis is given to making sure pupils have a sound basis of numerical skills. By the end of Year 9 the higher-attaining pupils can use these skills well, for example to draw graphs of algebraic functions. However, lower-attaining pupils have difficulty with estimating and are not able to recall their tables confidently. Higher-attaining pupils in

Year 11 use algebra with confidence whilst middle attaining pupils understand how to calculate different averages from sets of data.

114. **Overall, achievement is good** as pupils move through the school. However, the subject's analysis of pupils' progress shows that boys and lower attaining pupils are not achieving as well as others. Boys do not achieve as well as girls although the work of boys is now catching up with that of girls. The subject has already targeted these as areas that need to improve.

115. Government initiatives are applied in lessons. However, all teachers are not yet using them well enough. Starter activities are being used to develop pupils' mental skills and review their learning, but not always as effectively as they could. In addition, the time spent at the end of lessons to review pupils' learning is not always clearly focussed on the objectives of the lesson.

*+++ In a Year 8 class, with 30 pupils, the teacher used 'wipe-boards' efficiently and effectively to provide quick feedback from pupils about their understanding of finding the mean, mode and median of different sets of data. However, in another lesson with a Year 9 class the initial activity was slow and feedback to pupils on their success was ignored.*

116. **There is good leadership of the department.** The head of department has had only just over a term in the job. In that time a clear direction has been provided for the subject's development and there is a clear commitment to wanting every pupil to do well. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

**Basic skills: contribution made by other subjects to pupils' competency in numeracy**

117. Pupils have average numerical skills when they enter the school in Year 7. The school has adopted the government's recommended approaches in Years 7 to 9 and standards of numeracy are above average. The strategy is beginning to have some effect on raising standards and its implementation is generally good. Pupils say the mathematics they are now doing follows on well from their work in mathematics in their primary schools. Standards of numeracy improve as pupils move through the school. In some subjects, such as science, where pupils draw graphs confidently to represent information from food labels, and in GNVQ engineering, where mathematical activities form a natural part of the lesson, a good contribution is made to developing numerical skills. However, this is not the case in all subjects. A coordinator for the development of numeracy across all subjects has just been appointed.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- GCSE standards are improving.
- Good teaching and learning leads to good achievement.
- Good relationships and classroom management mean that pupils have a positive attitude to science and want to do well.

### Areas for improvement

- The teaching and learning are not consistently good across the department.
- Assessment information is not yet used effectively to promote pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching methods do not always adequately meet the learning needs of all pupils.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	Above average	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good	
Management of the subject	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

### Commentary:

118. In the majority of lessons, stimulating teaching motivates pupils to work hard so that they learn well. Pupils' interest is engaged at the start of the lesson and their concentration maintained by a variety of tasks involving the pupils in practical activities. The lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers' questions probe pupils' understanding, getting them to clarify their thinking. Lesson aims are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and this focuses pupils' learning. These aims are reviewed at the end of the lesson to determine how successful the learning has been. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect with clear explanations and challenging questions. Pupils' good response in volunteering answers to teachers' questions contributes significantly to their learning.

*+++ In a Year 8 lesson on a balanced diet 'rapid fire' delivery of a very well planned lesson resulted in excellent learning. Skilled teacher questioning challenged pupils to build on their previous knowledge. There was an excellent level of discussion as pairs of pupils created their menu to represent a balanced diet.*

119. By the end of Year 9 pupils can discuss the nature of independent and dependent variables. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils can describe and interpret patterns in their results and evaluate their reliability. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulties in using their scientific knowledge to explain these patterns. Literacy skills are developed well with an emphasis on the correct use of key scientific words. Numerical skills are less well developed and pupils need more practice in using graphical skills. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning.

120. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and support assistants and generally make the same progress as other pupils.

*+++ In a Year 7 lesson on solids, liquids and gases the support assistant was involved closely in the planning of the lesson. The teacher and support assistant acted as team leaders in challenging class competitions. These fun sessions enabled low-attaining pupils to learn very well.*

121. In lessons where there are no assistants, special educational needs pupils do not make as much progress as other pupils because of a lack of suitable resources.

122. **Sometimes teachers do not match resources and activities well enough to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils.** In a minority of lessons seen the lack of variety in the tasks set meant that the pupils' interest was not engaged and some pupils' bad behaviour distracted others from learning. Where tasks are the same for pupils of all attainment levels, the higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make inadequate progress.



123. **Assessment of pupils' work needs further development.** Marking of written work has improved since the previous report but does not always give pupils information on how to improve. Tests marks are not yet matched with National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils do not have clear information on the standard of their work. Assessment data needs to be used more effectively to monitor the progress of individual pupils so that under-achieving pupils can be given extra support.

124. Whilst leadership of the department is good and often inspirational, the management of measures for improvement could be better. More rigorous checking of the quality of teaching and learning is needed to share good practice and to provide consistency across the department.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- The school has established an effective and engaging course.
- Very good teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9, leads to very good progress in lessons.
- Pupils are motivated well, enjoy discussing issues and forming points of view.

### Areas for improvement

- Sometimes teachers do not let pupils draw their own conclusions from evidence.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	N/A	N/A
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	N/A
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good
Quality of learning	Very good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	New subject

### Commentary:

125. Standards of work seen are average overall. Pupils discuss significant issues thoughtfully and work well together in groups. They listen to each other and are tolerant of the views of others. Through these approaches they understand some of the complexities of issues discussed. The quality of written work is not as good as that of pupils' speaking and listening; teachers need to match written tasks more directly to pupils' learning needs. Some need help in deducing conclusions from available evidence through more structured approaches to written tasks.

126. **Teaching is usually very good.** Personal, social and health education has long been effective and established in the school. It was positively reported at the previous inspection. A number of examples of skilful teaching and learning were seen during the inspection:

**+++** *In Year 9, pupils sought to identify three key skills they need for a successful life: being able to read, work with numbers and think logically. Pupils showed an awareness of how such skills might be applied in variety of ways, with a central focus on communication. For example, they recognised that the arts were used to communicate a person's thoughts and feelings.*

+++ In Year 8, pupils considered the social implications of people taking illegal drugs. Through skilful teaching they showed an understanding of key legislation as well as the outcome if particular drugs were used. Active learning through a well-designed quiz meant that pupils were attentive and wanted to discuss moral issues in a later lesson.

+++ In Year 7, pupils recalled learning from a previous lesson and listened well to each other as they discussed aspects of personal hygiene. This topic was well managed by the teacher by de-personalising the object of discussion so that pupils did not feel at personal risk. As a result the learning was enthusiastic and built upon the very good relationships established by the teacher. The strength of this lesson was that pupils related their learning to themselves without embarrassment.

+++ In Year 11, a lower-attaining group successfully discussed the stereotyping of people. They found this hard for their own views were often stereotypical and some boys felt that stereotyping was a version of 'truth', including in matters of race. However, by the end of the lesson most challenged this view. This was an outcome of good and probing questioning by the teacher who generated a full and frank discussion in a healthy and positive atmosphere. It was a demanding lesson but the teacher varied activities and focus to keep it moving at a good pace.

127. **The school has made a good start at introducing citizenship to its curriculum.** It is taught as part of personal, social and health education. Commercial and professional schemes have been interwoven following extensive research and together extend the thinking of pupils across a wide range of attainment. The work fits well with the school's commitment to personal and individual growth and its aim of being 'a learning community in pursuit of excellence'. Clearly, in the context of citizenship, the commitment to 'community' is a major connection. A key focus for the work is to encourage pupils to develop as thinkers and to develop the desire to establish thought-out views on their close and more distant world. The leadership of the subject is very good and has this as a principle goal and thus provides very clear direction. Teachers are still feeling their way to get to the heart of the demands of this 'new' subject. They are currently more comfortable with the subject in Years 7 to 9 than in 10 and 11. The school council and the general life of the school is seen as a focus for development of key aspects of citizenship. Its place as part of the ethos of the school is a promising focus.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results over the last three years have been above the national average. Some aspects of the subject are well above average.
- Standards of work are well above average by Year 11; pupils have a particularly good understanding of design practice.
- Teaching is consistently good and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT facilities are very limited.

**Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Very good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Overall, above and well above average at A*-C.
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

  

Leadership of the subject	Good.
Management of the subject	Good.
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good, however boys' performance is still weak.

**Commentary:**

128. Teaching and learning in design and technology are good. Lessons are very well planned. In Years 7 to 9 teachers make effective use of their subject knowledge to motivate and encourage pupils to acquire new skills. In lessons teachers encourage the pupils to clarify their understanding of the design processes by the consistent use of the correct technical language.

129. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 they have widely differing experiences of design and technology, however by the age of fourteen pupils have made progress and achieve well. The higher-attaining pupils make rapid progress. They make good use of their numeracy skills in expressing survey results and in making accurate calculations.

130. Standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11. In the GCSE year many pupils are well able to talk about their strengths and areas for improvement. Their overall achievement is very good and a direct result of very good teaching, including effective marking of pupils' work. In year 11 lessons are very productive. The quality of discussion amongst pupils about their work; their enthusiasm for solving problems; their knowledge of how well they are doing combined with the high levels of designing and making skills make a significant contribution to the very good learning taking place.

**+++** *In a Year 11 graphic products lesson there was a highly productive and lively discussion amongst a small group of pupils trying to work out how to attach a hook on a final product of one of the group. Each idea presented was carefully weighed up and either discarded or developed further. The design and technology experiences of earlier years was being successfully consolidated and extended.*

131. Much of the written work of pupils takes the form of a portfolio. This independent work is of a high order. Folders show a mature approach to projects. The majority of pupils sketch well. Higher-attaining pupils are very good at annotating work and have strong research skills. In all the subject areas design sheets of these pupils show consistently good thinking on paper. However for a small number of boys, folders are not of the same quality. Many of them prefer making and modelling activities to presenting work in written or graphical forms.

**+++ Pupils with special educational needs achieve well:**

- because of the good teaching they receive,
- the very good use of writing frames for A3 work in Years 7 to 9, for example in food technology,
- the expectations that teachers have of them.

132. Pupils with special educational needs therefore respond well. They are keen, well motivated and work at a productive pace.

133. In just over a term in the job, the new head of department has as a focus the raising of standards. Members of staff are now teaching within their subject expertise. These changes are already having a positive effect on standards. Planning is good. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection, but the curricular organisation on a rotational pattern does not lead to continuity and the highest standards.

## EXPRESSIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

134. The arts are organised within a faculty. This leads to a useful coherence of common concepts and understanding of common features such as the notions of form, shape and contrast. The faculty is well led with energy and flair and useful links are made between disciplines without forced integration. Departments within the faculty link well together in a range of extra-curricular activities, notably in productions and concerts. The presentation of pupils' course work in drama and music has benefited from the close links with the department of art and design.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning are very good.
- Results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were well above average.
- Pupils' achievement through the schools is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is under-developed.
- There are insufficient opportunities for three-dimensional work on a large scale.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are insufficiently involved in self-assessment.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Very good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

#### Commentary:

135. **Teaching and learning in art and design are very good and occasionally excellent.** Teaching reflects a very good knowledge of fine art and graphics and lessons are very well planned to ensure that all pupils can progress at their own rate. One teacher is skilled in teaching three-dimensional studies but work produced, though of a high standard, is small in scale and limited in quantity because of the lack of storage space. Homework is a central feature of art provision with teachers marking work in the pupils' presence and offering good oral feedback. More consideration could be given to explaining why the teacher

evaluates the work as he/she does and for ensuring that pupils understand the difference between task objectives and learning intentions. However, the dialogue with pupils on a one-to-one basis, linked to their current work, is an example of very effective teaching. Teachers generate a lively interest in art and design and encourage pupils to work hard and do their best. This often results in work of very good quality.

136. Key words are displayed but on such a small scale that they are not easily read from across the room. In an otherwise very good lesson the teacher rubbed the technical words off the board rather than getting pupils to write them as a glossary of terms in their sketchbook. Pupils use skills of numeracy but sometimes opportunities for such use are insufficiently identified. ICT is not developed in graphics although some pupils use it for research at home or in the resources centre.

**137. Achievement is good in Year 9 and often very good in Year 11 as a result of good progress made in lessons:**

**+++** *In a Year 9 class the emphasis on observational drawing for homework plus the teaching of composition and painting in lessons is a good combination and leads to pupils understanding that making mistakes is a valuable step in the learning process. In two Year 11 classes the majority of pupils work hard to complete course work. They are interested in their chosen subjects and knowledgeable about specific artists or art movements, because of the research they have done.*

**+++** *Gifted and talented pupils produce fine line drawing, well-developed compositions and personal interpretations of examination questions. Their attainment is well above average. Pupils join in a lively and informed discussion about whether a particular artist could be considered a realist or not.*

138. The leadership of the subject is good and gives art and design a lively presence in the school. There are minor shortcomings in the accommodation: there is only one sink in each art and design room; with large class sizes this makes safe clearing of painting materials difficult. The lack of a double period for Year 10-11 pupils limits opportunities for visits or using the locality.

**Drama**

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

<b>Strengths</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GCSE examination results are well above average.</li> <li>Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent in Years 10 and 11.</li> <li>Pupils have developed a clear understanding of character and how to construct effective dramatic scenes using extracts of text.</li> <li>There is an excellent drama studio/theatre for lessons and performance.</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for improvement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision in Years 7 to 9 lacks coherence.</li> </ul>	

**Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Not applicable	Well above average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Very good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/a	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Not observed	Very good
Quality of learning	Not observed	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Not observed	Excellent



Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Steady and secure

**Commentary:**

***Enthusiastic, energetic and effective teaching takes place in a splendid studio/ theatre.***

Learning is lively, effective and stretches young performers technically and emotionally. As a result standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. This is the result of very good and often excellent teaching. Teaching is well-informed and meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils show clear understanding of the conventions of drama and use them to enhance their work. They are prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and seek to take it beyond the stereotype when working on themes that have connections with their own lives. For example, in lessons in Year 11 pupils looked at aspects of ambitious dreams in a real world as they worked on ‘Billy Liar’.

*+++ Two lower-attaining boys worked on a scene in the play when Billy and Liz talk about going away to London. Through skilful intervention and asking questions about how they would feel doing the same thing, the boys were able to give a thoughtful and subdued interpretation of the text that caught the attention of the rest of the class. It was more than the easy emotive stereotype and had a personal reality for the boys. They were working at GCSE grade C level.*

*+++ In the same class, a higher-attaining boy and girl worked on the same scene. They quickly found a way of performing it, but it was a little too pat. The teacher intervened and helped them study the sub-text through improvisation and questioning. Why was Liz bothering with the immature Billy? Billy who forever boasted of his ambitions was reticent to go. Why? The pair then worked for an extended period, setting the scene or themselves under the street light outside Billy’s house. They ended with an interpretation of the text that clearly moved their classmates, for it made them imagine beneath the skin of the characters. This work was at GCSE grade level A\*.*

139. Teaching is secure, perceptive and demanding. The class knows what is expected of it and pupils work independently, knowing that soon the teacher will spend some quality time with groups to help them make the most of their skills. As a result pupils make good progress in lessons, develop a commitment to drama and contribute to the cultural life of the school.

140. Drama provision in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent. For pupils in these years to have drama depends on the approach of English teachers. None was observed during the inspection but it is clear that its quality ranges from very good and regular lessons to minimal experience in some classes. To maximise the potential of the subject as a central feature in the culture of the school, as well as a means towards even further academic success in the subject, a surer foundation is needed in Years 7 to 9.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- Students attain standards that are above average in Year 9 and well above in Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils enjoy music.
- Extra-curricular music-making is a strong feature of the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The attitude of some Year 11 boys is not conducive to effective learning and is not always managed well.
- The assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### Commentary:

141. **Pupils attain standards by Year 9 that are above average.** Pupils play the keyboards well and compose music effectively. Their listening skills are good. There are some very able composers in Year 11 who write for different instruments and in varying styles. Standards are well above average. They use computers to help them to compose, but well developed performing and listening skills mean that some can hear what they write without the aid of the computer.

142. Teaching and learning in music are good. Pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress in this practical environment. Lessons are well planned and organised and taught at a very good pace. Pupils respond well by working hard and productively in almost all lessons. Sometimes, though, in an effort to provide variety opportunities to develop and refine work in more depth over a period of time are lost. A very few boys in Year 11 do not show the level of commitment seen elsewhere and too much precious teaching time is lost dealing with them.

143. **The teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is evident and infectious.** As a result pupils enjoy their music-making activities. In each lesson there is a good variety of these for pupils to develop their performing, composing and listening skills. Pupils work from very appealing booklets devised by the teachers. These provide tasks and music to perform which are appropriate for all pupils. The practical nature of the activities in music, means that most boys are well motivated and have a strong desire to succeed.



+++ In a Year 9 lesson a group of four higher attaining boys perform for the class, the pop song they have also composed. They take time and trouble to set up correctly and their class-mates listen appreciatively enjoying the boys' success. This has been a challenging exercise for them.

144. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in this practical environment.

145. Although the leadership of the subject is very good and pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of musical experiences, often to standards that are above and with older pupils well above average, the management of the subject needs to take more account of assessment opportunities to ensure that:

- teachers are confident in using the national curriculum levels of attainment
- there are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss or write about the quality
- of what they have done
- pupils know the grades and levels they are achieving
- targets set have a strong musical focus and that progress in achieving these
- is checked regularly
- information gleaned from good assessment is used to plan for raising
- standards through even better teaching and learning.

146. At lunchtime and after school, the department is full of music making as groups, bands and choirs rehearse for forthcoming concerts. Parents and members of the community attend rehearsals to help them. The standard of these activities is high. A video of the trip to play and sing in Italy last year shows the level of commitment and enjoyment experienced by the pupils. Many are to visit Paris next year. At their performance in Notre Dame, it is hoped that the choir will sing a piece composed by a student, inspired by 'A Nativity' by John Tavener. These activities considerably enhance the quality of music in the school. Pupils are moved by and learn the benefit of real co-operation in performing beautiful music together in inspiring surroundings.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- There is good learning in the lessons taught by permanent, specialist teachers.
- New management is beginning to move the department forward.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils reach average standards but many do better in their other subjects.
- There are not enough specialist, permanent geography teachers.
- Higher-attaining pupils and some boys could achieve more.
- Assessments of pupils' work are not related to the national curriculum.

### Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

**Commentary:**

147. Teaching and learning in geography are satisfactory. There is good teaching by permanent, specialist geography teachers, who plan interesting lessons which engage most pupils' attention. Objectives for lessons are clear and pupils understand them. Too much teaching is by non-specialists, especially in Year 8, where some classes have two different teachers each week. This lack of continuity makes the checking of pupils' progress and responding to their individual needs unnecessarily difficult. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers plan for their needs, preparing specific work for them. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons, but too often the work lacks intellectual challenge for them and they lose concentration. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory but girls concentrate better than boys and focus on their work with more determination. As a result, they achieve better.

148. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 9. Pupils have improved their knowledge of places and their levels of skill.

*+++ As early as the first term of Year 7 they have learnt to read maps, using six-figure map references. By Year 9 they can manage analysis of the issues involved in development aid. Higher-attainers can disentangle complicated political and economic issues, while lower-attainers can distinguish between needs for long- or short-term aid.*

149. Achievement continues to be satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Written work is conscientiously done in the main. Most pupils in their GCSE year respond well to revision classes which are carefully planned and are responsive to the difficulties they experience. Boys continue to need more support from the teacher than girls at this stage. They ask for help too quickly, without really trying to think problems through first. Sometimes this lack of focus and determination holds back their learning and limits their overall achievement and examination success.

*+++ Some boys in revision classes in Year 11 seek immediate help from the teacher with map work which Year 7 pupils can already do, instead of thinking their way through to a satisfactory solution. They lose focus on the task and have to be constantly cajoled by the teacher. More determined pupils, often girls, persevere with determination and confidence and learn rapidly.*

150. **A new head of department has made a sound start in providing overdue leadership in reviewing and improving the department's procedures.** Even so, there is much still to do:

- schemes of work lack the detail necessary to ensure good lesson planning for pupils working at different standards;
- there is too little checking on the quality of lessons across the department – a difficult task given that there are 14 teachers, many of them non-specialists, teaching the subject;
- the assessment of pupils' work, especially in Years 7 to 9, lacks precision, is unrelated to the demands of the National Curriculum and is unhelpful as a device for identifying how well individual pupils are doing and what they need to do further to improve.

Because of these shortcomings, the department has gone backwards since the previous inspection and standards have declined.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- Boys show improved commitment to learning in history.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of history is enhanced because of well managed analysis of historical sources.
- Pupils' active participation in learning has increased since previous inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of standards does not include statistical analysis of results over time.
- There is insufficient sharing of ideas about matching learning experiences to targeted skills.

### Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject		Good
Management of the subject		Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection		Satisfactory

### Commentary:

**+++** *When asked to explain why they enjoyed finding information from the group of sources given to them by the teacher about the Home Front in WW1, two Year 9 boys with special educational needs said, " All these sources break it down for you and the sheet, (an aid to writing), has all you need to do the work"*

151. **This perceptive observation encapsulates why teaching and learning are both good.** Teachers' high expectations are expressed in the range and depth of materials from which pupils extrapolate knowledge. This results in a high level of historical accuracy. Teachers challenge pupils to make reasoned judgements about causes and consequences during war or political change, and lead them to reflect on suffering, for example, of the homeless during the Depression in 1930s America. Such teaching makes history relevant because it leads to spiritual experience based on feelings. Pupils' spiritual and moral senses develop because in writing and speaking, they put themselves in others' shoes through letters, obituaries, newspaper articles or mock trials. Extended writing, independent learning in project research and presentation skills are enhanced by teachers' skill and enthusiasm for using ICT and their imaginative collaboration with the librarian. Reading, scanning, note-making, oral presentations, planning techniques for writing, displays and reference to key words, the building up of glossaries illustrate the mutual pay-off between history and literacy. There are insufficient opportunities for the development of numeracy. Teachers' skilful use of good text resources, video, overhead projectors, excellent displays and passion for their subject, set a stimulating context for learning and pupils know that history matters.

**+++** *Several strategies are succeeding in motivating boys;*

- *Re-organised Year 9 curriculum includes an investigation into the "Titanic" disaster*
- *Mixed pair and group work because of boy/girl seating arrangements in all classes*

- *Opportunities for presentations in front of the class build self esteem*
- *Frequent changes of activity (eight in the best lesson) build up learning through the achievement of short-term goals. This best practice represents a baseline for professional discussions within the department to devise common strategies which deliberately promote the development of skills and give feedback on learning at all stages of a lesson.*

152. **Overall, achievement in the subject is good.** In Years 10 and 11 this derives in part from pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning, for example using examination criteria to judge specimen answers in groups, discussing their findings and presenting their own 'model' to the rest of the class. High-attaining pupils have extension homework tasks and produce impressive extended writing where paragraphs have a key sentence followed by illustrations and reasoning. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good, many of them boys, because teaching matches their individual education plans. In some lessons there is insufficient support from learning assistants or a lack of materials matching learning needs.

153. Lack of detailed data analysis to judge the department's long-term performance causes the department to miss opportunities to raise standards. The leadership and management of the department would be better if more attention were given to ways of raising standards further.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils learn well because teaching is good.
- The subject significantly helps pupils express themselves, to consider moral issues and to learn about themselves and others.
- There is plenty of up-to-date computing equipment.
- The rooms the subject is taught in are of high quality.

### Area for improvement

- The school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject		Good
Management of the subject		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection		Unsatisfactory

### Commentary:

154. Until September 2002, pupils did not have lessons in ICT. They gained ICT skills through work in other subjects. Now, all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have one lesson of ICT a week. The subject leader has only had responsibility for ICT in Years 7 to 9 for just under four months. She has made a good start on planning series of lessons. Currently, not all

pupils in Years 10 and 11 take ICT. The school has advanced plans for all these pupils to

take a course in the subject from September 2003. Currently, the school is not meeting the requirements of the national curriculum for all pupils.

155. ***In lessons, pupils learn well because they are well taught.*** Teachers understand how pupils learn:

+++ *In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher encouraged everyone to speak to the full class because she never said an answer was wrong. Pupils explained their thinking and the teacher, by very skilful questioning, developed the pupils' thinking so that the pupils corrected their own errors. This approach developed pupils' confidence.*

156. ***Teachers choose examples very well so that pupils learn much more than just computing skills:***

+++ *In a very good lesson to a Year 7 class, the teacher asked pupils to decide which of two pictures illustrated various documents better. Pupils often made the choice instinctively, but then began to think about their instincts. They listened to each other's views very well, even when they disagreed with what was said.*

+++ *Pupils in Year 9 investigate reasons for and against experimenting on animals when they are learning to use the Internet.*

+++ *Pupils in Year 10 reflect on the ways in which computers are changing people's lives.*

+++ *Pupils are encouraged to think about the costs of producing a brochure when using a design package.*

157. Pupils are confident to use computers for tasks such as word-processing. However, the pupils who have not had ICT until recently cannot say what is good about their work or suggest the next steps to develop. Teachers support them well to develop these skills. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils because they are taught in smaller groups. Their work is modified to their needs. They enjoy using computers but find some of the ideas difficult.

158. ***Pupils do not achieve as much as they might either by the end of Year 9 or Year 11.*** This is because pupils in those years have not had enough lessons in the subject.

159. The subject is taught in rooms that have plenty of space for movement and are set out to look like what might be found in industry. These rooms provide a good atmosphere which is one reason for the good attitudes pupils have to ICT. They like using computers. Although standards have declined since the previous inspection, there has been a good increase in the number of computers. Importantly, the school is now acting to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

#### ***Basic skills: contribution made by other subjects to pupils' competence in the use of ICT***

160. The school has more computers per pupil than most schools. Good technician support maintains this provision. Good use is made of computers in many subjects. In music pupils use computers to help them compose and perform. Pupils learn about cashflow in business studies by making good use of spreadsheets. In religious education pupils use the Internet well to find information about religious festivals. In a few subjects, such as art and design, more use should be made of ICT to help pupils learn. In subjects such as design and technology there are not enough computers readily available. This means that either pupils have to spend too much time moving to other rooms to reach a computer or that they use a less effective method of working. Overall, the standards in ICT used in subjects are below average.

161. Pupils use the Internet well for research in some subjects. The training of staff has encouraged more use of ICT in their work. The school has started buying laptop computers for teachers. These are making a good contribution to increasing the use of ICT in lessons, for example when the plans for a lesson are given in a slide show to the class. Teachers are also finding these laptop computers very useful for tasks such as analysing marks from pupils' work.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory** – it is good in German but unsatisfactory in French.

### Strengths

- GCSE results in German are well above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning in German are good and enable pupils to achieve well.
- Standards of writing and listening in both languages are above average.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are positive, they have good relationships with their teachers and their behaviour is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in French are below the national average and declining.
- Expectations in French lessons are too low and lead to significant underachievement.
- Pupils are not confident in manipulating the language for themselves because they do not get sufficient opportunity to do this.
- The use of assessment to plan more effectively for the progress of groups with differing learning needs and ensure consistency across the department requires development.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen: French	Below average	Below average
German	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time: French	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
German	Good	Good
Results in GCSE: French	N/A	Below average
German	N/A	Above average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Management of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

### Commentary:

162. **Standards attained in German are above average.** This is because lessons are well planned with a good variety of very well-sequenced activities, which engage pupils' interest and enable them to make good progress. Pupils speak confidently and their listening skills are very well developed. This is because of the very effective and extensive use of German and frequent opportunities for them to use the language themselves in lessons. Pupils are also given frequent opportunities to practise in pairs and small groups. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to participate because they are confident they can succeed and activities are designed to provide them with achievable steps in learning.

163. Pupils' listening skills are well developed in both languages because teachers use French and German effectively to conduct activities. Presentations of new language are clear and activities well sequenced. Marking of written work is thorough and gives good guidance about how to improve accuracy in writing. As a result standards of writing by the end of Year 11 are above average.

*+++ Year 11 pupils rapidly increase in confidence in asking and answering questions in German because of a series of very well sequenced activities designed to increase their confidence and independence in using the language for themselves. They use their knowledge of the criteria for the examination very effectively to plan answers, evaluate their work and identify how to improve it. This contributes to the raising of the standards they attain.*

164. Objectives are usually clear and shared with pupils. However in French, lesson objectives do not take sufficient account of pupils' prior attainment or the requirements of examinations and tests. As a consequence pupils do not achieve appropriately or make enough progress in French.

165. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; activities and resources are well matched to their needs. Teachers make very good use of games and competition to encourage pupils to join in. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and gain in confidence and competence during such activities.

*+++ In French, pupils in Year 7 were keen to participate in a guessing game with flashcards and as a result, increased their confidence in asking each other, in French, about the pets they had.*

166. Standards in writing are above average in both languages. Average and lower-attaining pupils write to a model, match print with meaning and use set phrases, substituting words to change meaning to produce short accounts. By the end of Year 11 higher attaining pupils write at length and in detail, applying grammar rules successfully and linking their ideas effectively.

167. ***Appropriate action has not been taken in French to ensure that standards match those in German.*** Priorities are clearly focused on raising standards but teachers do not have sufficient understanding of the requirements of the national curriculum levels of attainment or examination requirements in French. This results in expectations that are too low. There are examples of good and very good practice in the department but systems are not yet in place to ensure that this is shared across the languages. All pupils have the opportunity to study both languages but few do so beyond Year 9. Development planning is appropriate and the department now has a good capacity to improve.



## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of the teaching is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards physical education.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities provided by the department.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards on the GCSE physical education course are not high enough.
- The curriculum does not ensure that boys and girls have the same learning experiences.
- The length of units of work is too short to make sure of depth of learning.
- National curriculum levels are not used sufficiently to plan teaching activities.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Commentary:**

168. **Teaching and learning in physical education are good, and sometimes very good.** Teachers plan lessons well providing challenging tasks, which build on pupils' previous experiences. Teachers make very effective use of their very good subject knowledge, to give detailed explanations, which helps pupils learn. Using focussed question and answer sessions teachers encourage pupils to share their knowledge, which helps them evaluate their own and others performances. Excellent lessons are a result of expert planning, pace in teaching and positive attitudes of pupils wanting to work hard.

**+++** A GCSE physical education theory lesson was conducted at a very fast pace. The teacher made maximum use of the time available and challenged pupils to think and make good use of their own knowledge.

169. In most lessons pupils take responsibility for their own learning during warm up time at the start of lessons, showing their understanding of the reasons for warming up and which activities to use.

170. **In some activities pupils have standards that are higher than might be expected:**

**+++** In dance in Year 8 pupils have good choreographic skills, and make good use of gesture in their performances of 'cowboy' routines. In gymnastics in Year 9 pupils not only show high level performance skills such as front somersaults and forward walkovers, but there is good quality in their performances.

171. **Achievement is good, given pupils' starting points.** In Year 7 pupils learn the skills and formations of new games such as hockey and rugby. In Year 7 hockey after only six lessons pupils have learned sufficient skills in pushing and stopping to be able to practise short corner routines. In GCSE physical education, results in 2002 were average and many matched pupils' predicted grades; this represents good achievement for these particular pupils as their standards were below average at the end of Year 9.

172. **Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.** Teachers know their pupils and have an awareness of their capabilities:

**+++** *One pupil with motor-learning problems in a Year 8 gymnastic lesson, was fully involved and made good progress because the teacher gave one-to-one support to meet the pupil's learning needs.*

173. Although there is a good range of activities in the curriculum, only girls in Years 7,8 and 9 have dance lessons, and outdoor activities are restricted to a very short unit of work for boys. Assessment schemes are being developed, but little use is made of national curriculum levels in teaching. Gifted and talented pupils are provided for through a good range of extra-curricular activities and school teams. There are strengths in athletics and games, with some good development in boys' rugby and basketball, and girls' hockey. The department was re-awarded its 'Sportsmark' status earlier this year. The cleaning of the sports hall and gymnasium is not sufficiently thorough; the spaces are often grubby and not suitable for work in bare feet.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- By Year 11 students achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- Religious education plays a very strong part in pupils' personal development.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Statutory requirements are now met for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.

### Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment is below that of girls.
- Very few boys choose to follow the GCSE full course.
- The assessment system is not fully understood by pupils in Years 7 to 9.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject	Very good	
Management of the subject	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

**Commentary:**

174. The standard of work in Year 9 is close to the average expected by the locally agreed syllabus. As pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a very wide range of experience this represents satisfactory achievement. By Year 9 most pupils know the main facts about the major faiths of the world. Most make simple evaluations and apply what they know to their own lives. They are beginning to gain deeper understanding. However, recent improvements to the curriculum have not yet had an effect on standards.

175. **By Year 11 pupils achieve well and reach above average standards.** Most pupils follow the GCSE short course and a much smaller number, nearly all girls, follow the full course. On both courses pupils gain good understanding of moral and social issues. They are aware of the ethical and philosophical standpoints of various faiths towards issues such as the right to life, euthanasia and abortion. They understand the need to examine evidence before reaching a personal decision. Girls achieve better than boys.

176. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teachers plan well, conduct lessons at a good pace, keep pupils interested and focus closely on their objectives. These good points were seen in a very good Year 11 revision lesson on euthanasia:

**+++** *A quick starter activity involved pupils working in pairs. Skilful questioning by the teacher drew out information previously learned. Pupils then wrote comments about the Christian approach to the right to life based on biblical teaching. A short PowerPoint presentation increased learning, which then extended to Hindu views and a comparison between euthanasia and abortion. The lesson ended with pupils usefully summarising orally what they had learned.*

177. The marking of work of Years 10 and 11 pupils is very good. Comments are linked to GCSE grades and show pupils how to improve. Some of the comments on Years 7 to 9 work, however, are too bland to help pupils do better. Teachers do not always cope entirely successfully with the wide ability range in these younger classes. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall but there are times when work is too hard for them.

178. **Pupils are attentive and work hard.** There is a small minority of boys who misbehave but teachers manage them well and they rarely prevent others from learning.

179. **The department is well led and managed by the recently appointed head of department.** He has introduced good schemes of work that provide greater continuity. He has also instigated a very good target-setting and assessment system that works very well in Years 10 and 11 but is not yet fully understood by pupils in Years 7 to 9. The development plan accurately identifies the department's priorities together with suitable strategies. For example, it includes the need to alter teaching styles so that the subject will appeal more to boys. The department consists very largely of teachers who are new to the school, but is already working well as a unit.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' subject expertise and their use of ICT promotes very good independent learning.
- Assessment is used effectively to enable pupils to achieve very well.
- Very good relationships encourage the motivation of pupils and underpin their very good attitudes towards learning in almost all lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of continuity and progression between Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form in the provision of some courses.
- There are insufficient links with industry to provide relevant work-shadowing and experience for all pupils.

### **Commentary:**

180. These subjects considerably enhance the breadth and range of the curriculum. They are popular and successful.

181. **General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ)** courses consist of:

- Engineering at GNVQ part 1 intermediate level,
- Leisure and tourism at GNVQ part 1 intermediate and foundation level, and
- Science at GNVQ full foundation level.

In Year 10 these courses have been replaced with the new vocational GCSEs in which successful candidates will be awarded two grades.

182. In the most recent examinations results were average and have improved. Over three-quarters of pupils are successfully completing their courses. These results reflect the overall very good achievement of these pupils who generally entered the school with lower skills in reading and writing than most. This is the result of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of most pupils towards their learning. Assessment is a strong feature of these courses and is used very well by teachers. Consequently, pupils know exactly what to do in order to improve their standards. There are insufficient links with industry to provide relevant work shadowing and experience for all pupils.

183. One lesson was observed in each subject:

**+++** In **engineering** pupils applied their practical skills well in project work, for example, in using a centre lathe correctly when milling a screwdriver head. The teacher's expertise and good communication skills enabled all the pupils to make good progress in the lesson.

**Standards are average.** Pupils who are successful in the examination achieve the equivalent of two GCSEs at grade C or above.

**+++** In **leisure and tourism** pupils investigated and analysed marketing and promotion practices to produce a written report. They had visited work places and used ICT very effectively for research and presentation.

**Standards are above average.** Pupils who are successful in the examination achieve the equivalent of two GCSEs at grade G or above.

**+++** In **science** pupils revised the difference between solids, liquids and gases. Very good learning was assured through the effective use of a PowerPoint presentation and a practical demonstration.

**Standards are well below average compared with the national norm.** This represents very good achievement for these pupils, some of whom have behavioural problems. Pupils who are successful in the examination achieve the equivalent of four GCSEs with a maximum grade D.

184. The school is currently reviewing its 14-19 curriculum. At the moment there is continuity in engineering and tourism but not in science. Health and social care and a vocational course in business are not included in Years 10 and 11. Both are offered in the sixth form but there is no take up of business.

#### **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1**

185. Courses in construction, hairdressing and motor vehicle engineering have been introduced into Year 10 this year. This very good and motivating initiative provides work-related education to match the needs and aspirations of about 50 pupils who choose one of the courses. They are taught at the local college of education.

#### **GCSE business studies**

186. **Results are well above average and a high proportion gain A\* grades.** This subject is popular and successful. Good use is made of ICT, for example, using spreadsheets to forecast cashflow. One lesson of the lowest set in Year 11 was seen during the inspection. Many pupils had difficulties understanding ideas such as the different types of costs faced by a business. Unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant number of pupils lowered the quality of this lesson because pupils did not learn as much as they should.

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

In the inspection, 15 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	11	91	62	9	15	1.9	1.5
Sciences	2	100	78	50	27	4.0	2.3
Music	1	100	84	0	29	1.0	2.4

**GCE A level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	22	86	87	45	43	5.8	5.8
Chemistry	18	67	90	28	43	4.1	5.9
Biology	27	100	88	37	34	6.2	5.2
Physics	15	87	88	13	40	4.1	5.7
Design and technology	10	100	91	60	30	6.0	5.4
Food technology	4	75	83	25	28	4.5	4.7
Business studies	33	91	92	30	32	5.5	5.5
Economics	7	86	89	14	36	4.3	5.5
Computing	26	96	86	8	23	4.2	4.6
ICT	15	93	N/A	0	N/A	3.3	N/A
Physical education	11	100	92	0	25	4.7	5.1
Travel and tourism	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.0	10.1
Health and social care	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10.5	10.8
Art and design	18	100	96	67	46	7.8	6.6
Music	4	100	93	50	35	6.5	5.7
Theatre studies	11	100	N/A	45	N/A	7.1	N/A
Geography	5	100	92	20	38	5.2	5.7
History	8	63	88	0	35	2.0	5.4
Religious studies	3	100	92	100	38	8.0	5.8
Sociology	6	100	86	17	35	5.0	5.3
Psychology	28	89	N/A	21	N/A	4.5	N/A
English language	15	100	91	47	30	6.1	5.3
English literature	19	95	95	21	37	5.2	6.0
Communication studies	37	84	93	27	31	5.0	5.5
French	7	100	89	43	38	6.0	5.6
German	8	100	91	38	40	7.2	5.8

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, physics and biology. One lesson of further mathematics was sampled. Only 2 students are following this course. Teaching in this lesson was very good. The teacher ensured that both students contributed well to the lesson. Students' attitudes are very positive and they are achieving well. Chemistry was sampled. Examination results in chemistry fluctuate between above and below average. The attainment of students seen in a Year 12 group was just below average. Electronics was sampled. Provision in electronics is very good. Results are well above average. In the lesson observed, lively teaching with a variety of tasks actively involved the students in focused learning resulting in very good achievement. The retention rate is good.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good; as a result pupils achieve well.
- The very good attitudes of students underpin their good achievement.
- Marking is thorough; it helps students to improve their standards.
- Good leadership and management ensure good curricular planning.

##### Areas for improvement

- Students do not contribute sufficiently to their own learning in lessons.
- The monitoring and support of teaching is inadequate.

#### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

#### **Commentary:**

187. **Standards of work seen during the inspection, and GCE A level results, are above average in 2002.** Students have achieved well since they started the sixth form as they have taken on a more demanding range of mathematical skills.

188. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned; teachers clearly focus students' learning on the lesson objectives and how they fit in with previous and future work. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to explain new topics clearly to develop students' understanding.



+++ In a Year 13 class with 6 students, the teacher referred students regularly to the lesson objectives to get them to think about how the skills developed in previous work could be applied to the work they were doing on the binomial theorem.

189. Sometimes, teachers do not involve the students enough during the lessons; they provide them with the required knowledge and skills but their questioning does not allow students to contribute to the development of the lesson.

+++ In a Year 13 mechanics lesson about power, the teacher told the students too much and did most of the work. The examples were done by the teacher with little involvement of the students; the appropriate formulae required from previous work on energy, and the answers, were usually supplied by the teacher not the students.

190. **The achievement of students is good.** The very positive attitudes of the students, together with the good teaching, ensure that they build well on previous knowledge. Teachers support students' learning well. Teachers' marking is thorough; it regularly informs students of how well they doing and provides good advice about how they can improve their standards.

191. **There is good leadership** from the new head of department. There is a clear focus on improving standards for all students. Good provision has been made this year for Year 12 students whose standards are lower than normally found in the sixth form by offering an AS level course over 2 years. At present, teaching commitments make it difficult to adequately monitor and support teaching within the subject.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership has resulted in a shared commitment to raising standards and the achievement made by students over time.
- Very effective introduction of new courses has resulted in students achieving standards that are above average.
- Very good teaching and students' attitudes to their work lead to effective learning.
- The work of laboratory technicians contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The use made of marking to plan and set short-term targets is too often neglected.
- There are too few computers to meet the subject's requirements in the use of ICT.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good	Very good
Results in 2001 examinations	Well above average	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good

**Commentary:**

192. **The standards of work seen reflect the examination results and are well above average.** Students bring to new situations their prior knowledge and understanding. Their attitudes to work mean that most are responding very well to the demands made of them. This is significant to the progress they make in lessons.

*+++ In Year 12, students have good recall of previously learned work on scaling and measurements. They confidently interpret micrographs and identify organelles. In Year 13, students evaluate an investigation into inheritance and respond well to questioning with higher-attaining students asking searching questions of the teacher and of each other.*

*+++ Students in both years are skilled at keeping very good records of their work. They use computers to assist their research and are competent independent learners. They share their ambitions and support each other well and are confident that their aspirations will be met in biology.*

193. **Teachers set high standards and have high expectations of the students.** They are well qualified and plan for effective learning. Targets and learning objectives for every lesson are shared with students. Very good questioning, particularly to assess knowledge and understanding, challenges students and informs the need for further matching of work to their needs. As a result, students know exactly what they are doing. They are acquiring new knowledge and developing their ideas and understanding at a good pace. Significant to this is the teachers' understanding of the examination board's requirements and the use they make of sample questions.

194. Lessons provide students with first-hand information about their learning. They value information they receive through teachers' regular marking, although targets to help students improve should be set more often. Planning of lessons takes into account individual students' learning needs. Students are well motivated and recognise how hard teachers work to improve the quality of their learning. Recent results show that the attainment of male students is now at least in line with the females.

195. **Leadership and management are very good.** Within the department there is a shared commitment to raising standards further. Specialist teachers are well deployed; the level and use of resources enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. The management and work of laboratory technicians is significant to the quality of teaching and learning. Many lessons are taught out of laboratories. Good use is made of ICT through effective demonstration, but there are too few computers to support the full range of curricular requirements. An excellent position statement sets out clear priorities for development. A good system is in place for self-review of the department and of students.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- A-level results have improved significantly.
- The good overall achievement of students is due to good teaching and learning.
- Students' positive attitudes to work are in response to supportive teacher-student relationships.

### Areas for improvement

- Results in 2002 in the AS course were below average.
- Teaching methods sometimes do not adequately meet the learning needs of all students. Teaching and learning are insufficiently monitored.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

### Commentary:

196. **Teaching is enthusiastic.** Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding enables them to explain physical concepts clearly, and to build on students' previous knowledge. Very good relationships give an effective learning environment in which students are comfortable in asking for help when they feel the need. The student with special educational needs is very well supported and is making good progress. Lessons are well structured and the marking of written work is thorough and detailed. ICT is used to enhance teaching and learning.

**+++** *In a Year 12 practical lesson students were carrying out a variety of investigations testing design and practical skills. The various activities included the use of the Internet for research in solving specific problems and appropriate sensors to measure the acceleration of golf balls, using ICT to record and process their results. Students found the activities provided useful reinforcement of previous work done. The teacher questioned students to check their understanding and to discuss improvements to their procedures. Students were well motivated and worked productively. Their learning was very good.*

197. **In some lessons a slow pace limits learning.** Students are not very responsive when answering teachers' questions or in asking questions themselves. This has a negative impact on their progress. More opportunities for students to discuss actively and debate topics would increase their scientific curiosity and improve their learning. The teaching methods seen during the inspection included whole-class teaching with insufficient opportunity for students to progress at different rates dependent on their learning needs. Where tasks are the same for students of all attainment levels higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make less progress. There are not enough

opportunities to use technology for the development of independent learning skills and many students are too reliant on their teachers.

**+++** *In a Year 13 lesson on binding energy and its effects, the teacher went through the examiners' mark scheme for some questions done from past examination papers. Good advice was given on exam technique. Most students were confident in using the concept, though there was some discussion as to whether the mass of electrons would be involved in calculating the mass change for the formation of a particular isotope. Learning was good but was limited by the varying pace of work as the students tackled the questions. The higher-attaining students were held back by the lower-attaining students who were unsure how to start some questions.*

198. In 2001 results in the AS examination at the end of Year 12 were average but in the A Level exam were below average. In 2002 results in the AS examination declined but at A Level there was significant improvement.

199. The take-up of the subject has increased and the retention rate during the AS course is good. However, a high proportion of these students in 2002 did not go on to study physics at A Level.

200. Assessment data needs to be used more effectively in monitoring students' progress so that under-achieving students can be given extra support. Leadership and management are satisfactory; more effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the subject will enable specific strategies for improvement to be incorporated into a development plan for the subject.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

No subject was the focus for the inspection. Engineering and design and technology were sampled. In engineering new leadership has brought much needed changes to the assessment system. Teachers have high expectations and very good knowledge and experience. A gap currently exists however between the teachers' expectations and those of the students who opt to take the subject. This is resulting in poor attendance patterns in engineering in Year 13 leading to under-achievement. In design and technology in Year 13, overall standards are well above average at grades A-B. Portfolio work, for example, in textile technology and product design is impressive. Students' key skills are very good. Planning is complex and well executed, critical analysis is carried out very well. In the three subject areas the students' high levels of knowledge are applied effectively.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus for the inspection was business studies. One lesson in economics was sampled; the teaching and learning in this lesson were satisfactory.

### **Business studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Results in public examinations have improved in recent years.
- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and learning.
- Very good management of the department provides a clear development plan aimed at raising standards further.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Some of the accommodation is inadequate and prevents the effective use of modern technology.



### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good	Very good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject		Very good
Management of the subject		Very good
Care & guidance		Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection		Good

### Commentary

201. **Results in public examinations have improved significantly.** The number of students attaining A and B grades in GCE Advanced Level more than doubled in 2002. All students obtained a grade for the first time in several years. Similar improvements took place in the AS level examinations at the end of Year 12 in 2002. The proportion of students obtaining higher grades rose significantly. Both these sets of results show students achieved well, given their starting points, so that overall achievement by the end of Year 13 is very good. The considerable improvements in results and achievement have been due to a number of factors:

202. Teachers have a very clear focus to their lessons. They share what students will learn very clearly from the outset and then proceed to develop their ideas through very good levels of questioning and debate. This challenges thinking well. When looking at a product life cycle, for example, students learn the various stages quickly and reinforce this by having to work out for themselves the different stages that current products might be at, such as palm-top computers or Internet phones. Teachers allow plenty of time for debate and discussion, and the students value this opportunity to explore their ideas and develop their skills. There is a clear and effective focus on examination technique, with gentle yet forceful reminders about how to answer examination questions effectively. This is reinforced through the good marking of students' work, with helpful comments on how to improve. Technical language is clearly explained and learning is carefully reviewed at the end of each lesson.

**+++** *In a Year 13 lesson, careful teasing out of issues by the teacher led students to understand the nature of 'fixed costs'. Students were made to think and work out that variable costs are a significant consideration when undertaking investment appraisal. In this work the teacher maintained a clear focus for students on the techniques needed for the examination. Learning was very effective in this lesson and students showed very good levels of analysis of data.*

203. **The department has a clear and effective development plan for raising standards.** This plan focuses clearly on how learning might be improved. It has met with great success so far, as evidenced by the improved progress and better results. The head of department has a very good understanding of raising standards further and is an able and competent leader. There is frequent and regular monitoring of teaching, as new ways of improving performance are sought. Planning of the curriculum has been a recent focus for change, with a revision of the modules taught and the incorporation of a coursework element recently. Both these are having a positive impact on learning. Students stick with business studies with few leaving after the end of Year 12.

204. **The department suffers from unsatisfactory accommodation.** Although there are two specialist rooms, the department has to use rooms in other parts of the building which

are shared with other subjects. In the specialist rooms there is good use being made of new technology to support learning, notably through the use of the laptop computer and projected images which show change and variables effectively. Learning is invariably enhanced through the use of such strategies.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on ICT, but computer studies were also sampled. In computer studies, examination results were below the national average in 2001 but rose markedly in 2002. One lesson was observed. This was satisfactory. In this lesson students learnt about computer functions but spent too long on definitions.

### Information and communication technology

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching is good.</li> <li>There is a very good range of computing equipment for students to work on.</li> </ul>	
Areas for Improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many students start the course with lower levels of skills and less knowledge than the course assumes.</li> <li>In 2002, three out of every four students starting the course did not continue with the subject after the AS year.</li> <li>The unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority of students diminish their learning.</li> </ul>	

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in 2001 examinations	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Good, although some students are not happy with their choice of ICT
Improvement since the previous inspection	Subject not taught at time of previous inspection

### Commentary:

205. Many students have not taken a GCSE course in ICT before the sixth form. These students start the course with low levels of ICT skills. For example, some have never used a database. Just as important is that they are not used to writing about their work. They have not yet learnt to record how they developed their work or to evaluate it. Teachers are very aware of this and work hard to develop these skills. They do this successfully but there is not time in the two years for students to reach the levels they should so that their overall achievement is no better than satisfactory.

**+++** A student in Year 12 said 'It's clever!' when demonstrating how he had used a



*spreadsheet to record income and expenditure for a boxing club. He was expressing delight in his own achievement.*

206. Objectives for lessons are clearly stated. Teachers make sure that students know exactly what they have to do for their coursework and provide good advice so students know exactly how to improve their work. Students are told what they should achieve in each lesson. This helps them to know how well they are doing. They set students very clear deadlines. This makes sure students complete everything. One teacher has become an examiner for the subject so that she can offer even more help and another teacher is applying to follow the same path.

207. ***There is a very good range of computer equipment for students to use.*** Students enjoy using computers to produce solutions to real problems. They develop their computer skills well.

**+++** *One student in Year 12 taught himself how to write computer programs to add features to the spreadsheet he had designed. He was well supported by the school's computer technician.*

208. A female student who had recently arrived from South Africa was very pleased with the development of her computing skills because she had not had the opportunity to use computers at school before coming to England.

209. Students do not show as much enthusiasm for writing the documentation needed to accompany their projects. Some students work less productively on this. A small minority acts immaturely and their behaviour slows the learning of others.

210. ***Three out of every four students who start the course in Year 12 choose not to continue with the subject after taking the AS examination.*** Whilst some students only want an AS qualification, some feel they will gain better grades in other subjects and some are disappointed with their choice.

211. Good leadership is taking steps to make sure that, in future, students have enough knowledge and adequate skills when they start the course.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus of the inspection was on travel and tourism, but a lesson in sport and physical education was sampled. In sport and physical education, examination results at advanced level were average in 2001 but they improved significantly in 2002 and one student was in the top five candidates in the country. In the AS examination students achieved grades that were well above expectation in relation to their GCSE results. In the lesson seen teaching was satisfactory and students were testing their reaction times and using skinfold callipers competently to measure body fat. They had a secure understanding of both health and skill-related fitness and made satisfactory progress in the initial stages of their personal exercise plans.

## Travel and tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards and results are improving.
- Teaching and learning are good and as a result students achieve well.
- Students' attitudes are good and have a positive impact on their learning.
- Teachers use assessment very well to challenge students appropriately.
- The development of independent learning through investigation, analysis and evaluation.

### Areas for improvement

- The ICT facilities in some rooms are inadequate to support students' learning.
- The use of modern technology in teaching is underdeveloped.
- Links with industry are insufficient to enrich further students' learning.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	AS	A level
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Not applicable	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Subject not inspected at previous inspection.

### **Commentary:**

212. Students take either the single or double award. The timetable is structured very well so that Year 12 and 13 classes combine for the six optional units of the double award. This ensures the most efficient use of resources and teachers' expertise.

213. **Achievement is good.** Most students have relatively low GCSE results and from this modest base achieve well as they move through the sixth form. In a lesson on marketing and promotion the student with a statement of special educational needs is fully engaged in learning and makes equally good progress. Portfolios of evidence are thorough and well presented. ICT is used well for research and word processing but less so for handling data and desktop publishing. The facilities for ICT in some of the rooms used for teaching are insufficient to support students' learning. Teachers rarely use modern technology for teaching such as PowerPoint presentations.

214. **Standards and results are improving because the quality of teaching and learning is good.** As a result students understand well the fundamental concepts of travel and tourism and develop their skills of research, analysis, evaluation and report writing. They become effective independent learners. Teachers know their subject and have relevant experience. Lessons are planned to ensure a good pace of learning and good relationships promote mutual trust and secure open discussion.

+++ *In a lesson on the development of tourism the teacher clearly explained the meaning of*

conservation, regeneration and rehabilitation and extended the students' learning giving telling examples. The teacher's good planning created an appropriate rate of learning. This continued as students worked independently, analysing a newspaper-cutting on the use of a former stately home, because the teacher moved around the class providing individual help.

215. The use of assessment to promote learning is built into the course. Students have their own specification that clearly describes what they have to achieve in order to attain different grades. In addition good marking informs them how to improve their standards. This motivates students who, therefore, have positive attitudes to learning.

+++ In two lessons on countryside recreation teachers used marking and the specification effectively to challenge students to increase their depth of analysis and evaluation of work on the Lake District. This led to a more thorough understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of the development of tourism to local communities.

216. Leadership and management of the subject are good overall. However, classes have up to four different teachers and students remarked on the disadvantages of this on their learning. In the sixth form, work experience is not arranged centrally. There is a need to establish more links with industry to develop more opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and understanding by means of practical work.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design, music technology and theatre studies courses. Two lessons of the music AS and A level course were also sampled. The teaching was satisfactory in one and very good in the other. The teacher's knowledge and skills in the subject are very good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared with appropriate activities. Although numbers taking the examination are small all students pass and achieve satisfactorily.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning are good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13.
- Results in graphics at A Level were well above average in 2001.
- There is a dedicated room for sixth-form art and design.

#### Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of ICT are inadequate.
- Lack of visits to galleries limits students' wider perspective of art and design.
- The development of advanced drawing skills is limited as students have no access to life classes.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Very good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Very good
Leadership of the subject		Good

Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

**Commentary:**

217. **Teaching and learning are very good.** Students benefit from having access to teachers who combine experience with freshness to the profession. They also offer a range of skills in two and three-dimensional art. A minority of Year 12 students is occasionally immature in its attitudes and this is reflected in the quality of the work, with teachers having to exercise more control than might normally be the case.

218. **By the end of Year 13 standards are well above average.** The introduction of a modular structure to the course has led to some confusion as to what is required, with results at AS down in 2002. Students vary considerably in their approach to personal organisation and their ability to plan, research and evaluate their work but they all have made significant gains from Year 12 to 13. Work is almost exclusively two-dimensional although one male student is working in three-dimensions on a small scale. The dedicated workspace is invaluable in allowing students the freedom to come and work whenever time permits. There is a computer available in the sixth-form area but no evidence of it being used either in current or past work.

219. The graphics work is more structured than that in fine art, which is more open-ended. Students tend to achieve better results at examination level with the graphics option.

*+++ Excellent A Level work is evident in graphics folders on such topics as Japanese design and children's book illustration with two female students amongst the top five students in the country.*

*+++ One female student of Chinese heritage displays sensitive cultural tendencies in the way she handles line and colour. Two higher attainers have developed a feeling for texture in their work and this proves a unifying influence in all they do. Male students concentrate on fantasy imagery or street art whereas female students often favour the natural world, moral or social issues illustrating words such as intimidation or extravagance. Very good spiritual understanding is evident in poems about cherry blossom combined with Japanese imagery.*

220. All teachers give individual tutorials. One teacher is particularly good at helping students rediscover their largely intuitive ways of working. Students are then more able to judge how well they are performing; this helps them in setting personal targets.

*+++ One male student is very clearly aware of how he has developed from dependency on drawing in Year 12 through a unit on Indian and Chinese culture to an interest in painting in Year 13 as he tackles the theme 'My Town.'*

221. The single lessons are a problem for organising field trips for taking photographs or for drawing from first-hand experiences. As a result few gallery visits are undertaken and little use is made of the evocative seascape environment. Although adult evening classes are run in the school, no life classes are available for students. This limits understanding of the human form.

222. The cleaning arrangements for the sixth form art studio are not adequate.

## Music technology

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

### Strengths

- Standards are rising.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers and students share real enthusiasm for music.
- There are very good technology resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always ensure that all students are sufficiently and appropriately challenged.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Average	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject		Very good
Management of the subject		Very good
Care & guidance		Good
Improvement since the previous inspection		N/A

### Commentary:

223. **Standards seen in lessons at both AS and A level are now above average and students are achieving well.** Music technology is a relatively new subject in the school. The subject went through an unstable period of staffing last year. As a result students did well to achieve as they did. Students now enjoy the expertise of highly experienced teachers thanks to very good leadership and management of the subject. There are too few students currently studying the subject to make reliable comparisons with national averages and between the achievements of male and female students.

224. **Teachers and students are enthusiastic about music – making it and listening to it.** This considerably enhances the quality of the students' learning. Teaching and learning in music technology are good overall with many very good features. During the lessons most students learn new information skills and acquire understanding very quickly.

**+++** *In a lesson dealing with the theory of major keys and the process of moving from one key to another, students appreciated the wealth of information and detail given by the teacher in the first half of the lesson. They related their practical knowledge of chords on their instruments to what they were hearing now with exclamations of "Oh! I see!" and "That makes sense now!"*

225. Students are keen to get things right, as shown in the care taken to tune guitars before rehearsing and recording. The teachers' excellent skills in, and knowledge of their subject come from first hand and long experience and are regularly called on as they direct their support at individual students all of whom require different kinds of information and attention.

+++ In a lesson where students were preparing a combined midi and audio arrangement, the teacher introduced a new digital keyboard quickly to one student by relating what he told her to what she already knew. Later with other students, the teacher helped students with the problem of how to signal the start of a piece for the guitarist. Two days later the students and teacher were anxious to play the recording to show the very good progress that had been made and the high quality of performance and recording.

226. Teachers are also good at withholding support if they know that the students are capable of and will benefit from solving problems themselves. In most lessons this allows each student to be appropriately challenged and extended by what they are required to do. In one lesson, however two students who already knew much of the music theory being taught, were insufficiently challenged and ways should be found of taking students' past experience and knowledge of music into account when planning the lesson activities.

227. A student with learning difficulty is helped by a learning support assistant by writing notes in such a way that they are easier to understand. The range of resources for the subject is very good but the increasing popularity of the subject is already beginning to place pressure on access to equipment.

### Theatre studies

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching and learning are never less than good and frequently very good.</li> <li>Students appreciate the facilities and bring excellent attitudes to their learning.</li> <li>Results in examinations show an overall upward trend and are well above average.</li> </ul>	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work in some files lacks the skills of presentation seen in the best.</li> </ul>	

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Good	Very good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent	Excellent

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Steady and secure

### Commentary:

228. **Students are committed to quality as result of their respect for very effective teaching.** During the inspection Year 12 students worked on difficult theories of acting based on the teaching of Stanislavski and applied it to their work on Chekhov's 'The Three Sisters' and in Year 13 to Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler'. At the same time, a more theatrical area of study was undertaken by Year 12 in seeking ways to effectively enact and bring out the humour in the Mechanical's play within Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. Three teachers with very different styles of work each connected well with the students. The students themselves, especially when acting, show the essential qualities of self-appraisal, generosity



and astuteness in appraising the work of others. They bring a maturity to their

work on demanding material; they are concerned 'to get it right'. They enjoy working in the same ways as established theatre practitioners.

*+++ Year 13 worked on 'Our Country's Good' by Timberlake Wertenburger and showed a good knowledge of the issues facing the characters in the play. They used sophisticated theatrical language when discussing characters. They applied this knowledge in a Stanislavskian 'drawing on feeling for a line' to lift the text from the page. Students were imaginative, generous and supportive of each other as they struggled to determine the right space and physical relationship with each other in the context of the social relevance of the scene. They delved deeply into the text. The teacher spent significant periods of time with small groups to press this exploration fully.*

*+++ Year 12 students have already captured a similar intensity in their work. They were quick to take evidence from the text to identify the motivation of the characters in 'Three Sisters' and the driving force in the play's opening scene. They now know that movement on stage always has a natural or emotional purpose. The quality of this early work owes much to intensive and enthusiastic teaching that empowers students to feel free to express their thoughts and feelings in response to working on the text.*

229. Students experience good and very good teaching regularly. This is confirmed by the sense of anticipation as they arrive for lessons. They sometimes organise their own vocal or physical warm-up at the start of lessons. Energy is at the heart of good drama work and teachers need it as much as students. Enthusiastic energy is a feature of the teaching in theatre studies. Excellent relationships are established with students matched to a sense of purpose and providing a direction for students' learning. Good use of questioning is often a feature.

*+++ In introducing Year 12 to work on the Mechanical's play, two key questions were put to the group. Students found answers that allowed them to pursue a rehearsal of the scene: the Mechanicals were trying hard to act but were useless. As a result, the students became very inventive in ways of presenting the scene and this challenged the teacher to respond whilst still seeking to achieve a 'blocking' of the scene by the end of the lesson. The interaction between teacher and students was that of director and actors. As a result the learning was active and students made it their own.*

230. **The quality of arts learning, therefore, is high.** It is a very good learning environment for teachers and taught. The teachers work as practising artists and as a result an aesthetic awareness in the work is always present for the students.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was on geography, religious studies, sociology and psychology. Lessons were sampled in government and politics, where the presentations of three pupils were good and history, where teaching and learning were good.

## Geography

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

### Strengths

- There was improvement in examination results at AS level in 2002.
- Good teaching encourages students to learn through well-planned research and group work.
- The good attitudes of students in lessons enhance their learning.
- Very informative written feedback is given to students on individual essays.

### Areas for improvement

- Regular observations of teaching in the sixth form are not yet in place.
- There is some under-achievement of higher-attaining students in the standard of their writing.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Below average	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

### **Commentary:**

231. Overall, teaching in geography is good. It enables students to make progress in lessons. Group work is generally well planned to help students to learn through collaborative research on particular topics. This was the case in lessons on global change and regional inequalities in Italy. In some lessons ICT is used very effectively by the teacher to present information to students. However, there is little evidence that students are using ICT themselves to investigate or present work. In lessons and in their written work, students show that they are developing a satisfactory understanding of both physical and human geography topics, for example weathering, sustainable development and migration. Students are competent in using a range of geographical sources to carry out investigations and can represent information in a number of graphical forms.

**+++** *In a very good lesson with Year 13, in which the approach of students to their work was excellent, the task was to investigate a range of sources to produce a report on El Nino, global warming and ozone depletion. Students worked collaboratively in small groups and their learning moved at a quick pace. The teacher was well-organised and ready with supportive materials and advice, but students were encouraged to work independently. Students showed their own human response to the material they interpreted. ICT supported their work and learning was effective. The teacher 'managed' this learning skilfully.*

232. In their written work students describe and explain geographical patterns and processes. Some higher attaining students do not produce work in sufficient detail to achieve the grades they are capable of. The written work of lower attaining students shows they are making good progress in developing their geographical knowledge and understanding but do

not always provide adequate explanations or a sufficient number of

examples to illustrate their answers. On key pieces of work teachers provide very informative and useful feedback to students to help them improve.

233. Leadership is satisfactory. An important feature is the clear determination to improve provision and standards. At present there is insufficient time to carry out lesson observations on a regular basis and share good practice.

234. Standards have not improved since the previous inspection although there has been a significant improvement in the AS results for 2002. Students continue to make good progress and the quality of students' written work has been maintained, although there remains a need for improvement. The department is still in the process of establishing an effective system for monitoring students' progress in lessons and achievement over time.

### Religious studies

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good.</li> <li>• Students have very good attitudes to their work.</li> <li>• There is very good direction of the work of the sixth form.</li> <li>• Very good assessment procedures assist learning.</li> </ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No male students choose to study religious education.</li> </ul>
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### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	N/A	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Excellent

  

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very little information on the sixth form in the previous report

### Commentary:

235. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is close to the average expected on the AS level course. As students enter with average qualifications this represents satisfactory achievement. They understand the basics of ethics and philosophy. They know the arguments used by major philosophers and theologians such as Leibniz and Aquinas concerning the reasons for existence. They are beginning to appreciate the difference between approaches to ethics based on reason and revelation. However, at this early stage students are only beginning to think independently and do not involve themselves fully in discussion.

236. **Students on the A Level course in Year 13 achieve well and reach standards that are above average.** They analyse religious and secular approaches to ethical problems such as genetic engineering and in-vitro fertilisation. They make due reference to appropriate

authorities. They have good knowledge of theories about the existence of God such as the ontological and the cosmological. They argue their own views logically while respecting those of others. Thus they make good gains not only in philosophy and ethics but also in their personal development.

237. Teaching is good with the result that students learn well. Teachers' very good subject knowledge means they are comfortable in leading discussions which help students reflect and gain deeper insight.

**+++** *A lesson on the religious experiences of C.S.Lewis and John Wesley was very successful because the teacher prompted discussion by pertinent questions. His quiet interventions helped draw from the students possible sceptical and psychological explanations for religious conversions.*

238. Sometimes, however, teachers are too didactic instead of allowing students to work out their own solutions or seek their own explanations. Nevertheless students learn well because lessons are well planned, flow at a good pace, focus on learning objectives, and are frequently spiced with humour.

239. ***Students' very good attitudes in Year 12 and excellent attitudes in Year 13 help to create an intellectual climate in the classroom.*** They work very hard, both in lessons and on their homework. They make good use of the internet for research. Most clearly enjoy learning. Consequently very few students drop out during term-time and most carry on from the AS course to A Level.

240. ***The recently appointed head of department provides very clear direction for the work of the sixth form.*** He has quickly established a very firm commitment to raising standards. Statistical data are used very well. The department sets minimum targets for students, tracks their progress and ensures that they know what they need to do to meet or exceed predicted grades. New schemes of work ensure that the work of all teachers in the department is complementary. The development plan tackles the need to attract males to the sixth form course. There was not enough information about religious education in the sixth form in the previous report to judge whether there has been any improvement.

## Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision for sociology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Students attain above average results in AS and A Level examinations.
- Good teaching challenges students to think and provides them with opportunities to engage in discussions.
- Good relationships between students and teachers support learning.
- Students are very willing learners and mature in their approach to the subject.
- The department has a clear focus to improve teaching and learning further.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are not as effective as necessary in drawing conclusions and evaluating research.
- The use of target-setting to identify for students what they must focus on to improve is under-developed, especially in teachers' marking.

**Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good – focus on improvement	
Management of the subject	Good	
Care & guidance	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Sociology not inspected at previous inspection.	

**Commentary**

241. Teaching and learning in sociology are good. In all lessons students are challenged to think about the issues they are studying. Some lessons provide opportunities for students to participate in productive discussions where they can test out their understanding.

**+++** *In a lesson on aid to developing countries students showed they had a good understanding of current development issues which they used effectively in their arguments for and against the cancellation of debt.*

242. **Relationships are very good.** Students together with teachers provide a learning environment where students are not afraid to discuss and evaluate the quality of their own work.

**+++** *In a revision lesson students engaged in a very mature and supportive discussion of one student's essay on religion.*

243. In lessons, students develop a satisfactory understanding of, for example, differential achievement in education and the ethical issues related to different methods of sociological research.

244. In their written work higher-attaining students show they have a good grasp of sociological theories and research and write about such topics as the family and secularisation in some detail. They find it more difficult to draw conclusions that show they can make judgements about the validity of different approaches to a topic. The work of lower-attaining students shows a satisfactory level of sociological knowledge and the ability to provide basic explanations.

245. The leadership of sociology is good. There is a strong focus on improving examination results through better teaching and learning and the department is more active in helping students identify the ways in which they can improve their work. There is little use of ICT for learning although teachers do encourage students to use particular web-sites for research purposes.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- There has been significant improvement in pupils' attainment in public examinations in the recent past.
- Learning is very good as a result of very effective teaching methods.
- Very good use is made of information known about the students' potential to raise their overall achievement.
- Very good vision from within department seeks ways of driving up standards.

### Area for improvement

- ICT is not effectively incorporated as part of teaching and learning.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good	Very good
Results in 2001 examinations	Above average	Average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Care & guidance	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	N/A

### Commentary:

246. **Results in the Advanced Level GCE examination have improved significantly between 2001 and 2002.** The percentage of students reaching the highest grades A and B has tripled from just over 20 per cent to 66 per cent. All students gained A to E grades in 2002, whereas the year before that was not the case. Overall students' achievements are very good, given their average starting points when they enter the sixth form. This is a significant leap forward and is due to the following features:

247. **Teaching is very good and shows some outstanding features.** Teachers work extremely effectively as a team, with their different styles complementing one another well. They help students make very good progress in their lessons. There are outstandingly high challenges in many lessons – students are expected to think for themselves and make decisions. They learn effectively through having key issues and theories constantly reinforced. There is a high level of activity in many lessons. Teachers use a wide range of resources to aid learning very effectively – showing clips from videos to show conditioning related to the theories of Skinner and Pavlov. Key phrases are pinned to the wall to add to the learning experiences. Students are encouraged to use highlighter pens to draw attention in their notes to important areas of learning and definitions. As a result of these strategies and others, students learn effectively by researching, debating, thinking, watching and listening. Their work shows that this is effectively extended into personal research and examination essays, which extend the learning process beyond the classroom very well. Students enjoy their lessons and have very good relationships with staff, who build on these initial enthusiasms effectively in a professional manner to raise the quality of learning.



**+++** *In a Year 13 lesson about how to relate conditioning to a response and stimulus, teaching was well planned and the interests of students quickly engaged. A well chosen video of a duckling being hatched and becoming attached to a moving toy allowed students to explore the relationship between stimulus and response. Skilful and perceptive questioning heightened the students' thinking.*

248. **Teachers assess their students regularly and effectively.** They use this information to plan their lessons and set realistic personal targets. The staff makes a full and regular analysis of each student's potential based on their GCSE performance and other work presented as the course progresses. Expert guidance is given of an outstanding nature on how to improve the work and how to succeed in the examinations. Other work is carefully annotated and marked with clear guidance given on how to improve. Students know their potential grades and what they are aiming to achieve.

249. **Very good leadership and teamwork are instrumental in driving up standards.** The department is very well led. There is clear and shared vision amongst the strong team of teachers about how to improve. There has been a complete revision of the syllabus, backed up by recent training. This has resulted in a new approach for some of the modules studied, as well as new and improved resources being used to motivate and stimulate the students' learning. The focus on using assessment information very effectively and observing each other teach have added to the improvement in learning and higher standards.

250. **There is, however, insufficient use of new technology throughout the subject.** There are no computers in either of the specialist teaching rooms. Students are encouraged to use the Internet and intranet whenever possible, and there are plans to improve access to computers within the department. The department has not yet updated itself on the way it might improve its teaching and presentation using new technology. As a result, and very occasionally, teachers give a little too much information to students rather than letting them work it out for themselves.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French. The overall provision is good in English language and communication studies, which were sampled. German, too, was sampled; standards attained are above average and students are confident and independent linguists. They achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning that presents them with frequent opportunities to use the language for themselves with a high level of challenge.

## English literature

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress in lessons because they are very positive about their work.
- Teaching is consistently good so that students achieve above average standards in their work.
- Students are well informed about their progress and know what is required to improve further.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of learning is less good when all students are not actively involved in lessons.
- Seating arrangements often discourage interaction between students so that class discussion becomes difficult and less productive.

### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in 2001 examinations	Average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Commentary:**

251. ***In work seen students show that they have better than average knowledge of literary texts.*** They grasp important themes and key ideas well. For example students strengthen their essays on William Blake's poetry by detailed knowledge of the poet's use of imagery. Higher-attaining students write fluent and very well organised essays that answer central questions directly. Lower-attaining students prepare essays thoroughly. They still achieve above average standards although they write less fluently and at times make awkward use of supporting quotations.

**+++** *Students show good personal responses when writing about the repressive society in Margaret Atwood's novel, 'The Handmaid's Tale'. The best essays are original and mature. All show students effectively analysing writing techniques.*

252. ***By the end of Year 13 they are currently producing work that is generally above average.*** This more closely reflects the 2002 examination results [well above average] that showed a significant improvement compared with 2001. Students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment, so this shows that their overall achievement is good.

253. English literature lessons benefit from very good relationships between students and teachers. Students learn well because they enjoy lessons. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging work. Students learn quickly as a result.

**+++** *In a very good lesson Year 13 students in small groups discuss Shakespeare's representations of women in 'Othello'. The teacher stands back, rightly assuming that*

students are capable of reaching their own conclusions. They respond with interesting ideas that show thoughtful approaches to the text. The quality of debate is lifted further when the teacher introduces a seventeenth century view of the relationship between men and women. She helps students to become independent learners by carefully gauging her interventions.

254. **Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good knowledge of their subject.** They plan lessons well so that students are confident in their work and make good progress. Occasionally learning is less effective because teachers do not give students opportunities to make developed responses to questions. There is little opportunity for high quality discussion in those lessons where students sit in rows facing the front.

255. Students are very positive about all aspects of the course. They settle quickly in Year 12 and very few drop out during the course. They like the frequency of group work and individual presentations in lessons because, *'We learn off each other in a language we understand.'* They are very clear about their progress and appreciate the way teachers mark their work in detail so that they know how to improve. Students feel that they are treated like adults and appreciate the theatre visits on offer, especially the residential trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. They enjoy using the very good facilities available in the library resource centre.

256. **The head of department provides a strong lead for the course.** She ensures that teachers work together effectively to provide a programme of study that meets the examination specification well. Examination performances are closely evaluated to help the department raise standards further. The numbers of students taking English literature continue to expand. Above average results have been the trend since the previous inspection.

## French

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

### Strengths

- Results attained in examinations are above average.
- Standards attained in writing and listening are above average.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they have good relationships with their teachers.
- Assessment is used effectively to raise standards of writing.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase opportunities for students to work independently of the teacher and of each other to improve confidence in speaking and responding.
- Expectations of teachers are sometimes too low.
- The management of the department does not currently ensure students make appropriate progress or reach the required standard for A Level.
- Inadequate focus on developing linguistic skills in lessons leads to students' lack of confidence in manipulating the language for themselves.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in 2001 examinations	Well above average	Above average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Very Good	Very Good

Leadership of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Management of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Care & guidance	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

**Commentary:**

257. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly average. Students present their ideas clearly and use a good range of vocabulary and structures in writing. Students write accurately to discuss contemporary issues and literature. They organise their ideas well in writing to present arguments, produce accounts and express their views on a variety of topics. Marking is thorough and gives them good guidance on how to improve. Listening skills are well developed and students respond promptly and appropriately to the exclusive use of French in lessons. Speaking skills are less secure; the majority of students have difficulty manipulating the language spontaneously and some are reluctant to express their views in lessons.

258. **Students' attitudes towards their learning are very positive.** They have very good relationships with their teachers and are concerned to do well. When asked to take part in pair work or discussion they are keen to participate and stay on task. They appreciate the help, guidance and time given to them by their teachers and the open access they are given to the department's resources.

**+++** *In a lesson with Year 13, students were studying character in a piece of writing by Maupassant. Although the majority were hesitant in speaking, they were keen to cooperate in role-playing. However, they had difficulty in responding to questions spontaneously in French. Their approach was anxious and they wanted to prepare thoroughly beforehand rather than going with the flow and trying to improve their confidence and fluency through practical talking and listening. Teaching and planning did not sufficiently help them in gaining this confidence.*

259. **In some lessons expectations are too low.** Inadequate knowledge of the requirements of the examination or of students' prior learning result in inappropriate objectives and the progress of students is too slow. Owing to recent staffing changes, the current management of the subject is unsatisfactory; there is inadequate guidance for inexperienced teachers and systems of monitoring and evaluation are not effective in ensuring that students make appropriate progress and reach the required standard.

260. **Teachers have a good command of French.** They provide good role models for their students. Presentations involve students and activities are well sequenced enabling students to build effectively on previous learning and give students the opportunity to explore issues. Reading skills are developed effectively through the analysis of a variety of texts from the media and the Internet. Students sometimes have difficulty in expressing their ideas because lessons are focused more on the issues and topic vocabulary than on sentence structure. Students would benefit from more structured language models to work from or practise when completing tasks in order to increase their range of language and increase their confidence in manipulating the language. Opportunities are missed to require students to use the language to gather or give information and to report back or present their ideas independently to others. As a result students are not confident in speaking and are reluctant to speak without thorough preparation beforehand or without reference to written notes.