

INSPECTION REPORT

QUEENSBURY SCHOOL

Queensbury, Bradford

LEA area: Bradford

Unique reference number: 107391

Headteacher: Mrs P Ward

Reporting inspector: Mr R Drew

7281

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 4th April 2003

Inspection number: 249764

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:	Deanstones Lane Queensbury Bradford
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss T de Leeuw
Date of previous inspection:	20 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7281	R Drew	Registered inspector		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?
9710	R Burgess	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?
4677	V Banks	Team inspector	Geography	
30899	K G Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18447	R Cohen	Team inspector	History (11-16) Business education (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19586	W Easterby	Team inspector	English	
31100	G Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
21785	V Kerr	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Biology (sixth form) Psychology (sixth form)	
16950	C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) Educational inclusion Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
31963	M Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design (11-16) Citizenship (11-16)	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education (11-16)	
7222	A Watson	Team inspector	Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

12972	T K Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	16
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	20
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	23
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	27
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	28
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	32
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	34
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	40
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	67

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Queensbury School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in the industrial village of Queensbury, just beyond Bradford's built-up area. The school serves both the village and parts of the surrounding rural and urban areas. There are currently 1391 pupils on roll, including 181 sixth form students. About 1230 are of white (British) background while 4 per cent are of Asian (Indian) origin, 3 per cent Asian (Pakistani) origin with a further 2 per cent coming from a range of other ethnic minority communities. There are 731 boys and 660 girls in the school. Ninety-six pupils use English as an additional language, though none is at an early stage of language acquisition. About 11 per cent of pupils claim free school meals – less than average. Broadly speaking pupils are neither strongly advantaged nor disadvantaged by national standards. Last year 23 pupils joined the school during the course of the year and 32 left.

Pupils currently enter the school with broadly average prior attainment. In previous years their attainment scores at aged 11 have been very variable but generally below or well below national average. About 10 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, a lower than average proportion.

Since the previous inspection, the school has nearly doubled in size as a result of a lengthy and disruptive authority-wide reorganisation. The catchment area now includes more professional families and more pupils from ethnic minority communities. The new headteacher has been in post for only 18 months. The school is active in numerous initiatives, including Excellence in Cities and Investors in People, has a City Learning Centre on site and is applying for new status as a mathematics and Information and Communication Technology College. The current headteacher inherited a substantial budget deficit that has limited spending plans.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with many strengths. Standards have been below average but are rising. Teaching and learning are good and the overall behaviour and attitudes of pupils are also good. Leadership and management are good overall and there is very good direction from the headteacher. The school has successfully coped with the consequences of a protracted and difficult reorganisation and is well placed to improve at a rapid rate. Spending per pupil is average and the school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and, at both senior and middle levels, management is good overall
- Teaching and learning are good and in the sixth form very good
- Standards match national averages and are rising, so pupils now make good progress in each phase of their education
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the school as a whole are good
- Relationships in the school are good
- Links with other schools and with the wider community are very good and beneficial to pupils
- The quality of leadership, teaching and learning are particularly effective in English

What could be improved

- Results for both Year 9 and Year 11 pupils are below or well below those for similar schools
- Leadership and management in art and design, music and English as an additional language are unsatisfactory
- In Year 11, standards seen during the inspection were below average in art and design, music, German and the non-GCSE information and communication technology (ICT) programme
- The curriculum, though good in many respects, has shortcomings in ICT and religious education coverage in Years 10 and 11, in numeracy strategies and in the way responsibility for some classes is split between several teachers
- Teaching and learning in Year 10 are satisfactory and pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory, leaving these features weaker than in the rest of the school.
- The school lacks a system for the complete and comprehensive recording and analysis of data on bullying and racial incidents

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school was last inspected in 1997, when it was a 13 to 18 upper school. It became an 11 to 18 comprehensive school in 2000, incorporating pupils and teachers from middle schools and the upper school into a greatly enlarged single unit. Most pupils and teachers had no previous experience of this much wider age range. The building programme did not provide additional permanent accommodation until a year after the additional pupils had arrived on site. A significant budget deficit arose between 1999 and 2001.

Since the previous inspection, a new school has in effect been established. Considerable upheaval was involved and standards of attainment, pupil attitudes and staff confidence declined for a time. Governors and staff have succeeded in reversing this process and in the last two years, the rate of improvement has been rapid. Action has been effective on many of the key issues raised in 1997, especially on broadening teaching and learning strategies and raising the quality and influence of middle management.

In addition, the current senior management team have put in place many strategies for ensuring improved results, removing the budget deficit, ensuring better links with the community and other schools and colleges. The benefits of such actions are now becoming apparent.

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	D	D	E
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	D	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

For the past few years, pupils have entered the school with below-average attainment. Current Year 9 work, seen during the inspection, is broadly in line with national standards and

therefore indicates good achievement across Years 7 to 9. Published test results for 2002 were below average for all schools, and well below average for similar schools. The trend prior to 2002 had been erratic, but work seen during the inspection represents an improvement on recent results.

At the end of Year 11, results in 2003 were below the average for all schools and well below those for similar schools. However, these results represent an improvement, and this upward trend is confirmed by the standards observed during the inspection, which are average. In some subjects, recent results have been above average, notably physical education, religious education and history. Attainment in 2002 was below average in art and design, drama and German. Pupils in general make good progress across Years 10 and 11, which is also true for gifted and talented pupils and for those with special educational needs or those using English as an additional language. Girls attain significantly better than boys in both Year 9 and Year 11 results, but the school has taken numerous steps to counter this and is having success in many subjects. The ambitious targets agreed with the local authority for 2002 were met in terms of A* to C results, but not in terms of points scores.

In the sixth form, Year 13 results were well below average in 2001, but greatly improved in 2002. Work seen during the inspection confirms this upward trend with standards overall now matching national ones. Students having previously made considerably less progress are now achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are on balance, positive about school: a majority take the opportunities offered in lessons and extra-curricular activities and participate eagerly. A small minority, especially in Year 10, have negative attitudes. The general level of exclusions is low.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour was good or better in nearly 80 per cent of the lessons observed during the inspection, and there is much very good behaviour. Pupils are animated outside lessons and the vast majority are considerate. In a limited number of teaching groups, especially within Years 9 and 10, behaviour is unsatisfactory, some of it oppressive: the school takes action which much reduces its impact.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Parents are right to believe the school is successful in helping their children become mature and responsible. Relationships across Years 7 to 11 are good, reflecting the commitment shown by staff to getting the best possible response from pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance levels for the previous year are better than the national average, but unauthorised absences are too high. Attendance during the inspection was noticeably lower than the average for the previous year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning for Years 7 to 11 as a whole are both good and noticeably improved in relation to the quality in the previous inspection report.

The proportion of both satisfactory teaching and very good teaching has risen significantly. Teachers are constructing well-planned lessons, with high expectations of pupils. They use their subject expertise and skills at managing pupils well. They succeed in the vast majority of lessons in gaining a good response from pupils. In a minority of lessons, especially in a few Year 10 teaching groups, the negative attitudes of some pupils are not adequately managed. Overall, however, pupils are positive in their approach and learn well, matching the pace and expectations of teachers successfully.

Teachers' confidence and expertise in reinforcing the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and ICT are satisfactory, and the use of target-setting data in Years 7 to 9 is of a similar quality. These aspects lag behind the higher quality that teachers show in all other facets of their work. Similarly, pupils' learning is good overall but their skill at independent study and, in Years 7 to 9, their awareness of their progress in relation to national standards they are reaching are less effective, though satisfactory.

Pupils using English as an additional language are learning well, largely because their grasp of English is very secure. Pupils with special educational needs also learn well as a result of good awareness by the teaching staff as a whole and some valuable specialist support. Gifted and talented pupils also show good learning in relation to the particularly high expectations placed upon them.

Teaching and learning in English are very good; the quality in mathematics is good and in science both are satisfactory. In the great majority of other subjects both teaching and learning are good, though in art and design and citizenship they are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good and this is having a major impact on raising standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All required subjects and courses are in place and there are several good features such as additional subjects, including drama, and very good curricular links with primary schools. Extra curricular provision is good. However, religious education and ICT provision for non-examination groups in Years 10 and 11 fail to meet statutory requirements, and numeracy arrangements are unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The diagnosis of pupils' needs is good and some subjects make good provision. There is some inconsistency between support in different subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils using English as an additional language receive good teaching and are all competent, often very accomplished, users of English. There are shortcomings in the way their strengths and weaknesses are assessed and responded to.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Pupils are given clear, consistent guidance on moral issues, which contributes to their good behaviour. Social and cultural development is satisfactory, but there is too little scope for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school has a secure pastoral system and heads of year know their pupils well. Tutor time is used variably, however. Overall, assessment arrangements are good and the monitoring of pupils' progress is helping to raise standards, especially at GCSE. In Years 7 to 9, teachers are less secure in making accurate initial assessments and setting realistic targets.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The school has worked hard to establish effective links with parents and provides more information and more opportunities for consultation than is usual.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Very good leadership is provided by the headteacher. Senior and middle managers provide good leadership and management. The headteacher has directly initiated improvements and has delegated to colleagues the responsibility for other crucial changes. These initiatives have already begun to bear fruit in terms of better teaching, plans for new status and rising standards. Many middle managers now operate very effective departments, but the quality in art and design, music and English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. Accommodation, while very good in the new block, is unsatisfactory elsewhere. Staffing and resource levels are satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors show a good knowledge of the school and are well organised. They are thus able to give good strategic support and guidance to the school. Most of their statutory duties are carried out well, but they are not meeting the Act of Worship requirements and those relating to ICT in Years 10 and 11 or those for religious education across Years 10 to 13.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has shown that it can improve well on issues raised in the previous inspection. Its current planning is very good and indicates a perceptive evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and realism in the plans for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Educational priorities are very well identified and financial management very efficient, which ensures that funds are wisely deployed to support precisely the areas the school seeks to develop or sustain. The school is good at comparing its spending policies and its performance with those of other schools, and acts wisely on the results of such analysis.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>A very high proportion of parents expressing views on the school are pleased by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high expectations placed on their children. • The very approachable nature of the school staff. • The good progress their children make. • The wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for their children. 	<p>Compared with parents in other schools, a small minority are dissatisfied with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in the school. • The information they receive about their children's progress. • How closely the school works with parents.

Inspectors judge that the parents are right to think highly of the progress made by their children and the high expectations placed on them, and they support parents' views on the openness and helpfulness of staff and the range of extra activities provided. Inspectors judge that, for the school as a whole, behaviour is good by national standards, though in a limited number of teaching groups in Year 10 it is unsatisfactory. They find that the information provided for parents is better than average and similarly judge that this school is good at working closely with parents.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

QUEENSBURY SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is an integral part of Queensbury School. Currently there are 181 students on roll with numbers rising rapidly: Year 12 has 127 students, compared with 54 in Year 13. About 90 per cent of students are white (British) in origin, with 6 per cent of Asian (Indian) background, 3 per cent Asian (Pakistani) and 1 per cent from a range of other ethnic minority communities. There are broadly similar numbers of male and female students.

Overall, students' home backgrounds indicate neither significant social or economic advantage nor disadvantage. Their attainment on entry to Year 12 is below the national standards for sixth forms: a lower proportion have A and A* GCSE grades than nationally and a significant proportion of students enter with four A* to C grades when other sixth forms generally require 5 passes at this level. About 6 students have statements of special educational needs and 14 are on the special educational needs register.

Sixteen subjects are offered at AS and A2, with four AVCE and two intermediate vocational courses. In addition, students follow an enrichment programme including general studies in Year 12, a progression module in Year 12, work experience and opportunities for peer mentoring, additional courses and a range of social events. About 53 per cent of Year 11 stayed on into Year 12 this year. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are about 75 to 80 per cent. Queensbury School's Year 11 provides virtually all students currently in the sixth form and the proportion staying on is now increasingly rapidly after having dropped significantly during reorganisation in 2000 and 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective and improving sixth form. Standards now match national averages and students are achieving well. Past results have been well below average, but a recent and strong improving trend has been established. Teaching and learning are very good. The sixth form has good leadership and management and a broadening curriculum that now meets students' needs satisfactorily. Spending per student is broadly average; cost-effectiveness is satisfactory.

Strengths

- There is good leadership from the Manager of Key Stage 5 and from heads of year.
- Current Years 12 and 13 are achieving well.
- Standards seen during the inspection are above national averages in English, biology, product design and physical education
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Assessment systems and target-setting are well organised and have a beneficial impact on students' progress.
- Results are improving at a rapid rate.

What could be improved

- Results in recent examinations were too low in art and design, history, physics and mathematics.
- Group sizes are too small in Year 13.
- Retention rates from Year 11 into the sixth form have been too low.
- There is too little enrichment of the formal curriculum.

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	Satisfactory. Standards are broadly in line with the national average after a weak performance last year. Teaching is variable, with some very good and some less so. The department is resolved to improve and has the capacity to do so.
Biology	Very good. Very good teaching and learning are leading to results that are above the national average and which show good achievement by students. The subject is well managed and increasing numbers are taking it.
Design and technology	Good. Overall, provision for product design is good. Teaching is good and has resulted in above-average levels of attainment. Recent examination results are in line with national averages. Students make good progress in acquiring personal and practical skills and develop good independent learning skills. Their achievements are good.
Business studies	Good. From relatively low standards at entry to the sixth form, students make good progress and attain standards in line with the national average. The subject, which is increasingly popular, lacks appropriate accommodation and access to ICT.
Information and communication technology	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Since September, a new team has brought more rigour to teaching and as a result standards should improve over the next few years. ICT is well supported by the technical staff.
Physical education	Good. Students make good progress in developing a secure knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting performance. An insight into the key factors influencing sports participation is developing well.
Geography	Good. The provision for geography is good and students make good progress because they are committed and well supported. Teaching is very good. The department is well led and managed. Numbers are low but rising. Examination results in Year 13 in 2002 were well below average compared with those for previous years but standards seen during the inspection are much better and match national average.
Psychology	Good. Very good teaching is now resulting in very good learning. The large number of students taking this well-managed course are achieving well and working at standards that match national averages. This is a higher standard than seen in recent examination results.
English literature	Very good overall. Provision for English literature is very good. Standards are above average. Very good teaching and very good motivation from students means that achievement is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good advice about the sixth form prior to entry. Some subjects ensure that very clear guidance is subsequently provided, while others do not define expectations sufficiently. Students receive regular, high-quality information about their progress and advice on how to improve their performance. Personal support is good and careers advice satisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The Key Stage 5 Manager, working closely with year tutors, has established a good ethos in the sixth form. Students have a strong commitment to study and a clear picture of the progress they are making. Along with the senior management team, wise decisions have been taken that have broadened the curriculum and encouraged better take up rates and much more effective group sizes. Teaching, progress and results are well monitored, and effective action is taken to improve weak aspects of provision.

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"> • Good information about subjects and courses. • The range of courses matches students' talents and aspirations. • Teaching is good. • Teachers are very accessible and helpful. • The overall experience of sixth form life, which they would strongly recommend to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of enrichment courses and extra curricular activities is limited. • The quality of careers advice. • The extent to which the school listens to and responds to sixth form students.

Inspectors judge that students are right to rate highly many aspects of sixth form provision. Inspectors agree with students that enrichment and extra-curricular activities are currently too limited. However, they judge that scope for students to express their views and gain a fair response is satisfactory and that careers advice is also broadly satisfactory.

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. Standards observed during the inspection showed that pupils' work at the end of Year 9 is broadly average. The end-of-Year 9 pupils' combined results in National Curriculum tests for 2002 were below average for all schools, and well below the average for schools with a similar intake. Given that pupils taking tests in Year 9 have in recent years entered the school with well below average standards, the achievement of pupils in their first three years in this school has been good. Current Year 9 pupils are also producing work that represents good achievement compared with their standards in Year 7.

2. Results in 2002 were below average for all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but the English results were better than those in the other two subjects. The trend in results over the last three years has been quite erratic, rising sharply in 2001, but falling away noticeably in 2002. Overall, results have not been rising at the national rate, but this largely reflects the variable prior attainment of pupils which ranged widely both before and during the reorganisation of education in the area. Uncertainty amongst both teachers and pupils at that time coincided with unusually low scores by Year 7 pupils. In addition the reconstituted 11 to 18 school has taken some time to complete its process of appointing and retraining teachers to match its new age range and to overcome the organisational problems caused by having to teach several new intakes of pupils in a very extensive suite of temporary classrooms.

3. In the work of Year 9 seen during the inspection, standards in English and mathematics now match national averages and are just below average in science. This indicates a marked improvement on the standards in last year's tests. In other subjects, the standards observed by inspectors in the work of Year 9 pupils were broadly in line with those found nationally in the majority and just below average in the remainder. No subject had 'well below' average standards. This further confirms an overall picture in which end-of-Year 9 standards have now collectively risen to match national average.

4. These improved standards represent the outcome of rises in teaching quality and the very effective way in which many subjects are now led and managed. Achievement is good in the majority of subjects and satisfactory in nearly all others, but it is unsatisfactory in respect of the use and application of ICT skills outside formal ICT lessons. Boys in Year 9 attain slightly lower standards than girls, but the gap is the same as that found nationally.

5. Results at the end of Year 11 were below average in 2002. For example, 43 per cent of pupils gained A* to C passes at GCSE compared with 49 per cent nationally. The school's 2002 targets agreed with the local authority were 44 percent for A* to C grades and 39 for candidates' average points scores: the first target was broadly met but the points score of 35.2 fell short of expectations. In previous years, results have been lower, so an upward trend has been established. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards being reached by current Year 11 pupils matches national averages and this confirms the improvements seen in examination results. It is further strengthened by interim tests and marks for Year 11 pupils, which are significantly higher than those of the previous year's pupils.

6. Some subjects help pupils to attain at a particularly pleasing level: in religious education, history and physical education, 2002 GCSE results were above average, while French results matched the national figure exactly. The work of current Year 11 pupils

matches these results in French and in the GCSE ICT course. In the majority of other subjects, standards observed during the inspection are now average and they are just below average in the remainder.

7. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is now generally good. In the recent past, it has been broadly satisfactory, but for the current Year 11 pupils, achievement has been helped by the growing proportion of lessons with good or very good teaching and by the effective systems for assessing progress and setting demanding targets in all of their subjects. In addition, the close mentoring of boys likely to underachieve has been successful. Achievement is good in the great majority of subjects. In art and design, citizenship, modern languages and mathematics, it is broadly satisfactory. There is unsatisfactory achievement in ICT when it is not part of the GCSE course because provision across the curriculum is too variable, reflecting limited confidence and access to ICT facilities for many teachers.

8. The school caters well for different groups of pupils. Gifted and talented pupils make good overall progress, and reach high standards in their work in the great majority of their subjects. For example, in mathematics, they take their GCSE examinations a year earlier than usual and go on to study at AS level successfully. In English, they take part in debating competitions, and often win awards. In art and design, however, they do not make enough progress, and do not reach the standards that they should. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The support is essentially focused in Years 7 to 9, but across the school, including the sixth form, their progress is good. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, 13 pupils on the special educational needs register achieved an overall total of 110 A* to G grades. There are 96 pupils with English as an additional language. None are at an early stage of learning English. The vast majority, including those in the sixth form, make as good progress as others in the class or group they are in according to their ability level. A very small minority would benefit from a measure of support in the more difficult language of examination questions.

9. Boys attain noticeably less well than girls in Year 11 results. The gap is wider than the national one. The school has acted on this issue and adapted its teaching styles and introduced a mentoring programme for boys who might under-achieve. These strategies are relatively recent and have not had an impact on published examination results, but are having a beneficial impact on the lessons observed in current Years 10 and 11, in which boys are generally well motivated and making good progress. The attainment of pupils of different ethnic origin at GCSE has only recently been analysed so trends cannot be determined. However, in the 2002 results, pupils of Asian (Indian) origin reached standards well above the school's average while the standards reached by pupils of Asian (Pakistani) background varied from above average in the case of girls to below average in the case of boys.

10. Compared with standards at the time of the previous inspection, the current situation represents satisfactory improvement. In the light of the decline in standards and erratic trends surrounding reorganisation in 2000, the last two years' results and the quality of work seen during the inspection represent a very good improvement in standards.

Sixth form

11. Results for Year 13 students in 2002 were just below the previous years' national average. Collectively, the A level and AVCE produced a points score of 16.3 compared with a national figure (for 2001) of 18.6. In recent years, results have been well below average, but 2001/2002 results show a marked improvement on 2000. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were in line with those found nationally. Given that students have entered the sixth form with below-average prior attainment, current Years 12 and 13 are making good progress. Previous year groups' results indicated that progress was

considerably less.

12. The work seen during the inspection of Year 13 confirms the improving trend in recent results, further strengthened by the much improved AS results, and other assessment data for these students and those in Year 12. The good achievement of current Year 13 students reflects the very good quality of teaching they are receiving and the very effective assessment and target-setting systems now in place. It is also the outcome of very positive attitudes so that the progress they make in most lessons is consistently very good.

13. Standards vary widely between subjects. In the 2002 results, students taking design and technology, biology, physical education and English language achieved better results than in their other subjects. Conversely, students' results were below or well below their overall performance in other subjects, notably: art and design, mathematics, history, physics, ICT and geography. In the subjects focussed upon during the inspection, students' work showed that standards are generally higher than in the 2002 results, being above average in English literature, design and technology, physical education and biology. Standards were below average in ICT.

14. Students with special educational needs achieve well in the sixth form, as do those using English as an additional language and those deemed gifted or talented. Boys and girls reach broadly similar standards, in contrast to national and local trends in which girls outperform boys. This reflects the fact that teachers are increasingly using assessment data and one-to-one mentoring of students to ensure each student's need and potential is provided for, and in the majority of lessons observed boys were effectively motivated made equally good, sometimes better progress than girls. The school does not store and analyse comprehensive data on the performance of students according to ethnic background, and there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on this matter during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good. Most display enthusiasm for school. A large number of boys and girls of all abilities and races use the facilities in the learning centre, both before and after school and during breaks and lunchtime. When opportunities to become involved are presented, they do so, for example, in taking up musical instrument tuition or participating in sporting activities outside their lessons. In the best lessons, they are keen to succeed and respond very well to teachers' high expectations of what they can do and how they should behave. Pupils, in Year 7 especially, display excellent attitudes; they concentrate well and show interest, although sometimes the opportunities for them to be actively involved in lessons are limited. They are co-operative and willing to say when they don't understand. Year 10 pupils displayed mature attitudes towards a police visitor talking about drug awareness and very good or excellent attitudes were seen in nearly a third of the lessons with the year group. However, a minority of pupils of that age do not respect the school's code of conduct nor respond suitably to some teachers' requests to behave and in about 10 per cent of Year 10 lessons unsatisfactory attitudes led to unsatisfactory teaching and learning. A similar tendency is evident amongst some Year 9 pupils but teachers succeeded in ensuring satisfactory teaching and learning in all lessons observed.

16. In over 70 per cent of lessons across the main school, behaviour is at least good, and in contrast to the exceptions described above, it is often very good. There have been no permanent exclusions recently and the number of fixed-term exclusions is at a reasonable level for a school of this size. Pupils who display abusive behaviour may be excluded and only reintegrated after discussion with parents. Behaviour around the school site is usually orderly, and most pupils are friendly and polite, although some take advantage of the

congestion of some narrow corridors to jostle unnecessarily other, often younger, pupils. Pupils in most year groups perceive that there is more bullying and racism than there should be, although they say that reported incidents are dealt with promptly by school staff. Inspectors judge that these aspects of behaviour are rendered unsatisfactory because of the attitudes of a small minority of pupils. They agree with pupils that appropriate action is taken when incidents are reported.

17. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is satisfactory. Many pupils recognise that the opportunities for them to take on specific responsibilities are limited; for example, the school council is beginning to be effective as a voice of the pupils, but not many can be actively involved. Pupils use homework and study clubs well and represent the school in sports matches.

18. Relationships in the school are good, especially between pupils and teachers, and are a feature of the best lessons. For example, the very strong relationships observed in a Year 11 citizenship lesson enabled pupils to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of health matters. In physical education, most pupils work well in pairs, small groups and teams; they celebrate one another's achievements and successes and most lessons take place in an atmosphere of mutual encouragement. Pupils clearly understand the impact of their actions on other people. After a design and technology lesson was deliberately disrupted by a group of girls, another group sought out an inspector after the lesson to apologise for the bad manners displayed.

19. Pupils' response to the school's provision for personal development is satisfactory and most show appropriate respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They listen carefully in assemblies, but there is little substance for them to reflect on their place in the world and develop in spirit, or to appreciate the cultural diversity of Britain. Similarly, the short tutor sessions at the start of morning and afternoon sessions contribute too little to pupils' personal development. When opportunities arise, they respond well, and in religious education, Year 7 pupils shared their feelings about their inner-self well, demonstrating their trust of their peers and staff. Another group showed respect for what they had learnt about the Jewish people's food customs.

20. Attendance is satisfactory. The school's statistics indicate that overall attendance is good and above the national average, but the rate of unauthorised absence (where no satisfactory explanation is given, or pupils truant) is above the national average. Pupils are usually punctual. During the inspection, over one fifth of all lessons seen had significantly fewer than 90 per cent of the pupils on roll present, with some as low as 58 per cent, but subsequent records show that quite widespread sickness affected the local area at the time.

21. As at the time of the last inspection, the majority of pupils are well behaved and hard-working, but the very strong mutual respect so evident then is not quite as secure. Pupils perceive a rise since 1997 in the amount of bullying and racist incidents and in the number of lessons disrupted by unacceptable behaviour, even though on all these counts the current standards are good compared with schools nationally. Inspectors agree with pupils' perceptions.

Sixth form

22. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes. They sustain concentration very well and they are keen to succeed. They are well motivated, and fully engaged in their studies. They show high levels of commitment, for example, in vocational business studies.

23. They develop good personal and learning skills. During a geography lesson, students demonstrated good study skills, which enabled them to make excellent progress. Students raise questions and take notes well. In an English class, they demonstrated very good independent preparatory work for a piece of original writing. Personal development and relationships are very good in the sixth form. Some very productive working relationships are evident in many lessons and contributed to very successful preparation for their review day.

24. Students express positive views about the sixth form and nearly all said they would advise other students to join. They appreciate their teachers and feel that they treat them with respect as young adults, although this is not the case with younger pupils in the main school. Most said that the printed information about courses in the sixth form is good and that they are helped to study and research topics independently. Nevertheless, they express some criticism of the advice given on what to do in the sixth form and some had problems with the options available, which took a month to sort out. Students also have reservations about the enrichment programme and the fact that the extra-curricular sporting opportunities are primarily for main school pupils. They feel they have a limited involvement in the rest of the school, although some help in their free periods with lessons with younger pupils. The role of prefects appears vague.

25. Questionnaires indicated that a significant number were unhappy about the information they receive on progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get, but students spoken to disagreed: they felt that the school's 'UPI' (progress review), which links performance in each subject to the targets predicted, is very helpful.

26. Attendance is good, and better than for the main school, although a few lessons observed during the inspection had four or more students away in a class of 20.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching and learning for the school as a whole is good. About 96 per cent of the lessons observed during the inspection had satisfactory or better teaching and learning and the proportion with very good or excellent teaching was 22 per cent. Compared with teaching and learning at the time of the previous inspection, these figures represent a good improvement, reflecting the recent emphasis on developing teaching skills and monitoring of teaching quality by senior and middle managers. In the great majority of lessons, teachers are good at managing pupils effectively and at setting high expectations. Planning is consistently good and pupils benefit from the clear structure that typifies most lessons.

28. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson with excellent teaching, pupils were greeted at the door and a very positive working relationship established almost before the lesson had begun. For a setted class of middle-attaining pupils, a very high standard was expected from the outset, but pupils rose to the challenge well. In a Year 9 religious education lesson, teaching was very good partly because the opening and concluding sessions clarified previous work, set clear objectives for the lesson and then reviewed progress well. Pupils were thus able to work very purposefully throughout the lesson. The teacher also used a wide range of techniques to promote discussion, independent thinking and to support or challenge pupils with different needs. Good liaison with a special educational needs support assistant also helped.

29. The very effective use of paired and group work was clearly evident in a Year 10 German lesson. Again, expectations were high with the target language used virtually all the time, including the giving of complex instructions. Careful planning led to numerous opportunities for all pupils to speak to the whole class or to their partners or in groups, and

the teacher had established such heavy participation as the norm. His positive encouragement and support helped pupils to speak confidently and develop their understanding and fluency rapidly.

30. Teaching has a few general areas of weakness. The day-to-day reinforcement of ICT and numeracy skills is unsatisfactory, reflecting inconsistent access to ICT equipment and the need for further training in numeracy and ICT teaching across the curriculum. When teaching is, on rare occasions, unsatisfactory, it is generally because expectations are too low or behaviour is not managed adequately. For example, in a Year 8 art and design lesson, most aspects of teaching were good, but too little was expected of generally well-behaved pupils. The opportunities to draw portraits from life were replaced by portrait drawing from pictures, for instance, and there was too little variation in the task, given the range of prior attainment in the group. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, a similar lack of challenge and variety of task led to loss of interest and unsatisfactory behaviour from a significant minority of pupils.

31. The learning of pupils is good overall largely because of the good quality of teaching that predominates. The vast majority of pupils also help themselves by the positive attitudes they bring to their lessons. They are good at responding to the new knowledge and skills being taught and to the pace and demands set by teachers. Their skills at independent study and group work are less well developed, though satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have a satisfactory awareness of the levels they are working at and should aspire to, whereas this knowledge is good amongst the older pupils.

32. The overall quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is particularly evident in those classes in which pupils receive additional help from learning support assistants. The Pro-active Learning Suite provides effective individual support for pupils with special academic or behavioural needs. As well as improving learning, this helps to raise the pupils' self esteem. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and understand their special needs clearly. Individual learning programmes are good, but monitoring and reviewing of targets is not well developed. In those lessons in which teachers match challenges to the individual pupils' special needs, pupils make good progress over time. Planning of lessons is good and a variety of teaching styles and appropriate resources enables those pupils with special educational needs to learn well. Teaching links with literacy are good and key words are displayed and used in lessons. Teaching is least effective when individual pupils' targets are not addressed.

33. The quality of teaching and learning for gifted and talented pupils is good. In the great majority of subjects, extra work is planned to extend their performance, and challenging tasks are set. However, in a small number of subjects, including physical education and ICT, work is not well matched to their needs, and learning is no better than satisfactory. In art and design, teaching is not challenging enough to stretch their skills or understanding of the subject and their learning is unsatisfactory as a result.

34. Pupils with English as an additional language learn well, as a result of the good teaching they receive. As no records are kept of pupils' background history of learning English, teachers are not aware of possible areas of excellence or of support needed. There is no specialist help available for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in their GCSE work, and no training of teachers in this area.

35. There are significant major differences between teaching and learning in different year groups. While for the school as a whole teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons, in Year 10 the proportion drops to 88 per cent. The same year group, however, have a greater proportion of good quality teaching and learning than the school as a

whole, indicating the marked contrast between many well-motivated teaching groups and a few with disaffected pupils who are not always managed successfully.

36. In some subjects, teaching and learning are great strengths and the quality of both is good in most. This success can partly be attributed to the clear leadership in these subjects and the benefit of a consistent approach evolving from effective support from colleagues. In English, the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Both are satisfactory rather than good in art and design, in science and citizenship. Learning in science in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Conversely, students' results were below or well below their overall performance in other subjects, notably: art and design, mathematics, history, physics, ICT and geography. In the subjects focussed upon during the inspection, students' work showed that standards are generally higher than in the 2002 results, being above average in English literature, design and technology, physical education and biology. Standards were below average in ICT.

37. Much has been done by the school to ensure that teaching and learning are fully supported and monitored, although, compared with many schools, this process began relatively recently. For teaching and learning to become very good, the consistency with which different heads of department observe and report back to colleagues would need to improve, and there is scope for judgements on colleagues' standards to become more demanding.

Sixth form

38. The quality of teaching and learning for the sixth form is very good. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, virtually all lessons had satisfactory or better teaching and in 83 per cent, the quality was good or better.

39. Teaching and learning are especially successful in some subjects. In English, geography, biology and psychology, the quality of both is consistently very good. In virtually all the other 'focus' subjects teaching is good, though in mathematics there is considerable variation and the overall quality is satisfactory.

40. The strengths in teaching across the sixth form are numerous: virtually all lessons are taught by capable specialists with very good communication skills; planning is very effective and makes good use of assessment data. Relationships are very good. Students are consistently very good at most aspects of learning. They are very well aware of the standards at which they are working and to which they should aspire. They concentrate very well in lessons and are good at working independently, a less well-developed trait amongst younger pupils in the school.

41. On the rare occasion when sixth form teaching and learning are less successful, the factors responsible are usually a failure to ensure that there is a high level of challenge, even in situations when students are working on their own for part of the lesson.

42. At its best, sixth-form teaching and learning combines an impressive array of strengths. In a Year 12 geography lesson, for example, the teacher constantly involved students; they and she built on prior knowledge; questions were probing yet the teacher's manner supportive. Examination requirements were known in detail and shaped the coverage of the topic. Students worked as a whole class, in pairs, in groups and individually. The outcome was one of excellent learning leading to above national average standards.

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

43. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils and pupils are satisfactory

44. During Years 7 to 9, pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, personal, social and health education, citizenship and drama. Religious education provision meets the requirements of the Bradford Agreed Syllabus and the topics chosen are appropriate. Many areas of the curriculum have good quality and a broad range of activities, such as expressive arts, which include music, drama and art and design, and physical education, which offers games, gym, dance and athletics. However, timetabling arrangements mean that there is a problem of discontinuity in expressive arts and that one third of pupils in physical education are denied full access to the curriculum because they are taught as mixed sex classes. In English, geography and science, pupils' progress is hindered by the discontinuity that derives from split classes, leading to many pupils having two or three teachers for the same subject. The provision for ICT now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 and 8, but there is no discrete ICT in Year 9.

45. In Years 10 and 11, pupils take a broad range of courses that contribute to the core National Curriculum, but this is broadened by the addition of GNVQs in business education, ICT and in health and social care. GCSE courses are offered in the core subjects and in modern languages, drama, music, history, geography, art and design and physical education. Higher-attaining pupils have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics in Year 10. There have been good improvements in diverse areas of the curriculum, which not only enhance pupils' learning but also their chances of academic success. For example, in history, the school now offers two GCSE syllabi which reflect the different interests and capabilities of pupils, and in design and technology, the resistant materials course, which had been delivering relatively poor results, has been replaced with a new 'product design' course which inspection evidence already indicates is producing better results. The school enhances the provision for pupils in GCSE French and German and in GNVQ Intermediate ICT by offering twilight classes in these subjects. Most subjects are allocated an appropriate amount of time, except for religious education, which has considerably less than the national average. Because of this, the school fails to meet its statutory requirement with regards to the provision of religious education. Similarly, there is a statutory breach in the provision of discrete ICT in Years 10 and 11. In those years, the majority of pupils are not taught ICT and there are insufficient planned opportunities in other subjects. In science, split classes and rotations disrupt learning and make tracking pupils' progress difficult. Though negotiations are currently under way with Bradford College to offer a more vocationally oriented curriculum, these have not yet led to a sufficiently wider emphasis on vocational provision. The overall strategies for literacy teaching across the school are satisfactory but those for numeracy are unsatisfactory, requiring greater prominence and consistency in departmental planning.

46. There is a carefully structured personal, social and health education programme. The latter includes careers work. Citizenship is delivered within this programme as is drugs and elements of sex education. All are delivered satisfactorily. The school does not meet the statutory requirement concerning acts of collective worship. Opportunities for reflection are missed in both tutor registrations and year assemblies.

47. Provision for pupils with special educational needs across the school is satisfactory. The school ensures equal opportunities for boys and girls to access the whole curriculum and effective measures are taken to ensure that all pupils are included in all activities within the mainstream. For example, in science, there is good support and teachers' strategies help to minimise failure and maximise success. ICT skills are being effectively developed through

the use of Successmaker in the Pro-active Learning Suite. The needs of the 34 pupils with statements of special educational needs are well diagnosed and their reviews provide a good focus for future learning. Outside agencies are appropriately involved and the school uses their reports and advice well. In departmental planning there is a lack of consistency in the way pupils' special needs are interpreted and provided for, but in day to day teaching staff are sufficiently alert to the needs of individuals to ensure that overall progress is good.

48. All pupils with English as an additional language have the same access to all areas of the curriculum as other pupils. Their specific aptitudes and needs are not as well assessed and communicated to staff as they should be, but they make good general progress because their competence in the use of English is as high as that of their peers.

49. Curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. The planned programme of opportunities includes summer schools, learning performance seminars to prepare Year 9 pupils for their statutory tests, and a 'brain gym', which helps pupils to understand how they can learn more effectively. Year 11 pupils take part in a share race, which helps them understand the complexities of economic systems. There are also after-school sessions in a range of subjects, including religious education and Spanish. In addition, high-quality instrumental tuition is provided in music. In art and design, however, there are not enough opportunities for the gifted and talented pupils to experience the world of art at first hand.

50. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Some assemblies have prayers and times for reflection; others provide some opportunity for moral and social guidance or are primarily used to communicate information and are not acts of worship. There are opportunities to reflect and experience spiritual growth, for example, in music, where pupils listen with apparent appreciation to the great composers. In religious education, they responded well to a period of meditation and consider what is important to them whilst learning about what is important to others. In other areas, opportunities for spiritual growth are missed or inconsistent.

51. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. Most teachers are consistent in re-enforcing the school's code of conduct and are good role models. The police and Youth Service make a valuable contribution through their guidance, and pupils are encouraged to support each other in a positive way. They raise money for charitable causes and the school, and information from such groups as Islamic Aid provides insight into the ways that people can support each other. Many subjects, such as geography, personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education, enable pupils to consider moral dilemmas. The school has a firm view on the right of its pupils to feel safe and they are aware of this.

52. Provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory. They have good opportunities to develop confidence through travel, and extra-curricular activities enable them to take part in group activities. When they have the opportunity, they collaborate well, as in the pupil-led drama group, but there are limited opportunities to develop their skills of leadership or to demonstrate initiative and independence. Year Councils are developing and inter-form competitions enable some to represent their peers, but formal opportunities to take responsibility are few. A good feature is the opportunity for pupils to work along side adults, for example, as indoor bowlers or in the ICT suites, which enables them to gain confidence in communication outside their peer group.

53. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from the support of musical instrumental teachers and gifted musicians have a range of good experiences, such as working with 'Opera North' and being involved in workshops on Asian dance. However, there are insufficient musical experiences beyond the school band and the 'Yellow and Blues band'. Drama is being redeveloped and Year 7 are rehearsing for a showcase of their work reflecting a range of cultures. There have been few theatre visits and no professional workshops or visiting writers to inspire pupils. Art and design provides very limited opportunities to explore different cultural forms. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of their local culture and very good links are established with local industry through design and technology. Pupils visit the local mills that are so much part of their local history, and in geography, they undertake first-hand investigations of areas of British culture. A significant number travel abroad, and there is a direct link with a German school. However, there are insufficient opportunities to celebrate the range of cultures found in Britain.

Sixth form

54. Post 16, the range of A2 and AS courses is quite extensive and a smaller number of vocational course at advanced and intermediate level are now in place. Overall, therefore the curriculum meets students needs satisfactorily. There are still areas of the curriculum in which provision needs to improve: religious education is still not sufficiently part of the sixth form programme, contrary to statutory requirements, and the enrichment programme is narrow and does not lead to full participation by students. Group sizes in Year 13 – often two or three students per teaching group - are too small and retention rates into the sixth form and across Years 12 to 13 are low. This reflects a marked lack of confidence amongst students during the reorganisation phase of 2000/2001 when they chose not to pursue post-16 education or sought it elsewhere. This trend has now been countered and numbers and the viability of courses are recovering well. In addition, the school is currently reviewing its 14 to 19 curriculum. A major factor of the post-16 element of this review is the school's participation in the development of the South/South West Bradford Federation, which is established to broaden opportunities for students to study a greater range of subjects, including minority subjects. Already, the curriculum has been broadened with the inclusion of some level 1 and foundation courses to match the aspirations and potential of the students more effectively.

55. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students have a greater opportunity to take responsibility at special events and as trainers in the health and social education classes of the younger pupils. They are involved in and help to organise main-school clubs. There is a sixth form social committee, but no sixth form council as yet, and no regular opportunities to play a leadership role within the school. A minority of students support younger pupils through the paired-reading scheme in primary schools and as mentors. They raise funds for the disadvantaged and are good school role models in this. Their presence at the 'Peace and Reconciliation' conference last year enabled them to share their experiences through assemblies with younger pupils and they communicate students' views of religious education as members of the 'Junior Sacre' committee. Opportunities for cultural development are limited. There is no music in the sixth form, no opportunities to attend concerts, and few theatre visits. Key skills are promoted satisfactorily through separate subjects, and the school is good at providing guidance about university application and careers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The school's arrangements to protect the welfare and safety of all groups of pupils are satisfactory. There is a designated teacher with responsibility for child protection issues and to monitor and support children in care. Although procedures are clearly laid out in a

handbook for staff, this teacher does not give individual guidance to new members of staff. Good relationships have been established with the local social services departments. Satisfactory procedures are established to deal with health and safety issues and routine checks on buildings and equipment are conducted regularly, with senior management and governors appropriately involved. Not all written risk assessments, especially for the new building, had been completed at the time of the inspection. Very good care is provided for children with specific medical problems. First aid arrangements are good with trained first-aiders to support a full time nurse, although those on duty at lunchtime are on call rather than being available in the medical room.

57. The school's assessment and monitoring of academic performance and personal development are satisfactory and so is the educational and personal support and guidance that the school provides. The identification of gifted and talented pupils is good, they receive very good support and their progress is monitored very well. Pupils with special educational needs are properly identified and they are well supported so that they make good progress, but their individual education plans are too variable and not closely enough monitored across all subjects. There is effective mentoring to raise the attainment of boys at GCSE level.

58. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. An electronic registration system is used and registration is generally conducted efficiently, with absences appropriately followed up with parents to find an explanation. Certificates to promote good attendance are awarded when pupils are present for all possible sessions in a term or an academic year. Senior staff and the services of an attendance clerk and an educational welfare officer are used well to identify and support individual cases of poor attendance. However, during the inspection a significant number of lessons were visited where the attendance was poor, linked to an outbreak of sickness within the local community at the time.

59. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good, but those for monitoring oppressive behaviour are unsatisfactory. Several incidents of a racist nature have taken place over the last three years, most of a minor nature, but a few were of greater import. The school has dealt well with all incidents, and continues to contain this type of behaviour firmly. All behaviour of this sort is reported to the local education authority and to other outside agencies where necessary. The school has an effective anti-racism policy and a well-supported working group that meets regularly and responds well to new initiatives. Within the school, reporting and record-keeping requires greater rigour, because recording is not complete and systematic: this limits the scope for accuracy in gauging the scale and nature of bullying or racist incidents, and a reliable analysis of such data would guide the school in strengthening its procedures to eliminate this type of behaviour. Staff and pupils meet regularly to discuss racist issues, but the effectiveness of this group is not monitored. A confidential police drop-in centre has been established in school and it is reported that it is used well. Good support is provided by the pro-active learning support team for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Ten pupils were attending a behaviour management course run by the Youth Service at the time of the inspection. Behaviour is monitored well. A log of the recorded incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour, as well as significant personal achievements, is maintained by year heads for each pupil.

60. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress for the school as a whole are good and data is used well to raise pupils' achievement. Assessment of pupils' work is very good in design and technology for all year groups. Generally, assessment and its use in monitoring progress to ensure appropriate provision is more effective in Years 10 and 11, when pupils are studying for public examinations, than it is in the years leading up to statutory assessments at the end of Year 9. The history department has developed simple and effective methods to monitor attainment so that subsequent work is made sufficiently

challenging for all pupils. Most pupils know how they are getting on; they understand the target grades set for them and know how to improve their work, although they find this easier when comparing GCSE target and attainment grades than National Curriculum levels. Some subjects, for example, geography, have no clear basis on which to judge future potential.

61. Attainment data is properly analysed and this enables particular groups to be recognised as under-achieving and for help to be channelled to meet their needs. For example, a mentoring programme was put in place with the specific intention of raising standards at GCSE for boys capable of reaching grade C, but whose performance showed them likely only to achieve a grade D in their examinations.

62. Since the last inspection, the good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic and personal performance have been maintained. The use of assessment data and target-setting for the additional year groups which joined from middle school during the reorganisation are less well established.

Sixth form

Assessment

63. Assessment of attainment and progress is good overall and the data is used well to guide curricular planning. It has, for example, led to the broadening of the number of vocational courses available and to pursuing a degree of federation with other sixth form providers to widen the choice of courses. The Key Stage 5 Manager and the Year 12 and 13 tutors liaise well both with students and their parents in setting and reviewing targets. Students have a better than average awareness of their predicted grades and how they should use such data to improve or acquire confidence in their progress.

Advice, support and guidance

64. Good educational and personal support and guidance is given to students. Teachers are supportive and offer advice willingly. Procedures to monitor attendance are satisfactory with registers marked at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Tutors are involved with their students and participate in regular reviews of their work. The information, advice and guidance given to students to support learning are good. Students understand what they must do to reach their potential grades. Careers education and guidance for future courses is satisfactory and the school is particularly helpful in providing information about application and visits to universities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. Most parents and carers express positive views about the school. The inspectors agree with them that the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best, that the teachers and other staff are approachable if questions or problems arise, that most children make good progress and are happy at the school. Some worries were expressed, but no specific areas of concern were identified by a significant number of parents. A very small number of parents submitted written comments which largely expressed satisfaction with the education provided, although a few are rightly unhappy about some behaviour in the school and drew inspectors' attention to bullying, especially name-calling, which they felt was not always handled well. However, inspectors' judge that the school has acted effectively on all recorded instances.

66. The school has good links with parents of all pupils, including those in the sixth form. The quality of information provided is good and includes a prospectus, a magazine 'In Touch' and the governors' annual report to parents. The presentation of the information is very good, but omits to include all the examination results, as required by law, although these are available 'on request'. Parents are offered opportunities to be involved when their children are making choices for GCSE. Boys' under-performance is being targeted by the school in many ways. Those parents whose sons are identified as making less progress in Year 11 than they should are fully involved in the mentoring programme and given suggestions on what they can do to help. Reports on pupils' attainment and progress are good and clearly link current performance with the levels or grades which pupils are expected to achieve, based on past results. They provide good information on improvements needed to achieve target GCSE grades at the end of Year 11; they are less good on improving standards between Years 7 and 9, although National Curriculum levels are given for all subjects. Parents also receive interim details of attainment and effort in each subject and frequently also personal letters to explain concerns or praise good work. They are encouraged to visit the school to discuss progress with tutors and teachers.

67. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is good. Parents are properly represented on the governing body. They readily attend Review Days with their children's tutors, consultation evenings with subject teachers and other meetings organised to help them to become involved in their children's progress. When requested to do so, they usually attend discussions to rectify concerns about attitudes, behaviour or poor work, and most attend annual reviews of the education plans for pupils with special educational needs. The newly re-constituted parents and friends of the school association is beginning to organise social and fund-raising events for the specialist school status bid. Some parents are involved in community studies, which are held on the school site.

68. Since the last inspection an effective partnership with parents has been sustained.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. Leadership and management for the school as a whole are good, primarily because the headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported by good management from senior and middle management colleagues. Improvement is good since the previous inspection, when middle management was considerably less effective.

70. At senior level, the quality of leadership is good. The relatively newly appointed headteacher has been instrumental in ensuring significant progress on several fronts and receives good support from senior colleagues. The main areas of success have been setting up procedures for monitoring, supporting teaching quality, putting in place assessment and target-setting arrangements and developing the school's links with other schools and the wider community in joint learning projects. In addition, medium- and long-term planning are now of high quality and involve the expectation that the school will very soon acquire new status and funding as a mathematics and ICT College.

71. Heads of department and heads of year provide effective good middle management. At the time of the 1997 inspection, too few saw their role as carrying extensive responsibility for raising standards and monitoring and supporting the work of colleagues. They are now well guided and monitored by key senior staff. Within the last three years, well-designed in-service training has promoted their role and new structures and responsibilities, especially the creation of the Central Management Team, have promoted their development. Good new appointments have also been made.

72. Some middle managers are particularly successfully, notably leaders of the English, design and technology, history, ICT and modern languages departments, where management and leadership are very good. However, in art and design, music and English as an additional language the quality is unsatisfactory. Direct monitoring of colleagues by middle managers is variable, but the great majority perform other roles well, such as development planning, setting collective expectations and the creating of effective schemes of work and clear assessment procedures.

73. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs benefits from good leadership. With so many pupils and staff and the management of the Pro-active Learning Suite, this is a very demanding position for the co-ordinator. The special needs co-ordinating group of departmental representatives provides a good communication structure. More frequent meetings of this group will benefit the pupils with special educational needs. The close links with contributory primary schools should continue to be improved. A commitment to maximising the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in the life of the school as a whole is a strength of the co-ordinator's organisation. Monitoring of the pupils' individual learning programmes is not yet fully developed and should be improved, and learning support are not always deployed flexibly.

74. Leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented pupils are good. Organisation and planning are very good, and the initiative is very enthusiastically promoted. Clear criteria are used to identify pupils and challenging targets are set. The system for tracking their progress is very thorough, and pupils have individual tutorial sessions with teachers, and discuss their progress openly. However, there is not yet enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that there is consistency in the teaching they receive.

75. The special educational needs co-ordinator looks after the needs of pupils with English as an additional language. No records are kept of these pupils concerning, for example, their performance in primary school, length of time in England, languages spoken at home, support and progress in the school as a group. The school does, however, make returns to the local education authority on the academic performance of Years 9 and 11 ethnic minority pupils, and receives the annual block analysis of these students' performance in the school within the local education authority. This analysis does not identify individual needs and performance over time. There is, therefore, no clear picture of the background and performance of all those with English as an additional language.

76. The quality of financial management is now very good. On arrival, the current headteacher inherited a large budget deficit. The school has been unable to fund many of the improvements it has planned in response to clear needs. However, good progress has been made in reducing the deficit and in seeking additional funds from sources such as Excellent in Cities and via the bid for new status. In addition, the loss of sixth form students during reorganisation, which contributed heavily to the initial deficit, has been reversed: improved curricular provision, teaching quality and secure management are attracting growing numbers of students and the additional income they bring with them.

77. The good improvement made since the inspection of 1997 indicates that the school's leaders are succeeding in working with staff to bring about significant change. Above all, the current senior managers have re-established the school in its new 11 to 18 form as a secure and stable learning environment with strong vision and a commitment to improvement.

78. As a result of good overall leadership and management, current standards in Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13 are higher than they have been for several years, and rising at a good rate. The improvements in teaching quality, managerial skill and the greatly improved

attitudes and behaviour are all outcomes of strategies put in place, relatively recently, by the school's leaders and managers. The initiatives centred on the Proactive Learning Suite and the City Learning Centre have both contributed particularly well to pupils' improved attitudes, study skills and awareness of the community around them.

79. The governing body contributes well to the work of the school. Governors show a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses by virtue of receiving extensive documentary evidence and by ensuring that members of the governing body visit the school regularly and see it in action. There is a perceptive and well-grounded understanding of the school's affairs on the part of key governors and a well-organised structure of committees and meetings to ensure that knowledge is disseminated.

80. The governors provide good strategic advice and support to the headteacher and other managers. They question plans and proposals constructively and hold senior managers to account in a thorough but professional manner. Most of their statutory duties are properly fulfilled, but those relating to the Act of Worship, to religious education in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form, and to ICT across the curriculum are not yet met.

Staffing

81. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory in most areas of the school. The school has managed the transition from upper school to secondary school and the staff have received additional training to support the extension of their experience to the additional year groups. Some areas, such as science and religious education, have been through a period of staffing turbulence and long-term supply teachers are being well supported during this period. In design and technology, teachers have chosen to develop their skills further to ensure that pupils receive food technology experience, despite the problems of recruitment of a specialist teacher. Timetable organisation has resulted in a large number of classes in some areas being taught by more than one teacher and this is affecting the progress of some groups. There are sufficient learning support assistants for those with special educational needs, but they have insufficient training to develop their skills further.

82. The school is rightly proud of the guidance and experience it provides for teachers in training, and student teachers feel well supported through a regular training programme and good mentoring. Newly qualified teachers are similarly well supported. Teachers new to the school are well inducted, although greater emphasis is needed to ensure that the child protection strategies are understood. Strategies for the professional development of staff are very good and training is clearly linked to the school development plan and is intended to enhance the education of the pupils.

Accommodation

83. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but there is a marked difference between the quality of old and new buildings. The new building provides a stimulating learning environment, but many aspects of the older building are unsatisfactory. A large building programme has provided the school with very good additional accommodation to meet the extra demands of school re-organisation, allowing the removal of all temporary accommodation, and each subject, except mathematics, now has a suite of adjacent rooms. Narrow corridors create congestion at lesson changeover times.

84. Budget limitations have meant that essential maintenance has not been carried out to the exterior of the old building and, in turn, this has led to deterioration in the quality of the interior. Heavy rain during the inspection highlighted problems with flat roofs and cracked gutters causing internal leaks. Dampness has affected plaster and woodwork and caused paint to peel.

85. Most subject areas have sufficient specialist and dedicated spaces to teach the curriculum effectively. Informative displays and celebrations of pupils' work improve the appearance of most areas, particularly effective in modern languages and English. Accommodation for art and design and business studies is unsuitable and storage of equipment for physical education is a major weakness. Much time is lost in moving equipment through a narrow doorway. Provision for food technology is unsatisfactory. Kitchen units and worktops in one area are deteriorating and becoming unhygienic, and a second area is far too small for the number of pupils using it. Lifts, chairlifts and ramps provide wheelchair access to all parts of the building. The medical room is spacious but does not provide sufficient privacy for those pupils needing its facilities.

86. Road improvements and added parking facilities have improved access the school grounds but, visually, the approach to the school is unwelcoming. The site is only partially fenced and is vulnerable to unauthorised access. Litter presents a problem in some areas of the grounds.

Resources

87. Resource levels for the school as a whole are broadly satisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks in mathematics and religious education, and those used by history are somewhat dated. The good ratio of computers to pupils does not prevent relatively poor access and usage in science, history and English. Design and technology has a well-used digital camera and facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture as well as good machinery. Consumable materials are, however, in short supply. Religious education has good, home-produced teaching materials, but does not make sufficient use of external resources, such as visits outside of the school or inviting visiting speakers in. In general, departments have barely sufficient capitation to enable them to keep pace with their day-to-day requirements, which is not surprising given that the school has had to cope with a deficit budget.

88. The school's learning resource centre provides a very good level of support to the pupils' learning throughout the school. Two good-sized, light and airy rooms are well equipped with computers providing access to the Internet. A good range of books and magazines is available. Opening at 7.30 each morning, it does not close until 5.00 at the end of the day. Throughout this time, for the 'Early Birds' session between 7.30 and 8.30, as well as at lunchtime and after school, large numbers of pupils enjoy the opportunity to study and read for enjoyment. The organisation is efficient and effective, with all borrowing and stock management computerised. As a City Learning Centre, it provides also for adults from the community to share with the children's use on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

89. The sixth form is well led and managed. This is substantially the outcome of good co-ordination and setting of expectations by the Key Stage 5 Manager and by heads of Years 12 and 13. It also reflects developments designed for the school, such as new assessment arrangements and the monitoring of teaching, being adopted by the sixth form successfully.

90. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Crucially, the loss of students in 2001 and the very small group sizes and total numbers in Year 13 have been countered and the retention rates and viability have risen to safe levels. The narrow curriculum in place until recently has been broadened, so that additional vocational courses and further AS courses are already on offer. Furthermore, clear plans are in place to extend the formal curriculum and other aspects of provision through links with other post-16 centres

in the city. The governing body shows a keen awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and offers good strategic advice regarding the scope for liaison with other sixth forms, and the importance of keeping the sixth form as attractive as possible to Year 11 pupils so that take up rates are sustained or improved upon. Governors are aware that cost effectiveness has been unsatisfactory in the recent past and that 'best value' principles are to be pursued rigorously.

91. Good guidance and support for students are provided, reflecting the effective and care and management exercised by the Key Stage 5 Manager and post-16 tutors. The advice and guidance about university application is better than average. The quality of accommodation and resources is unsatisfactory.

Resources

92. The learning resource centre supports students' learning very well at various points in the week, but is not always available to sixth formers. Departments are satisfactorily resourced. However, the match of teachers to the needs of the sixth form is very good. Teachers are appropriately qualified in most areas, and in religious education an additional specialist has been employed to ensure that A level students are not disadvantaged during a transitional stage in staffing. Teachers have received training in the newly introduced A level examinations and this enables them to provide good support for the students. Additional training is required in some areas, such as art and design, in order to ensure that methods and information are as up-to-date as possible.

93. Accommodation for sixth-form students is unsatisfactory. The common room is too small for present needs and will not meet any future expansion of student numbers. There are few facilities dedicated solely to sixth-form use, which puts further pressure on whole-school facilities, such as the learning resource centre. Access to appropriate study areas is also limited. Accommodation for teaching psychology is unsatisfactory. A small, poorly soundproofed room, lacking ventilation does not provide positive conditions for teaching and learning in the subject.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

94. In order to continue the school's improving trend, the Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards for Year 9 and 11 to at least match those for similar schools by:
 - ensuring that assessment and target-setting systems for Years 7 to 9 operate as effectively as elsewhere in the school;
 - giving a focus and extra rigour to the monitoring of standards and leadership and management of art and design, music, German and the non-GCSE programme for ICT;
 - taking new, decisive, measures to ensure good attitudes, teaching and learning across all pupil groups in the current Year 10.(Paragraphs: 2, 5, 7, 15, 35, 60-62, 72, 105, 137, 139-141, 144, 164, 195, 201)

- (2) Monitor and support particularly closely the leadership and management of English as an additional language so that all the strengths and needs of such pupils are thoroughly understood and acted upon by the school.
(Paragraphs: 75, 99, 145, 196)

- (3) Modify the curriculum so that:
- the coverage of ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11 is increased so as to meet statutory requirements;
 - the widespread practice of splitting responsibility for classes between more than one teacher is discontinued;
 - a programme for ensuring good numeracy reinforcement is implemented.
- (Paragraphs: 44-46, 100, 115, 120, 131, 134, 141, 164, 196, 197, 201, 205, 208)
- (4) Ensure that all staff, pupils and parents can be reassured that complete data about alleged bullying or racial incidents is recorded, analysed and acted upon.
(Paragraphs: 16, 59)

Sixth form

- (1) Monitor particularly closely the steps being taken by staff to raise standards where students' results in 2002 were below or well below their performance in their other subjects, notably in art and design, mathematics, history, physics, ICT and geography.
(Paragraphs: 13, 39, 212, 240, 245, 249, 250, 252)
- (2) Take all possible steps to safeguard the positive trend in numbers entering the sixth form so that the uneconomic group sizes typical of current Year 13 are not repeated.
(Paragraphs: 54, 90)
- (3) Establish a good enrichment programme by:
- broadening existing content;
 - involving all students in the programme;
 - providing a clear structure, so that students can plan effectively and staff monitor and reward their progress through the programme;
 - including religious education provision which meets statutory requirements.
- (Paragraphs: 54, 55, 249, 250)
- (4) Improve accommodation so that students in a rapidly expanding sixth form have good quality:
- dedicated teaching rooms;
 - library and other study areas;
 - social and catering facilities.
- (Paragraphs: 91, 93)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	158
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		72

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	26	73	48	5	1	0
Percentage	3.1	16.5	46.2	30.4	3.1	0.6	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	14	23	7	0	1	0
Percentage	4.2	29.8	48.9	14.9	0	2.1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1211	181
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	151	4

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	162	14

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	96

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	134	109	243

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	78	78
	Girls	87	69	66
	Total	170	147	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (77)	61 (73)	60 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (40)	31 (44)	18 (23)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	65	66
	Girls	70	54	56
	Total	127	119	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (64)	52 (65)	54 (63)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (14)	29 (32)	15 (30)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	104	115	219

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	37	92	98
	Girls	57	110	11
	Total	94	202	209
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (40)	92 (89)	95 (96)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.2
	National	39.8

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	25	27	52
	Average point score per candidate	16.4	16.3	16.3
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	25	27	52	6	8	14
	Average point score per candidate	14.7	14.2	14.7	4.7	7.1	6.1
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

* No national comparative figures for 2002 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	1247	63	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	58	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	45	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	7	1	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.53
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	51
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1064

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

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

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	24.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3 642 380
Total expenditure	3 572 712
Expenditure per pupil	2 568
Balance brought forward from previous year	(252 552)
Balance carried forward to next year	(162 450)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	32.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	53.4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1391
Number of questionnaires returned	120

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	53	7	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	47	7	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	50	12	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	55	9	7	2
The teaching is good.	24	59	7	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	47	11	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	58	9	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	20	54	9	4	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	57	6	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	53	4	1	7

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are average and achievement good.
- Very good teaching means that pupils learn very well.
- Very good leadership and management lead to a consistent approach that promotes learning.
- Pupils work hard to improve their standards when the regular teacher is present

Areas for improvement

- Standards of spelling are below standards in other aspects of written work.
- Computers are not yet commonly used in the classroom to aid learning.
- Pupils do not work hard enough when the regular teacher is not present.

95. Results in the national tests for pupils in Year 9 are average. They were below average, unusually, in 2002. Compared to schools with a similar intake, results in 2002 are below average, but above average considering pupils' prior attainment. They are above average at level 5, but below average at the higher levels. Pupils perform better in English than in science and mathematics. Girls do better than boys by about the same as they do nationally.

96. Standards seen in Year 9 are average. Not many pupils attain well above average standards, but neither are there many at well below average standards. Taking into account pupils' below-average standards on entry, achievement is good. Standards have improved because problems in discontinuity in teaching, which adversely affected results across Years 7 to 11 in 2002, have been largely rectified. Classes that had problems last year have been taken over by other teachers and pupils have caught up with their work. High attainers speak confidently and at length. Their written work is accurate and imaginative. They understand their reading, including *Macbeth*, well, using quotation effectively. They do not analyse language in sufficient detail. Middle attainers write clearly, but do not always use paragraphing effectively, and spelling is flawed. They respond well to the characterisation in *Macbeth*. Lower attainers make many spelling errors and mistakes in punctuation, but vocabulary is reasonable. Their writing is lively and they can express their ideas at length using some description. Overall, reading and speaking and listening are better than writing. Girls perform better than boys.

97. Over the past three years, results in GCSE examinations in English were average overall. They were below average in 2002, with too many pupils gaining unclassified grades. Girls did far better than boys, and by more than is found nationally. Results in English literature were below average in 2002, but have improved steadily for the past three years. Pupils achieve about the same in English as in their other subjects. In 2002, results were average compared with results from similar schools and well above average compared with pupils' prior attainment.

98. Standards seen in Year 11 are average. Those pupils affected by the discontinuity in staffing, which adversely affected results in 2002, have caught up with missed work and folders of coursework are now up to date. Pupils make very good progress in class, and

coursework folders show that they achieve well over time. High attainers analyse literary techniques confidently. They see, for example, how Wilfred Owen in *Dulce et Decorum Est*, conveys emotions. They have a wide vocabulary and have developed their own effective writing styles. Middle attainers have an apt vocabulary, but sometimes lack control of sentence construction. They use quotation well to support their responses to literature. Low attainers over-use, 'and', and, 'so', but can develop their writing and speaking at some length. Spelling is poor. They show understanding of plot and character in their reading, but give little detail on aspects of language. For the majority, reading is better than writing. Though girls do better than boys, it is by far less than in previous years. Short, tightly structured activities and the sitting of boys next to girls have been successful techniques in lessening the differences.

99. Through Years 7 to 11, pupils with special needs make good progress. Very good management by teachers helps those with behavioural problems to stay on track. There is insufficient additional support in class, however, and work is not always focused on pupils' specific individual needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Some, however, still struggle with complex sentence structure and idiomatic language, for example, that of examinations, and there is insufficient extra support for these pupils. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress: very good provision has been recently put into place for them and their progress is closely monitored and encouraged.

100. Teaching and learning are very good. They are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where there is more variation. Pupils learn quickly because lessons move swiftly from activity to activity through a carefully planned structure with a very clear purpose. In a Year 9 class, for example, the teacher made pupils think about the characters in a scene from *Macbeth* through a series of short, purposeful activities and excellent questioning. All were involved in the lesson from the outset and swiftly gained a good understanding. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils work hard, collaborating well in the frequent opportunities given for paired and small group work and in class discussion. They do not yet work independently enough, however, to carry on at the same rate when the teacher is absent. Homework is set regularly and develops or re-enforces learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 know their targets and how they can achieve them, because teachers assess regularly and thoroughly, making clear strengths and weaknesses. This is developing well in Years 7 to 9, but the use of targets is fairly recent. Spelling is not taught sufficiently rigorously. Pupils use computers regularly, but they are not a common part of work in the classroom. The department has not yet determined where English can make a contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. The many strengths in teaching include much that is relatively recent, so that while current progress in lessons is frequently very good, longer term achievement by pupils has yet to benefit fully and is good rather than very good.

101. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision for the future and how the department can improve still further, and teachers work well together, with a strong shared commitment to improvement. Teaching, the curriculum and results are carefully monitored. The department has made good improvement since the last report. The extensive re-organisation has been done effectively, with teachers confident in teaching in new phases, and new government initiatives, such as the National Literacy Strategy, have been introduced successfully.

Literacy

102. Strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory. An active literacy group has been established, with representatives from various subject areas, and an audit has been taken to find out what is being done throughout the school to help pupils develop their literacy skills. However, the appointment of a co-ordinator has yet to be made and there is much more to be done in ensuring that all subjects realise the importance of the contributions

they can make.

103. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils read reasonably accurately and many enjoy using the learning resource centre, both in lessons and in free time. They are given some opportunities to read aloud and silently, for example, in religious education. They are encouraged to write for different purposes and in different ways, for example, in geography, and occasionally given help in how to structure extended writing more effectively. However, technical errors, such as spelling and punctuation mistakes, are rarely corrected outside English, and new words are not introduced carefully enough in many areas. Where important words are introduced and taught carefully, as in history, music and modern languages, pupils' writing is more accurate. Pupils listen to the teacher well, but are not provided with sufficient opportunities to explore ideas together in small groups and pairs, developing understanding, vocabulary and sentence construction.

Drama

104. Standards seen in Year 9 are below average. Though some pupils have good self-control and use gesture and facial expression well, some do not exercise enough self-control. However, standards in Year 7, where new management is having the most effect, are well above average. Pupils rehearsing for their imminent performances were extremely well motivated and worked very co-operatively, both in small groups and as a whole class. They controlled their movements very well, performing confidently and with great enjoyment.

105. Results in examinations in Year 11 are very low and have been so for several years. Pupils do far less well in drama than in their other subjects. Standards seen in Year 11 are below average, which is nevertheless an improvement over previous years, with achievement now satisfactory. Several pupils portray character convincingly and those present work together well to develop and improve their scripted dramas. However, high absence rates affect standards considerably.

106. Teaching and learning are good. There is much variation in the standards of teaching and learning, but new schemes of work and systems of assessment have now been introduced. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and pupils improve their understanding considerably because of the good advice of teachers. Teaching is most effective where teachers take an active part in the lesson, modelling roles to show pupils how to improve.

107. Leadership and management are now good. Recent, very new, leadership has excellent vision for the future of the subject and clear plans for how its status and influence will be developed from its present low state. The forthcoming Year 7 showcase is an indication of the improvement already being effected.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The mathematics department is staffed with well-qualified teachers and is well led.
- Pupils behave well and work hard.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good, in the circumstances.

Areas for improvement

- Too many groups are taught by more than one teacher.
- The departmental policy for marking is not consistently applied.

108. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national average for Years 7 to 11. Across the school, pupils' achievement in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 is good. The pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work and are well taught.

109. The pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are achieving well. When those in Year 9 joined the school, their skills and understanding in mathematics were below the national average. Results in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 11 were below the national average for all schools in 2002, and well below those for pupils in similar schools, with boys performing less well than girls. Over time, improvement was above the national trend until last year, when there was a weak performance from an uncharacteristic year group whose teaching was affected by the reorganisation of the school in 2000 and by the maternity leave of one of the teachers.

110. Up to the end of Year 9, pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. Pupils currently in Year 9 are performing in line with national norms. The work of higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 shows that they can solve linear simultaneous equations and equations with an unknown on both sides. They can draw up a table, draw a cumulative frequency graph and use them to find the estimated mean for group data. Average-attaining pupils can plot and use co-ordinates in all four quadrants. Some can construct pie charts. They can divide decimal numbers by a whole number less than twelve. Those who have more difficulty with mathematics produce some good basic work on probability and can construct tables and bar charts from simple surveys they have done. Some show that they can add and subtract simple fractions, but do not always cancel them to their lowest terms. Basic number work is secure across the range.

111. The number of pupils scoring grades A* to C at GCSE in 2002 was in line with national averages, showing above-average improvement by the pupils from their results in national tests two years earlier. Mathematics results at GCSE are not as good as those for other subjects in the school, and boys do less well than girls. Results have been improving year on year.

112. The standard of work of pupils in Year 11 seen during the inspection is rather better than is suggested by last year's examination results, but still in line with that attained nationally. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. About half of those currently in Year 11 are on course for the higher grades of A* to C at GCSE. Some of the most able were entered early for GCSE in Year 10 and are currently studying for the first stage of the AS level. These pupils were learning to understand different categories of number – irrational, real, integer – and coming to terms with the co-ordinate geometry of a straight line. Other higher-attaining pupils showed good algebraic skills and could, for example, solve quadratic

equations by factorising and by use of the formula. Average-attaining pupils showed a reasonable grasp of multiplying brackets and had a sound understanding of three-figure bearings and solution of problems by scale drawing. Lower-attaining pupils produced good, neat tables and bar graphs for discrete data in statistics, and understood the angle properties of various polygons. In general, however, they did less well in tests and when asked to apply what they had been taught to solve problems.

113. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. Good classroom support by classroom support assistants contributes to the progress that is made, although the allocation of these assistants on the basis of individual needs, rather than the requirements of classes as a whole, sometimes leads to two extra adults being supplied in one class, when another with similar needs has no extra support.

114. The school has changed markedly due to reorganisation since the last inspection. Two-thirds of the teachers of mathematics are new to the department. Improvement over the time since reorganisation has been good, although results for 2002 showed an uncharacteristic decline. Teaching is better. Good leadership of the department and very effective staff development has set a secure platform for further improvement, and the currently 'satisfactory' achievement of pupils across Years 10 and 11 now has the basis for improving to 'good' as better results are confirmed at GCSE.

115. Pupils' progress is hindered by the fact that half of the classes have more than one teacher. Budgetary constraints demand efficiency, but pupils feel, and say they feel, unhappy when they are working on closely related topics in different books with different teachers who have different approaches, as they get confused. There is also an implicit cost in time wasted on organisation and liaison that would otherwise be unnecessary. Arrangements for joint working, including ensuring that a member of staff has overall responsibility for the lessons taught to each group, are probably as efficient as they can be. They are not as good as having just one teacher responsible, if for no other reason than to be sure just who is accountable for success or the lack of it.

116. The teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good throughout the school. In Years 7 to 9, in particular, the impact of the national numeracy strategy is substantial. Lessons begin with a short session of mental arithmetic, usually related to the main topic of the lesson, and proceed at a good pace, so that pupils enjoy their mathematics and are keen to learn. The use of a plenary session for reflection and review at the end of each lesson is, so far, less well developed, but is the subject of departmental planning and development work. Levels of expectation and pace are almost universally good. Most teachers plan lessons effectively and manage the pupils well, so no time is wasted. Pupils are given a variety of activities, so that their interest and work rate are maintained at a good level.

117. Nevertheless, in a proportion of lessons, including the one unsatisfactory lesson that was seen, teachers are not planning precisely enough to meet the objectives they set. Lesson objectives are almost always written on the board at the start of the lesson and copied into books, but the point of the lesson is not always explained clearly in terms that the pupils understand. Good and sometimes very good use is made of technology, such as the interactive computer projector screens and overhead projectors; however, there are times when the flexibility of writing on the board is preferable, especially if the lesson is not going to plan.

118. There were several examples of very good teaching. The best of these was an excellent lesson on area taught to a Year 7 group. It began with a test of five- and six-times tables, using a measure stick. Pupils were made to think hard not just about multiplication, but also about proportion and the patterns associated with multiplying. For the main part of the lesson they worked out the various sizes of rectangle that could be made with given lengths of string with the ends tied together. This involved careful reading of instructions, as well as deciding on what was to be done. Exemplary support was provided by the teacher, with questions that challenged them to think and supported them to do so without giving too many clues about the answers.

119. There are some issues with marking of work. The departmental policy is that all work should be corrected by teacher or by pupil, and checked by the teachers weekly and that homework and tests should be marked by the teacher. There is some very good practice within the department in this respect; as well as indicating whether the work is right or wrong, teachers comment on how it might be improved, suggest targets for improvement and make good use of the school's reward system to motivate pupils to do better. This is not universally the case, however, and the current arrangements for monitoring marking have not been fully effective in making sure that all teachers mark consistently.

120. The impact of the national literacy strategy is to be seen in word lists on the walls in classrooms, although these are not always used as effectively as they might be. Spelling and grammar mistakes are corrected in some, but not all, cases.

121. Opportunities for pupils to enhance their understanding of mathematics by using computers are planned into schemes of work. The department has a set of lap-top computers, which can be linked to the school network and are used at every level. They are used to study shapes and transformations, and to draw graphs and charts. This is substantial improvement since the last inspection. Successmaker is used to improve numeracy skills for those most in need of it.

122. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. In every lesson seen, the pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour were good, very good or excellent. This good behaviour stems usually, but not always, from pupils responding well to good teaching. Relationships in the classroom are good. The quality of these relationships does much to contribute to the pupils' progress.

123. Departmental leadership is good and there is excellent support from the staff. There are very effective arrangements for improving teaching performance, based on regular monitoring and performance review. In a first step towards peer review, teachers are given the opportunity to watch each other teach and provide constructive criticism. Very effective training arrangements for student teachers and those new to the department have been established. They all speak very highly of the support and guidance they are given. The department is very well organised and the head of department provides an excellent focus on improving teaching and learning for her team. Planning for improvement is well targeted, realistic and thoughtful. It is also the result of joint consultation.

Numeracy

124. Numerical skills are average in all years across the school, but the strategies for improving them to a higher standard are unsatisfactory. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils are denied access to any element of curriculum through lack of competence. In design and technology, measuring and weighing skills are effective. In art and design, pupils can produce neat repeat patterns through careful measuring and an awareness of shape. In history, pupils produce good graphical work, enabling them to analyse population growth, war statistics and results of elections. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than

mathematics is unsatisfactory: while preparatory training has been carried out towards the introduction of a whole-school approach for the teaching of numeracy skills, and the school has a policy for teaching numeracy, individual subject departments such as English, science and physical education, lack policies and a common approach in their teaching, so that pupils' learning is less effective than it should be. Opportunities for improving pupils' numerical skills often pass unidentified, although there are examples of good teaching. In geography, fieldwork provides scope for good examples where number skills need to be used. Subjects such as religious education have not yet looked closely at their schemes of work to see where numerical skills are needed, and so do not contribute as they should. Even in science, there is very little evidence of number work being specifically taught.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards in GCSE examinations are steadily rising.
- New management structures are leading improvements in all aspects of the department's work.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is becoming very effective.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough permanently contracted, specialist teachers to meet all the needs of the curriculum.
- The present arrangements for grouping pupils are not meeting the needs of all pupils.
- The structure of the timetable results in many classes in Years 7 to 9 having two or even three teachers, this disrupts continuity and limits progress.

125. Results in the national tests taken by Year 9 in 2002 were below the national average and well below those of pupils from similar schools. The results matched those obtained by pupils in other schools who were of a similar standard when starting secondary education. Boys performed slightly better than girls. As these pupils were below the national averages when they entered the school, these results show satisfactory achievement. From 1999 to 2001, results rose but fell in 2002 - although not by as much as in English and mathematics.

126. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the present standards are similar to the most recent examination results, although there is some improvement shown by higher-attaining pupils. For example, the highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 all have a firm grasp of the particulate nature of matter and can give clear explanations of melting and vapourisation. If the level of progress observed is maintained, a larger proportion of these pupils will obtain the higher grades in the national tests than was evident in 2002.

127. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, results were close to the national averages and matched the performance of pupils with similar backgrounds. Results were well above those gained by pupils in other schools who were at the same standard in Year 9. As this standard was below the national average, these results represent good achievement. Both boys and girls achieved well, although the advantage of girls over boys in the proportion of higher grades (A* to C) obtained is greater than that seen nationally. Over recent years, standards have risen slowly but consistently.

128. Examination of pupils' notebooks, test results and the observation of lessons indicated that steady improvement is continuing. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, working at a good pace, accurately measured the diffraction of light rays passing through a glass block and all have a secure understanding of the phenomenon. Year 11 pupils of middle and lower attainment are slowly mastering the very difficult concepts involved in ionic bonding. Pupils in Year 10 have a solid basis of effective learning that will form a good platform for next year's examinations. They have, for example, a thorough knowledge of organic chemistry that enables them to understand the differences between 'alkanes' and 'alkenes'.

129. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with much that is good and some very good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and are fully committed to their academic and personal welfare. Pupils recognise this and respond by working hard and behaving well. These good relationships ensure that there is an orderly climate for learning in all classrooms. Most lessons are well planned and there is an increasing use of imaginative methods that results in effective learning. In a very good Year 9 lesson, pupils revising for the national tests worked in groups to match scientific terms with definitions. Every child was actively involved in their group's final decisions and all had their knowledge and understanding reinforced by this enjoyable exercise. More adventurous planning is also improving the opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational skills. Year 7 pupils gained a good understanding of 'controlled variables' in experimental method because they were presented with a stimulating problem based on a real life situation. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 gained a good understanding of the intricacies of hormonal control of the female reproductive cycle, because the information was presented in carefully measured steps and all received individual tuition.

130. In some lessons, there is too much reliance on the textbook or the teacher talking for long periods. In such lessons, pupils behave well and record information carefully but do not always understand what they are writing about. Occasionally, careless planning leads to unsatisfactory learning. A lesson on the digestive system was less effective than it should have been, because the first task was ambiguous and the overhead projector image used was significantly different from the work sheet that pupils were asked to complete.

131. All teachers are sensitive to the problems that some pupils have with demands on literacy and numeracy skills in science lessons. Some teachers lack the skills and knowledge that are needed to help pupils overcome their problems. There are plans to improve this aspect of science teaching but they are as yet embryonic. The use of ICT within the teaching of science is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient equipment. In particular, there is a lack of apparatus for data-logging so that, for example, pupils are unable to measure changes in pH or temperature electronically.

132. In recent years there have been major upheavals in both staffing and management. Almost all the science teachers now in post have been appointed over the last three years. In this time, there have been three heads of department, the present holder being appointed last September. This has meant that many classes have experienced unplanned changes in teacher and some have been taught by a succession of temporary teachers. These changes, combined with staff absence due to illness, have disrupted learning and limited the progress of many children. There still remain posts that are not permanently filled, including that of teacher in charge of chemistry.

133. The current setting arrangements result in some large classes that include pupils of widely varying attainment. Teaching does not always provide work of appropriate difficulty for all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, in these classes. Nevertheless, all teachers give much help and support to pupils with special educational needs and overall they make satisfactory progress.

134. In Years 7 to 9, almost all the classes have two teachers and some three, disrupting continuity and making the monitoring of individual progress very difficult. This results in overall learning being less effective than the teaching of individual lessons indicates that it should be. It is the main reason why achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory when in Years 10 and 11 it is good.

135. The present structure of three subject specialist technicians of equal status and narrowly defined duties is preventing the department from making the best use of their time and expertise. It also prevents the most efficient use of apparatus and other learning materials. A more rational structure that recognises the integrated nature of main school science would significantly improve provision.

136. The new laboratories are of a very high standard and are providing an excellent environment for both teaching and learning. The continuing separation of the physics teachers, who are housed in the old building, is limiting the extent to which teachers can co-operate and share good practice.

137. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Management structures are now more settled. The new head of department, well supported by other senior colleagues, is achieving improvement in all aspects of the provision. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is accurate and frequent. The data collected is starting to be used to monitor the quality of teaching. The use of assessment to set ongoing and motivating targets for individual pupils is not yet fully developed. The organisation of the GCSE course is much better. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been redesigned to meet the requirements of the National Science Strategy and are already resulting in better learning. The use of CASE (Cognitive Approach to Science Education) lessons, although not yet used by all teachers, is improving teachers' understanding of how pupils learn. Most importantly, morale in the department is high; teachers feel valued and are giving of their best. The support given to inexperienced and student teachers is very good.

138. Since the last inspection, there has been a period of low morale and decline. Over the last two years, the quality of provision has improved and is now doing so at an accelerating rate. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Given resolution of the remaining staffing deficiencies, there is good potential for a significant rise in standards.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Colour work is bright and bold.
- Teachers are very encouraging in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Work set is not challenging enough for the higher-attaining pupils.
- There has not been enough improvement since the previous inspection.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to experience artwork at first hand.
- Sketchbooks are not used often enough or vigorously enough to fully develop pupils' own ideas.

139. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results were below average. Numbers of boys taking the examination were too small to reliably compare their results with those of the girls. Results vary from year to year, and are usually below average. Pupils usually perform less well in their art and design than in most of their other subjects.

140. In the work of current Year 9 pupils, standards are below average. Achievement is satisfactory, considering their standards when they join the school in Year 7, which are below average. They make steady gains in their skills knowledge and understanding in the subject. Their colour work is bright and bold and they create lively aerial views using inks and opaque paint. Their portrait paintings are vigorous, and show a bold use of thick impasto. Observation work is careful, and shows a growing ability to observe detail closely, for example, when drawing the stitching and buttons seen in coats and jackets. However, pupils' drawing lacks fluency, and the line work of middle and lower attainers is rather heavy and laboured. In addition, their sketchbooks are not used regularly enough to fully develop their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at a satisfactory level, because when support is provided, it is effective in maintaining their engagement and interest in lessons.

141. In the work of current Year 11 pupils, standards are below average. Their achievement is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils make steady gains in their skills in the subject. Pupils often work on a large scale, building on their confidence in using colour brightly and boldly. They make lively compositions, and learn to balance lines, shapes and fluorescent colours to make abstract designs. ICT is used to investigate the work of other artists, and to manipulate images, though its use is not widespread enough. Pupils' research work lacks depth, and their study of the work of other artists does not inform their own work enough, because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to study artwork at first hand. In addition, the very small numbers of higher-attaining pupils, and those identified as gifted and talented, do not make as much progress as they should, because the work set is not challenging enough to stretch them.

142. Attitudes to the subject are satisfactory: the great majority of pupils apply themselves to their work, which helps to support the steady progress they make. However, a very small number of pupils, mostly boys, in Year 11, show little motivation, and do not try as hard as they should. This means that they do not do as well as they should in the subject.

143. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers are very encouraging, there is good individual advice and the pace is brisk. For example, in a lesson on painting, the teacher gave a crisp, enthusiastic introduction, using previously completed work to exemplify high standards. This was followed by good individual advice on handling the paintbrushes or improving the composition. The resulting pace was good, as was learning. However, in some lessons, methods are not interesting enough and pupils work rather mechanically, without enthusiasm. Levels of interest are no better than satisfactory, and they begin to chat, without trying as hard as they could. These factors restrict learning overall to a level that is no better than satisfactory.

144. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards, pupils' achievement, and the quality of teaching and learning have not improved sufficiently. In addition, the subject does not do enough to develop pupils' cultural awareness, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness of the world of art.

145. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There has not been enough improvement since the previous inspection. While teaching and learning, and standards of work, are monitored, action taken to improve them has not been urgent or focused.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
- The Duke of Edinburgh programme makes a good contribution to pupils' work in the subject.
- Good use is made of outside agencies to inform pupils and enable them to become better-informed citizens.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment systems are not yet refined enough for pupils to know how well they are doing, or how to improve.
- Pupils' written work is rather brief, and does not always reflect the complexity of the issues studied.
- Not all pupils take advantage of the opportunities to be actively involved in citizenship activities.

146. In Year 9, standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory, and pupils are making sound gains in their skills knowledge and understanding of the subject. They learn about the electoral system and appreciate the importance of voting and becoming involved in responsible change. They take part in debates to try to improve the school environment and make suggestions for how things might be improved, for example, by providing metal benches to resist vandalism. They also take part in fund-raising for good causes, such as the 'Children in Need' appeal. Pupils also appreciate the opportunities to represent the views of their classmates through the Year Forum system. Their written work, however, is rather brief, and does not always fully explore the ideas and topics they have studied.

147. In Year 11, standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils show a sound knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and learn to discuss their importance. Debates in small groups are lively, and pupils express their views in this situation with confidence. They learn about the economic systems and the impact that decisions at Parliament have on their own lives. For example, they discuss the taxes they will pay, and the services and benefits they are entitled to receive. A number of pupils take part in work in the local community, for example, by visiting the elderly and helping with their shopping. Pupils also learn to see the world through the eyes of others, by taking part in exchange visits to France and Germany. Their written work, however, does not always reflect the complexity of the issues studied. In addition, not all pupils take advantage of the opportunities to become actively involved in citizenship activities.

148. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. At present, teachers promote discussion and debate, encouraging pupils to improve their skills in speaking and listening by expressing their opinions clearly. In the best lessons, the teacher explains complex ideas at a level that pupils can understand and uses skilful questioning to draw out pupils' views, and help them to think further. In one lesson, for instance, the teacher appeared to complain about the tax system so that pupils became eager to balance this view by pointing out the benefits. This approach promoted good levels of engagement, pace and learning. However, at times, lessons are directed by the teacher to such an extent that pupils are not actively involved, sometimes simply copying from the board, and thus finding it difficult to explain the topics they have been studying. In addition, assessment systems are still being developed, and concentrate on involving pupils in recording what they have done. However, they are not yet refined enough for pupils to have a clear idea of how well they are doing, or how to improve.

149. The curriculum has been well planned, and there are discrete lessons in the subject, distinct modules in tutorial time and others in subjects such as geography, where pupils learn about the environment and the effects of global warming. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme makes a good contribution by encouraging involvement in community service. The school also makes good use of outside agencies, for example, the local police force, to help pupils to make informed and responsible choices on issues such as substance abuse. While the majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes to the subject, a small number do not immediately see the point of some of the topics and take part in lessons without real enthusiasm.

150. Leadership and management are good, and the introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned and enthusiastically promoted. The school is clear on the areas needing further development and is monitoring the quality of lessons in order to continue to improve provision.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching has led to a steady increase in pupils' attainment at GCSE.
- Very good leadership and management have created a strong, mutually supportive team of teachers.
- Good assessment procedures, and very good use of assessment information, have led to improved opportunities for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies for challenging higher-attaining pupils are not detailed enough.
- Accommodation for food technology is unsatisfactory and is affecting standards.

151. Standards for pupils at the end of Year 9, based on the work seen during the inspection, match national averages. In 2002, there was a significant rise in the number of pupils awarded National Curriculum levels 5 and above and the work of current Year 9 pupils confirms that standards are rising.

152. GCSE results in 2002 were below average. However, results were 10 per cent better than in 2001, and there has been a rising trend for the last 3 years. Graphics and resistant materials were the highest-performing areas, and, although food technology results were low, they were higher than in previous years. Poor results for pupils in GNVQ engineering reduced the overall figures considerably, and disguised the improvements that have taken place in other areas. The engineering results also adversely affected comparative performance figures, which show that pupils do not perform as well in technology as in some other school subjects. The department has thoroughly analysed the reasons for this, and the reasons why girls' results are better than those of boys, and taken effective action.

153. Standards of work in Year 9 are average. Some pupils reach higher standards than this and have worked with a reasonable degree of independence to produce design folders with good research, analysis and written evaluation skills. They take pride in their work and use ICT to improve its content and presentation. Many pupils, however, find it difficult to conduct independent research and do not have sufficient graphic or written skills to record or develop ideas successfully. Pupils are introduced to good design methodology in a structured way, enabling lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs to respond to all aspects of the work. By following instructions, for example, Year 9 pupils were able to build

a simple program to control a sequence of movements in an electric motor, but their level of understanding was insufficient to allow them to work independently. Pupils make good progress and, because they enter the school with below-average technology skills, achievement is good.

154. Standards in Year 11 are average overall. Standards are higher in graphics and systems and control than in food technology. The newly established product design course is providing a valuable technological experience, and higher-attaining pupils are developing a good understanding of designing and making. In graphic products, pupils' modelling skills are good. Where computers are used, the quality of pupils' work is improved. For example, research material from the Internet is edited well and used to support the development of ideas; results from questionnaires are presented in graphic form and digital photography is used effectively to record work in progress. Many pupils, however, have basic graphic skills, and this is reflected in folders that lack both depth of content and care with presentation. Pupils work better in a practical situation. Despite some lack of skill in construction and lack of depth in folder work, pupils' practical projects in systems and control represent a great deal of effort and commitment, and provide a valuable learning experience. Pupils with special educational needs are able to benefit from the practical nature of the work. For example, a Year 10 pupil with limited understanding of 'working to scale' was able to produce a drawing of a 'net' with sufficient accuracy to allow it to be made into a three-dimensional model in card. Pupils continue to make good progress and build on previous positive achievements.

155. Teaching and learning are good. Just over half of all teaching is good, and the remainder satisfactory. Teachers have shown a high level of commitment and mutual support in undertaking training across all technology skills and processes. This has provided a strong, flexible team with a depth and range of skills appropriate for an up-to-date technology curriculum. All teachers teach all aspects of design and technology, and this has helped to show pupils that technology influences every aspect of modern life. Where teaching is good, lessons have a clear set of objectives that give pupils a strong working framework and provide a range of learning opportunities to maintain pupils' interest. In one well-taught Year 11 revision lesson, for example, prior knowledge was tested and reinforced, technical vocabulary strengthened and sketching skills improved by a combination of direct teaching, good management of resources and a brisk pace. Expectations were high and pupils responded with good behaviour and positive attitudes. Teachers give good support to pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are supplemented by teachers' own knowledge of pupils, so pupils receive appropriate individual help and make progress at the same rate as their peers. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teaching methods do not provide sufficient variety of activity to maintain pupils' full interest or provide sufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils. A small group of pupils, mainly girls, lack sufficient self-discipline to benefit fully from the well-planned lessons they receive and, despite the best efforts of teachers, are determined to disrupt the lesson. The quality of teaching is monitored closely, and there is a positive culture of sharing good practice, teaching as a team, where appropriate, and supporting new teachers and teachers in training. Technicians are used effectively to support teachers and pupils with practical tasks.

156. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear sense of direction for development and a collective determination to improve. A difficult staffing situation has been managed well, and teachers with different backgrounds and experience have worked together to build a worthwhile technology curriculum. ICT, electronics and computer-aided design and manufacture are incorporated into pupils' work in Years 7 to 9, and projects successfully combine new technology and materials with manufacturing skills. Assessment procedures are thorough, and the information is used well to monitor pupils' progress and make effective decisions. For example, standards in GCSE food technology have begun to

improve after experienced (but not specialist) teachers were deployed to teach it. Improvement will be difficult to sustain, however, without further specialist teaching and a complete refurbishment of the unsuitable and unhygienic accommodation. Accommodation in other areas is good, and is complemented by good quality displays. Extra-curricular activities are mainly limited to additional support for project work, but pupils receive good experience of the world of work through opportunities for placements in industry.

157. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements in departmental organisation and teaching quality, and an upward trend in examination results.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE have risen dramatically, from well below average to broadly average, in the last three years; this is because of an improved curriculum, incorporating fieldwork and lively teaching from specialist teachers.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There are now secure arrangements for staffing and accommodation, after a period of upheaval.

Areas for improvement

- Work plans for Years 7 to 9 do not include enough fieldwork and ICT to develop pupils' numerical and research techniques.
- Assessment procedures are not used sufficiently in Years 7 to 9 to improve planning and individual pupils' work.

158. Standards at GCSE improved dramatically in 2002, rising from well below average to around average; everyone passed. Girls performed much better than boys, and did as well as girls nationally. No pupil achieved an A* grade. Boys' standards were below average, but considerably better than the year before. Overall, pupils' performance was about average compared with their other subjects. Previously, some pupils took a short course GCSE, which has been discontinued because it did not meet their needs.

159. Successful strategies, which have been particularly motivating for boys, include setting shorter and more practical tasks, and using ICT for research and fieldwork to develop practical and analytical skills. As a result, during the inspection, no difference was seen in the performance of boys and girls. The present cohort is set to at least maintain standards.

160. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average. Given that when they joined the school in Year 7 their standards were well below average, pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made good long-term progress or 'achievement'. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress, but they are not monitored closely enough. Work about flooding by the current Year 7 pupils indicated that they are achieving average standards. The majority have sound skills and soon acquire a sense of place. They use atlases, which are always available on their desks in geography rooms, particularly well to find information. Fieldwork and ICT are not used enough at this stage. Most pupils have some understanding of geographical ideas. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 described and gave good accounts of how volcanoes are formed, and explained the connections between areas of earthquake and volcanic activity well. Average-attaining pupils described patterns

and started to explain the processes. Lower-attaining pupils have gaps in their understanding.

161. Throughout the school, teachers teach geographical skills well and use numeracy effectively in practical work. Higher-attaining pupils write well at length, because of the way that teachers structure the work, providing good quality work sheets to help pupils of all abilities to sort and organise their ideas. Higher-attaining Year 11 pupils, for example, wrote well-argued pieces on 'How large numbers of young or old people can lead to problems for the active population'. Lower-attaining pupils could write basic explanations. A strong feature, especially in Years 10 and 11, is the emphasis on oral work, which helps pupils to share and develop ideas.

162. In Year 11, standards are average, reflecting improving examination results. Pupils, including gifted and talented pupils, are achieving well, benefiting from focused, specialist teaching and their own positive attitudes. Most show sound understanding of human and physical processes. They have developed a good range of skills and use technical terms correctly. The use of ICT for research, analysis and presentation supports work well. Most pupils enjoy research and can follow structured enquiries. Field studies in Malham help them to apply what they have learnt and to improve their numerical and critical skills. The conclusions reached by higher-attaining pupils are well linked to theory, and they begin to evaluate the limitations of their work. Average-attaining pupils show good understanding of physical processes, but are not so good at summing up their results. Lower-attaining and special educational needs pupils, well supported by guidance, draw brief conclusions linked to theory.

163. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good and excellent features. Both are more consistent in Years 10 and 11, where teaching is entirely by specialists. The excellent qualities were exemplified in a Year 11 lesson about sustainable tourism. The initial activity, sorting and linking statements, was taught with verve and provoked animated discussion. Through perceptive questioning, the teacher guided and developed pupils' understanding. She used the whiteboard effectively to construct a diagram linking the issues to the need for management and how this could be accomplished. Pupils used this as a basis to build up detailed written answers. As a result they made very good gains in their understanding and improved their examination skills. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, so that the majority of pupils settle sensibly, work hard and are clear about what they have to do. In one lesson, a few Year 9 boys wasted time, and although the teacher dealt firmly with them, they detracted from the general progress of the class. Work plans support non-specialists well. Occasionally, teachers do not maintain the pace of lessons, and sometimes miss opportunities to further the learning. Feedback to pupils during lessons is good. The end of the lesson is often rushed, and the value of a plenary session, to evaluate with pupils the progress that has been made, is lost. Teachers set and mark homework regularly. Detailed comments help older pupils to improve, although comments to help younger pupils are not so helpful. Unfinished work is not always followed up, creating problems for revision.

164. Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, particularly since the nature of the school has changed significantly. The head of department is managing change well and knows what has to be done. She has too little time to perform all her monitoring duties effectively. Both she and the other teachers have whole-school responsibilities, making delegation difficult. Plans for Years 9 to 11 are working documents, which are being audited to include new initiatives. Teachers are working well together to try to overcome timetabling constraints, caused by some classes being taught by two teachers and some teachers lacking the experience to teach older pupils. The department makes a good contribution to all aspects of personal and social education, including citizenship. Fieldwork is a strength. Resources are good, and the learning resource

centre is well used for research. Accommodation is well organised, with informative displays. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good at GCSE, although in Years 9 to 11 assessment data are unreliable. Assessment procedures are not sufficiently standardised to allow the information to inform planning and improve individual performance.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The department has strong leadership.
- The teaching of history is good, with some very good features.
- Overall, standards are in line with national averages.
- Achievement is good across the school.
- Good use of displays of pupils' work creates a good learning environment for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not read sufficiently widely. The lack of textbooks does not encourage wider reading, research or preparation for the next lesson.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 lack retention and examination techniques.
- Pupils do not have enough access to ICT.
- Marking in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 is not in line with national levels.

165. Standards in the work seen for current Year 9 are in line with national averages. On entry to the school, this same year group had below average standards and pupils are therefore achieving well. The recent results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate even higher levels of attainment but lack compatibility with the assessment standards found nationally.

166. Pupils have a wide range of skills, including interpretation of evidence, prioritising of historical issues and an understanding of chronology. They use a wide range of materials, including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence and a range of sources, to deal with some complex issues and themes. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their studies of the causes of the First World War, successfully analysed the long-term and short-term causes.

167. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average and pupils are achieving well. Pupils' GCSE results have generally improved over the last three years, apart from in 2001, when they were well below national averages. In 2002, results were above national averages. Pupils achieved well in comparison with their other subjects. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations, and a significant number of pupils attain high standards. This represents good achievement during Years 10 and 11. Pupils develop their evaluative and analytical skills effectively, and with the help of their teacher they develop their own independent arguments when addressing questions that require them to give their opinions. For example, pupils confront and debate the reasons for American involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s.

168. Given their attainment at entry to the school, pupils across all attainment levels make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good differentiated materials and provide effective guidance in lessons. The encouragement of boys, by specific seating arrangements and by encouraging their participation in reading, means that boys are catching up with girls, and there is little difference between their levels of attainment.

169. Teaching is good overall, and it is very good in some lessons. A similarly strong profile of teaching applies to all years. Teachers know their subject very well and have an obvious love for it; this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned, and teachers use a wide range of methods that support learning well. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils intellectually and encourage independent thinking and learning. In those lessons judged to be satisfactory, there is a tendency to allow some pupils to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning. In all lessons, there is appropriate emphasis on literacy within the classroom, and high profiles are set for reading and for the correct use of technical language. Homework is set regularly and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge and skills very effectively to take pupils' knowledge and understanding to deeper levels, and give them the means and encouragement to become independent learners, capable of evaluating their own performance. Such teaching supports learning well.

170. Learning is good. Pupils mostly behave well, with high concentration and focus, although there is a small but significant minority whose behaviour is unacceptable. Very good relationships underpin learning, because pupils listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. In several lessons, pupils worked very effectively in groups or pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department, which is mindful of supporting the attainment of all pupils.

171. However, pupils' overall attainment both across time and in examinations is hampered by their weaknesses in oracy and literacy skills, their ability to recall information and their examination techniques. Wider reading outside the classroom is still not developed for the vast majority of pupils. The lack of reading is exacerbated by pupils having insufficient textbooks for use at home, which reduces the opportunities for them to review their work, extend their understanding, undertake research or prepare for the next lesson. There is an adverse effect on both the extent of pupils' knowledge and the development of independent learning skills, both of which are essential for higher grades in examinations. Moreover, pupils do not yet have sufficient access to ICT to support their understanding of the subject or improve the presentation of their work. Accommodation is good: bright, airy classrooms, suitably decorated with pupils' work, create an environment conducive to learning.

172. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has produced documents that are informed and informative, and which underpin much of the good work of the department. This is particularly true of the 'traffic light' system of assessment and tracking, which has been piloted for the school. The head of department has a clear and realistic vision for the future, which encompasses the challenges and the opportunities the department is facing. He is an excellent and effective role model for commitment to continually raising standards. In this, he is excellently supported by the other members of the department. Together, they form a very strong team that is well on the path to bringing success to the subject and to pupils, in terms of both their academic attainment and their enjoyment of history.

173. The trend in standards since the last inspection has been one of good improvement across the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**. In the dedicated ICT courses in Year 7 to 9 provision is **good**. The GCSE and GNVQ courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are **good**, but provision for ICT across the other subjects of the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership by the recently appointed head of department.
- Good teaching for pupils aged 14 to 16 who take the GCSE and GNVQ examinations.
- Good standards in these examinations.
- Good resources, with very good technical support.
- The introduction of the National Curriculum Key Stage 3 ICT Strategy is going well.

Areas for improvement

- Standards for pupils aged 11 to 14 and for those pupils aged 14 to 16 who do not follow an examination course in ICT are too low.
- Teaching and learning of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is not effectively co-ordinated.
- Year 9 does not follow a discrete course in ICT.
- Insufficient time is allowed for the head of department to monitor and evaluate classroom teaching.
- The planning of teaching of literacy and numeracy through ICT is not sufficiently developed.

174. Teacher assessments for last year's Year 9 were not available for 2002 or for previous years. These assessments will be available at the end of this academic year and the school has already instituted procedures for correcting this breach of statutory requirements.

175. From work seen during the inspection, from discussion with teachers and pupils and from lessons observed, it is clear that standards in Year 9 for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are below national expectations. Attainment on entry to the school has been below average in recent years so that achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Pupils make steady progress in the weekly ICT lessons in Years 7 and 8, but this provision does not extend to Year 9. Their experience of ICT is delivered across the curriculum by the different subjects. There are strengths in some areas, notably design and technology and mathematics that respectively teach a control technology module and a simple programming language to draw geometrical shapes on a computer screen. However, there is no overall co-ordination of teachers' efforts, and pupils' learning in ICT is unsystematic. This is so throughout the main school. Some departments, such as modern languages, geography and history, use word-processing software to support work in their subject and some make good use of CD-ROMs and the Internet to research. The science department teaches data-logging, but has insufficient equipment to do so well.

176. In the GCSE courses, pupils attain results that are above national averages. Around a third of Year 11 pupils were entered in the 2002 examinations. The remaining two-thirds follow a core ICT course that is limited in scope and does not offer pupils the opportunity to cover the full range of National Curriculum ICT. As a consequence, these pupils attain standards that are below national averages and they make unsatisfactory achievement. The curriculum they follow does not comply with National Curriculum requirements.

177. In GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, pupils attain standards that are above national averages. Their work features an above-average ability to analyse problems. They can identify the range of economic activities that take place in a leisure centre and devise solutions to problems of information management. They design good data-capture forms to gather the required information and produce a good range of high-quality business documentation associated with their projects. Pupils have a good grasp of the areas of knowledge and understanding required by the syllabus and of some of the ways in which ICT can be used in the home. Their folders are generally well organised and present a good body of work from which to revise. Research skills are well developed and pupils use the Internet effectively to extend their knowledge of information systems and related areas.

178. Teaching and learning in ICT lessons in Years 7 and 8 is sound. Teachers are successfully introducing the Key Stage 3 ICT National Strategy, which is bringing better structure and challenge to pupils, though the organisation of lessons is not yet fully secure. In particular, some teachers run out of time and do not make best use of final sessions to bring pupils together to celebrate progress made, to discuss and clear up problems encountered and to share future work. Teachers make sound use of data projectors for introductions to lessons, making these sessions more effective. However, they are not very innovative in their use of this exciting means of communication.

179. Teaching and learning in the dedicated ICT courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 is generally good. Lessons are well planned and teachers produce good support material that supports and guides pupils' learning. A typical lesson features teachers working around the class giving effective feedback that effectively promotes individuals' progress, as do the effective feedback sessions. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, which they successfully impart to pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils are made well aware of course deadlines and give regular and informative feedback on progress. Lesson objectives are shared so that pupils know where their learning is leading. These measures ensure that pupils have a good awareness of their learning and, in particular, of what they have to do to improve. Relationships with pupils are good and staff spend a lot of their time outside of lessons to support and advise, particularly as coursework deadlines approach.

180. The current quality of leadership and management of ICT is very good, but provision still reflects much from an earlier phase of less effective direction. Since his arrival at the start of this academic year, the head of department has identified and tackled the problems facing the department very well. He provides clear vision and his drive for improvement is shared by his staff. He has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the department through his scrutiny of work and planning and his analysis of assessments, but he needs some time to be allocated for formal observation of teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9 to ensure the successful introduction of the Key Stage 3 ICT Strategy. The school is improving the provision of ICT in Year 9 in the coming year by giving them a term of dedicated ICT.

181. There is a need to further develop ways in which literacy and numeracy can be supported through ICT. The network manager and ICT technician make a significant contribution to the work of the department.

182. The co-ordination of ICT in the school is not well managed. The measures necessary to ensure that departments make good use of the resources available to use ICT to support learning in their subjects have not been put in place.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in French over the last three years, although broadly average overall, have been among the best in the school.
- Teaching is good overall and often very good.
- Pupils behave well and are responsive.
- The quality of management is high and teachers work very well together as a team.
- The time allocated for modern languages has increased since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The place of the second foreign language is not yet established.
- Pupils' awareness of National Curriculum levels is not good enough.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils do not do corrections of written work
- The very good use of French by teachers is not consistent across the department.

183. All pupils study French in Years 7 and 8 and, this year, also in Year 9. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 study French. A small number of current Year 9 gifted and talented pupils began Spanish in their Year 8, in addition to their French studies. These lessons take place after school, and include other gifted and talented pupils from Years 8, 10 and 11. In previous years, however, a small number of pupils, mostly lower attainers, chose to change from French to German in Year 9. These pupils studying German are now in Years 10 and 11. In Years 10 and 11, growing numbers of pupils, including higher attainers, have been allowed to drop modern languages completely in order to do Business Studies. This factor is beginning to affect the department's overall performance in French deleteriously.

184. Standards in the lessons and other work seen in Year 9 are just below average, which represents good achievement, because these pupils' results just before they began their study of French were well below average. Many higher attainers, including the gifted and talented, speak with confidence and have very good accents. They recognise quickly many words they have learnt before in both listening and reading activities. These higher attainers develop their writing skills well and are able to write in some detail about their past experiences, for example, on holiday. Middle attainers are more hesitant in speaking, but they listen carefully, and, with repetition, can generally understand. They are usually quite slow in remembering words and phrases. In the large sets of mixed middle and lower attainers, the lowest attainers, including some of the pupils with special educational needs, find the pace of work difficult to follow. A significant number of them need more practice in recognising and saying new words and phrases. Middle attainers in these sets write shorter accounts and benefit from the close support from teachers. The lower attainers generally write with care, but use a very limited range of vocabulary. Overall, all pupils pay good attention to the presentation of their work. However, they are not required to do follow-up corrections or redraft their work, after teachers have carefully marked it, and there is no over-arching writing programme for Year 7 to 9. This picture of attainment is confirmed by the teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2002 and 2001, when the results were below average, but improving.

185. Standards in the lessons and other work seen in Year 11 are below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily to reach this level of performance. The gifted and talented pupils, as in Years 7 to 8, are in top sets and achieve well. Most higher attainers, including the gifted and talented, continue to develop their speaking and writing skills well. The most talented write accurately and even with flair and imagination. They enjoy difficult and complex reading and

listening passages, but when, on occasion, the work is not challenging enough, they make much less progress. The middle and lower attainers generally make good progress in the examination syllabus, especially when the teaching approach is methodical and supportive. However, they still need the close guidance and support they have from their teachers, in tackling the written coursework assignments. Many are quite hesitant in speaking French, and find remembering words from lesson to lesson quite difficult. With practice, though, they persevere well and often surprise themselves and the teacher with how much they can understand in both reading and listening passages.

186. Year 10 and 11 pupils who began German in their Year 9 make good progress overall. Standards in lessons and other work seen are below average overall. However, many pupils of all abilities develop very good accents, because of the considerable amount of listening and speaking work they do. The few higher attainers use tenses well and write accurately and in detail for their coursework assignments. The lower attainers have difficulty in remembering vocabulary from lesson to lesson, but with careful teaching, they perform well in all skills at their level.

187. In 2002, GCSE results in French were broadly average. The results, as in the previous two years, were among the best in the school and pupils achieved well to reach these standards. Girls out-performed boys, as was the case in the previous two years, although the difference between the performance of boys and girls has fluctuated considerably. GCSE results in German in 2002 were very low. A small group of low-attaining pupils, mostly boys, had little interest in the language and performed unsatisfactorily, as did similar groups in the two previous years.

188. Teaching and learning are both good overall. Lessons are often taught very well and pupils learn effectively as a result. A few lessons were outstanding in quality, because of the excellent range of activities and continuous attention paid to building up pupils' knowledge and skills. Most teachers generally use the foreign languages very well and give pupils many opportunities to develop their listening and speaking skills. These teachers generally give all classroom instructions in the foreign language and give plenty of time to intensive language practice, particularly in Years 7 to 9. On a few occasions, in the large mixed middle and lower attainers' sets, more practice for the lowest attainers and some of the pupils with special educational needs is needed. In Year 7, teachers are taking part in a very interesting project on developing fluency in speaking in line with the Key Stage 3 strategy. Teachers want their pupils to do well, and challenge them continuously with an interesting and stimulating range of resources and activities. In only a small number of lessons were teachers' expectations not high enough. Work with overhead projectors is often very good, because it enables teachers to revise previous work, practise new work and show pupils very clearly how they can build on their current knowledge. Language games, for example, with cards and dice, form an important part of many lessons. All these activities require careful planning, sharing of ideas and a clear understanding of what pupils need to make progress. Pupils are often assessed in their speaking and listening skills in class, and generally they are given immediate feedback on their performance. Teachers manage their pupils particularly well, and establish very firm patterns of behaviour, in which pupils learn to listen carefully, concentrate and participate.

189. The department is managed very well, and the subject manager leads a team of teachers committed to high standards and continuous development. Since the last inspection, there have been marked improvements in GCSE results, in the quality of teaching and the amount of time allocated to modern languages, so that overall improvement has been good. The department contributes very effectively to pupils' cultural development, with three native speakers and a French foreign language assistant on the staff, very well supported trips to France and excellent display in the corridors and classrooms. Observation

of teaching and the use of ICT by pupils are areas that have been tackled well.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning seen during the inspection were good.
- Accommodation and learning resources are good.
- Most pupils show good attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Too few pupils are being entered for GCSE.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient use is being made of ICT.

190. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 judge standards to be about in line with the national average. The five pupils entered for GCSE in 2002 all achieved grades C or D. Since the last inspection the number of entries has declined, and has remained low over the past three years. Groups are too small for valid comparisons with national figures. There is no difference between the overall attainment of boys and girls. Eleven pupils in Year 10 and eight pupils in Year 11 are currently preparing for GCSE. In the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations, fourteen pupils gained pass or higher grades in brass, woodwind, percussion, keyboard and theory.

191. Standards of work in Year 9, observed during the inspection, were average. The pupils effectively studied 1960s music, with particular reference to the Beatles. Pupils are unclear about the rudiments of music, and the quality of singing is unsatisfactory. The presentation of work in notebooks is satisfactory, but marking of pupils' work is not satisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils are able instrumentalists, who perform with growing confidence.

192. Overall, achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Progress in lessons seen during the inspection was generally good. Year 7 pupils showed a good understanding of Indian music and the raga scale. They composed a three-part Indian piece of music using tala, raga and improvisation, and effectively performed these compositions in group activities on the keyboard. The pupils in Year 8 made very good progress in relating songs and stories. They enjoyed listening to such pieces as Mussorgsky's *Night on a Bare Mountain* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Year 9 pupils made good comparisons between two renditions of *Ticket to Ride*. Working in pairs, they effectively played the melody, chords and bass line of *Yellow Submarine*. The pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are fully integrated into all aspects of music lessons and make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils perform on an instrument to high levels of competence. There is no significant variation between the attainment of boys and girls.

193. Overall standards at the end of year 11 in the work seen during the inspection are below average. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is broadly satisfactory: pupils choosing GCSE music progressed well but they are very few in number. Progress in lessons seen during the inspection was good. The pupils in Year 10 demonstrated good composition skills when writing a piece of music for a special occasion or festival. They had a good understanding of binary and ternary form, as well as rondo and variations, and knew how to apply these to their own compositions. Boys and girls perform equally well. The pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good

progress, in line with their peers. Higher-attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented instrumentalists make good progress.

194. The pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a good attitude to music: the substantial majority enjoy lessons and are keen to learn. Older pupils have a good attitude to the subject and to learning. They learn well as a class, in small groups and individually. Relationships are mature and productive. Musical activities are inclusive, involving boys and girls of all abilities. They show respect for their own and one another's performances and handle the instruments they use with care.

195. Teaching and learning during the inspection reflected the contribution of an established member of the department and of temporary teaching staff appointed to cover absences. The quality was good overall. These teachers and the visiting instrumentalists have a secure knowledge of the subject and are able performers. A good range of teaching styles helped to sustain the pupils' interest, and as a result pupils learnt well. Pupils with special educational needs were identified and support was satisfactory in the few instances where it was provided. Pupils' work was effectively assessed as lessons proceeded. The longer-term use of assessment and target-setting is not satisfactory. Presentation in notebooks and the marking of pupils' work is not satisfactory. Teaching made an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities are being missed for singing and musical contributions in assemblies. Pupils effectively study a range of musical styles, including African and Indian music. The school band performed a piece of music written in a blues/jazz style, which was composed by one of its members. The choir and band and a school talent concert make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' knowledge and performance skills. ICT skills are inadequate, and there is limited use of computer technology. Teaching was least effective when lessons lacked a clear structure and strong pace. Teaching is most effective when pupils are given a variety of tasks to be completed within a given time period. The six visiting instrumentalists give high-quality teaching to 74 pupils.

196. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Some issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed and more time has been allocated to the subject, to enable the National Curriculum to be delivered effectively. The attitude of the pupils towards the subject has improved. However, too little improvement in provision has taken place overall. Schemes of work are too limited to guide and promote high standards, there is no longer an A level course, and GCSE entries are low in number. The teaching of singing and the standards reached are unsatisfactory. Option arrangements should be reviewed, to prevent music being a disadvantaged subject in Years 10 and 11. Resources and accommodation are good

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good.
- The overall programme offers good continuity and depth within the activities covered.

Areas for Improvement

- Pupils' understanding of the 'principles of play' across a range of games is weak.
- The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is not closely monitored to inform assessment and progress over time.

197. Standards of work seen in games and gymnastics in Years 7 to 9 are generally average. Boys exhibit technical accuracy in a variety of skills in basketball and badminton. Most boys skills well in small-sided games. Some perform less confidently when playing in competitive contexts. An understanding of the principles of attack and defence in games, which would help them to make links across games and understand the context of specific game situations, is less secure. In gymnastics and trampolining, girls are developing a range of ideas. While many girls perform movement with poise and control, some lack confidence with vaulting. In Year 7, girls combine actions well to produce high-quality gymnastic sequences. Girls move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently in particularly difficult circumstances. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 as a whole is satisfactory, but the impact of mixed-gender groups with certain activities is inappropriate and affects the progress of some pupils.

198. The number of pupils gaining A* to C grades in GCSE has fluctuated over recent years. The most recent results were around the national average and among the best results in the school. Results overall are in line with predictions and pupils are achieving well. In theory work seen in Years 10 and 11, pupils are progressing well and show an appropriate understanding of key concepts linked with the respiratory system. Their written work demonstrates an accurate use of technical terms and understanding of sports provision and local and national influences. There is no marked difference in the overall results of boys and girls. The number of girls taking GCSE has been low, but is increasing in the current Year 10.

199. Standards in the work of Year 10 and 11 observed in practical sessions are varied, but generally in line with national expectations for their age and experience in the activities of basketball, rugby football, football and dance. Some pupils exceed expectations for their age and demonstrate a high level of skill. Several boys exhibit a high level of technical skill in delaying in football or distributing the ball in rugby. Certain individuals demonstrate impressive bowling actions in cricket, with good control of line and length. In fitness work, girls achieve well and in dance, some show good clarity of gesture and timing as well as the ability to choreograph group routines. Performances in rounders and tennis are less secure and in the latter reflect lack of previous experience. Overall, however, pupils' standards represent good achievement across Year 7 to 11.

200. It is rare that pupils with special educational needs can be distinguished from the rest and many make good progress in practical work. A large number of pupils develop and refine their skills in the extensive extra-curricular sports programme. Participation in activities such as basketball, football (both girls and boys), and rugby serve to improve performance in these aspects of the curriculum. Several teams and individuals enjoy local and regional success.

201. Teaching and learning are generally good, with some of it very good. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching is good where challenging objectives are outlined initially and teachers provide stimulating demonstration and planned progressions at brisk pace, with a variety of tasks. In a Year 11 lesson, teaching was very good. Realistic steps were outlined and pupils rose to the challenge of developing their ability as defenders to delay the attacker, having been inspired by the teacher. Across Years 7 to 11, learning of practical skills is good and is enhanced by the length of units of work that enhance depth and progression in the activity. However, opportunities to underpin numeracy and literacy strategies or the role of citizenship are missed. Distinctive features of the teaching are the good command of the subject and the encouragement of pupils of all abilities. Although assessment of pupils is established, there is currently no information about pupils on entry to the school, and the use of National Curriculum levels lacks precision.

202. The department is well led and managed. It makes the best use of the good indoor and poor outdoor accommodation. Both resources and accommodation for gymnastics are

poor, with unacceptably difficult access to the limited apparatus. These factors have a negative impact upon standards and progress. Efforts to minimise these problems place unnecessary pressure on the teacher. Non-participation in lessons is minimal, but strategies to ensure that these few non-participants are fully involved are lacking. There is evidence of a reflective culture and a positive team ethos in the department. Improvement since the last inspection is good, most notably in the establishment of a new teaching team following a period of some upheaval.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers encourage their involvement and response in lessons.
- The use of aspirational targets encourages pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils following the GCSE course are very well prepared for their examination.
- The department provides very good opportunities for the spiritual development of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment does not support the monitoring of work across the department.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their entitlement to a religious education.
- Where classes are taught by more than one teacher, there is a lack of continuity that hinders progress.
- There is insufficient use of external resources to enrich pupils' understanding.

203. Results in the 2002 GCSE full course religious studies were above average. Boys' results were broadly average when compared to boys nationally, but girls' results were well above the national average for girls. There is no clear trend. More girls are following the course than boys. All pupils who took the examination over the last two years gained at least a pass grade.

204. Pupils are achieving average standards in Year 9, which represents good achievement given the pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Higher attainers have a good grasp of the key features of the faiths they study and are able to identify with the feelings of the believers. They are helped to progress well through effective teaching and learning from the outset: in Year 7, for example, pupils successfully considered the difficulty of fasting during Ramadan and the reasons for striving to succeed. Pupils are developing an understanding of the significance of initiation ceremonies. Through re-enactments they are able to identify the key features and most pupils consider the feelings of those involved. A minority do not take the time to reflect and as a result they do little more than record the main points. Pupils have a good grasp of the inequality in world resources and can suggest some reasons for poverty and debt. They identify the problems faced by third-world farmers, and the unfairness of world trade. These topics provide good opportunities for reflection on the value of money and higher attainers demonstrate thoughtful conclusions. Lower-attaining pupils respond well orally, but do not demonstrate depth of thought in their written work.

205. Standards in the Year 11 statutory religious education course are below average. Pupils have very few lessons and these are insufficient to develop understanding of the importance of faith to a believer or to relate religious teaching to the moral decisions. There is no opportunity to assess their progress and no significant work through which they can demonstrate their achievement.

206. Those following the GCSE course were reaching average standards in the work seen during the inspection, which represents good progress. However, especially towards the end of the course pupils are particularly well prepared for their examination and generally achieve an above-average results. As a consequence of the thorough preparation for examinations, time for independent discussion of issues or investigation is limited. Pupils are making a detailed study of St Mark's gospel and have a secure grasp of the teachings of Jesus. They have a good knowledge of the parables and are able to interpret the concepts revealed there. Pupils identify the Christian teachings relating to crime and punishment and reflect on the purposes of punishment. They are able to compare different teachings to form a debate relating to the moral dilemmas of euthanasia and abortion. Higher-attaining pupils write well-balanced essays that demonstrate clear understanding of the differing views represented in religious teaching and they include relevant quotations to support their statements. A minority of higher-attaining pupils conclude with reasoned judgements; lower-attaining pupils include relevant detail, but their conclusions are brief and contain little evaluation. Pupils have a good grasp of the concept of discipleship and their extended writing demonstrates clear understanding of the effects of Christian belief on the believer.

207. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall and some very good teaching was observed. The department is committed to the success of its pupils, and the use of targets that they can aspire to is creating an atmosphere of self-belief and high expectations. In the best lessons, teachers make the aims of the lessons clear, and planning includes a variety of activities that support the development of pupils' understanding. Teachers treat the responses of pupils with respect and as a result they are encouraged to become involved in the oral work of the class. Homework is imaginative and pupils are encouraged to present their work in a variety of forms. In most lessons, very good management of pupils creates a positive working environment that enables them to be actively involved in their work. Most active work takes place in Years 7 to 9, where pupils take pride in the presentation of their artwork and respond well to opportunities to re-enact the stories they study. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and teachers encourage pupils to be reflective and sensitive. In a Year 7 class, the teacher recognised the need felt by pupils to have the time to consider items that are precious to them before studying items precious to religious believers. The department provides very good opportunities for spiritual development and pupils are given opportunities to meditate and experience calm and relaxation.

208. Lessons are less successful where groups are shared between teachers. There is a lack of consistency in teaching and less freedom for teachers to develop lines of enquiry prompted by pupils. Where non-specialist teachers are used, especially where the groups are shared between teachers, there is a lack of continuity and commitment and the progress of pupils is hindered.

209. The leadership and management of the department are good. Schemes of work are being re-written to include key questions, and the head of department has correctly identified areas for further development. Pupils are involved in the evaluation of their work, and the regular end-of-module review and self-evaluation enables them to reflect and set personal targets for their work. Whole year group assessment is undeveloped and provides insufficient information to enable the monitoring of the progress of different groups, or to identify areas for development. The department has a good range of artefacts, but insufficient textbooks to enable pupils following the GCSE course to study at home and prepare for lessons. The

department supplements their reading with revision guides and booklets. ICT is well used to enable pupils to make 'virtual reality' explorations of religious buildings, such as the church and the synagogue. There are, however, very few opportunities for pupils to undertake first-hand investigations of places of religious significance. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have their entitlement to a religious education. The department has successfully developed the course to include Years 7 and 8. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

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

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

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

GCE 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	12	67	*	8	*	3.0	*
Chemistry	6	83	*	33	*	5.0	*
Biology	9	100	*	33	*	5.8	*
Physics	4	100	*	0	*	4.0	*
Design and technology	12	92	*	33	*	5.2	*
Business studies V	3	100	*	66	*	7.3	*
Information and communication technology	14	78	*	7	*	3.4	*
Sports studies	5	100	*	20	*	4.0	*
Leisure and recreation V	6	100	*	50	*	7.3	*
Travel and tourism V	4	75	*	0	*	2.5	*
Health and social care V	4	50	*	50	*	4.5	*
Art	5	100	*	20	*	4.8	*
Geography	8	75	*	13	*	3.3	*
History	4	75	*	0	*	2.0	*
Religious studies	11	100	*	45	*	5.8	*
Psychology	8	100	*	25	*	5.8	*
English language	7	100	*	43	*	6.0	*
English literature	23	96	*	13	*	4.9	*

** National comparison data for A and AVCE results in 2002 are not yet available*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology. In addition, physics and chemistry were sampled. In 2002, a small number of students in physics obtained results that were below the most recent national average and which showed unsatisfactory achievement. A slightly larger number of students matched the national averages in chemistry, demonstrating satisfactory achievement. In both subjects, standards are now rising and both have good-sized classes in Year 12. In Year 13, students are above the national average in chemistry and close to it in physics. In both subjects, teaching observed was good overall with some that was very good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving overall.
- Course numbers are usually healthy, and there is an upward trend in recruitment.
- Students are very appreciative of most of their teachers.
- The department has well-qualified and knowledgeable teachers. There is the capacity to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough.
- Induction arrangements do not provide well enough for the full range of ability of those accepted onto the course.
- The time allocated for mathematics lessons is short and not always fully used.
- There is room for improving the assessment and monitoring of the students' work.

210. The department offers courses leading to mathematics at AS level and A2 level. The students taking mathematics study a combination of pure mathematics and statistics in Year 12 and pure mathematics and mechanics in Year 13. An opportunity for students to study further mathematics is offered outside of normal taught curriculum time. Similar arrangements are made for those who wish to improve their GCSE results to obtain a grade C or better.

211. During the inspection, AS level lessons in pure mathematics and statistics and a Year 13 tutorial in pure and applied mathematics were observed. A selection of work was scrutinised from each year. A representative sample of students was interviewed.

212. Results for Year 13 students were below average in 2002. A2 level had risen in the years following 1998, and were in line with national figures in 2001. There were issues related to teaching, now resolved, which affected students' performance in 2002. Twelve students completed the course, of who four were unsuccessful. Several more achieved results less good than their prior attainment suggested they should. These results compared unfavourably with those for other departments in the school. AS level results were also unsatisfactory, because the teaching was not as good as it should have been. Because of these unsatisfactory results, the number of students currently studying mathematics in Year 13 is just three. This represents a considerable drop, following several years of improving numbers on the course. There are 27 students currently studying mathematics at

AS level, a healthy figure, reflecting the department's efforts to recruit more effectively. Achievement or long term progress is currently satisfactory

213. The standard of work seen on the inspection was broadly in line with the national average and better than might be expected from last year's examination results, largely because of recent improvements in teaching. The Year 13 students are all expected to pass the examination and perform as well as they should. In mechanics, students were confident with Newton's laws, with projectiles and with the effect of friction on particles moving on a rough surface. The highest-attaining students produce excellent, clearly presented work, while the others sometimes have difficulty applying the theory they have learned to practical modelling of real-life situations. In pure mathematics, students all had a good grasp of the calculus, and the highest-attaining students were confident when integrating logarithmic, trigonometric and exponential functions using a variety of methods. The others found integration by inspection quite difficult; they could differentiate using the product or quotient rules, but did not always see when examples for integrating were the inverse of these.

214. AS level students show a wide range of mathematical ability. The highest attaining students were confident working with sequences and arithmetic series, and had a very good grasp on statistics. Average-attaining students produced good algebraic work in pure mathematics when simplifying expressions and solving quadratic equations by completing the square. The lowest-attaining students continue to make mistakes with basic algebra; errors were made, for example, with surds such as $\sqrt{(90 \times 30)} = 3\sqrt{30}$. Nor do they use a rough calculation to check whether or not answers are correct. Understanding of statistics is poor with, for instance, no real grasp of probability.

215. The department aims to be as inclusive as possible, and accepts students onto the course with lower qualifications than is the case in many schools. A quarter of those currently in Year 12 obtained only a grade C in their GCSE examination last summer, and a similar proportion sat for the intermediate paper rather than the higher at GCSE. Intensive revision of the elements of the higher-level GCSE syllabus that are not required for intermediate level are incorporated into the course. This intensive revision does not meet the needs of those students whose algebraic skills, in particular, are not strong enough at the start of their advanced studies. The department is considering how best to improve what it offers to these students; if this is not done urgently, students will be left struggling on the course when they are almost certain to fail the examinations at the end.

216. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Teachers know their mathematics very well. Some lessons seen on the inspection were very well taught. These were well prepared and taught at a brisk pace, and the students were involved and interested in what they were learning. Less successful lessons were lacking in imagination and arid, reflecting preparation that was adequate but no better. Teachers express the wish to improve the students' ability to think for themselves, for example through the use of mind-mapping exercises. Students are asked to exercise responsibility, for instance, by marking almost all of their own work, but they are not being given the necessary support to show them how to improve. In the case of marking, for example, there is no evidence in the work in the students' folders to show that they have corrected areas of misunderstanding. Individual detailed target setting and identification of what precisely is acting as a bar to understanding is not taking place, other than in a general sense in lessons taught to whole classes. Regular tests are set at the end of each module of work, but these are not close enough to examination standards and are not always marked with enough rigour. Insufficient use is made of examples of precisely how to answer questions, and of close individual monitoring of day-to-day work before students are expected to develop on their own.

217. The students feel well supported by most of their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in difficulties, and are appreciative of the amount of time outside of normal lessons that the teachers are prepared to offer them.

218. The time allocated to the teaching of mathematics is less than is usually found elsewhere, which is adding to the difficulty of raising standards. It is, therefore, especially necessary at Queensbury that time is well used in all lessons. This was not an issue during the lessons seen on the inspection, but other evidence provided indicated that valuable teaching time is not always used as effectively and productively as it should be.

219. Mathematics in the sixth form benefits from sound management. Most teachers are enthusiastic and pull together as a team. There is room for improvement, but there is also the capacity to see that it takes place.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning are resulting in rising standards.
- The number of students taking the subject is rising significantly.
- The subject is well managed.
- The technical support for lessons is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough textbooks and other published sources of information.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to add variety to the learning opportunities.

220. In 2002, nine students took A level, all passed and a third gained a higher grade (A or B). This standard of attainment is above the most recent national average and shows good achievement by both male and female students.

221. Examination of students' files, test results and observation of lessons confirmed the maintenance of these high standards. Year 13 students are nearing the end of the two-year course, all 13 are in line to pass and a good proportion is predicted to gain the higher grades. During one lesson, working in pairs, students gave short presentations to the class that required them to relate previous learning to the single concept of the effect of surface area on rates of diffusion. The originality with which students approached this problem showed good mastery of a high level skill. All the contributions were well thought out, logical and supported by detailed evidence. The exercise showed students to have an extensive knowledge of different aspects of biology but also the ability to understand how different parts of the syllabus are interrelated.

222. In Year 12, there are 24 students taking the AS level course. Although a small number are finding parts of the work difficult, all are very well motivated and working hard. Most of the students are working at levels that should ensure that there is at least satisfactory achievement in the examination. They have detailed knowledge of the movement of water and nutrients through plants and most understand well the physical forces, for example, 'hydrogen bonds' involved. Higher-attaining students, learning about genetically caused diseases such as cystic fibrosis, displayed an excellent understanding of 'DNA transcription'. They had sufficient confidence to challenge the teacher's interpretation of the phenomenon with cogently organised arguments. If the lower-attaining students maintain their present level of commitment and teachers continue to give extra support, all students could achieve

passes in the examination.

223. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have very good mastery of the subject material and the demands of the syllabus. This results in students being very well prepared for the examinations. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. There is mutual respect and the atmosphere in lessons is one of shared enjoyment in the subject. In all lessons there is an emphasis on independent learning which students find stimulating and challenging. The skills they are acquiring will be of great value if they proceed to higher education. The materials for experimental work are prepared to a very high standard by the technician who often supports students in class, adding much to the quality of learning.

224. The provision of a variety of textbooks and other sources of information is unsatisfactory. Although not critical, this does limit opportunities for students to undertake independent research into topics. Lack of specialised science equipment for ICT limits students' experience of modern experimental techniques. There is also insufficient use of ICT skills such as word processing and data-handling for the production of coursework.

225. Management and leadership of this subject are good. The work of three teachers is carefully co-ordinated and they work together, with the technician, as a mutually supportive team. Assessment of students' progress is accurate, used to set ambitious targets for students and to monitor the quality of teaching. Fieldwork is particularly well organised.

226. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Numbers choosing the subject at AS level are rising and a good proportion are continuing on to take A level. Standards have risen and there is good potential for further improvement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was AS and A2 courses in design and technology, product design.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good achievement by students.
- Very good leadership and management provide a good overview of course organisation.
- Good deployment of teachers provides in-depth skills and experience for students to draw on.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have sufficient understanding of the ethical and moral issues surrounding design decisions.

227. Results in A level examinations over the last four years have ranged above and below average, with no significant trend. Pass rates have been high, and a full range of grades awarded, reflecting the wide range of ability of students accepted onto the course. Results for 2002 were disappointing, and although a third of students achieved higher grades, no students achieved an A grade. The unexpectedly low AS level results were disputed by the school, and a subsequent re-sit by all candidates resulted in considerable improvements in the grades awarded. Comparative figures show that the general attainment level of students entering the course is below average, but that they make good progress by the end of Year 13.

228. Standards of work by students at the end of Year 13 are above average. However, there is a wide range of ability represented on the course, and some students are working below this level. Higher-attaining students have undertaken projects that are challenging, but that they have a realistic chance of successfully completing. They have a good understanding of design processes, and folders contain good research and investigation. Design briefs are carefully constructed, building on a clearly identified need, and offer good opportunities for students to study the social and environmental contexts of design decisions. For example, in the design of equipment for young children, safety of construction and materials is considered, as well as ergonomic factors. Students use ICT with confidence and competence for research and presentation purposes. Digital photography is used well, for example, to record work in progress, and computer aided design and manufacturing skills are used to improve the quality of production. Lower-attaining students are less successful in undertaking in-depth research and are less accomplished in the use of sketches and drawings as a developmental process. Year 12 students are working at above-average levels. They are developing good practical skills and are able to plan and carry out materials testing experiments to support their project work. Project folders show a clear progression of ideas, and students are able to discuss how their work has evolved. Students are less secure in their understanding of the impact of design on society as a whole. For example, in a group discussion on environmental issues it became evident that students' concept of 'environment' was limited to 'recycling' and 'litter'. Wider ethical and moral issues were not fully understood. Extra-curricular opportunities for students to broaden their understanding are limited.

229. Teaching and learning are good. Because five teachers are involved, a depth of skill and experience is available to students, and there is flexibility in the way that staff expertise is used. Good communication among teachers ensures that attainment and progress are assessed thoroughly and students receive good written and verbal information. Students know their target grades and whether or not they are on course to meet them. Teachers are effective as consultants, and good working relationships enable discussion to be conducted at a mature level. This has enabled students to develop good independent working skills and, in lessons seen, they were able to work productively, manage their own time and effort well, and take responsibility for planning their own progress. A good staff training programme, mainly provided within the department, has ensured that all staff have the knowledge and skills to teach the course requirements. The use of team-teaching techniques maximises the benefits of teachers' skills and experience.

230. The course has maintained its popularity, and most students complete the course. Students have very positive views about the benefits of the course, both to them as individuals and for further career development. Not all students intend to go into higher education, but all are sure that the skills developed on the course will be of value. Some students have been admitted to the course with lower than normal GCSE results but, although the general standard of their work is lower than others in the group, their progress is good.

231. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear overview of the course organisation and monitors student performance carefully. Staffing, accommodation and resources are deployed to maximum effect. Since the establishment of the course at the time of the last inspection, there have been good improvements in teaching and organisation, and the course has consolidated its position as a popular option. Above all, students make good progress in relation to their attainment levels on entry to the sixth form.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on the AVCE Business Studies programme. The school offers several related courses and these are referred to in the same report set out below.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Results over the last two years have been consistently good, and are now in line with the most recent national averages.
- Teaching is good overall, and occasionally very good.
- Student response in class is very good.
- There is good leadership and management of the department.
- Progress is good.

Areas for development

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for current provision and is insufficient for the potential expansion of the department.
- Students do not read widely and lack knowledge of information retention techniques.
- Access to in-class learning resources is poor, particularly ICT resources for students to use to enhance their learning.

232. The school offers business education in Years 10 and 11 and at post-16. The inspection concentrated on the sixth form, where the school offers intermediate GNVQ and AVCE in the single award. The department's open-door policy on admissions to its sixth-form courses echoes the school's philosophy of encouraging students to enter the sixth form. Consequently, students' levels of attainment on entry to the department's courses in the sixth form are below national levels. Results in public examinations at AVCE and intermediate GNVQ levels improved in both 2001 and 2002, and are now in line with the most recent national averages. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are also average for both male and female students. There are no figures for students from different ethnic groups.

233. At intermediate GNVQ, students make good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those related to employment conflicts and their resolutions. Students confidently use a wide range of business terminology. They demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts. Work is thorough and covers the requirements of the assessment evidence grid in a broad way. The strength of the students' class work is the their basic understanding of the subject matter and the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files. Students are increasingly confident with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data, although these are still relative weaknesses.

234. Results at AVCE are generally in line with national figures. The standards reached by Year 12 and 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are continually improving, and are now in line with national levels. However, some work seen during the inspection indicated standards above national levels. Students confidently use a wide range of business terminology. They demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts, such as the use and importance of administration in business organisations. Work is thorough and covers the requirements of the assessment evidence grid in a broad way. Students make good progress, particularly in those aspects relating to the economic

environment in which business operates, and they are good at applying their understanding in order to incorporate their theories into contextual examples.

235. From relatively low levels of prior attainment on entry to the sixth form, achievement is good overall. Students' good progress reflects the good teaching they receive. Overall, the quality of the teaching on all courses in the department is good, and occasionally very good. In the best lessons, teachers have excellent rapport with students, and their expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to explanations. Lessons are carefully planned, and case studies and other activities are effectively used to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Students are very well supported academically. The teachers' methodical explanations help the lower-attaining students to understand. Teaching is very well structured, dividing the course into units that clearly specify the learning that needs to take place. Teaching is particularly strong when the teachers encourage the students to become independent learners. Marking of work is mostly very detailed and helpful, using, where appropriate, criteria used by the examination board. Relationships in classes are very good. However, in those lessons judged to be satisfactory, there was a tendency to over-provide help for students, partly at the expense of encouraging them to become more independent learners. Progress is best where students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work.

236. Students generally respond very well in lessons. Their attitudes are mature and they sustain interest. They listen attentively to each other's presentations, and are mutually supportive. Higher-attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and show evidence of wider reading. Too often, however, some students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning. A small number of students, particularly but not exclusively lower-attaining students, fail to complete assignments on time. Students have very positive views of the subject. They particularly appreciate the very clear organisation and structure of their courses, and the clear feedback on their attainment and progress.

237. Students' overall achievement, though already good, is still restricted by several factors. Students rarely show evidence of wider reading and do not take opportunities to increase their reading. This is partly due to additional interests outside school, which reduce the time they can devote to learning. Resources are inadequate. The department lacks an effective range of textbooks and other materials. The lack of access to television/video and to ICT and relevant professional software has an adverse effect on learning. Accommodation is inadequate and unsatisfactory, in terms of both the size of rooms and how appropriate it is. The poverty of accommodation and the lack of access to appropriate ICT facilities impact detrimentally on standards.

238. Leadership and management are good. The department is jointly led by two members of staff, who share responsibility. Under their supervision, the department has produced a range of informed and informative documents that deal effectively with all aspects of the department's work. They give effective and efficient leadership to the subject. In all their work, they are very well supported by their colleagues, whom they, in turn, support. They have a clear vision for the future of the department that sensibly encompasses plans to strengthen both the academic and the vocational aspects in order to meet the differing needs and aspirations of future students. They provide an excellent role model for a department that is committed to high standards and high achievement. The department is particularly good at explaining the way its programme will unfold over the two years of sixth form study, and as a result very few students leave courses prematurely.

239. The business department has made good progress since the time of the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on ICT.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Resources are good
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in AS and A examinations are too low.
- There is too limited a variety of approach to learning, including independent learning

240. In the 2002 examinations, students gained results at both AS and A level that were below the most recent national averages, as has been the case over several years. ICT has become more popular in the past two years, as shown by last year's retention rate from AS to A level of over 70 per cent. The teaching team is largely new this year and there are signs of some improvement in standards.

241. In work seen, Year 13 students are attaining standards that are below average. This still represents good overall achievement since these students have not had the benefit of a well-planned programme of ICT over their time in school, though most have followed a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. They have made satisfactory progress in areas of knowledge and understanding required by the syllabus and their final coursework is progressing very well.

242. Year 12 students are making good progress with their project work and many have produced sound analyses of the problems for which they will design ICT solutions. They require a lot of support from teachers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the software they use and standards of attainment are below national expectations.

243. Teaching in the sixth form is good. A fresh team has been formed that includes the new head of department, and teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and this knowledge is shared with the students effectively. Teachers develop good, purposeful working relationships with their students that help them to achieve satisfactorily and the attitudes of sixth form students are good.

244. Lessons are generally well planned and provide a sound level of challenge that promotes satisfactory progress. However, lessons tend to rely too much on textbooks and there is insufficient variety in the approach to teaching and learning, with a lack of encouragement for students to develop more independent forms of learning. However, staff spend a lot of their free time effectively providing additional help.

245. The leadership of post-16 ICT is good. The department had not had strong leadership for some time and the current head of department has made rapid progress in updating teaching programmes, policies, assessment and target-setting arrangements and in starting to support and monitor the work of colleagues. Resources are good and support learning well. The network manager and the ICT technician provide valuable support to teachers and to students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on sports studies. Lessons and documentary evidence were also sampled in GNVQ leisure and recreation where both teaching and learning were good and standards of attainment in line with those found nationally.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Much of the teaching is good and staff exhibit good knowledge of their subject.
- Numbers taking both AS and A level are increasing

Areas for improvement

- Demands for students to analyse topics critically is not always evident
- The development of student presentation skills is weak.

246. There has been an upward trend with results at AS and A level. In recent years, all students have gained an A to E grade at A level, with the higher-attaining students gaining A or B grades. At AS level, the majority of students gained A to E grades, with an appropriate number having success at the higher grades. This represents good achievement for the majority of students during their one or two year course. There is no marked difference in the overall results for girls and boys and there are an increasing number of girls taking the subject.

247. Standards in the work of Year 12 and 13 students observed during the inspection are above average. Students show good knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting performance. Some of the projects produced demonstrate good understanding of research methods and good application of theory to practice. They are also developing an appropriate insight into sports provision in other countries. An understanding of sport and the media is also developing well. In a Year 13 session, students were introduced to the topic of comparing sports provision in France and England. It was noticeable that they were able to make appropriate links to previous learning and had researched well in order to contribute to an informed discussion. In Year 12, students showed a positive approach to learning about the variety of organisations linked to 'Sport in the UK', drawing upon earlier work in GCSE and extending their knowledge and understanding of terminology. However, opportunities to challenge students to analyse critically the information provided were missed. The presentational skills of some students are weak and they lack training in this key skill.

248. Teaching and learning are good, with appropriate responsibility placed on students to research and enquire. The intended outcomes of lessons are clearly outlined at the outset and teachers provide stimulating examples and demonstrate good knowledge of their subject. In good sessions, pace is maintained throughout and questions are directed at individuals, always encouraging them to link theory and practice to illustrate their answers. Teachers know their students and in Year 12 and 13 are able to direct questions appropriately in order to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. Expectations are high and the higher-attaining students are given additional tasks in order to help them achieve the highest grades. Insufficient demands are put on students to encourage them in independent learning, particularly in Year 12, where they tend to accept resources at face value rather than analyse them critically.

249. The leadership and management of sports studies are good. The course is well organised, colleagues supported and monitored effectively and students achieve well. In addition, some sixth form students are given the opportunity to make an invaluable contribution to the physical education programme, not only through representation, but also by assisting teaching staff in coaching and teaching duties. This aspect is encouraged by the opportunity to gain the Community Sports Leader Award.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

There was no focus subject within this curriculum area, but art and design was sampled. In art and design, results at both A level and AS level were well below average in 2001. In 2002, results at A level showed some improvement, though results at AS level did not. Numbers of students taking the examinations were too small to compare reliably the results of with those of female students. Students usually perform significantly less well in their art and design than in their other subjects. Two lessons were sampled. Strengths of the teaching were seen in the good individual advice and the clear explanation of assessment criteria given by the teacher. However, in one lesson, students did not receive enough teaching input, and the lesson lacked a sense of urgency and pace. As a result, students did not learn as effectively as they should.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology, but history and religious studies were also sampled. Standards broadly match the most recent national ones in history and teaching and learning are good. In religious studies, students reach above average standards as a result of very good teaching. Outside the formal option course, statutory requirement for religious education for all students is not met.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Students are making good progress, because they are committed and well supported by their teachers.
- There is very good teaching.
- The numbers taking AS level are rising.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results are not good enough.
- Only small numbers of students take A level courses.
- The entry standard for some students is too low.

250. The department caters for a small but rising number of students following AS and A level courses. Some students are encouraged to do AS geography as an additional subject and do not continue to A level. The calibre of students varies from year to year, and some have started the courses with too weak a grasp of essential prior knowledge. Most achieve satisfactory standards, according to their potential, but some struggle and, in spite of the support given by teachers, do not achieve a grade.

251. In 2001, AS results were well below average, but in 2002 the pass rate more than doubled to 70 per cent. Most performed according to their potential, and two students gained A grades. One student achieved full marks in two modules. This year, the majority of students have appropriate entry grades, so teachers can pitch lessons at the right level.

252. Small A-level numbers for the last few years make national comparisons difficult. Most students gain a pass grade. In 2002, standards were well below the most recent national average. Six out of eight candidates passed, one gaining a Grade B. Most made satisfactory progress according to their potential. There were no significant differences in the performance of male and female students, either in the examination or during the inspection.

253. An evaluation of the results has led to a change of examination board better suited to students' needs, the introduction of residential fieldwork and the teaching of a skills-based element. These changes are reflected in current students' work in terms of improved practical skills and increased understanding, because students have more opportunities to apply what they have learnt to unfamiliar contexts.

254. Standards in Year 12 are above average, and the majority of students make very good progress. They use terminology well and work on maps and diagrams is well handled. They have developed effective research techniques. They build effectively on work done earlier in the school, for example remembering and applying work on coasts well when studying the processes on a cliff face. Lower-attaining students are well supported by the teacher and peers. Their good understanding of physical and human processes is shown in well-structured essays about population and hydrology. Examples from fieldwork are used to good effect. At this stage they are not so good at synthesising information. A very few, without a geographical background, struggle to achieve an appropriate standard, finding it difficult to make links between patterns and processes.

255. A strong feature of both courses, particularly in Year 12, is the good standard of oral work, in which lively discussion is well channelled by the teacher. Throughout, students develop a wide range of skills, building on earlier fieldwork. ICT is used well for presentation, analysis and research. Practical activities, including fieldwork in Wharfedale and Iceland, allow them to use numerical skills to test results for significance.

256. In lessons and the work seen, standards in Year 13 are average. Students make good progress in relation to their potential. In Year 13, they work with a good degree of independence, using the learning resource centre well for research. Most make detailed notes, which are useful for revision. Their mature and responsible attitudes are demonstrated by the good quality of their coursework and fieldwork. Up-to-date resources and well-chosen tasks are effective in maintaining interest and pace. Students show that they can draw selectively on resources to discuss contemporary issues. Average-attaining students in particular used resources well to make good arguments and counter-arguments for proposed housing developments in the South East of England. They showed sound understanding of urban pattern and growth, clearly identifying the causes, but not linking them so closely to examples as higher-attaining students. Lower-attaining students show a sound grasp of theory, but their explanations and examples lack detail.

257. Overall, teaching is very good, with excellent features, and students learn very well. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject generates a lively response and creates a positive climate for learning. There is strong emphasis on independent study and developing evaluative skills. Teachers' expertise and knowledge of examination requirements helps them to plan thoroughly, to help students to understand increasingly difficult ideas and to help them to cope in examinations. Very good planning over a series of lessons gives students the

opportunity to apply what they have learnt, as in a Year 12 lesson on urban land use. The lesson included confident and constructive oral presentations, demonstrating that students could organise information logically and link their chosen examples to models. They used the resources provided well, while the teacher used the whiteboard effectively to synthesise and refine their ideas. Students are given good feedback during lessons. Occasionally plenary sessions are too hasty, missing opportunities to reflect on what has been learnt.

258. The department is led and managed well. Progress has been good. Standards are improving. The curriculum is well planned and ensures that there is good progression from AS to A level. Students appreciate the support given to them and enjoy fieldwork, which is a strength. Resources and accommodation are good.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching now results in very good learning and rising standards.
- Very good understanding of the requirements of the syllabus enables students to maximise their performance.
- Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and a high proportion completes the AS course.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for both teaching and administration is poor.
- The position of the subject in the school's curricular and management structures is inappropriate.

259. Standards in the work seen for current Year 13 are average. In 2002, eight students took A level and all passed. The proportion gaining higher grades (A or B) was below the most recent national average. Comparison of the results of both male and female students with their performance at GCSE shows satisfactory achievement. The 2002 results were better than those of previous years when fewer gained the higher grades and some failed.

260. A larger number of students (13) are taking A level this year and evidence gathered during the inspection indicates a rise in standards to match national average. Students' files are exceptionally well organised and contain complete records of work undertaken. Handwritten notes are supplemented by relevant and interesting published material which students have annotated or highlighted. Each student's file contains a great deal of test material, marked to A level standards, which indicate that all students are in line to pass. The proportion likely to obtain higher grades is above the national average. In class, they present as confident and knowledgeable. Students revising psychopathology displayed very good understanding of schizophrenia. Their powers of evaluation are well developed and enabled them to make critical judgements on the value of different theories proposing possible causes of the condition.

261. Over 30 students, in two classes, are taking AS in Year 12. These classes were observed and, in both, standards are close to the national average. Students have good understanding, for example, of all the main theories explaining conformity and are clearly gaining the confidence needed to form a critical view of the evidence supporting them. Again, their records of work are impressive. A particularly valuable feature is the variety of note taking techniques employed, including spider diagrams that require students to actively process information and discourage passive copying.

262. Teaching and learning are very good. The one psychology teacher is very well qualified and experienced. Lessons are planned in detail, based on good knowledge of the subject. Very good insight into the demands of the well-chosen syllabus enables students to maximise their performance in examinations. Very effective use of assessment and target setting also supports this desire to maximise students' potential. A rich variety of teaching methods are used, which all emphasise independent learning and a critical approach to evidence. Students gain particularly from well-designed group work where they collaborate well and help each other to resolve difficulties. There is good use of ICT to research topics, handle data and improve the presentation of coursework. Relationships are very good both between students and teacher and amongst the students. By treating the students as responsible and capable adults, the teacher has raised self-confidence and created an atmosphere in which students are happy to take responsibility for their own learning. In a very good lesson taken in a computer suite, students worked individually researching topics and word processing their own notes. Each student had to dictate his or her own pace. The amount and quality of work produced were of a very high order.

263. The accommodation for teaching and the administrative needs of the subject are poor. One very small, rather dingy room, with poor ventilation and much noise from nearby activities, does not provide a good climate for learning or teaching. At least one class is too large for this room and activities such as role-play are compromised for all classes. There are no convenient storage facilities for learning resources or departmental records.

264. At present, the school has linked psychology to the science department. Although psychology has an obvious basis in science, the inexact nature of the subject dictates that the teaching methods have more in common with humanities subjects such as sociology or the newer curricular areas such as business studies. Students need to learn how to evaluate evidence in a way that is rare in the sciences where the factual basis is much stronger. The course structure and examination requirements for psychology are quite different to those of the traditional sciences. These differences make it difficult for the science department to provide appropriate support for the teaching of psychology. As the only teacher of psychology, the present post holder is in danger of becoming professionally isolated.

265. This relatively new subject, now the responsibility of the teacher who joined the school in September of this academic year, is well managed and increasingly successful. Numbers are rising and standards are improving. The subject is now a valuable part of the school's post-16 provision and there is good potential for further improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature but sampling of English language also took place; students in the language course made good progress as a result of good quality teaching which encouraged independent learning.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and achievement very good.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning
- Students show very good motivation and work very hard.
- Relationships are very good, leading to confident, independent students.
- Very good assessment procedures motivate students to improve their standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not read sufficiently widely, nor visit the theatre often enough.

266. Recent results at the end of Year 13 have generally been below average, although those for 2001 matched national norms. Male students do as well as female students. Though students did less well in English literature than in their other subjects in 2002, this is not usual. The 2002 results at the end of Year 12 were above recent national averages for AS level, with a large proportion of students gaining the highest grades. They did better in English literature than in most of their other subjects. Problems that occurred in the 2002 A level course, with some discontinuity in teaching, have been completely eradicated.

267. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Many students, male and female, attain the highest grades. Students make very good progress in lessons and achieve very well over the course. They work very hard, both in class and at home. Folders of work show thorough coverage of the course, including useful examination practice and high-quality handouts from the teachers. Students use the Internet to extend their knowledge of critical reviews, and attend lectures at universities. This is a popular course and students express great satisfaction with it. Gifted and talented students make very good progress, with many hoping to earn a place at university.

268. High attainers analyse language and structure perceptively. Work on *A Clockwork Orange*, for instance, shows mature response, accurately written. Essays are well structured, following clear lines of argument. The students are independent thinkers, confident in their own interpretation of unseen text. Middle attainers use quotation well. They know their texts and make effective comparison between them, of, for example, *The Color Purple* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Lower attainers achieve course expectations, but have much less in their folders and analyse in less depth. All use technical vocabulary confidently and accurately. Students discuss challenging, unseen poetry with real interest, delving into meaning and how effects are created with persistence until they make sense of it. In a Year 13 lesson, students thought carefully, with help from the teacher, about how coursework essays could be honed and improved by constant re-drafting, using computers to help develop them.

269. Teaching and learning are very good. Students develop understanding very well because of teachers' very good knowledge of and enthusiasm for their subject. Teachers have very good awareness of examination requirements, which means that students are well prepared for external examinations. Students have confidence in their own responses

because they are encouraged to think for themselves and the methods and resources used are interesting. The range of texts chosen for study encourage a reasonably wide range of knowledge, from modern American and English literature to the metaphysical poets. However, students do not read sufficiently widely around their set texts, nor visit the theatre sufficiently frequently to gain comprehensive knowledge of a great width of literary styles and dramatic techniques. Students enjoy sophisticated discussion because of the very good relationships fostered in lessons. Analysis of *Close*, by Carol Ann Duffy, for example, carefully directed by the teacher, led to clear awareness of the ways anguish is portrayed in the poem. Students know exactly how to improve their work and attain their target grades, motivated precisely by very good marking and very good reports.

270. Leadership and management are very good. Pairs of teachers work closely together and monitor teaching and progress keenly. Improvement since the previous report has been good, with teaching and standards improving.