

INSPECTION REPORT

RIVINGTON AND BLACKROD HIGH SCHOOL

Horwich

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105261

Headteacher: Mr J Baumber

Reporting inspector: Henry White

2795

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th February 2003

Inspection number: 249766

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: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 11 to 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rivington Lane
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs G Jackson

Date of previous inspection: 10th March 1997

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19743	A. Taylor	Team inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils?
13734	H. Davies	Sixth form co-ordinator	Business education (sixth form) Religious education (sixth form)	
32208	D. Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20336	E. Arnold	Team inspector	Citizenship	
27050	V. Blackburn	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Biology (sixth form)	
4007	R. Deurden	Team inspector	Religious education (11-16)	
11695	A. Edwards	Team inspector		
	R. Greenwood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8756	P. Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19915	P. Hooton	Team inspector	History	
3943	D. Innes	Team inspector	English	
22524	S. Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18589	M. King	Team inspector	Music (11-16)	
20192	T. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
12897	M. Mealing	Team inspector	Health and social care (sixth form) Sociology (sixth form)	
22685	N. Moss	Team inspector	Drama Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
31129	J. Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design	
3930	R. Pitcher	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
7399	P. Roberts	Team inspector		
14913	C. Thompson	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form) Educational inclusion	

30978	E. White	Team inspector	Geography (11-16)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rivington and Blackrod High School is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England school serving the towns of Horwich and Blackrod and the broader community of West Bolton. It is a much bigger than the average 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school and occupies two sites that are 1 mile apart. There are 1892 pupils on roll, of whom 330 are in the sixth form. Four per cent of pupils are of Asian background; most other pupils are of white heritage. Thirty-nine pupils have English as their second language; none is at an early stage of learning the English language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average; the proportion with statements for learning, behavioural and physical need is below the national average. The proportion receiving free school meals is below the national average and the numbers of pupils leaving and joining the school during the school year is low. When pupils start in Year 7 their attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average. The school has been a Specialist Technology College since 1999. It has Investors in People and Sportsmark Gold Awards.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is providing an effective education for its pupils. Standards in GCSE examinations are above the national average. The good teaching, the good attitudes of most pupils to learning and good management systems are now enabling pupils to make good progress in their lessons. More time is needed in this improving school for this good learning to build up and effect the overall achievement from Years 7-11 which is presently satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The sixth form is good and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall attainment is above average in the GCSE examinations; results in art and design and design and technology are well above average.
- The headteacher gives inspirational leadership to his school and the wider learning community.
- Excellent partnerships support the curriculum delivery and teachers' professional development.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well.
- Relationships with parents are very good.
- Most pupils make very good progress in developing their social skills.
- Exclusions are low reflecting the strategies to keep all pupils engaged with learning.
- There is good provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- There is a good sixth form.

What could be improved

- The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE passes at grades A* and A and A* to C.
- Strategies to eliminate the poor attitudes and behaviour shown by a minority of pupils.
- The provision for ICT, modern foreign languages and citizenship in the taught curriculum.
- Accommodation and resources in some curriculum areas.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the school was last inspected in 1997 is good. Over the last five years, GCSE results have improved in line with the national trend. The proportion of good teaching has increased and good progress has been made in tackling the major key issues in the last inspection report. The learning environment is much improved following the recent £3 million refurbishment programme. The growth in sixth form numbers from 183 to 330 reflects the

wider curriculum provision. The arrangements for collective worship and the provision of religious education in the sixth form have not been tackled. The provision for, and standards in, modern foreign languages in Years 7-9 has declined due to problems of staff recruitment. The curriculum provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7-9 does not fully meet statutory requirements.

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				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	A	B	B	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	*		

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

Over the period 1999 to 2002, the results in the national tests for 14 year-olds in English, mathematics and science were at the national average but well below the national average for similar schools. The improvement in these results has been below the national trend. Compared to their results in Year 6 this represented well below average achievement. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average for most subjects, including English and science. Standards in mathematics are above average and achievement is good. Good teaching is helping pupils make good progress in their lessons but time will be needed for this to build up and effect the overall achievement which is currently satisfactory. Standards are below average and achievement unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages reflecting the problems the school has had in recruiting teachers and in ICT and citizenship where there are weaknesses in the current teaching programmes.

Over the period 1999 to 2002, the GCSE results overall were above the national average and at the national average for similar schools. Achievement from Year 9-11 was satisfactory. The trend in improvement is in line with the targets set by the school and is broadly in line with the national trend. Although pupils gaining 5 grades A* - C were also at the national average, they were well below the national average for similar schools. Some pupils only gained grade D in some of their subjects; they should have gained grade C. More pupils should have attained grades A* and A. Results in English were below the national average; in mathematics and science results were in line with the national average. The trial examination results for this year show that more pupils are working at the level needed to gain grades A* to C and are in line with the realistic targets which have been set. Standards of work seen are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are well above average in art and design and design and technology; achievement is very good in art and design and good in design and technology. Standards are above average and achievement good in physical education. Standards are average in all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, except citizenship in the taught curriculum which is below average. Achievement is satisfactory in most subjects; it is good in religious education reflecting the low starting point in this subject at the end of Year 9 and in history reflecting the progress pupils make in their course work. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship.

Results in the 2001 GCE "A" level results were at the national average. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are average overall; students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have good attitudes towards their work and teachers. A small minority does not come to lessons intending to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most behave well and show they understand right and wrong. Occasional low level disruption and interruptions in lessons slow the lesson down. Exclusions are low.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The atmosphere in school is positive and friendly. Pupils make very good progress in developing their social skills and many give countless hours helping others.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school works hard to keep in line with national averages. A significant number of pupils are late in the mornings because of difficulties with public transport.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and very good or excellent in one in five lessons. Teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics in Years 7-11. Teaching and learning in science are good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are very good in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages in Years 7-9; learning is less secure due to the difficulties in recruiting staff. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in all years and the national strategy is having a beneficial effect on teaching and learning in Years 7-9. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Marking is not consistent with and between departments. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs although on some occasions it is not sufficiently challenging to the most able pupils. In lessons, most pupils make good strides in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They work hard, produce good work and concentrate well. They are aware of how well they are doing and how to improve. In a few lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory when behaviour management is unsatisfactory or the work is not well matched to the pupils' needs. Learning is unsatisfactory in some lessons when a minority of pupils have poor attitudes to work. Teaching is good in the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students are encouraged to be independent learners. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught across the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It provides a wide range of vocational and academic opportunities for learning. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by excellent provision for extra curricular activities. The excellent relationships with the community and Teacher Training Institutions add significantly to the learning opportunities for pupils. Careers education and guidance are good. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirements for ICT and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils who consistently receive support from the impressive team of class support teachers make good progress. The needs and progress of pupils on the special needs register are reviewed frequently
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: There is very good provision for social development. Provision for moral and cultural development is good in lessons and activities and through the examples set by teachers. Provision for raising spiritual awareness has improved since the last inspection and it is now satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Standards of care are high and Child Protection procedures effective. Target setting for older pupils is developing well and they know how they are doing and how to improve.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Very good. Parents are well informed about the school and involved in their child's education at all stages. They are consulted regularly by the school. Personal, Social and Health Education is not included in reports and this is a weakness. Although reports do not contain sufficient information about progress and targets are too general, parents are involved in target setting sessions with their child and the tutor.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership to his school and the wider learning community, ably supported by the deputy headteachers. Senior and middle managers provide good leadership and management in improving learning and raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors know the main strengths and weakness of the school and are very strong in holding it to account. The statutory requirements are not fully met in ICT, religious education or for the daily act of collective worship. The principles of best value are applied effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A wide range of procedures is used to review the work of the school including questionnaires to staff and discussions with pupils. The monitoring of teaching is well established but needs to focus on learning and the standards of work the pupils are producing.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial resources and grants are used well to develop a high quality teaching force, developing leadership and management skills and improve learning. There are weaknesses in the staffing of modern foreign languages. Computer resources are unsatisfactory in food, religious education and textiles and there is a lack of effective access to computers in art and design, modern foreign languages and music. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in art and design, physical education and religious education at lower school and for sixth form study.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school • Their children are expected to work hard • Their children make good progress • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not happy about the work their children are given to do at home • Some parents say they are not well informed about their child's progress • A few parents say the school does not work closely with them • Some parents have concerns about behaviour.

Inspectors agreed with everything that parents like about the school. Inspection evidence supports concerns about the sharing of progress; more detail is needed in annual reports. Homework is regularly set but is not always challenging enough for the more able. While standards of behaviour in the school are good overall there is a minority whose behaviour is unacceptable. Inspection evidence shows that the school works closely with parents. They have many opportunities during the year to make their views known to the school, and staff contact parents early when concerns arise.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

RIVINGTON AND BLACKROD HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11-18 comprehensive school has 320 students, 185 boys and 135 girls, compared to the national average size of 166 students. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, there were 189 on the sixth form roll. There is a very wide range of advanced level GCE subjects and advanced level vocational courses available in the school and within the West Bolton Federation. 55 percent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Most students are of white heritage with some having an Asian background. The retention rate is high and very few students fail to complete their courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is cost effective and does not take any subsidy from the main school. Students learn effectively and achieve average standards in their courses. Overall, students achieve well in relation to their level of attainment on entry to the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects and particularly good in product design and physical education. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and the head of sixth provides very clear educational direction. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- Teaching is good and many lessons are very well taught. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- Students are positive towards their courses and are developing the skills to work independently.
- The sixth form is well led and managed. There is a clear commitment to raise standards combined with a capacity to succeed.
- The school and the Bolton West Federation provide a very wide range of academic and vocational opportunities for students.
- The provision for students' academic and personal development is good.
- Students' progress is effectively evaluated and monitored by most tutors and subject teachers.
- The range of extra curricular activities and students' involvement with the community is very good.

What could be improved

- Accommodation for the sixth form does not fully support learning.
- A small number of students display immature attitudes and this impedes their progress.
- Inconsistency between tutors in the regularity of the individual mentoring process.
- The school is not providing religious education for all students as required by law.
- Provision of newspapers, periodicals and access to the Internet in the sixth form area to support independent learning.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good: Students reach above average standards as a result of good teaching and their hard work.
Chemistry	Satisfactory: Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their level of attainment at the start of the course. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is insufficient use of practical work to develop real understanding of chemistry.
Biology	Good: standards are well above average and students make good progress given their starting points. Teachers have high expectations but in some lessons the involvement of students in their learning is too limited.
Design technology	Good: Well-planned curriculum provides good continuity from Year 11. Very effective teaching and mature attitudes from students results in good achievement.
Business	Good: Teaching and learning are good. The well-planned curriculum enables students to achieve well in relation to their GCSE scores.
ICT	Satisfactory: Teaching is good overall but there is a lack of systematic monitoring and target setting to track students' progress and raise attainment.
Physical education	Very good: Very good teaching results in very good learning by students.
Health and social care	Good: as a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes good progress is made.
Art and design	Good: Students achieve well in art and design as a result of good teaching.
Drama	Good: Good teaching results in very good progress in learning. The new examination course meets students' needs well. Students work is well assessed and this helps them to achieve at their full potential
Religious studies	Good: Well-informed and enthusiastic teaching enables students to make good progress in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.
History	Very good: Students are well supported by good teaching and resources. Results in 2002 rose significantly
Sociology	Satisfactory: The curriculum is well planned and teaching is good. Students make satisfactory progress but need to develop more critical thinking skills.
English Literature	Good: Students achieve well because they are well motivated and benefit from good teaching.
Modern Languages	Good: Students make good progress as a result of highly experienced teaching. The use of computers is underdeveloped.

Other subjects visited include: **Geography**: Good teaching and learning. **Music**: Good teaching and learning. **Economics**: Good teaching results in students achieving well. Results at A-level in recent years have been above average. **Personal, health and social education**: Satisfactory teaching contributes to students' personal development. **Psychology**: Satisfactory teaching and progress. **Physics**: Teaching and learning were good. **English language**: Teaching and learning were good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good: Students are guided and supported well. Subject teachers and tutors are always willing to give advice and support, which is appreciated by students. There is however some inconsistency in the quality and regularity of the one to one mentoring provided by tutors.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of sixth has a very clear vision for the development of learning opportunities for students. Leadership of subject departments is good overall and this contributes positively to students' achievement and personal development.

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"> Choice of courses allows me to follow a programme, which meets my talents and career aspirations. School helped me to settle into sixth form work. I am well taught and challenged to do my best. Teachers are accessible to help me if I have difficulty with my work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My work is thoroughly assessed so I can see how to improve it. I am kept well informed about my progress. I am well advised by the school and / or careers advisers on what I should do after I leave school. Outside my main subjects, school provides a good range of worth while activities/ enrichment courses. I am treated as a responsible young adult. The school listens to the views of its sixth form students.

In a large number of interviews a significant majority of students expressed positive views about their sixth form experience. Inspectors fully agree with the students' positive views. Most students interviewed consider that in a significant number of subjects work is regularly marked and assessed, although in a small number of subjects there is some delay in marking. They considered that they are kept advised on progress and inspectors agree. Inspectors consider that there are good opportunities to gain effective advice on their post sixth form careers. Inspectors and students in interview also consider that there is a very good range of extra curricular / enrichment activities. A majority of students spoken to also contradicted the questionnaire view that they are not treated as adults. They recognise that a small number of less mature and poorly motivated sixth need to be treated in a structured, controlled and less adult manner. Students would like to see greater flexibility in attendance in non-lesson time. Inspectors consider this to be a legitimate area for discussion particularly in relation to the study accommodation available. The major concern of many students is the quality of the sixth form environment. Inspectors endorse this view.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Strengths

- GCSE results in art and design and design and technology are well above average
- GCSE results overall are above the national average.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to raise standards in the GCSE examinations, particularly of the most able, so that results are in line with, or better than, those of similar schools.
- Continue to raise standards in Years 7-9 English, mathematics and science so that the number of pupils gaining the higher levels are in line with, or better than, similar schools.
- To raise standards in ICT, modern foreign languages and citizenship in the taught curriculum.

1. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were average when compared to schools nationally. Over the last five years, the results from these tests have not improved as fast as the national trend. Given that these pupils were above the national average in these subjects when they entered the school, these results represent well below average achievement. The numbers of higher attaining pupils gaining level 6 is average for mathematics and science, but below average in English when compared to all schools nationally but these results represent well below average achievement since the pupils joined the school in Year 7.

2. Results in the GCSE examinations for 16 year-olds in 2002 were above the national average when compared to all schools nationally. The trend in these results has improved broadly in line with the national trend and represents satisfactory achievement across Years 10 and 11. Although the number of pupils gaining five passes at grades A* to C is average compared to all schools nationally, this represents well below average achievement across Years 10 and 11.

3. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 in mathematics and science were average when compared to schools nationally. Standards in English Language and Literature were below average.

4. Standards should have been higher. In 2001/2 there were significant staffing issues in English and science which, together with disruptions relating to the extensive building programme, resulted in significant disruptions to pupils' learning. As a consequence, the school was not able to move as many pupils past D to C as they were hoping to. In Year 9 the results also reflect the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils which slowed down their learning. The school is now making good use of the national strategies for these three subjects to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. The recently appointed heads of department in English, mathematics and science are all giving high quality leadership to their teams.

5. Standards of work seen in Years 7-9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in mathematics, design and technology and physical education and achievement is good. Standards are below average in citizenship in the taught curriculum, ICT and modern foreign languages and achievement is unsatisfactory. The low standards in these subjects reflect the weaknesses in the present teaching programmes of

citizenship and ICT together with the difficulties the school has faced in recruiting and retaining modern foreign language teachers. In citizenship standards and achievement are below average. In all other subjects standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory in geography and religious education; it is good in history, art and design and music reflecting pupils' low levels of attainment in these areas when they enter the school.

6. Standards of work seen are average and achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards and achievement are well above average in art and design and design and technology and physical education reflecting the continuing high quality of teaching and learning in these areas. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography and modern foreign language. Standards are average and achievement good in religious education, history and music. This reflects the low starting point for religious education at the start of Year 9, the commitment of pupils to their coursework in history and the very wide range of curricular experiences their instrumental playing makes to these pupils' work in Years 10 and 11. Standards seen in citizenship are again below average and achievement is unsatisfactory reflecting the weaknesses in the present teaching programme.

7. As an improving school, the staff recognise the need to continue to raise standards so that they are in line with, or better than, schools in similar circumstances. A sound basis has been established for this to take place. Good use is being made of the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7-9 which was introduced to this school one year early. The advanced skills teachers each have a different but complementary area of work to support the improvement in teaching and the raising of standards at the school. The teaching across the school is good and pupils are making good progress in their lessons and learning is good. More time is needed for this good learning in lessons to build up over time and effect the overall achievement from Years 7-11. The school has made good improvement in teaching since the last inspection. The monitoring of teaching across the school is good although it does not relate teaching to the learning which is taking place and the standards of work which pupils are producing. The commitment and capacity to improve is good across all departments. Good progress is being made to meeting the school's targets. The recent trial examination results were collated and analysed by the Headteacher. He also identified the level of support for each pupil who should be doing better. There is good leadership and management at senior and middle management levels. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in mathematics, design and technology, art and design, physical education and religious education. Action is needed to ensure that gifted and talented pupils also make good or better progress in all subjects, particularly in ICT and modern foreign languages in Years 7-9 and citizenship throughout the school where progress is unsatisfactory. There is also the need to eliminate the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes to learning that are restricting the progress of other pupils in some lessons.

8. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory. Attention is given to the correct use of technical language and communication in both speaking and writing. There are weaknesses in pupils' sentence construction and spelling. Standards of numeracy are above average. There is an effective, whole school numeracy group. A whole school booklet on common approaches to mathematics topics ensures consistency of approach across the school. Teachers have satisfactory skills in using ICT in lessons. The use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped. Standards of ICT across the curriculum are therefore below average.

9. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7-9 are especially benefiting from the provisions that have been introduced and developed since the last inspection. The pupils who enter the school with a reading age of eight years or less usually become sufficiently competent in reading to pursue GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and most go on to gain five

or more lower grades. Very few pupils are taught outside their normal lessons and they are given good in-class support by the special educational needs co-ordinator and her team of a teacher and fourteen assistants. These assistants organise several different types of literacy activities that are vital to the progress of the lowest attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 in particular. Bolton Local Education Authority send a teacher into the school to enable pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) to make good progress.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Improved average points scores in 2002.
- Standards in biology, business, health and social care, mathematics and art and design.
- Current progress in drama which is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement in chemistry and ICT.

10. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is average. In 2001, the latest year for which there are national comparisons, A-level results were average compared to all maintained schools. Average points scores were just below the national average. When advanced vocational results are taken into account points scores were above average. In AS and A-level examinations girls attained at a higher level than the boys. Girls average point scores were above average.

11. There were variations between subjects with attainment in biology, English language and sports science being above average. Results in economics, French, German where there were very small numbers of candidates, were also above average. Most other subjects were average when compared nationally with the exception of chemistry, business studies, sociology and art and design where attainment was below average and in religious studies and home economics where it was well below average. AS results were particularly good in mathematics and the overall pass rate went up to 90 percent.

12. Results improved in 2002, both in terms of the proportion passing their courses and in terms of average point scores achieved. An analysis of students' progress indicates that in 2002 overall they made better progress than expected from GCSE to A level. Good improvements in results were achieved in business, English literature, French, mathematics, physics and sociology.

13. For current students, standards are average overall in Year 13 and they achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. In the subjects that were inspected in detail, standards are average in English literature, chemistry, product design, sociology, history, ICT, religious education and drama. They are above average in business education, health and social care, biology, physical education, art and design, and mathematics. Students are achieving well in most subjects except chemistry and ICT, where achievement is satisfactory. In drama current progress is very good.

14. The reasons for good achievement are the good teaching students receive and the very good support and guidance. Assessment is thorough and students receive good advice on how to improve their work. Their progress is monitored carefully and most students have regular reviews with their tutors. Students are well motivated and appreciate the help that they receive. Their positive attitudes contribute to the progress that they make.

15. Only a small proportion of students leave without completing their A-level or vocational courses: well under the national figure of ten per cent. A small number of students left at the end of Year 12 after completing AS-level courses, some going into employment and some to further education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Good attitudes to school
- Good relationships
- Very good response to school and community work
- Low levels of exclusions reflecting the strategies to keep pupils engaged in learning
- Pupils with special educational needs develop good attitudes to their learning

Areas for improvement

- There is some low level disruption in a minority of lessons in Years 8-10.

16. Pupils' attitudes to school and the quality of relationships are both good. Behaviour in and around school is satisfactory.

17. The positive tone seen during the previous inspection has been successfully maintained and attitudes and relationships remain a significant strength. Behaviour, whilst satisfactory, is not quite as good as it was. This is because more pupils are engaging in low level disruption which is hampering teaching and learning.

18. Pupils' attitudes are good and they enjoy coming to school. Parents agree with this view. It is also reflected in the attendance figures which have remained stable over the years and in line with national averages. There is some significant lateness from a large number of pupils who arrive by public transport. This is through no fault of their own. The school is working to resolve this, in co-operation with the bus companies.

19. During lessons, pupil's attitudes and behaviour were never less than satisfactory for Year 7 pupils and nearly always satisfactory for Year 11. In fact, they were usually good and in one quarter of lessons were very good and occasionally excellent. In Years 8-10, unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes occurred in approximately one in six of all lessons seen. There is racial harmony in the school and pupils from different backgrounds work together and socialise freely.

20. Pupils are interested in their lessons and generally want to be involved in class activities. Most of the pupils willingly and maturely take part in class discussions. This was shown when Year 7, having watched a video on stress, debated possible trigger points. Pupils' capacity to listen to others is variable. Often it is good and pupils debate sensibly. Sometimes, boys will protest when a girl offers a differing opinion and shout her down. Both girls and teachers do not let this pass without challenging their approach. However, it does show that boys do not always have sympathetic attitudes when listening to one another.

21. Pupils' good attitudes were typified in a history lesson on Northern Ireland, specifically on 'Bloody Sunday', when discussing why interpretations are still important today. Here, after an initial discussion, Year 10 pupils began working very quietly through the exercise, to match interpretations of events with sources. Because teacher and pupil relationships were so good, they were confident enough to speculate aloud to the class, for instance, wondering 'why the army did not dress as civilians'. The teacher skilfully painted a picture, encouraging them to use their imagination, enabling them to think how it would have felt to have been there. This in turn helped them contribute enthusiastically and knowledgeably to the

discussion on how people's attitudes can be changed. During the lesson, pupils diligently made their own notes. By the end, they were much more authoritative and aware of the urgency for Northern Ireland today.

22. Most pupils respond well to the school's expectations of how they should behave in and round the premises. In most lessons where behaviour is good, pupils make good progress and are learning effectively. The large majority are polite and helpful.

23. Some older pupils do not feel they are in class to 'think', rather, to receive instructions. A minority of lessons lack a learning culture because of pupils' negative attitudes. The school are working hard to change this outlook. Some pupils, often boys, will purposefully 'wind up' teachers. This is only true for a minority; others will, on occasion, express annoyance at their peers continually messing around.

24. Relationships in the school are good and the atmosphere is generally positive and friendly. When asked by inspectors, about the best things at Rivington and Blackrod, several pupils referred to their teachers.

25. Numbers of pupils involved in temporary and permanent exclusions, and the length of the exclusion has fallen, because of the schools' success in providing a range of strategies to keep all pupils engaged with learning. The learning support centre provides effective support for pupils who might otherwise stop attending school and for those pupils returning after some time away from school such as long term illness. The behaviour support unit provides good support for pupil who might otherwise be excluded from school and ensures that these pupils remain engaged with learning. In Year 10, the alternative vocational curriculum option provides a practical approach to learning and includes inputs from a wide range of key agencies to help pupils avoid difficulties outside of school as well as during their time at school. Indeed, to the schools' credit, only one pupil was permanently excluded last year. Bullying, when it occurs, is handled well by staff. Pupils are confident that teachers listen to them and take action; they confirm bullying is not a problem in the school and inspectors agree with this.

26. Pupils make very good progress in developing social skills. They contribute very enthusiastically to the life of the school and community, largely as school councillors, Young Citizens and Millennium Volunteers. Many give countless hours of work by helping others and raise considerable amounts for charity. There is an impressive network of trained mentors working in school, supporting their peers in a variety of ways.

27. In discussion with a representative group of pupils involved in community work, inspectors were impressed with their commitment and maturity. As school councillors, they understand it takes time to effect change, but some could not hide their frustrations that ideas for improving the school are not implemented sooner. They are currently discussing possible involvement in working towards being a 'Healthy School'.

28. Where pupils with special educational needs receive and make use of the support available, they develop good attitudes towards their learning. This results in earnest efforts at the extra-curricular "Reading Club" support classes and in a general sense of confidence in the school. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can be fully involved in its general life. The good attitudes of the pupils generally enable them to respond positively to the opportunities offered.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Students have good attitudes to their studies and are committed to working and fundraising for others
- Pupils make very good progress in developing their social skills
- Behaviour is good

29. Students have good attitudes towards their work. They behave well and a strength of the sixth form is a strong commitment to working and fundraising for others less fortunate. Relationships in the sixth form are very good and based upon mutual respect and a genuine liking for each other. Students' attendance rate is satisfactory and retention rates are good.

30. Relationships with staff are very good- usually, warm, friendly yet respectful. In conversations with inspectors, students praised the help and support they receive from staff. During the inspection, student's attitudes in lessons were usually good and in half of the lessons seen, they were very good and occasionally excellent. Their interest and concentration are usually good and they show a strong commitment to do well, for example, during a lesson with a temporary teacher, students worked together responsibly and as a result, made the most from a situation they were unfamiliar with.

31. Good attitudes towards learning and very strong relationships were clearly shown in a personal and social education lesson, part of the 'towards peak performance' programme designed to overcome barriers to learning. Because of the teacher's excellent rapport with her tutor group, she was able to 'transport' them to the morning in August when they will be opening their exam results envelope. This became real for the students as they closed their eyes and imagined themselves there. Students maturely discussed experiences of past students now at university, and because of the teacher's skill in drawing everyone in, it became a debate about education helping individuals to deal with different people.

32. Behaviour is usually good. Most students are good role models for younger ones to aspire to. This is particularly so in the case of the elected presidents and vice presidents who represent the school at public functions. There has been one exclusion this academic year. Occasionally, the behaviour of a minority lets others down mainly in non-lesson time. Students recognise that a few of their peers do not act as mature young adults and they feel it is appropriate that staff deal with this minority differently, because of this.

33. Students' response to opportunities designed to enhance their personal development is very good. They show a passion, devotion, and sheer commitment to fundraising for a cause very close to their hearts. There is a positive atmosphere in the sixth form which shows itself in the way everyone works together for the good of others. As a result, they raise thousands of pounds for charity. A good number are registered as millennium volunteers and devote hours to helping others both in the main school and in the wider community. For example, in school, they support lessons as food technicians, help small groups in English, and some are even building computers for sixth form use

34. The large majority of students returned their pre-inspection questionnaires to give their views on what the school provides for them. Whilst the questionnaire revealed a significant amount of dissatisfaction, further questioning and conversations between inspectors and students during the inspection contradicted this view and showed students to be satisfied with the school. The head of sixth form feels students completed the questionnaire during a period of change and turbulence, whilst many of them were holding negative views about certain aspects of sixth form life. This is clearly no longer the case. Most spoken to are positive about sixth form life.

35. As at the last inspection, student's attitudes and behaviour were positive and since then, they have been successfully maintained.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject
- Teachers plan their lessons well
- In most lessons, pupils make good strides in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills
- There is a commitment to providing high quality learning experiences to raise standards throughout the school
- Pupils with special educational need are well taught

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of marking across and within departments
- To ensure that work is always well matched to pupils' needs, especially when a wide range of ability of pupils is present
- To insist that all pupils project their voices when answering questions so that the whole class can hear what is being said.
- To eliminate the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching
- To eliminate weaknesses in pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons
- Some teachers do not make the most use of learning support assistants

36. In Years 7-11, teaching and learning are good in two out of every three lessons. In one fifth of lessons teaching and learning are very good or excellent. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in 8 out of the 153 lessons observed. Learning was unsatisfactory in a further 11 lessons where, despite skilful teaching and behaviour management, less was achieved than expected by the whole class due to the inattentiveness and poor attitudes to learning by a minority of pupils present. These pupils do not come to lessons prepared to work. Some refuse to work, there is constant background chatter, lessons are interrupted by silly and sometimes cheeky remarks, calling out and occasional disruptive behaviour.

37. The key strengths of teaching at Rivington and Blackrod High School are the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects and the effective way in which the best lessons are planned. Pupils are now making good progress in their lessons and learning is good. More time is needed for this good learning to build up and effect the overall achievement which is currently satisfactory.

38. Good knowledge is demonstrated by the high quality coaching and demonstration work in physical education and design and technology lessons. Pupils concentrated well in developing their techniques in physical education and were confident in using a computer package in their design activity in design and technology. In GCSE music and history lessons, the teachers' knowledge of the GCSE assessment requirements helped pupils improve their analytical skills in music and their interpretation skills in history. In drama, teachers recognised the importance of promoting and developing pupils' own ideas through skilful teaching. In these lessons pupils enjoyed the success they were achieving and their subject knowledge, understanding and skills increased rapidly during the lessons.

39. Effective planning in the best lessons is demonstrated in a variety of ways. In a Year 8 geography lesson the teacher made good use of a stimulating game to help pupils explore issues relating to the profit made at each stage of the process from production to the

final sale of bananas. Pupils were engaged well in learning within their groups and this enabled them to make and justify high quality decisions. In a range of subjects, lessons reflected the different ways in which pupils learn. These lessons involved very good explanations by the teacher, good use of diagrams and good use of role play and discussion work and pupils made good progress in their learning. In design and technology, several lessons began with an exercise in thinking skills; these skills were then applied successfully to the problem-solving situation contained in the lessons. Pupils were enabled to engage rapidly with the challenging situation presented to them; they were adept at solving problems and modifying their design solution. In a Year 9 art and design lesson on shadow puppets, the introduction explored how pupils of different abilities, especially the most able, could extend themselves fully. This aspect of planning work to match the needs of all pupils in classes where pupils have a wide range of ability is currently a shortcoming in a significant number of lessons.

40. The marking of pupils' work varies across and within departments. Marking helps pupils make strides in improving their work when it helps them understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Marking is unhelpful when it is limited to one word such as "excellent" especially when the work has a combination of strengths and weaknesses. In a minority of lessons, there is very good assessment practice. In a Year 7 swimming lesson, there were many opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of their own strokes or those of others and to suggest how improvements could be made. A Year 11 art and design class concluded with a critical analysis of pupils' work; notes for development were made and recorded in the teacher's record book to aid future planning. In the best lessons, teachers used skilful questions and answers to check and extend pupils' understanding, but sometimes these sessions are less effective when pupils do not project their voices sufficiently well to ensure that the whole class can hear what is being said. In a Year 11 design and technology class each pupil had their own action plan against which both the teacher and pupil could monitor the progress being made and check that high standards of quality were being achieved.

41. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there are weaknesses in:

- the management of pupils' behaviour in Years 8-10
- planning for the needs of all pupils; the most able pupils are not stretched whilst the work for the least able is not broken down into small, manageable steps.

42. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is normally good or better. The specialist staff are knowledgeable and the support assistants work very conscientiously to maximise opportunities for pupils. In subject lessons the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is usually satisfactory and often good when the support assistants are available and the teacher knows how to use them most advantageously. It is evident, however, that training is required for teachers in order to maximise the use of assistants and for all the assistants to have further training in teaching literacy and numeracy skills whilst giving support generally. Individual education plans are made available, with termly targets stated, but their use is uneven.

43. There is a commitment to providing high quality learning experiences to raise standards throughout the school. This is ably led by the four Advanced Skills Teachers responsible for areas such as key skill development, challenging able and talented pupils, developing thinking skills and changing teaching and learning styles in the sixth form. A blend of formal and informal groups meet together on a regular basis to plan, deliver and review lessons based upon these principles. Such is the commitment of staff that these groups often meet one hour before morning lessons begin and several teachers are using their experiences as the basis of Best Practice Research Scholarships. The assistant headteachers are working in collaboration with colleagues in the Learning Network

Partnership Schools to share and develop their skills in coaching, and championing new approaches to learning to raise standards within the teams of teachers which they line manage.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very good teaching in product design, physical education and drama.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Lesson planning and the range of strategies employed.
- The development of independent learning.
- Helpful diagnostic marking in most subjects to help students raise their standard.

Areas for improvement

- Planned use of ICT in German.
- Too few planned practical experiences in chemistry
- Strategies in history lack breadth.
- Some delay in marking in business and inconsistency in quality and quantity of constructive comments in sociology.

44. Teaching is good in the sixth form. It is good in all the subjects that were inspected except graphic design, physical education and drama where it is very good and in chemistry where it is satisfactory

45. Very good subject knowledge underpins most teaching and helps to build students' confidence. In product design and drama, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to challenge and inspire students guiding them very well to build up skills and understanding. In drama for example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher skilfully guided students into building character profiles by placing them in every day situations. Strong teaching communicates an enthusiasm for mathematics and students respond positively

46. Lessons are mainly very well planned and a good range of strategies is employed to assist learning. In sociology, lesson plans highlight learning outcomes and in health and social care learning tasks set build upon earlier units of the syllabus. English and German teachers plan well, linking tasks to previous and future work and ending with a discussion to consolidate learning. The planned use of ICT in German is however underdeveloped.

47. Teachers give students good support and guidance and create good relationships, so that students trust them and develop positive attitudes. This is a feature of all subjects. Particularly good examples were seen in religious studies when students were examining ethical and philosophical arguments. In product design teachers provide very good individual guidance to ensure that all students achieve their best. The pace in English lessons is brisk and teachers demonstrate an infectious enjoyment of the work being done. Students gain confidence from the supportive relationships with teachers

48. In many lessons teachers use a range of methods that enable students to rely on themselves and learn actively. In product design for example, students research in depth to gain understanding of product development and the use of materials. They are given opportunities for discussion, and provided with contributions from visiting lecturers from higher education both of which prepare them very well for the next stage of education. Business studies lessons link theory to practice in the real business world with visits, speakers and up to date case studies In most subjects students are challenged to think for themselves and do independent and paired research. In chemistry there are too few practical lessons to enable students to relate theory to real chemical reactions.

49. In most lessons students are encouraged to be independent learners. Questioning is used well in mathematics to probe understanding and make students think. The level of mathematical debate is high and is a key factor in good learning. In biology and business students are challenged to think about what they are learning. But in less successful lessons in biology pace is slow and students are too passive. The best teaching in physical education is characterised by the challenge presented to students to take responsibility for their own learning. In religious education students are challenged to think and are given many opportunities for group discussion backed by teacher support. More challenges structured to produce more extended oral feedback from source evaluation in history would sharpen students' ability to discuss and question in the group instead of through the teacher. Teachers in English literature are consistent in their expectations that students should be able to form their own opinions and make their own judgements.

50. The quality of marking and feedback is generally good. Work is marked thoroughly and students are usually given detailed, helpful comments. In sociology however there is some variation in the amount of helpful feedback to students and in business education there is sometimes a delay in marking and returning work to students.

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

Strengths

- Curriculum provision overall is good.
- There is a good programme for personal and social education.
- The excellent relationships with the community add significantly to learning opportunities for pupils.
- Very good arrangements to ensure continuity from primary school to the secondary school.
- The Vocational Power Initiative represents very good provision for the pupils it is designed for.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The organisation of ICT in Years 7-11 and modern foreign languages in Years 7-9 religious education for a small minority of pupils in Year 10.
- The ICT elements of art and design, music and religious education.

51. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are good and are greatly enhanced by the excellent programme of extra – curricular activities. Since the last inspection the school has developed its curriculum to provide a wider range of opportunities, including additional vocational courses, in Years 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form. Overall, the provision for religious education is satisfactory although it is unsatisfactory for a small number of pupils in Year 10. The provision for ICT does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum ICT and the ICT elements of art and design, music and religious education are not currently taught.

52. The curriculum in Years 7-9 is good. It is broad and balanced and contains all the subjects of the National Curriculum together with drama, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Time allocations to each subject are mainly appropriate, with the exception of modern foreign languages where the time allocation is below the national norm and is adversely affecting pupils' attainment and the numbers of pupils opting for a second language in Years 10 and 11. The literacy and numeracy summer school is well used to support pupils whose standards are below average on leaving primary school. This support is continued in Year 7 in after school booster classes and some

additional specialist teaching during the school day. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is well established and is being used to good effect in mathematics and English to improve lesson planning and to provide a greater variety of learning experiences for pupils.

53. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is also good. It meets National Curriculum requirements in all subjects except ICT and religious education because a small number of pupils are not able to access the curriculum. The school has led the development of the Bolton West Federation with other post-16 providers and has provided all pupils with a wide choice of optional subjects, giving pupils the opportunity to embark on both vocational GNVQ courses, Fast Track Apprentices and GCSE courses. Vocational Power Initiative meets the needs of pupils who require a practical approach to learning very well. This course enables pupils to work with a range of external providers and is a very effective link between the worlds of school and work.

54. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. In some subject areas the provision is particularly strong, for example in history where new textbooks have been purchased to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, and in art and design where higher attaining pupils are able to progress through the courses more quickly and to take final GCSE examinations earlier than most pupils of comparable age. Where it occurs, the schools grouping arrangements are helpful in meeting the needs of pupils of mixed ability. The specialist provision for both moderate learning and behavioural needs is effective because it provides support predominantly in subject lessons. Additional programmes in Years 7-9, for example the daily lunchtime Reading Club and some withdrawal for specialist teaching for pupils with specific learning difficulties are used effectively to meet the needs of those pupils needing greater individual support. In Year 10, the wide choice of vocational and GCSE courses meets the needs of most pupils. In addition, the Vocational Power Initiative comprises very good provision for those pupils requiring a different style of learning. The initiative is a very good combination of certificated courses, education for living, work experience and vocational training. Pupils benefit from contact with a range of providers, including teachers, the school's youth and community worker and those from commerce and industry. The school's Behaviour Support Unit and Learning Support Unit are other effective ways in which the school ensures that pupils with specific learning or behavioural difficulties can remain in the school learning environment and access their curriculum entitlement.

55. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. It provides opportunities for all pupils to take part according to their interest and needs in a large number of sporting activities and clubs associated with numerous curriculum areas for example art, design and technology, science, geography, and music. The expertise of the teaching staff is augmented by inputs from other professionals, for example tennis coaches and visiting writers. The school's commitment to extra curricular provision is, in part, recognised by the Sports Mark Gold award. The work of the classroom is very well extended by fieldwork and other visits. In geography, annual fieldwork visits are well designed to extend pupils' knowledge and the skills necessary for geographical investigation and in history, pupils' understanding of the impact of an historical event is greatly enhanced by the visit to the Somme Battlefields. Pupils gain a good understanding of the practical application of design from visits to clothes shows and in the engineering club. Pupils are encouraged to reach the highest standards in examination coursework and teachers provide good support to pupils by after school clinics and additional classes.

56. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. The scheme has recently been remodelled to reflect the demands of citizenship. Appropriate reference is made to sex and drugs education.

57. The careers programme which is delivered as part of the school's personal, health

and social education is good. In Year 9, pupils receive good guidance on option choices through a well designed booklet which provides detailed information on the nature of the vocational and GCSE courses available. It also contains very good careers information linking qualifications and subjects to a variety of career opportunities of the vocational Year 9 pupils are given a good introduction to the world of work through Industry Day workshops which give pupils the chance to work with representatives from industry. In the well structured work experience package, which is very well supported by the local community, Year 10 pupils gain valuable experience in making job applications as they apply for their own work experience placements using the Education Business Partnership web site. The debriefing exercise which follows work experience is effectively used by the Connexions service in individual consultations with Year 11 pupils. There is a good provision for careers education in Year 11. Interested pupils are able to attend careers information talks given by outside agencies for example the Army and individual interviews with the Connexions Service are held in a new Connexions Room. There is a good supply of careers information in the Library. Pupils with special educational needs are given good assistance to plan their for their future destinations from the Pathfinder consultant.

58. The school's relationships with its community and partner institutions are excellent because the school actively promotes and values its contacts. At a very senior level, the Director of Community Learning has the responsibility of overseeing community links and the school has recently appointed a Community Development Co-ordinator to build on the excellent provision already in place. Currently the school is a dynamic partner in the Horwich and Bolton Learning Community Project and has recently been awarded the Schools Extra Award for 2002 in recognition of its out of hours provision. This includes Adult Education Classes, a Learn Direct Access Point, Family learning opportunities in ICT in both primary and secondary schools, open child care schemes at two feeder primary schools, and initiatives which work with younger pupils who may not be taking full advantage of educational and social opportunities.

59. Based on very good partnership relations, the strategies employed by the school to ease pupils' transition from primary school to secondary school are very good.

60. Primary school pupils attend classes at the High School in the latter part of Year 6 and benefit from the opportunity to use the specialist provision and the chance to become familiar with the larger establishment. Teachers from the High School also visit the primary schools to teach and to observe literacy and numeracy teaching. The literacy summer school and the transitional units of work in English, mathematics, and humanities are effective in maintaining the continuity of pupils' learning.

61. The school establishes effective links with parents through a full programme of Parents' Evenings and good information booklets. A particular strength is the holding of the Parents' Induction Event on the evening of the pupils' induction day when parents are able to ask questions or raise any issues which have come to light during the day, interacting in small groups with a senior member of staff. The effective partnership between Bolton Institute and the school provides additional learning opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and extends the work of departments in an exciting way, for example the Accomplice initiative which links the creative talents of school pupils and companies in England's Northwest to create innovative and marketable products.

62. The school ensures that the pupils with special educational need benefit progressively from the full school curriculum as their literacy skills improve. Where support assistants are used well, the one to one or small group tuition enriches the curriculum significantly. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is sufficiently broad to include a range of vocationally orientated courses. Where pupils have urgent problems, the Learning Support Centre provides good

purposeful support in co-operation with the subject teachers.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very wide range of appropriate course available to meet needs and aspirations of students.
- Strong commitment to the development of key skills taught through timetabled lessons.
- Good progression from Year 11 to post 16 opportunities.
- Very wide range of enrichment activities.

Area for improvement

- Meet statutory requirements for religious education by ensuring all students can attend taught religious education lessons.

63. The sixth form, working within the Bolton West Federation, offers a very good range of AS and A-level courses, as well as vocational courses in business, engineering, health and social care, art and design and computing. There is a strong commitment to the development of key skills which are taught through timetabled lessons. Students follow a general studies programme in which they are introduced to a range of appropriate moral and ethical issues. The sixth form is open to all students who can benefit from the courses, regardless of their qualifications. The retention rate in the sixth is high.

64. The school responds well to local needs. Students are given impartial advice on whether their best interests are met by courses within the Bolton West federation or in other institutions. Vocational courses at intermediate level are being considered within the federation, to widen further the opportunities for students. The school is successful in helping students to progress from Year 10 and 11 courses into the sixth form and then on to university, further training or employment.

65. The school responds to local initiatives and is active in broadening students' opportunities. It is actively involved in developing close links with local institutions, organisations and with universities to give students broader opportunities. There are very good links with local universities. The sixth form has a strong tradition of community involvement working with local schools, old people's homes, sporting organisations and by undertaking charity work. There are very good connections with the wider world with visits to France, Sweden, Russia, South Africa as well as a community project in the Gambia

66. In addition to those mentioned above other enrichment activities include a very wide range of sporting, community service and arts activities. The Young Enterprise scheme is well organised and, through this, students visit local industry and successfully apply for jobs. Other activities that support the curriculum include trips to theatres and exhibitions, residential trips and fieldwork. In sport course, students work in local leisure centres and primary and middle schools, organising tournaments and coaching. Generally there are good opportunities for students to gain work experience linked to their own aspirations.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Strengths

- The provision for social development is very good particularly the Millennium Volunteer Programmes
- The provision for moral and cultural development is good

Areas for improvement

- To ensure all departments clearly identify the opportunities for contributing to pupils' spiritual development when lessons are being planned.

67. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's ethos and aims clearly embrace and enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development. Not all departments however have as yet, identified the opportunities to explicitly develop these important aspects of personal development.

68. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory with religious education lessons making a significant contribution. This is an improvement on the time of the last inspection when provision was judged unsatisfactory. The daily life and activities of the school enable pupils to consider and understand human emotions and feelings. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own self-awareness and understand and accommodate the differences they perceive in other people. Pupils are assisted to develop respect for others and their beliefs. Assemblies make a positive contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and self-awareness and provide satisfactory opportunities for reflection. The use of the registration period varies a great deal but in one Year 7 session good use was made of time to reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Religious education and history both make good contributions. In history, pupils have the opportunity to reflect on a range of issues including the feelings and emotions of participants in the First World War. In religious education, all pupils have the opportunity to learn about a range of beliefs and values. Good examples of spiritual development were observed in lessons on being a good neighbour and the study of beliefs and values in Christianity and Islam. There are also opportunities in art and design to reflect on the spirituality of aboriginal art and consideration through art of the horrors of war. In other curriculum areas opportunities are missed to contribute to pupils spiritual development because they are not identified when lessons are being planned.

69. The provision for moral development is good. The school provides a very clear code of conduct as a basis for behaviour. It promotes fairness, integrity and respect for others. Pupils are expected to show respect for each other and for expected codes of behaviour. Teachers set a good example and act as good role models for their pupils. Assemblies are well used to reinforce these values. A sense of fair play is strongly promoted in physical education. Science, religious education history and geography play an important part in this provision. In religious education, pupils examine religious teaching on contemporary issues such as euthanasia, abortion, prejudice and discrimination. In history, a good range of opportunities is identified in the scheme of work. These include the study of the ethics of slavery and the values of the Romans. The moral dilemmas involved in globalisation and the exploitation of resources are covered in geography lessons. There is a high expectation in departments and the school that pupils will respect others as well as property. Pupils are encouraged to be active in considering the needs of the less fortunate through charitable work.

70. The provision for social development is very good and is a considerable strength of the school. It fosters a very good sense of community and encourages pupils to recognise and respect social differences. Pupils are given a very wide range of opportunities to show initiative and accept responsibility. Good examples include the School Council and a range of responsibilities in extra-curricular and community activities. In subjects they are encouraged to accept a high degree of responsibility for their own learning. Many subjects encourage pupils to work together in-groups and pairs, developing team-working skills, so important for life after school. The very wide range of trips and visits in this country and abroad adds to the growth of social skills. These include visits to Germany, South and West Africa plus many trips and field study opportunities in Great Britain. All provide opportunities for pupils to develop social their skills of social interaction and understanding. The school has very positive links with the community and the world of work. Students in the sixth form are given

opportunities via the Millennium Volunteers programme and Pass schemes to become actively involved in the life of the school and the community.

71. The provision for cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to explore their own culture as well gaining knowledge of and appreciation of other cultures. Music, art and design and English make good contributions, complemented by other subjects. A wide range of world music is covered and in English, in addition to British literature and drama, a good selection of world poetry is taught. The range of visits in history and geography and the study of different faiths in religious education strongly contribute to raising pupils' cultural awareness. The school makes a positive effort to introduce pupils to features of other cultures. In art and design, there is good reference in tasks to Japan, China, USA, India and Indonesia. Visits to Europe and Africa make a significant contribution. In addition, there are many other visits to places of cultural interest, for example to textile shows, theatres, art galleries and museums. These provide good opportunities to raise pupils' cultural awareness and understanding

72. The social and moral education of pupils with special educational needs is given particular attention and support through the individual education plans and the additional contact that they receive from the teaching staff. This can be particularly so in Years 10 and 11. There is no evidence of any particular developments in pupils' cultural and spiritual awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- Good systems for pupils' welfare and support.
- Good promotion and monitoring of attendance
- Good child protection, health and safety procedures
- Peer mentoring system
- Rigorous procedures for recording teachers' assessment of pupils

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in behaviour management
- Inconsistency in the use of form times to support pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- Teachers' knowledge of the characteristics of each National Curriculum level in some subject areas.

73. Arrangements for child protection, safety and welfare are good. Although this is a large school, teachers succeed in knowing pupils well. The security and friendliness afforded to Year 7 pupils at the much smaller Lower School provides them with a good start to their secondary education. The strengths in pastoral care seen during the previous inspection are still present.

74. A senior member of staff is the child protection co-ordinator and there are other staff trained to 'Named Person' status. There is a good level of understanding of child protection procedures, ensured by regular training and good liaison. The quality of relationships with other welfare agencies is strong, especially with the principal Educational Social Worker, who supports the school well by conducting annual training.

75. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety. These are firmly established and regularly reviewed. A Deputy Headteacher has overall responsibility and works well with an established health and safety committee, comprising of staff, governors, and pupils. They are good at ensuring everyone is aware of health and safety issues and they

monitor and review safe-working procedures diligently. A good number of staff are qualified to administer First Aid; this is complemented by a staff training programme on a wide range of associated health and safety issues, undertaken throughout the year.

76. Monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development is satisfactory. The introduction of the traffic light system, operational for Years 10 and 11 and currently being introduced into Year 9, is developing well. (Traffic Light System – this is where pupils are given a colour code of red, amber or green for each subject, depending upon how much progress they are making and the degree of the schools' pleasure or concern about their work.) It is starting to bring a much sharper focus to improving areas of potential weakness in subject areas. Pastoral support from Heads of Year is generally good. However, there are inconsistencies in the way they balance the pastoral focus with their developing role in helping raise academic standards.

77. The use of form times to support pupils' academic progress and personal development is inconsistent. The best are used well to motivate and inspire pupils, for example in exam preparation or to discuss individual targets. One particularly good example was seen where the youngest pupils were helped to improve their speaking skills whilst practising for an assembly on the theme of the Good Samaritan. In a minority of cases, there is no sense of urgency and time is wasted. The atmosphere is too relaxed; pupils gossip in groups and little is achieved.

78. One of the strengths of the good systems for ensuring pupils' welfare is the way they are encouraged and then trained to help each other. This is carried out as part of the schools' involvement in the National Mentoring Network and in the Millennium Volunteers initiative. It mostly involves older pupils, some of whom have taken part in special accredited counselling courses, to help them carry out this role. Support is unobtrusive and carried out sensitively, where required. They help pupils who have a range of problems such as low self-esteem, those at risk of disaffection, as well as others who are having friendship and bullying problems. The school is pro-active in this area and sees the potential for its further development.

79. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are generally satisfactory. The school's Behaviour Code which states 'every teacher has a right to teach and every pupil a right to learn', the classroom management Code of Conduct and pupil Code of Conduct are all appropriate and set a positive tone. The Rewards and Sanctions policy covers most specific situations and details a relevant response. However, the Rewards and Sanctions policy is not followed consistently and positive discipline is not uniformly practised.

80. In accordance with the schools' approach, staff use their own departmental systems for managing behaviour such as an escalating system of warnings leading to notes in the planner, short detentions and then a full forty minute detention. However, these are not always followed though. The support given to those staff struggling to cope with low-level disruption is variable. This is true both through departments and also through year group teams. Some staff feel well supported in the classroom. Others point to a distinct lack of help and being left to cope as best they can. This low-level disruption saps teachers' energy and means they cannot deliver the high quality lessons of which they are capable.

81. There is no clear and straightforward method for teachers to request the removal of pupils who are causing trouble. This is often because Heads of Department are either teaching or too far away. Again, the picture is of inconsistencies, because in some areas, Heads of Departments are present at the start of certain lessons and make themselves available to take disruptive pupils. This can mean they have to arrange cover and leave their own lessons. Directors of Learning, a support assistant and a youth worker also provide this

support in some areas. On occasions, teachers who desperately need to have a pupil removed from the lesson, because of constant disruption, do not have the means to do this. There is a distinct lack of extra adult support in those classes, which have the potential for disturbance. Strengthening the behaviour management systems is a key issue for the school to improve.

82. There are effective systems to help pupils deal with bullying. The anti-bullying policy is good and was updated and re-launched last term. It is sent to all parents and published in planners. Anti-bullying work is incorporated into assemblies, in Form Time and is an integral part of the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. A particularly good form time session was seen when Year 8 pupils watched a highly effective video on the effects of bullying. This had a big impact upon them. The school takes any reports of bullying seriously and investigates fully. Pupils spoken to during the inspection, when inspectors asked them about a wide range of school issues, confirmed this is indeed the case. They are happy that all adults listen to them and help them if they are worried. Inspection evidence supports this view.

83. The school works hard to ensure the promotion and monitoring of attendance remains a high priority. This is helping to ensure pupils' attendance remains stable year on year. The introduction of the Vocational Power Initiative has successfully improved the attendance of those pupils who were losing interest in school, as has the development of the Learning Support Centre. Staff have a clear view of those whose attendance is causing concern and attendance patterns are carefully monitored. Registration, raised as a key issue from the previous inspection, is now legally compliant.

84. There is a good working relationship with the Educational Social Worker who has agreed to meet Heads of Year each week, at the school's request. An Internet truancy programme where parents are telephoned using an automated message, if their child is absent, was installed about a year ago. It has now bedded down and is helping the school to ensure parents realise the importance of regular attendance, as well as tracking reason why pupils are absent.

85. Lateness in the mornings caused by the unreliability of public transport is causing problems for the school. This can involve up to 120 pupils each day. The school is taking positive action and have asked bus companies concerned to reschedule their timetables next academic year, in an effort to overcome this. The school promotes good attendance well. An innovative scheme called 'whatever URIN2', relaunched at the start of the year, gives pupils credits for good attendance which then counts towards their hours as part of the Millennium Volunteers project. This is in addition to the more usual certificate and reward scheme.

86. The care for pupils with special educational needs is admirable, with staff having a very good knowledge of the pupils' needs and then planning to meet them. Pupils who have specific problems have their needs reviewed weekly. This active concern is excellent. The centre manager who works closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator and other teachers carefully targets the provision in the Learning Support Centre. Parents express their appreciation of the Learning Support Centre. A small number of pupils who have behavioural problems and are at risk of exclusion receive good support in the Behaviour Support Unit. The assessment of pupils by the Special Needs Team is good but can vary considerably in curriculum areas.

87. There are rigorous procedures for the recording of the teachers' assessments of their pupils. These procedures are satisfactory overall. Teachers record these assessments in their mark books, and teachers' assessments are held centrally for use by the pastoral staff. Pupils record their teachers' assessments in their personal planners. Targets are set for each pupil based on both the test results from Years 6 and 9 and other national tests administered within the school. More challenging targets are then set to add value to the level of each pupil's attainment. These records are then reviewed regularly at both subject and Year Group level and intervention applied when necessary. In Years 7-9 the teacher assessments are based on National Curriculum levels. These are well used in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and design and technology where they are generally accurate. In other subjects such as art and design, ICT, modern foreign languages and music teachers have yet to develop a secure grasp of the characteristics of each level and the levels recorded are too generous or inflated. This is a weakness in the overall school assessment strategy.

Sixth form

Assessment

Strengths

- Good procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress

Areas for improvement

- The quality and use of assessment data in chemistry, ICT and physical education.

88. There are good procedures for assessing sixth form students' work and to monitor and support their academic development. A particularly helpful feature is that most teachers mark work carefully and provide students with useful written comments on how to improve their work.

89. Students are given targets for their performance in their final examinations. Tracking of students' progress is carefully planned and tutors have opportunities for one-to-one interviews. Each student's academic progress is regularly reviewed. Teachers and tutors are able to diagnose individual learning needs accurately and early, and then ensure students receive the support they require. The 'traffic light' system recently introduced uses assessment data to monitor progress and is regarded as being helpful by students. Reviews also lead to students setting targets for improvement.

90. Procedures to assess students' progress are mostly regular and well planned. Subjects vary however in the extent to which they use assessment data to help students know how well they are learning and to assist lesson planning. The assessment of work is excellent in art and design and occupies a central role in providing guidance on learning and makes reference to individual weaknesses in meeting assessment objectives. In mathematics, regular and detailed assessment helps students to know the standard of their work and exactly what they have to do to improve. In ICT however despite the good range of assessment data held by the department students need to be more involved in dialogue with teachers to inform them of their strengths and weaknesses. More detailed analysis of data in chemistry would help to identify strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and also suggest strategies for improvement. Student performance data is not used efficiently to track students' progress and to plan the curriculum in physical education. In most other subjects assessment data is used well to assist students to raise standards.

Advice, support and guidance

Strengths

- The very good relationships which underpin advice support and guidance in the sixth form

91. Students are well supported in the sixth form. The very good relationships that exist between staff and students and the interest staff show in them help to explain why support is good.

92. Induction arrangements, organised by the new Head of Sixth Form shortly before his arrival in September, are currently satisfactory. There are plans to completely overhaul and improve this programme next time around. Most students are clear about which choices to make and changing a course is unusual. The school does all it can to accommodate the personal circumstances of students, wherever possible.

93. There are good procedures in place to ensure students' health and safety. Procedures such as risk assessments, health and safety training, arrangements for visits are all carefully documented. In addition, two members of the sixth form are members of the Health and Safety Management Committee. The staff has an appropriate understanding of child protection procedures.

94. The new mentoring 'traffic light' system based upon red, amber and green and linked to regular meetings with tutors is useful for most students. This is where progress is reviewed and new targets set. It has recently been modified to include a signed record of what has been agreed. This has meant the system is now more formalised and students have a clear understanding of their progress and what they have to do to improve further. There is good support for those who are causing concern (identified as red) involving mandatory attendance at extra lessons and encouragement to attend the many subject drop-in sessions operating after school. Some mentoring sessions provide excellent support for students and are valued by all involved. However, there are inconsistencies between tutors in the regularity of the meetings, and this is an area for improvement.

95. Students receive good careers advice. Students spoken to were pleased with the quality of the advice and guidance provided. The quality of support and guidance has recently improved with special rooms being allocated as study rooms and staff employed to provide careers guidance and additional study support. Every student who does not wish to proceed to higher education receives a careers interview followed by individual mentoring. The programme of careers education and guidance for Year 12 has not yet started in earnest, and this is one reason why this area of the schools' work elicited a negative response in the questionnaire.

96. The good quality care and guidance seen during the previous inspection have been suitably maintained.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- The school provides a wide range of well presented, useful information for parents
- Parents' views are frequently sought and taken into account when changes are planned
- The school association makes a valuable contribution to school life
- Procedures for induction to the school are good

Areas for improvement

- Annual reports do not give parents sufficient detail about the progress their child has made in each subject
- Personal, social and health education is not reported, which is a weakness

97. A small proportion of parents and those with parental responsibility made their views known to the inspection team. They are mostly positive. Parents particularly appreciate that their child is expected to work hard, likes school and is making good progress. They feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns. Inspection evidence bears out parents' positive views.

98. A small but significant number of parents states that their child does not receive the right amount of homework. Some believe that they are not well informed about their child's progress and are concerned about the standard of behaviour. A few state that the school does not work closely with them. Inspection evidence supports concerns about the sharing of progress; annual reports do not provide sufficient detail about the progress made in each subject. Homework is regularly set but is not always challenging enough for the more able pupils, nor is it always marked in such a way as to help pupils to improve their work. While standards of behaviour in the school are good overall there is a significant minority whose behaviour is unacceptable; the school does not have systems in place to ensure that this is consistently well managed. Inspection evidence shows that the school works closely with parents. They have many opportunities during the year to make their views known to the school and staff contact parents early when concerns arise.

99. Parents have the chance to visit the school while their child is in Year 6 and are fully involved in the very good induction process. The school provides a wide variety of very good quality information about the school for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors between them provide the full range of information required. The termly Excel magazine celebrates the achievements of pupils very well. All parents receive a leaflet that includes important dates and a staff list. All the information is attractively produced and clearly written. Pupils' planners are used well for informal communication between home and school. Staff make regular contact with parents by telephone and letter both to praise and to deal with problems.

100. Parents are invited to attend the annual mentoring meetings when progress is reviewed and targets set. Attendance is high although they take place during the working hours. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings, including those about GCSE option choices or Post-16 courses is very good. Parents whose children have special educational needs are very well involved and informed at all stages.

101. Reports cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Personal, social and health education is not reported, which is a weakness. The format varies between subjects so that it is not always clear whether all subject reports cover the same areas. Most reports provide information about attainment but this is rarely developed so that parents have a clear understanding of the specific progress their child has made. Comments about progress are usually couched in general terms such as "pleasing" or "some" and are not related to the subject. Areas for improvement are similarly general for example, "Practise work she finds difficult".

102. The school association organises a range of social and fund raising events that are very well supported. The money raised is used to support the work of the school in a variety of ways. Parents support school events very well.

103. The school has built upon the good partnership that was reported after the previous inspection and involves them very well. For example, parents are consulted as part of the annual review of the home school agreement.

104. The school works to maximise its partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs by responding to ongoing requirements and having regular formal and informal reviews.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Parents pleased with attainment and progress.
- Students satisfied with range of provision in sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- Sixth form accommodation.
- Use of non-lesson time and registration.

105. Very few parents commented specifically on sixth form provision. Those that attended the parents evening seemed very pleased with attainment and progress and they particularly like the mentoring / “traffic light” system. They are satisfied with what the school provides and believe that their young people are happy and achieving well.

106. Sixth form students express satisfaction with the school. In the questionnaire completed by 229 students there were some major concerns, but in a large number of interviews with inspectors many concerns evaporated. They appreciate the very wide range of opportunities provided and the quality of teaching and the accessibility of teachers to provide help and support. They also appreciate the quality of information about the sixth form provided to them in Year 11 and the ways that they are helped to settle into courses and sixth form life. In the areas of concern most stated that work is marked and helpful comments are provided. In sociology however these tend to be inconsistent and sometimes in business some work is not marked and returned quickly enough. They consider that there are appropriate opportunities to gain advice on post sixth form careers. Most in interview said they are treated as young adults despite the high number who disagreed in the questionnaire. They expressed a view that a small number of students in this very large sixth form are immature and need a more structured and controlled environment. Many students are concerned with the rigidity of procedures for attendance when they do not have lessons. Inspectors consider this a legitimate area for further thought and consideration. Inspectors judged that there is a very wide range of enrichment activities despite the negative comments in the questionnaire. The major concern of most students is the poor quality of the sixth form accommodation. This is a view endorsed by inspectors.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The head is a visionary leader with strategic insight into the complex business of managing a large 11-18 comprehensive school on a split site.
- The culture of the school has changed, and there is a real willingness and commitment on behalf of staff and pupils to make a difference and improve the quality of learning.
- There are high quality procedures to check on policy implementation
- The investment in and support for staff development is very good.
- The school has a hard working and dedicated governing body
- The partnerships that the head has championed for the wider benefit of his school and the community it serves, are impressive.

Areas for improvement

- When lessons are observed, the focus is on teaching rather than identifying the effect of teaching on learning, and the standards of work which pupils produce
- The consistency with which the Learning Directorate challenge and support the subject and pastoral areas for which they have oversight
- Communication systems need to ensure the “big” messages of school improvement are heard and understood rather than the detail of the procedures on which they are based
- The need to improve the strategic management of ICT and support some colleagues in aspects of behaviour management
- To improve accommodation and learning resources in some curriculum areas.

107. The headteacher is an inspirational leader with a clear vision of a lifelong learning community of which his school will be a significant partner. His strategic insight, creativity and excellent interpersonal skills have already brought about considerable change in the school and the wider community. He knows his staff very well, recognising their skills and areas for potential development. Potentially high performing senior leadership and middle management teams are now established. The significant number of recent middle management appointments are providing good or very good levels of leadership and management to their teams in this improving school. The senior leadership team – the Learning Directorate – have line management and project development responsibilities. The members of the Learning Directorate are at different levels of development of their roles and so there are current inconsistencies in the setting of targets to their teams and the support and guidance given in areas such as the management of pupils with challenging behaviour and poor attitudes to learning. Members of the Learning Directorate work successfully with colleagues in other Learning Network Schools to develop their management and training skills and senior and middle managers are well supported by National College for School Leadership programmes. Several teachers (and some governors) have benefited from study opportunities in America and Sweden. High quality mentoring is provided for new staff, trainee teachers and any existing staff who need additional support.

108. The headteacher has led the development of Quality Procedures to underpin the work of the school. An impressive range of documentation shows how each policy contributes to the school’s aims and very detailed evidence is collated and monitored annually. Aspects of the Quality Policy are audited on a monthly basis and effectively bring coherence to, and raise the profile of, the various procedures for raising standards. These findings are matched with the views of staff, parents and pupils in this essential area of school improvement. There is a need to ensure that all staff appreciate the “big picture” of the overall procedures, otherwise it might be viewed as a bureaucratic paper chase rather than a key central strategy for raising standards.

109. Much has been done to improve the learning environment through the recent £3m building and refurbishment project. Improvements in accommodation are still needed in art and design, food technology, physical education and religious education at the lower school, Special educational needs and for sixth form study. The lack of computer facilities in food, religious education and textiles, together with a lack of effective access to computers in art and design, modern foreign languages and music, currently, is preventing the full delivery of the relevant programmes of study.

110. The culture of the school has changed, and there is a whole staff commitment to, and capacity for, improving the quality of learning. Departmental meetings regularly share successful lessons, and departmental teams are beginning to observe each other at work. Good monitoring of teaching takes place in art and design, geography, music and physical education. Such lesson observations currently focus on the activity of the teacher rather than the quality of learning taking place and the standards of work that the pupils are producing.

Teachers are confident to engage pupils in the learning debate and a commercial package is being evaluated to help pupils express their views on the learning opportunities in their lessons. Accountability is central to this new culture. Data is analysed at departmental and individual teacher level, and targets are set for both. The outcomes of key events such as a Year 11 trial examinations for GCSE are analysed by the head teacher, reviewed with subject and pastoral teams and action plans are quickly put in place to tackle any areas of underachievement.

111. During the times when the above changes have been taking place, the two deputy head teachers have very well supported the head in the day to day running of the school. They have confidently shared the vision of the learning school with the staff, governors, the parent body and the community.

112. The school has a hardworking and dedicated governing body that knows the major strengths and weaknesses of this improving school. They hold the school to account and are not shy of ensuring difficult personnel issues are resolved for the benefit of pupils and the need to raise standards. Financial planning is good and priority given to maintaining a high quality workforce who are well supported by training linked to the school's priorities, performance management or an individual's developing roles. All statutory policies are in place and monitored regularly, include the policy for race equality. The governing body is failing in its duty to ensure:

- All pupils experience a daily act of worship
- All pupils receive religious education in the sixth form, together with a minority of pupils in Year 10
- All pupils in Years 7-11 have full access to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for ICT
- The ICT requirements in art and design, modern foreign languages, music and religious education are met

113. The partnerships that the head has championed for the wider benefit of his improving school and the community it serves, are impressive. They all support the need to improve radically leadership, learning and the life long learning agenda for the local community. The head is aware of the need to balance his energies between the development of such partnerships and the needs of the school. This is vital at a time when many teachers have limited experience in their roles, ICT in this technology college needs better strategic management and a minority of pupils continue to exhibit challenging behaviour.

114. The management of the provision and co-ordination of opportunities for pupils with special educational needs is very good. An active management network effectively tracks and seeks to support the pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator is both able and conscientious. She organises a team of fifteen other staff skilfully. She is open to new ideas. Every aspect of the department was typically in order. She has shown particular skills in the development of her team of assistants but their fuller training and that of her professional colleagues has not been completed. Appropriate resources in subjects, and in particular ICT, are fewer than expected. The library provision in the upper school also needs to be reviewed.

115. Financial management is good and the principles of best value are applied to all commercial decisions. Spending on teaching staff is average for school with sixth forms and teachers are well qualified to deliver the curriculum at the school. Spending on classroom support staff is higher than in most schools with sixth forms reflecting the school's commitment to support pupils who have special educational needs, are at risk of losing interest in their learning or are at risk of exclusion. The use of specific grants is good. The technology college grant has been used effectively to improve the teaching, learning and standards of attainment in design and technology. The availability of computers has been

significantly increased. The technology college targets have been met in design and technology, science and mathematics but not in ICT. There has been a good impact of this funding in local primary schools. There has been effective training of teachers in design and technology teaching and assessment, and the provision of computers to some school has helped raise standards in ICT in these schools significantly. The impact of the funding for the improvement in teaching and learning in Years 7-9 is evident in the lessons observed in English and mathematics.

116. Taking into account:

- The above average attainment in GCSE results but the need for pupils to attain better at the higher grades
- Most pupils' positive attitudes to their work, behaviour and pupils personal development
- The good quality of teaching and learning, curriculum provision and care for the pupils
- The good leadership and management throughout the school
- The good improvement since the last inspection
- The comprehensive nature of the intake to the school.

Rivington and Blackrod High School is providing an effective education for its pupils and standards are improving.

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

Sixth form

Strengths

- Good leadership and management
- Clear vision for the development of the sixth form.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Cost effective sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- To ensure greater consistency in student mentoring between tutors.
- Sixth form accommodation.
- Improve leaning resources in sixth form area, for example newspapers, periodicals and computers.
- Update resources in German.

118. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The governors and senior leadership team have a clear strategy for the development of the sixth form. The aim is to provide a curriculum that is relevant to the needs and aspirations of students and thus maximise the number of students who stay on. New courses have been introduced and the sixth form has grown considerably in size. The governing body is supportive of the work of the sixth form and knows its strengths and weaknesses. One governor keeps in close touch through being linked to the sixth form.

119. The head of sixth form and the heads of years have a clear vision and appropriate planning is taking place for the future. Sixth form tutors are well managed and play an important and effective role in advising and supporting students. The head of sixth ensures that there are supportive relationships and that all students have equal access to the opportunities the sixth form provides.

120. Subjects are well staffed with appropriately qualified teachers. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and detailed planning is an important factor in the good quality of teaching.

121. The head of sixth form carefully monitors sixth form performance. Students' individual progress is reviewed regularly, as well as the progress that students make in each subject between GCSE and their sixth form examinations. Strengths and weaknesses in each subject are monitored and analysed. There is some inconsistency however in the regularity of tutors one to one mentoring sessions.

122. Despite the efforts of the school to improve overall facilities for students the accommodation is still poor for the large number of students currently in the sixth form. Improved provision has been provided for private study in another part of the school in the library. Improvements are also been made to provide better careers facilities. The pressure on facilities is a major concern for most students; a view endorsed by inspectors. In art and design, the room allocated to ceramics is inadequate and there is no separate sixth form working area. Most AS and A-level business lessons are taught in general classrooms in the sixth form block which do not match modern business environments. Accommodation is very good in product design.

123. The sixth form is cost-effective, in that there is a good balance between its income and expenditure. Governors, the head teacher, head of sixth and the business manager have a good understanding of the need to obtain best value for the resources and services provided in the sixth form and put these principles into practice.

Resources

124. Learning resources are generally satisfactory in subjects. In product design they are very good. There are however, no computers in the sixth form block and newspapers and periodicals are not provided to support independent learning. Religious education lacks computers to provide research opportunities in lessons. Some of the resources in German need to be updated.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

- (1) Continue to raise standards throughout the school in:
 - Years 7-9 in English, mathematics and science so that the number of pupils gaining the higher levels is in line with, or better than, in similar schools;
 - the GCSE examinations, particularly of the most able, so that results are in line with, or better than, in similar schools;
 - developing the criteria used in classroom observation to focus also on learning and the standards of work the pupils are producing;
 - ICT, modern foreign languages and citizenship in the taught curriculum;
 - ensuring that all teachers, in all subjects have an accurate understanding of the characteristics of each National Curriculum level so that pupils' work can be accurately assessed and moderated;
 - improving the day to day use of assessment to inform pupils what they are achieving and what they have to do next.(Paragraphs: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 40, 51, 87, 110, 112, 125, 162, 182, 211, 223)
- (2) Develop strategies to eliminate the poor attitudes and behaviour shown by a minority of pupils by:
 - identifying and embedding whole school approaches to managing the behaviour of these pupils;
 - ensuring that these pupils receive appropriate adult support to help them develop positive approach to learning;
 - ensuring that any staff who are struggling with behaviour management are consistently well supported;
 - identifying procedures for removing a pupil from a class should the need arise.(Paragraphs: 17, 19, 41, 79-81)
- (3) Improve the teaching programmes for ICT, modern foreign languages and citizenship in the taught curriculum.
(Paragraphs: 5, 51, 52, 180, 182, 211, 223)
- (4) Improve the computer facilities in food, religious education and textiles and ensure more effective access to computers in art and design, modern foreign languages and music.
(Paragraphs: 51, 109, 112, 179, 189, 224, 231, 251)
- (5) Work with the local education authority and other funding agencies to improve the accommodation for art and design, food technology, physical education and religious education at the lower school and for sixth form study.
(Paragraphs: 109, 124, 179, 189, 247, 254)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve accommodation for students to more effectively support learning and students development.
(Paragraph: 122)
- (2) Ensure consistency in approach to individual mentoring by tutors.
(Paragraph: 94)
- (3) Provide religious education to all students in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
(Paragraphs: 112, 318)
- (4) Increase range of resources available in the sixth form area to improve opportunities for the development of students' independent learning in and outside lessons.
(Paragraph: 124)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	153
	Sixth form	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		79

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	3	27	75	40	7	1	0
Percentage	2	18	49	26	5	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	24	30	13	0	0	0
Percentage	1	35	44	19	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y[11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1572	320
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	124	0

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	39

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	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	171	139	310

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	122	118
	Girls	107	97	96
	Total	216	219	214
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (65)	71 (72)	69 (72)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (31)	44 (46)	32 (35)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	115	123	115
	Girls	111	106	92
	Total	226	229	207
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (82)	74 (73)	67 (73)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (44)	47 (46)	18 (36)
	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	165	138	303

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	80	152	161
	Girls	76	130	136
	Total	156	282	297
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (51)	93 (90)	98 (97)
	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	44.6 (41.3)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	31
	National	N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	52	52	104
	Average point score per candidate	16.6 (16.2)	23.0 (16.9)	19.8 (16.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	51	50	101	14	8	22
	Average point score per candidate	15.5 (15.8)	23.0 (17.1)	19.2 (16.5)	5.3 (10.0)	6.0 (10.5)	5.5 (10.2)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (17.9)	* (17.4)	* (9.8)	* (11.4)	* (10.6)

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

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1788	54	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	42	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	32	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	1	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)	112
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1209

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	25.24
Key Stage 4	19.45

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	5 712 849
Total expenditure	5 668 324
Expenditure per pupil	3 003
Balance brought forward from previous year	142 086
Balance carried forward to next year	44 525

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	33.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	42.17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	10.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	10.2
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	1892
Number of questionnaires returned	248

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	58	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	56	5	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	48	19	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	18	8	1
The teaching is good.	20	66	8	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	51	17	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	47	8	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	4	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	52	15	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	32	52	9	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	52	11	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	52	8	2	10

**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 of attainment are rising.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers help to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- The proportions of pupils gaining level 6 and above at age 14 and grades A*-A at GCSE are too low.
- Persistent inaccuracies of spelling and punctuation undermine improvements in the quality of writing.
- Continuity of learning of some classes is disrupted by their having more than one teacher.

125. Results of national tests taken by pupils aged 14 in 2002 matched national averages in 2002 but were below the average for similar schools. The proportion achieving level 5 was above the national average but the proportion achieving level 6 and above was below average. The attainment of girls was above that of boys but below the national average for girls whereas boys attained more highly than boys nationally. The trend of improvement in recent years has been below the national trend.

126. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for the proportion gaining the higher grades A*- C in both English and English literature. Pupils achieved less well than in most subjects for which they were entered. The results for English were just above national average in 2001. The school enters a higher proportion of its pupils than is usual for comprehensive schools, particularly for English literature. Girls regularly achieve more highly than boys by a margin similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-A is below average, The 2002 results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties which have now been resolved.

127. Work seen shows that standards are rising and now are average. Schemes of work have been modified and lessons now are consistently planned to reinforce earlier learning and to build upon it. The quality of teaching in all year groups is improving because staffing is now stable and teachers are discussing their classroom experiences to find ways of further improving pupils' learning.

128. The attainment of pupils by age 14 is average. They listen attentively to teachers and each other so that they quickly understand tasks and can benefit from working in groups. If they are unsure, they have the confidence to ask for further explanation. Especially in Year 7 pupils speak clearly and confidently. In some classes in Years 8 and 9, however, speech is less clear. Because pupils speak too quietly, they cannot be heard by some of their classmates who sometimes lose concentration so that their learning is disrupted. Pupils in Year 9 read aloud accurately and at all levels of attainment are willing to volunteer to do so. They understand the main sense of what they read and become able to recognise significant details by using highlighting and note- making particularly when exploring poems. Lower attaining pupils, usually because of lack of confidence, depend heavily upon the help of

teachers to gain sufficient understanding. Pupils understand that they need to write in different ways for different purposes. Most learn to organise their material in appropriate sentences and paragraphs. They develop and use richer vocabularies and learn to vary their expression and sentence patterns. There are also some weaknesses. The quality of writing, including that of some otherwise very capable writers, is reduced by the frequency of errors. Particularly in the earlier years, there is uncertainty about the use of capital letters which are sometimes used to begin any word or appear in any part of a word otherwise written in the lower case. Spelling of newly encountered words including technical terms is usually accurate. In all years, however, spelling of words in everyday use, especially words with similar sounds such as 'where' and 'were', is often weak. Errors of agreement between subject and verb common in local speech, such as 'we was,' appear in written work. Some of these errors, including failure to write in sentences and paragraphs, persist even into the sixth form. Although they only occasionally lead to failures of communication, they do distract the reader from other qualities of the work.

129. Attainment in Year 11 is now average. The balance of strengths and weaknesses is similar to that of younger pupils. Pupils speak more clearly and show respect for the views of others. This helps them develop good skills in group work and the confidence to offer suggestions which they know will be fairly considered. Written work is increasingly well organised and pupils use wider vocabularies, However, errors persist of the same types noted in earlier years and continue to affect the work of pupils at all levels of attainment. ICT is used more frequently for word processing which particularly improves the presentation of written work.

130. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time. This is especially true of those for whom the school makes additional provision because of their learning difficulties. Class teachers understand their problems and, when provided, the quality of in- class support is very good. The most able pupils benefit from the nature of the tasks set which offer them appropriate challenge and their awareness that teachers expect more of them because of the targets they set for them. These pupils make satisfactory progress. Such pupils are not held back in lessons but the fact that more should attain the higher levels in Year 9 and the highest grades at GCSE indicates the need for the department to find additional ways of enriching and accelerating their progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

131. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is sometimes very good and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. They link them to earlier and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. They explain how lessons link to skills needed in exams and in life so that pupils recognise their importance. Lessons include a variety of activities so that pupils sustain their concentration. Teachers conduct lessons at a brisk and purposeful pace often with demanding time limits so that pupils learn to use their time effectively. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and achievement.

132. They are skilful in asking questions rather than providing answers so they can test understanding and extend it by requiring pupils to think for themselves. Pupils respond positively to these challenges because they are well- motivated and want to learn and because they have good relationships with their teachers and enjoy their praise and encouragement. Teachers manage potential misbehaviour very effectively so that it rarely becomes confrontational. Very occasionally, attention - seeking misbehaviour reduces the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Continuity of learning of some classes is restricted by their being taught by more than one teacher. The quality of marking and assessment of pupils' writing is inconsistent. Usually teachers helpfully identify pupils' successes and indicate the means of further improvement. Sometimes, particularly with pupils of below average ability, only one word comments are offered which indicate approval but do not

advise on how to improve.

133. The quality of leadership and management of this large department is very good. Since the time of her appointment, the head of department has introduced changes which are starting to improve levels of achievement. She is energetic and clear-sighted and is well-supported by her colleagues. There is an effective sharing of responsibilities and a clearly-shared determination to raise standards. The department is rich in experience and recognises the value of sharing that experience and ideas through different forms of collaboration including lesson observation. Teachers are now better supported by revised schemes of work which reflect more precisely meet current needs. Data including examination results are analysed to identify causes and effects so that successes may be built upon. Standards are beginning to rise. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Literacy

134. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Teachers of all subjects introduce pupils to technical terms and other vocabulary appropriate to topics being studied and ensure that they use them appropriately. In most subjects, pupils are given good opportunities to develop their ability to communicate effectively and at reasonable length in both speech and writing. Especially in English, geography, history and religious studies pupils are taught how to organise their material in essays. Pupils whose attainment is well below expectation for their age are given effective specialist help so that they make good progress. The quality of writing of a significant minority of pupils, including some with otherwise good levels of skill, is reduced by the frequency of errors particularly of faulty sentence construction and misspelling of words in everyday use.

Drama

Strengths

- Standards of attainment and progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' positive attitudes in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment and progress in Years 7-9.
- Disruptive behaviour by pupils.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7-9.
- Pupils' oral skills.
- The development of the use of ICT in the subject.

135. Standards gained by pupils at GCSE in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average, although they were less successful in the written module of the examination than the performance area. However, under the new leadership of the subject manager and the good teaching in these years, both Years 10 and 11 are now making rapid progress and are likely to attain above average standards. There has, therefore, been good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' drama portfolios are strong and well organised. Written work reflects well the course of pupils' response, development and evaluation work and their performance and improvisational skills are becoming impressive. Work seen based on a poem by Ainlee Walker was well researched and used as a basis for improvisation on child abuse with empathy and maturity. Pupils' improvisation on further

stages of a presentation of a scripted play, 'Road', as part of a self-evaluation exercise, were informed, thoughtful and very moving.

136. Teaching and learning in these years is very good, sometimes excellent. Achievement is very good. Teachers plan very carefully to ensure that all necessary skills are covered and that pupils are completely engaged with the work. Their subject knowledge is very good and they are able to communicate it well to the pupils. Management of large classes of boys and girls is very good, since all are interested and are being stretched to meet their full potential. The pace of work is good and pupils work productively and with praiseworthy effort. Methods are varied and tasks very focused, ensuring that pupils are learning all the time. Written work is set regularly and teachers' constructive marking informs pupils on ways in which they could improve.

137. Pupils enjoy the work, as the growing numbers taking the drama option testify. The subject is made accessible to all abilities and many who find more academic work difficult are able to excel in the practical areas of the course and to find self-esteem in the process. Relationships with teachers are very good and pupils work with willingness and enthusiasm, giving up much of their own time to perfect units of work.

138. The subject is very well led. The new subject manager has written very good schemes of work, firm development plans and brought a strong ethos of professionalism to the teaching of the subject. Work is very well assessed and evaluated, as are teaching and learning.

139. The situation in Years 7-9, however, is very different. Standards are below expectation by the end of Year 9, largely because too much time is swallowed up by teachers' efforts to check the high proportion of disruptive behaviour in many lessons. Progress is therefore very slow, despite the good units of work available to teachers. These schemes of work reflect cross-curricular work well, particularly in units on the Second World War and slavery, as well as in the area of social responsibility and citizenship seen in areas such as the reasons for eating disorders. The behaviour of boys is the main area of disruption; they prevent girls, who show more interest in the subject, from participating sensibly and indulge in open horseplay and other inappropriate behaviour.

140. As a result, teaching is only satisfactory in these years. Learning and achievement are unsatisfactory. Most teachers are not specialists and, while often working as hard as possible to engage the interest of pupils, they are prevented from doing so by many of the pupils themselves. The pace of lessons is slow and skills are quickly forgotten by the majority of pupils. Worse, the majority of pupils do not have the opportunity to improve their oral and presentational skills which regular drama lessons offer them.

141. The majority of pupils do not speak with ease and clarity, either in lessons or in their everyday lives. At this level, they are not taking advantage of the opportunity to learn to speak in different ways for different reasons and to communicate clearly.

142. Although accommodation and resources are now good, insufficient use is made of ICT in the teaching of drama.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning is improving standards
- Most pupils enjoy mathematics and so want to learn
- The department is well managed; priorities are identified and appropriate action taken.
- There is good support for individual pupils, in lessons and through activities after school

Areas for improvement

- Standards reached in examinations and national tests should be higher
- More systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching to improve satisfactory teaching to good.

143. Standards reached by pupils in external tests and examinations, especially in Year 9, are lower than the standards of work seen during the inspection. Staffing difficulties last year had a significant effect on these results. The department is now fully staffed with a specialist team of teachers. There have been several changes in the past few years in the staffing and management of the department. The department has met its technology college targets for 2002.

144. Pupils' results in the 2002 Year 9 National Curriculum tests are in line with national averages, although well below those of similar schools. The trend of these results over the last two years has been downwards. However, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average with some pupils reaching well above average standards. Departmental assessments show that standards in tests this year should rise.

145. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils have good algebraic skills and can multiply linear brackets. They can use Pythagoras' theorem to find unknown sides in right angled triangles. Average attainers' algebraic skills aren't as good as those of higher attainers. They can calculate percentages of amounts and interpret and represent data graphically. Lower attainers can carry out basic calculations with a reasonable degree of accuracy and collect and represent data graphically. Most pupils can carry out calculations quickly and accurately, but lower attainers have more difficulties in rapid recall and accuracy.

146. Pupils' results in the 2002 GCSE results are in line with national averages, and broadly in line with those of similar schools. Nearly all pupils are entered and the percentage passing at A* to G is good. The percentage of pupils getting the highest grades of A and A* is not as high as it should be. However, the new grouping arrangements in Year 10 are helping to raise standards for highest attainers. Early GCSE entry for some pupils has meant that they did not always gain the highest grades they could have done if they had been entered later on. Standards of work seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are in line with national averages, with some work well above average. Pupils in Years 9-11 entered the school with lower mathematical skills and knowledge than those currently in Years 7 and 8.

147. By the end of Year 11 higher attainers can use the sine and cosine rule to find unknown sides or angles in non-right-angled triangles. They are able to choose from, and successfully use, a wide range of skills to solve problems. Average attainers can apply the correct formulae to the solution of problems, for example the volume of prisms and area and circumference of circles. They are not as skilled as higher attainers in manipulating

algebraic expressions. Lower attainers can apply standard techniques to straightforward questions, but have difficulties with more complex ones.

148. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make similar progress to other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are usually taught in smaller groups. Learning support assistants are well deployed to help them with difficult topics and to keep them on task. When there are no learning support assistants, progress can be slower, as it takes the teacher longer to make sure all individual needs are met.

149. In all years, there is some small fluctuation of test and examination results by gender, but no overall trend. No significant difference was observed during the inspection.

150. Pupils in all years make good progress in lessons. This leads to good achievement in Years 7-9. For some pupils in Years 10 and 11, there are still some gaps in knowledge and understanding due to some staffing difficulties last year. This means teachers sometimes have to revisit previous work before they can start on new topics. As a result overall achievement over time in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, not yet good.

151. Pupils are taught in ability groups and this helps teachers to provide suitable work for them, leading to good progress. Another factor in all pupils' good learning is the emphasis teachers place on getting pupils to explain what they are doing and why. Other pupils join in, often suggesting different ways of tackling problems.

152. Pupils enjoy mathematics. The positive impact of the Key Stage 3 strategy is clear in the increasing variety of teaching and learning styles used. Pupils are encouraged to ask and answer questions; they respond well by competing to demonstrate their working to the rest of their class. As a result their attitudes and behaviour are generally good. A few pupils in all year groups can be silly and talkative.

153. Overall teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. When teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is because the teacher has to spend time dealing with the small number of inattentive and talkative pupils, slowing the pace of learning.

154. Teachers use their strong mathematical knowledge to plan effective and enjoyable lessons, using a wide variety of teaching and learning styles. Oral work is well developed as shown by pupils' improving communication skills as they move through the school. In one Year 10 lesson for higher attaining pupils, the discussion in the first part of the lesson about testing a hypothesis that all quadrilaterals were cyclic, caught pupils' attention and made them think about the nature of proof. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils learn well because they confident they can ask for, and will get, help. They are not afraid to learn from their mistakes. As a result pupils will work hard and tackle difficult ideas and questions, even if they are not sure how to do so.

155. Teachers encourage pupils to think about how they are learning, and what methods help them to understand their difficulties. For example, in a Year 9 class where several pupils were having problems with trigonometric ratios, the teacher asked them to compare what they found difficult in learning this with another topic they had found easier. The resulting discussion helped him to approach the topic, successfully, in another way. Marking of work varies in consistency and amount of detail written down about how pupils can improve and reach higher standards.

156. There are many activities after school that help pupils improve the standards of their work. There is also a good range of activities for gifted and talented pupils.

157. The acting head of department manages the department well and has used a wide range of assessment data to identify key priorities. She has made good use of assessment data in the monitoring and evaluation of standards. She is planning to carry out more observation of lessons in the summer term. Earlier, regular monitoring of all teachers would enable existing good practice to be more easily shared and help to improve standards.

158. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. The range of teaching and learning styles has widened and provision for the more able has improved. However standards in examinations haven't improved sufficiently.

Numeracy

159. The increasing emphasis in mathematics lessons on improving mental recall and agility has resulted in good standards in numeracy. The provision for the development of numeracy skills through work in other subjects has been given a good start through whole school activities. A numeracy group meets regularly, with representatives from all departments in the school. Audits of the use of numeracy in other curriculum areas have been carried out. A useful booklet on how to approach common mathematical topics has been written by mathematics teachers and given out to other departments. An example of the collaborative approach encouraged is the joint work by the mathematics and geography departments on the collection, interpretation and presentation of data from a Year 7 field trip.

160. Pupils' numeracy skills contribute to their progress in other subjects. For example, in science pupils use their graphical skills to record and interpret experimental results. Pupils' numeracy skills contribute to the quality of their finished products in design and technology, due to the accuracy of their weighing, drawing and measuring.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The leadership and vision of the recently appointed head of department
- A committed team of subject specialists most of whom have joined the school since the last inspection
- The development in teaching styles which is already having an impact on learning in Years 7-9
- Good relationships between staff and pupils

Areas for improvement

- The consistency in marking across the department
- The approach to developing literacy skills particularly those of writing and speaking
- GCSE results particularly at the highest grades
- The attainment of girls which is below that of boys

161. The attainment of pupils in national tests and examinations is in line with national average at 14 and 16.

162. Since the last inspection, pupils at the end of Year 9 have attained levels results in line with all schools nationally. The percentage of pupils attaining level 5 has been slightly above the expected national figure but not at the higher level 6 and above. Boys have consistently gained better results than girls. In 2002, results were well below similar schools and also below what would be expected in relation to pupils' prior attainment.

163. At GCSE, overall science results for those attaining grades A* to C have been in line with or slightly above national figures for the last few years. Those pupils who took double award science in 2002 attained slightly above the national average for grades A* to C, with boys gaining better results than girls. In single award science results were below national figures. Also in 2002, pupils taking both double science and single science performed better than in other subjects. Almost all pupils who take double science attain grade A* - G, which is above the national average. This is not the case in single science where the percentage attaining grades A* - G is below national figures.

164. Standards in lessons and in work seen are similar to examination and test results. Pupils in higher attaining double award science groups in Years 10 and 11 were working at level above that expected when they were recording detailed results of a sound experiment on computer or explaining the inheritance of human characteristics. Above average pupils Year 9 pupils could plot the changing strength of the magnetic field around a magnet. In other groups at GCSE and in Years 7-9, attainment was in line with that expected.

165. Throughout the school there are several groups attaining levels below those expected nationally. These were mainly in the lower sets from Year 9 upwards. For example, Year 9 lower attaining pupils had difficulty planning an investigation into digestion using their previous knowledge of food tests. Similarly not all Year 11 lower ability pupils could describe how fossils are formed and where they would be found.

166. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all years. They enter the school aged eleven with attainment levels slightly above average compared to all schools and by the end of Year 9 have attained similar levels. Similarly, during the GCSE courses, pupils also make satisfactory progress.

167. When the learning support assistant is directly involved with helping pupils overcome their specific needs or the teacher provides special resources, then pupils with special educational needs achieve well. At other times achievement is satisfactory. But when teachers have realistic but high expectations, then better progress is made by all pupils. Underachievement of pupils occurs when teachers do not provide work at the correct level for each pupil. This occasionally happens in the mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8 where the brighter pupils are not given sufficiently challenging activities and insufficient help is given to the less able pupils. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress.

168. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but better in Years 7-9 than at GCSE. This reflects the work currently being done by the department to improve teaching in the lower school. Just under half the teaching seen was good or better with one in five lessons where teaching was very good or excellent. There was one poor lesson.

169. In the better lessons, teachers provide ways of maintaining all pupils' interest using a variety of activities and practical sessions. Lessons are planned well using techniques suggested in the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. This includes sharing the aims of the lesson with pupils and revisiting them at the end. Good use of stimulus and starter activities such as using individual white boards meant pairs of pupils in Year 9 could test their knowledge of digestion from the previous lesson and learnt well. Practical sessions, very well supported by an extremely efficient team of technicians, are used to support and develop pupils' understanding of scientific principles, such as how the speed of a chemical reaction is affected by dilution of the chemicals involved.

170. Less successful lessons did not help all pupils to learn well. These included lessons where boys tended to dominate the answers and methods were not employed by the teacher to ensure that all pupils, particularly the girls, were given the opportunity to demonstrate what they were learning.

171. Most pupils behave well and settle to work, apart from a minority in one or two lessons. Firm handling by teachers means there is little confrontation. The majority of pupils take pride in their written work but there are several whose work is incomplete or poorly presented. This is often related to different expectations of staff, as marking is inconsistent across the department. Not all staff give pupils sufficient detail to inform them how they are doing or how to improve. The department has recently introduced a tracking system for informing pupils of their levels at the end of units of work. This allows targets to be set for the next unit but few teachers give pupils targets for improvement within their routine marking.

172. The department is using many ways to encourage the use of pupils' numeracy skills within lessons. There is good use of graph work in all years and older pupils can calculate values using different formulae. However, there are insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills by writing at length, verbally expressing ideas or speaking to the class.

173. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. The quantity of resources, particularly textbooks, has improved. There are more ICT resources which are used to enhance the teaching of the subject. This includes a set of laptop computers, scientific software and a department computer suite. Several of the laboratories have been refurbished but many are lacking colourful displays to stimulate pupils.

174. The quality of leadership and management is good. Since his appointment six months ago as the assistant, and his subsequent promotion to head of department two months ago, the new head of department has had considerable impact on the work of the department, particularly up to the end of Year 9. With the development of the new management structure and all key posts filled, the department is poised to continue the improvement already started. This will enable issues identified in the development plan to be addressed and raise the attainment of all pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results.
- Very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11, especially in the use of sketchbooks.
- The leadership and management of the subject.
- The quality of the teaching staff.
- The planning and assessment of pupils' progress.
- Relationships and pupils' attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in Years 7-9.
- The use of drawing to collect specific information.
- Pupils' ability to talk about their work.

175. Teacher assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 are well above average and reflect the lack of standardisation available both locally and nationally. The GCSE results in 2002 were excellent and the best in the school. These results were similar to recent years and improved since the last inspection.

176. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Sketchbooks deepen pupils' understanding of art through experimentation, drawing, collections of images and lists of words including symmetry, composition and wet-on-wet colours. Questions such as, "Did you do any special work with colour?" promote self-evaluation. Although pupils increasingly note their opinions they do not always use appropriate art vocabulary to discuss their work and text copied from the Internet adds little value. There is a strong emphasis on pencil, pastel, collage, paint and mark-making but observational drawing is under-developed. Worksheets provide good guidance on applying tone. The study of composition is strong and pupils study works such as Salvador Dali's "Sleep". Landscape paintings demonstrate good aerial and linear perspective. Pupils also recognise a happy visual accident, one noting of a computer printout, "It came out wrong but it looks better." There are good investigations into chair design to echo celebrities such as Britney Spears. Pupils work with art and artists from European and other cultures. They do not generate or manipulate imagery with computers. Pupils enter school with varied previous experiences of art and design but quickly develop an understanding of colour and composition. By the end of Year 9 they can produce two and three-dimensional work in a range of materials. Their achievements are good.

177. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Pupils are inquisitive and possess very good research skills. Their ability to talk about their work is much improved since Year 9. Sketchbooks are central to the pupils' learning and contain much evidence of exciting experimentation with drawing tools, differently coloured and textured papers and collections of visually stimulating imagery from magazines, the Internet and youth culture. Pencil skills are very good although drawings are often over-worked and presentational rather than analytical. Pupils enjoy drawing glamorous figures taken from magazines but their drawings from life are less accomplished. Their compositional skills are excellent with innovative perspective in cut and torn sketchbook pages emphasising the position of the planets receding into the distance. There are ambitious sculptures in willow withies, polythene, wire, string and paper. Architecture projects introduce pupils to Gothic cathedrals and they record their responses in graphic imagery and tissue paper collages. Pupils use computers and digital cameras to create special effects, adding further dimensions to their work. By the end of Year 11 they confidently develop their ideas through drawing, sketchbook and preparation work into a range of two and three-dimensional paintings and sculptures. They are increasingly able to assess their work and its value, knowing how to improve it. Their achievements by the end of Year 11 are very good. Those who are least capable in art and design make good progress. Their teachers have good knowledge of their special needs and they plan the work accordingly. Year 10 pupils involved in the Vocational Power Initiative made very good progress producing engaging, original compositions when working with an artist in residence to improve their computer skills. The challenging nature of the work and the mutually high expectations ensure that those who are most able make very good progress. Approximately twice the national average numbers have gained A* and A GCSE grades in recent years.

178. Teaching and learning in art and design have improved since the last inspection and are good overall. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are good. The best teaching and learning occur in Years 10 and 11 where they are very good and occasionally excellent. The relationships pupils enjoy with their teachers have improved to very good. Lessons plans make a considerable contribution to learning. Year 9 pupils made excellent gains in knowledge of the construction of articulated figures when inspired by Indonesian shadow puppets. The teacher's demonstration and classroom management immediately engaged

the class. There was a strong emphasis on shape, with opportunities for pupils to use their initiative in developing designs that reflect their personal interests. The use of *Post-It* notes for pupils to identify something they learned or found difficult allowed the teacher to modify plans for future lessons. Another teacher asked Year 11 pupils, "What does record mean?" challenging them to revise their ideas of drawing by asking, "Is Rembrandt's 10 minute elephant less good than Dürer's carefully drawn rabbit?" The sections of intense activity challenged pupils to produce five-minute drawings, causing surprise at the quality of their work. The final task was one of critical analysis with pupils' work displayed for all to see. On one occasion a small number of Year 9 boys slowed the learning of others by interrupting their teacher's presentation with inappropriate behaviour and what they considered witty comments.

179. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum in art and design has improved and allows pupils to work with a range of two and three-dimensional processes. There are art clubs and visits to museums locally and in London. Well above average numbers choose GCSE art and design and many successfully sit the examination in Year 10, along with small numbers in Year 9 and occasionally Year 8. The assessment of pupils' work identifies and rewards progress in a range of areas including classwork, collecting resources and information on artists, innovation, reviewing and modifying developing ideas, as well as the finished work. There are easy to understand versions of assessment objectives with guidance for improvement. Pupils and teachers identify target and estimated grades. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department provides particularly clear educational direction and she and her colleagues make a point of regularly sitting at a round table to discuss improvement and professional development. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored. Planning closely mirrors the school's priorities. The breadth of the pupils' work reflects the excellent match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The room set aside for ceramics is too small for large groups of pupils and its small windows and low lying location requires permanent fluorescent lighting, making observation and analysis by drawing and painting difficult. The resources for learning are unsatisfactory and the difficulty of accessing computers prevents full delivery of the National Curriculum.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The School Council and programme of extra-curricular events and activities.
- religious education and history lessons where teaching makes clear links with citizenship and helps pupils understand how to become responsible citizens.
- The vision, commitment and enthusiasm of the new Co-ordinator.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers have not yet become accustomed to establishing a clear enough distinction between citizenship work and subject or personal, social and health education based work.
- The introduction of an assessment, recording and reporting framework.
- Allow the Co-ordinator the time and opportunity to develop the necessary skills within the designated teaching teams and monitor progress.

180. The place of citizenship in the taught curriculum is at an early stage of development. An audit has helped the school identify where its cross-curricular links with citizenship are. In addition, there is a weekly personal, social, health and citizenship programme for all pupils. There is a very strong sense of purpose and commitment to preparing pupils for adulthood in

a culturally and ethnically diverse society. In history and religious education, there is evidence that the essential elements of citizenship are solidly based in the planning and teaching of the subjects through the school. In the best examples such as a Year 11 history lesson, citizenship was clearly identified in lesson planning and in teaching, which enabled pupils to appreciate the relationship between history and citizenship. During an A-level religious education lesson on law and punishment, students demonstrated good intellectual ability whilst discussing selfishness, morality and the importance of social contracts. In geography, valuable opportunities to stress the unique contribution that geography can make to pupils' understanding of citizenship were overlooked. Similarly, in a Year 8 poetry lesson where pupils were preparing for a poetry competition, pupils were able to demonstrate skills of participation, communication and responsible action to a very good standard but the important and explicit connections as to how this linked with citizenship were not made. In a Year 11 personal, social, health and citizenship education lesson, the teacher gave a lesson long presentation to the class on landmines. Pupils were passive recipients throughout and it was therefore impossible to determine what they had gained from the experience.

181. The new citizenship co-ordinator has vision, commitment and enthusiasm. The recently developed 'Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education' document clearly sets out the underpinning aims and objectives of the programme. The detail of the programme is in the process of being up-dated to strengthen and improve the teaching of citizenship. The present arrangements rely on tutors receiving teaching materials beforehand which are then adapted by the teacher for their group. Although a formal assessment, recording and reporting framework is not required immediately, the co-ordinator has identified this as an important area for development. In the absence of staff training on citizenship and a lack of monitoring of teaching, the teaching of citizenship is implicit and inconsistent. Teaching and learning are therefore unsatisfactory.

182. Over time, pupils are making good progress in the development of personal and social skills but without the explicit links to the citizenship curriculum as at present, progress in citizenship can only be described as inconsistent and unsatisfactory.

183. The programme of extra-curricular activities is extensive and has a good focus on developing citizenship. It is a real strength of the school. For those pupils who access this provision there are valuable gains in personal development and community contribution. The School Council is a representative body elected by pupils through a democratic process. A member of the Learning Directorate usually attends the meetings, which are chaired by a member of the sixth Form. Meetings are held monthly but pupils would like to meet more frequently. Whilst pupils felt that they had a voice they were frustrated by the time taken to respond to their ideas. Pupils are keen to join the debate on learning and talked with maturity and sensitivity about the issues involved. They saw an open dialogue with their teachers over learning as an exciting and positive activity that would do much to raise standards in the school. They felt that there was often a mismatch between learning approaches and learning styles. They also stated that they would like their work to have a higher profile in the school. The 'Millennium Volunteers' spoke with commitment and maturity about their voluntary work in the community. They also would value a higher profile across the school for the work they do. Some youngsters benefit from attending courses under this scheme and would like more opportunities to apply their new skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are rising and pupils now gain an above average proportion of the highest GCSE grades.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources for food and textiles
- Use of day to day assessment for pupils in Years 7-9.

184. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C was well above average. This indicates very good improvement since the previous inspection. Particularly good improvement is shown in the number of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A which is above the national average for boys and girls.

185. Standards of attainment in work seen by Year 9 are above average. This represents a continuing trend of improvement which is largely due to improved teaching methods that engage pupils actively in lessons and result in good levels of motivation. Pupils are confident when they use hand and machine tools and they are very safety conscious. Pupils reach the highest standards in graphic products where they have developed very good skills to present their work effectively. This is because pupils' progress is meticulously monitored and pupils respond very well to guidance on improvement and to the challenging work offered which includes opportunities to work creatively. Higher attaining pupils show flair and imagination in their design ideas and their research is detailed and clearly understood. All pupils evaluate their work and identify what needs to be done to improve it through following the design process for their assignments. Lower attaining pupils have weak writing skills and so express their ideas superficially. Their understanding of design concepts is insecure. In food technology lessons, pupils have good knowledge of nutrition and ingredients which helps them to modify recipes and create appropriate dishes for their food assignments.

186. Standards of attainment in work seen are well above average by Year 11. They are particularly high in graphic products where teaching is highly structured and teachers use very effective teaching methods. Higher attaining pupils show very good levels of creativity in their work and present it to a high standard. Their coursework folders are exceptionally well organised and show very good standards of formal drawing and sketching. The highest attaining pupils in textiles show the same flair and creativity together with high standards of sketching for fashion items they have designed. In food technology, most pupils have a good grasp of nutrition and the highest attaining pupils use this to plan appropriate food for people on special diets, such as gluten free meals. When using resistant materials most pupils use the design process effectively and have a good balance between practical skills and their understanding of the subject. Pupils design effectively for consumer needs and wants in all materials areas. The improved stability of staffing and good quality of teaching of the resistant materials course in Year 11 pupils is having a significantly positive effect. Pupils are now reaching expected standards for their age and ability.

187. Achievement is good in Years 7-9 in relation to prior attainment. When pupils join the school in Year 7 they have average skills and knowledge overall. This is helped by teachers from the design and technology department visiting primary schools to supplement existing provision for the subject. During Year 7, pupils quickly become familiar with the design

process and learning to use a wide range of hand and machine tools in each materials area. Well structured courses are supported by research and practical investigations such as in food technology where they change ingredients and proportions in basic recipes to discover what differences there are. In a very small proportion of lessons some pupils, usually boys, limit progress by taking up too much of the teachers' time for managing them. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11 where they now benefit from improved curricular provision and more focused teaching and monitoring of progress. They learn to manage their coursework projects so that work is completed on time. Pupils are provided with opportunities to improve their work through extra curricular workshops after school and during holidays. They make significant gains by studying their work in more depth and become skilful in evaluating work and improving it, especially in graphic products. Lower attaining pupils make good progress but are more reliant on teachers to prompt them to produce work in more depth. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress.

188. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching methods are effective and provide opportunities for pupils to participate actively in lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are experienced in teaching examination work and in evaluating the quality which results in good learning. In graphic products particularly, monitoring of pupils' progress is a strong feature and helps pupils learn to manage their time as well as improve their work. Because teachers have very good relationships with pupils there are good levels of co-operation and motivation leading to good achievement. Pupils improve their technical vocabulary because teachers introduce new words carefully at the start of projects. A high priority is placed on accurate measuring and marking or weighing of materials so that pupils can make good quality products. Teachers provide a good balance of practical and written tasks and knowledge of industrial practice is successfully integrated into learning. Although teachers mark books regularly and give grades according to the school's systems, they do not use the information sufficiently to inform younger pupils about the National Curriculum levels they are working within or to set short term targets for improvement. Pupils with special needs make good progress towards behavioural and learning targets because teachers provide appropriately challenging and interesting work and give them very good support in lessons. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are sensitively but firmly managed and treated with the same respect as others. Pupils respond well to the lessons they receive; their attitudes and behaviour are good.

189. The quality of leadership and management is very good. In consequence, standards are rising and staff work together as a team to share good practice and plan improvements. The department has met the targets related to the schools' technology college status and there has been significant improvement to accommodation and resources for resistant materials and graphics. There are plans to improve accommodation for food technology which does not currently provide a stimulating place to learn. ICT facilities in this area are also poor and restrict pupils' opportunities to learn about the use of computers for food and textiles. Improvement overall since the last inspection is good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are good
- Good lesson planning ensures a variety of learning opportunities and good learning
- The department's commitment to the improvement of standards
- The very good marking scheme in Years 9-11

Areas for improvement

- Use of the department's very good marking scheme to explain consistently to pupils what they have done well and how they can improve
- To increase the emphasis on the teaching of examination techniques
- To maintain the momentum of pupils' learning in all lessons
- To ensure that higher attaining boys are fully challenged

190. Pupils' attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 is average. Their standards on entry to the school are similar to those typically seen in pupils in Year 7 and by the end of Year 11 GCSE results are in line with the national average. Their achievement is therefore satisfactory.

191. The GCSE geography results improved significantly in 2002, and the proportion of pupils reaching A* to C grades was average when compared with national figures. All pupils attained A* to G grades which is above the national average. However, the attainment of boys is lower than that of girls particularly at the two highest possible grades.

192. Overall standard of work in pupils in Years 7-9 seen during the inspection is average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is average. Students with special educational needs make good progress because work is generally matched to their needs. Higher attaining pupils, including gifted and talented pupils are reaching above average standards and show good understanding of geographical skills and concepts. However, their ability to write reasoned explanations for the patterns they describe is not high enough. In pupils of average ability, there is a greater range of attainment, and poor motivation results in underachievement by some pupils.

193. Pupils in Years 7-9 generally develop a good understanding of geographical skills, ideas and the location of places. In Year 7 most pupils have a sound understanding of the basics of the Ordnance Survey Map reading. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding of the measurement of height. Those of higher attainment give accurate grid references and can relate accurately contour patterns to hill gradients. By the end of Year 9 most pupils can interpret statistics to identify the most popular holiday destinations although they are less secure when analysing and giving reasons for the change in tourist numbers over time. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of ecotourism compared with the effects of mass commercial tourism. Most pupils can understand that earthquakes are associated with movement along plate boundaries. They can interpret seismic trace graphs, confidently ascribing the likely sequence of events to the patterns on the trace. Written work is satisfactory overall. In their written work, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to explain clearly why large numbers of people visit the Derbyshire Peak District National Park. However, lower attaining pupils' work show below average literacy skills with weaknesses in spelling and sentence construction particularly where there are insufficient materials, for example outline diagrams and writing guidelines, to assist them.

Pupils demonstrate good ICT skills in Year 7 to produce advertising material for an American Tour of Britain and by the end of Year 9 are making good use of the internet to access information.

194. The overall standard of work of students in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection is average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall through these two years reaching average standards by the end of Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as do the higher attaining girls.

195. In Year 10 most pupils are developing a good understanding of economic and environmental consequences of locating an offshore oil rig near a coastal community. Debating the issue, they can empathise with the views of the various interested parties and recognise that such development is both beneficial and detrimental to the community and its environment. All pupils including those with special educational needs, are aware of the consequences of oil slick pollution on beaches and higher attaining pupils have some understanding of the effect that changing currents may have on beach development. By the end of Year 11, pupils are developing a good understanding of the work of rivers and can list the factors contributing to flooding. However, in their case study example, pupils did not show how these factors worked collectively to cause the Lynmouth disaster. Higher attaining pupils use ICT very effectively in the presentation of individual coursework, and all pupils are able to access information from appropriate web sites. In the cross curricular study, all pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the vulnerability of the ecosystem of the Equatorial Rain Forest.

196. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers' good knowledge of the subject ensures that specialist vocabulary is well taught and reinforced. There is good use of display to emphasise core words and to remind pupils of previous learning. In almost all lessons, pupils' concentration and interest is maintained because lessons are planned well. Objectives for the lesson are clearly stated and in most lessons teachers return to these at the end of the lesson to reinforce the main learning points. Starter exercises are often fun and informative, and teachers have devised a greater number of activities which allow pupils to direct their own learning. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when the too few opportunities for pupil directed study was an issue. Pupils work well in pairs, for example discussing where to place descriptions of earthquake damage on a seismic trace in Year 9, and in small groups when preparing for the environmental debate seen in Year 10 lessons. The open ended nature of these assignments is a plus, however in some cases not enough care is taken to ensure that such activities move on at an appropriate pace and that the learning objectives are achieved. The requirement for pupils to evaluate the quality of their research and for them to apply the information which they have gathered to their hypothesis is not always clear enough and as a consequence higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged and boys in particular avoid the more demanding tasks. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT for their own research and in well planned units of work. Teachers are competent users of the new technology and the provision for using ICT for teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Books are regularly marked and comments on written work are generally helpful, particularly at the end of longer pieces of work. The department has a very good marking scheme which is linked to National Curriculum levels. However, the scheme is not applied consistently and in general, teachers make insufficient use of this scheme to inform pupils of their attainment and of how they might improve. There is very good knowledge of the demands of the GCSE examination within the department, but this has not yet been used to devise a similar marking scheme for the GCSE course to help pupils understand examinations techniques more fully and how they can improve their grades.

197. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, social and moral education. For example, teachers and pupils discuss the loss of sacred places when rainforest is cleared and moral and social issues are considered in units of work on population distribution and migration, and the conflicting demands of more and less economically developed countries. The very good programme of fieldwork visits provides very good learning opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of physical, environmental, and human geography.

198. Pupils' attitude towards geography is mostly good. Behaviour is usually good because pupils know what is expected of them and teachers maintain a good working atmosphere with a friendly but firm discipline. Pupils usually settle quickly at the beginning of lessons and become actively engaged with the work, responding enthusiastically to teachers' questions. Students work well together. Discussion is usually orderly and individuals' views are respected. In a small minority of lessons, where the nature of the activities does not meet the needs of all pupils, the standard of learning is adversely affected because pupils are restive and poorly behaved.

199. The department is led and managed well. The vision statement, department documentation and schemes of work provide a clear sense of direction that is shared by all teachers. Strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of the department have been identified and are beginning to be implemented. There is good emphasis on pupils' standards of attainment and how these can be improved. The majority of the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed successfully and the department has a shared commitment to continued improvement. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Thoughtful leadership and a talented team of teachers work in close collaboration, respecting and learning from each other's strengths.
- Teaching and learning strategies challenge pupils to think and tease out meaning.
- Emphasis on pupils' interpretation skills and making judgements leads to their better understanding of history.
- Boys show commitment and reach above average standards of attainment in GCSE history.

Areas for improvement

- The links between learning tasks and specific history skills need to be more consistently shared with pupils.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to speak at length and increase their use of historical terminology.

200. History is a popular subject, with the percentage of pupils choosing it at GCSE consistently well above the national average.

201. Pupils' attainment is average in Year 9, indicating good progress when compared with their history ability on entry to the school. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also average, though higher attaining pupils reach above average levels because they respond well to challenges offered.

202. Attainment at GCSE is average, the majority achieving their predicted grade. Boys do better than girls, against the national trend, and gained notable success at grade "A" in 2002 exams. Standards of work seen during the inspection are overall average, although coursework suggests that most achieve beyond expectations and are therefore making good progress. Analysis of results against a number of criteria, alongside Year 11 pupils' comments on their studies at the end of the course, has led to good decisions about raising standards by getting the best out of pupils. These include adjustments to course topics, and re-organising teaching groups. Coupled with support classes after-school, revision booklets, videos and computer disks for home use, these changes should achieve the school's goal of raising the numbers gaining the highest grades, while developing the confidence of those on the C/D borderline and pupils with special educational needs.

203. Pupils in Years 7-9 know their National Curriculum levels and most teachers give specific advice in their marking about how pupils might improve. In Years 10 and 11 pupils know their predicted GCSE grades and keep a record of test results and targets in their books. Annotated marking for GCSE shows pupils exactly what skills they are demonstrating and to what level. Teachers' written comments give advice about what needs to be improved. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress.

204. Teaching develops history key skills very well for example, pupils habitually apply knowledge through interpretation to reach understanding. By using key skills terminology more consistently in lessons, pupils would more clearly recognise how they make progress, day to day.

205. Extrapolating information from a range of sources, making decisions about their reliability and re-processing knowledge (into poems, booklets, newspaper reports, letters) are skills which become habits developed by all pupils in Years 7-11. They form the springboard from which interpretation takes off. All pupils make judgements about how powerful leaders and religious, economic and political movements affect the lives of ordinary people in studies from Roman Times through the Civil War, 18th century industrialisation, the slave trade to the Russian revolution, Nazism and the war in Vietnam. Pupils' spiritual development is more evident than at the previous inspection because questions about feelings and attitudes are regular features of lessons. A Year 9 pupil, for example, suggested that a severely wounded soldier, sent home during WW1 and forced to join the "dole" queue, might feel "worthless or rejected".

206. In Years 10 and 11 history skills are sharpened by efficient note making, helping pupils to cope with the significant increase in information. Urgency increases the challenge because less time is allocated than in most schools at this stage. Impressive coursework is a response to skilful teaching enabling, particularly, pupils with special educational needs to overcome their literacy difficulties as they cope with the disparate collection of findings from their field studies of Roynton Estate. A Year 11 boy explained his appreciation of practical help and commented, ".....so it seemed easy when you came to write it all out". Higher Attaining pupils come into their own with the Northern Ireland study. They tease out contradictory evidence to find balance, keeping hypotheses in view and analyse concepts like "anathema", "exclusivity", "human rights abuse" to understand suffering and the legacy of Irish history.

207. ICT has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils use word processing and Internet and are assessed in Year 8 on their database work with the Horwich Census. New laptops are ready to be connected.

208. Teaching and learning are good; a third very good. Weekly meetings, professional collaboration and monitoring through regular lesson observations create a climate of dynamic growth and ensure consistent, lively teaching for every pupil. Therefore learning is also good. Work in pairs, groups, role-plays, games, excites pupils and gives them confidence so they are keen to be involved. This kind of teaching is a contributory factor influencing the choice of history by boys at GCSE. Writing frames, grids, lists, annotated timelines, spidergrams, help pupils to organise knowledge. Starter phrases, the "Two paragraph rule" (for/against) and conventions for introducing different aspects of an argument allow pupils to apply knowledge as evidence. When teachers are evaluating learning through question and answer in whole-class sessions, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to speak at length, explaining, illustrating and reasoning; and for relating to or questioning each other's contributions. Very good planning, use of time and concern for pupils is a strength resulting in well organised and detailed field study projects. A small number of Year 8 boys are poor listeners and make sharing ideas a challenge. Generally, behaviour is good or very good as pupils move purposefully from one episode of a lesson to another.

209. Leadership is very good and monitors all aspects of provision, especially teaching and learning, to maintain the strong attraction that history has for pupils. Analysis of attainment informs planning and priorities match the schools' aims. Opportunities to take advantage of recently appointed advanced skills teachers and the new Director of Learning have been quickly seized. Problems of staffing instability have been solved and because colleagues work in close collaboration they have quickly become a strong team focused on raising standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Specialist teachers of ICT have very good subject knowledge.
- There is a committed team of teachers.
- There are some very good ICT resources

Areas for improvement

- Plans for ICT resources need to ensure consistency and quality across the curriculum.
- There is insufficient focus upon raising standards of achievement.
- The school is not fulfilling its statutory obligation to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study in ICT because there is insufficient curriculum time in Years 7-9 and those pupils in Years 10 and 11 not taking an accredited course do not have access to their ICT entitlement.

210. Results from the statutory teacher assessments at age 14 are well above average. The 2002 teacher assessments undertaken towards the end of Year 9 show 97 per cent of pupils obtained the expected national curriculum level 5 or higher. These high standards are not borne out by this inspection. The prior attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average. Boys' and girls' attainment is similar. Pupils' GCSE results at the age of 16 in 2002 are below average. Girls consistently do better than boys at GCSE.

211. Standards of work seen are below average in Years 7-9. Achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because there is insufficient curriculum time given teaching the ICT national curriculum. There are insufficient opportunities to develop, practise and embed the full range of knowledge, understanding and skills required to reach the expected National Curriculum levels. By the end of Year 9 pupils can write and frame instructions to control events and understand the need for precision in doing this. The majority do not fulfil the

requirements to reach level five of the national curriculum because they cannot reflect critically upon their use of ICT in their work to sufficient depth. They do not have sufficient grasp of the varied ways in which ICT can be used to structure, present and refine information to meet the needs of specific purposes and audiences. The department recognises this and has plans to remedy the matter.

212. Standards are average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory for those pupils taking an accredited ICT course. The small number of pupils who do not, have inadequate access to ICT and so their achievement is unsatisfactory. In no lessons was attainment judged to be above average. For example, pupils are confident in the basic skills of word processing, and spreadsheets but their competence in selecting software tools for a specific purpose and ensuring that the finished product suits the purpose is much less developed. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. The school's Vocational Power Initiative is successfully using laptop computers to raise achievement. Nevertheless, there is a small minority of pupils who disrupt the flow of learning and this affects progress in lessons. In addition, although teachers keep a record of pupils' target grades there are few good pointers in pupils' marked work to say exactly the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

213. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In Years 7-9 pupils progress well when teachers have good specialist knowledge and are able to design tasks that make pupils think. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were encouraged to think carefully about the software they were using and to evaluate its usefulness as they completed their tasks. They were challenged and stretched. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs. In the small number of specialist ICT lessons seen in Years 7-9 pupils' attitudes and behaviour support their learning.

214. In Years 10 and 11 whereas teaching is good learning is satisfactory. Good teaching is characterised by teachers adapting their specialist knowledge to the requirements of the examination syllabi. For instance, in a lesson on web page design, the teacher used a data projector to show examples of pupils' work in progress and a discussion followed to see what improvements could be made. Good teaching is also characterised by the use of attractive worksheets that show the power of ICT to make learning appealing. These set tasks that begin simply but develop successive challenges. Learning is satisfactory rather than good because the behaviour of a minority of pupils adversely affects learning. This low level disruption can interfere with the smooth flow of learning despite a well-structured start to the lesson by the teacher.

215. Pupils do not get the precise feedback they need on how to improve. This results in pupils being passive because they cannot take responsibility for their own learning. There is insufficient use made in the department of tasks to meet the wide spectrum of learning needs of pupils taking ICT GCSE and GNVQ courses. Examples of extension work to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils are few. The needs of those pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Overall, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

216. Overall the leadership and management of ICT is satisfactory. The head of department is also head of business. He is responsible for planning and monitoring ICT across the curriculum and overseeing levels awarded at the end of Year 9. The expertise to ensure all staff has a good understanding of standards, especially in Years 7-9 needs to be further and fully developed.

217. ICT related courses are popular in Years 10 and 11. The head of department has

worked hard to make the curriculum suit the wide-ranging needs of pupils. Systems and procedures require further specific development to ensure that standards are raised. There is a close-knit committed team. Staffing in the department is stable. ICT teachers have very good specialist knowledge. Some have a background in industry. The ratio of pupils to computers (7:1) is average. The facilities in the new library are very good. Overall the picture is patchy with uneven access to ICT resources across departments. Plans for ICT need to ensure consistency and quality across the curriculum.

218. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The statutory requirement to deliver control technology is being fulfilled. The computer network has undergone development. There is a network manager and a team of technicians. The department has plans to make good the insufficiency of ICT teaching at Years 7-11.

Basic skills: the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum

219. Overall the strategy to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum is a mixed picture. In some subjects, for example, design and technology and religious education teachers' ICT skills are very good. In mathematics, history, music and physical education they are good. They are satisfactory in English, science, modern foreign languages, and art and design. Staff skills levels are poorly developed in the special educational needs department. Teachers receive training as part of a regular programme to develop skills.

220. ICT is used very well to support learning in the school's Vocational Power Initiative and in some English lessons where it complements some pupils' kinaesthetic learning styles. Overall, ICT is poorly developed to support special educational needs, especially on the lower school site. In mathematics, science, history, geography, and physical education ICT is deployed satisfactorily. It is good in religious education and design and technology. It is unsatisfactory in music, art and design and citizenship, and poor modern foreign languages.

221. In some lessons observed during the inspection pupils using laptop computers found it difficult to connect to the school's wireless network. This wasted time and was frustrating for the pupils. Overall, the use of ICT in lessons to enrich pupils' learning is underdeveloped.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The improvement in French GCSE results in 2002.
- The efforts of management at a time of severe staffing difficulty.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing.
- The balance of curriculum time for pupils doing one or two languages in Years 7-9.
- Strategies to improve attitudes in Years 7-9.
- Strategies to develop speaking skills in all years.

222. From 2000 to 2002 teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 record figures far above national averages. Those for 2000 and 2001 imply a level of performance not borne out in GCSE examinations in 2002 and unlikely to be achieved in 2003 on consideration of estimated grades. In 2000 results in GCSE examination in French were above the national averages. In 2001 results fell below national averages, but recovered in 2002 to be in line with national averages. Girls outperform boys by more than the national average. In German, results in GCSE examinations were above national averages in 2000, but fell below in 2001 due to a sharp drop in girls' results. Results declined further in 2002

due to a fall in boys' results. The performance of both boys and girls was significantly lower than their scores in other subjects.

223. In work seen during the inspection standards of attainment for pupils in Year 9 are below average. Pupils can understand short written and spoken texts and note the main points. They do not use language sufficiently independently to express meaning and their command of the perfect tense is weak in French. Five new members of staff have joined the department this session including three last month. The disruption this has caused has adversely affected continuity and progress in Years 7-9 as this is where they are mainly deployed. Currently, the department is one full-time teacher short and two of the new staff are not appropriately qualified for the subjects they are teaching which has some impact on pupils' learning. There is some sharing of classes, usually in the lower ability groups. There is less variation in standards than commonly found. Some middle attaining pupils in one group reached a standard equal to, or above the higher attaining pupils in Year 9. This occurs where they have had continuity of teaching from an experienced teacher. The curriculum has breadth but is unbalanced. Lower and middle attaining pupils have almost twice as much lesson time compared to pupils in the top ability groups in Years 8 and 9. The latter, particularly in their second language, have insufficient time to make sustained progress and this impacts on attitudes and attainment. Some pupils get confused because the two languages are taught by the same teacher. Very few pupils pursue study of the second language to GCSE. The teachers work hard to interest pupils but there is some immature behaviour in Year 9 which disrupts the flow of lessons. Effort is variable in all teaching groups and this is reflected in homework. In the classes which have not experienced changes in staff, lower and middle attaining pupils are working in line with national norms but higher attaining pupils are significantly below. In Years 7-9 achievement of most pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, is unsatisfactory. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In Year 11 standards are average. Pupils can cope well with the language required to conduct business in the post office, bank and youth hostel. They do not use language spontaneously to express meaning. Although curricular time is deficient in Years 10 and 11, there is a far larger input of experienced staff and more continuity. Attitudes are significantly better, particularly in the higher ability groups. Teachers work hard to cover the syllabus and much of the marking gives pupils clear guidance on how they can raise standards. As the starting point of the pupils at the beginning of their course is unclear, it must be concluded that the achievement of all groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory

224. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7-9, but progress is less assured due to the staffing and curricular issues. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well-planned and there are some good strategies to capture pupils' attention, for example, the 'through the keyhole' guessing game. Some other good ideas become counter-productive when over-used and the pace of the lesson drops. Sometimes the quality of visual aids is not good enough to aid learning. Teachers work hard to get pupils involved, for example, by allowing them to choose others to answer questions. Pupils, however, need more opportunities and guidance to develop speaking skills in the classroom through presentations and dialogues. There are some good examples of the development of literacy skills which accelerates pupils' progress. A Year 7 German class had devoted a good deal of attention to work on genders and the case system. Learning is assessed at certain points according to National Curriculum criteria, but pupils are not sufficiently aware of their levels. Homework is often not recorded in pupils' planners. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are better. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding and give pupils suitable practice in conversation and coursework preparation. Activities in lessons are well sequenced and teachers carry pupils along with them with a good blend of firmness, humour and encouragement. Pupils are effectively questioned to help them develop their thinking. Teachers are generally more confident in using the language

and this helps to develop pupils' comprehension. Good support material is provided to help pupils prepare for oral examinations but group work to develop speaking skills needs to be better managed to improve pronunciation. The quality of marking is better in these years, but again, insufficient homework is recorded by pupils to fully consolidate progress. Pupils in all years are not receiving their statutory entitlement to ICT and this depresses standards. Help sessions for Year 11 pupils are not formalised enough to have a significant impact. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as teachers attempt to involve them fully in classroom activities but increased support from learning support assistants would help raise attainment, especially in Years 7-9.

225. Leadership and management is satisfactory. Policies are in place, schemes of work are full, clear and provide good guidance to colleagues, although they are not adapted for use in teaching the second language. The head of department and her deputy are working hard to manage affairs in the face of difficult staffing problems. They both provide a great deal of informal support to new colleagues. However, leadership lacks a vision for the future and has not sufficiently addressed the problem of how standards are to be raised.

226. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory as standards have declined in the first three years; there is some deterioration in attitudes, especially in Year 9; the staffing situation is worse, and the departmental ICT facility, praised in the previous report, is now defunct.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching which enables pupils to make progress
- High expectations of work and behaviour
- Very good leadership and management
- Determination to improve and to develop opportunities for students

Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of ICT, particularly for 11 – 13 year olds
- The development of assessment to enable accurate targets to be set for students
- The numbers involved in extra-curricular activity and instrumental lessons

227. The standard of work of 14 year old students is average. Despite their below average attainment in music on entry to the school, many students make satisfactory progress, including pupils with special educational needs, because of the quality of teaching and high expectations. There is insufficient time allocated to music in Years 7–9 to enable pupils to achieve their potential.

228. In 2002 GCSE results were below the comparable national averages for A* - C passes. However all students attained at least a G grade. The number taking the examination in recent years has been too small to have statistical significance. Numbers following GCSE courses are now increasing.

229. Standards of work seen by 15 and 16 year old students vary widely and this is usual in small groups following GCSE music. Overall, achievement is good and examples of very good listening, performing and composing were seen and heard. For example two 16 year old students gave solo performances. One played Bach's *Air in D* to an excellent standard on the horn and a singer performed *Colours of the Wind* with great style and confidence. In lessons on pop music, students listened to examples and were able to describe in analytical

detail the elements of the music using the correct musical vocabulary. Examples of good composing were heard. The use of computers with music software assists students with this aspect but this facility is inadequate for the number of students.

230. Attitudes and behaviour are good with the exception of a small minority of students who interrupt the learning of others occasionally.

231. Work seen among 14 year old students during the inspection showed a wide range in what they could do and understand. Overall the standard is average. Achievement is good given the low levels of attainment in music on entry to the school. Some are able to perform simple pieces they have composed with accuracy and good control, whilst others still struggle with the basic skills of playing in time and with a sense of being part of a group. Composition work is characterised by the repetition of short phrases that lack variety and imagination. Keyboard playing is satisfactory although there is no systematic approach to the teaching of correct keyboard technique. The use of ICT that is required in the National Curriculum can be used effectively in this respect but at present the number of computers with attached musical keyboards is inadequate to meet this requirement.

232. Good foundations are laid with 11 year old students who are based at the lower school site. They sing with enthusiasm, mostly in tune, and are taught the basic skills of composing, listening and performing very effectively. In one lesson students composed a short piece in three parts. The good performances showed an appreciation of melodic shape and contrasting tone colour. Students are taught to use the correct vocabulary to describe and give an opinion about what they listen to. This good practice is typical of the work of the department as a whole and contributes well to the literacy strategy of the school. Achievement overall at Years 7-9 is satisfactory.

233. Attitudes and behaviour among 11 – 14 year old students are good. Instances of poor behaviour are seen, but they are rare. This is because of the high expectations of teachers and their ability to manage behaviour effectively.

234. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the music department, with all ages, is consistently good. Class teaching is successful due to very good planning, the expectation of high standards of work and behaviour and a caring, supportive approach to all students. Pupils enjoy the practical music-making, which is a feature of most lessons. Students are constantly encouraged to produce their best work and are praised and rewarded for good work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils who have benefited from additional music at primary school make satisfactory progress in Years 7-9 and good progress when they specialise in music in Years 10 and 11.

235. Teachers are developing ways of telling students what they must do to improve. A planned review of assessment methods will enable teachers to forecast more accurately the level each student will achieve at the end of Year 9. This will benefit all students, especially the most able who need to be challenged in order to achieve their potential.

236. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities. The total number of pupils taking part is not large in relation to the size of the school. The same is true of the numbers taking instrumental lessons although there has been a growth since the last inspection report. The achievement of students is celebrated in a number of events held throughout the year, those

at Christmas being very popular with parents. The music department makes a good contribution to the ethos of the school.

237. Since the last report the number of improvements made has been very good. Overall, standards are rising and there is a greater use and understanding of musical vocabulary. Listening skills and the ability of pupils to talk about music are good, the planning of lessons and development of policies are very good, the quality of teaching has improved and students are more actively engaged in learning.

238. The accommodation has recently been upgraded from a very poor to an adequate standard with the refurbishment of a suite of rooms. The small size of some rooms is an inhibiting factor but the school has created small groups in Year 9 to enable the best use of rooms and resources to be made. This has a positive effect on raising standards.

239. The music department has very strong leadership and management. There are the beginnings of a renaissance in the work of the department that is enabling the subject to become a vibrant part of school life.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good quality of teaching leading to good quality of learning overall.
- Good achievement by all pupils in lessons from the end of Year 8.
- Very good attitudes of pupils in lessons.
- Excellent range of extracurricular activities which extend pupils' learning.

Areas for Improvement

- The quality and range of learning in Years 7 and 8 is limited by poor facilities, resulting in unequal opportunities for many pupils.
- The systematic monitoring of teaching.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of measuring and noting the progress pupils are making.

240. Standards achieved in GCSE physical education in 2002 at the higher grades (A* to C) were close to the national average. This reflects a rising trend over time. The number of pupils gaining a grade (A* to G) was broadly average. This was expected. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average, particularly in Years 9-11. There are no differences in the achievement of girls and boys, or other groups of pupils.

241. By the end of Year 9, in basketball, girls are able to pass accurately and catch with confidence. They are beginning to develop and exploit space effectively, they can evaluate performances and can offer suggestions for their improvement. In Year 10 trampolining, boys and girls are able to execute 6 bounce sequences in total safety, and with very good form and fluency. In Year 11, boys and girls can correctly locate and define parts of the human anatomy, and are conversant with physiological terminology. This was achieved as a result of searching yet encouraging questioning by the teacher which challenged pupils to think for themselves, and gave them the confidence to consider a range of possible options.

242. Pupils learn well in lessons, but better from the end of Year 8 onwards when they are all on the upper school site, and achievement is good. Pupils perform at higher levels, demonstrating an appreciation of the subtleties of games play. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. They have a good understanding of health related fitness, and of the effects of exercise on the body, and they

are confident to express their views when asked. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and are able to make appropriate progress. High attaining pupils are challenged in a range of ways, including demonstrating for, and supporting and guiding, their peers. Observing and evaluating performance against set criteria is common in the best lessons and this lets pupils recognise and appreciate the progress they have made.

243. Many pupils achieve significant success both in teams and individually, gaining local, regional and national recognition. The school provides for pupils with exceptional ability and has international performers and an age group world record holder on its roll. An excellent range of extracurricular activities, including many competitive fixtures with other schools, provides an impressive range of opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills

244. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good, and they are happy to express their positive opinions of the subject. They arrive promptly in lessons, they are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, and demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive, and listen closely to the guidance and instruction given by their teachers, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. They work hard at tasks which are well matched to their abilities and needs. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good, and pupils are encouraged and trusted to work independently and collaboratively, often not under close supervision. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, and to undertake supportive and advisory roles with their peers are a common feature of the best lessons. The very positive sense of fairness and the recognition and celebration of success at all level underpins the strong moral, social and cultural ethos of the department. Good participation rates means that pupils make the most of the opportunities for learning which are presented to them. Many pupils are undertaking the junior sports leaders award.

245. The quality of learning and teaching is good. Pupils learned new acrobatic skills rapidly because the teacher's subject knowledge, and clarity of explanation ensured that all pupils had a clear picture of what they were trying to grasp. Their knowledge and understanding of basketball improved because teachers challenged them with ever more demanding practices. All teachers pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, the pupils listen carefully, and can thus learn new skills confident in the knowledge that they are safe and secure. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of their work rate and behaviour, and maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons. The pupils respond well to the challenges set by their teachers, and make very high physical and intellectual efforts to learn rapidly. Lessons are well planned and structured, with clear learning objectives. When allied to clear explanations and good demonstrations, this ensures that good learning takes place.

246. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The all specialist teaching staff of this large department are a hard working, dedicated and complementary team who support each other well. They are carefully deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum, and have a shared commitment to continuous improvement. The staff team has the capacity to carry this ambition forward. Assessments of pupils' work are made continuously, and link directly to the detailed and up to date schemes of work. The recording process has potential but is inefficient and cumbersome in operation, being largely paper based., The subject development plan has vision and clarity. There is regular monitoring of teaching, but this is not systematic enough, nor is it overtly focussed on learning outcomes. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Areas identified for improvement have largely been addressed, except where prevented by the need for excessive capital outlay. The school holds the Sportsmark gold award.

247. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The upper school site has a large sports hall, and a gymnasium. However space is at a premium. There are satisfactory outdoor grassed areas and hard surface areas. The changing rooms have recently been refurbished. The lower school facilities are poor and inhibit learning. The school uses alternative local authority facilities nearby, but travel to and from this facility reduces the time pupils spend on task. There is no scope for space sharing on site when the weather is inclement. Pupils in Year 7 are, despite the best efforts of the staff, severely disadvantaged. Those pupils in Year 8 who remain on this site for their education do not have equal opportunities for learning, when compared to other Year 8 pupils who are accommodated at the upper school site. The department is well resourced with learning materials and equipment

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and a dedicated team of committed specialist teachers.
- The quality of teaching, especially lesson planning, the use of a wide range of learning approaches, and the support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The high quality of provision for pupils' personal development and relationships.
- The high standards achieved by pupils on the full GCSE course and the very good work of gifted and talented pupils in Years 7-9.

Areas for improvement

- Develop the quality and use of marking and on-going assessment to monitor pupils' performance and progress; provide feedback to pupils on their attainment and progress; set targets for improvement; guide lesson planning.
- The quality and range of resources, especially the range of artefacts and other non text-based resources; the access to ICT facilities; the access to audio-visual resources at the lower school.
- The standard of the accommodation, especially at the lower school.

248. Since the last inspection there has been a radical transformation in the provision for, and the quality of, religious education and an accompanying change in most pupils' attitudes towards the subject. This has resulted from the appointment of a new team of specialist teachers and the creative, determined and innovative leadership of the subject. Despite remaining accommodation and resource limitations, the school now has good religious education provision and has laid the foundations for considerable further improvement.

249. In the past two years, the small number of pupils following the full GCSE course consistently attained well above school and national averages. The main success story, though, has been in the introduction of the short GCSE course for almost all pupils who are taking the statutory course in religious education in Years 10 and 11. First examinations have yet to be taken but work observed suggests that pupils are working to an at least average standard. Coming from a very low baseline, this represents a very significant achievement. The quality of discussion in lessons can be very good, as in a Year 11 lesson on the Hindu view of the nature of God and in a Year 7 lesson on who is my neighbour? In Years 7-9 standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

250. Attitudes towards the statutory religious education course have undergone a major change, with most pupils throughout the school now responding positively in class and actively engaging with the key ideas. A small minority is actively antagonistic towards this area of learning and, if not managed well, sometimes this can spill over into disruptive

behaviour. Attitudes of pupils following examination courses are very good. Because of the focus on values, pupils' personal development and relationships are of high quality. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress Pupils with special educational needs make at least sound progress and are usually supported by materials that easily accessible and well matched to their needs. The use of visual resources and drawing on materials from art and design, drama and science is helpful to pupils of all abilities. Some of the work produced by gifted and talented pupils is outstanding e.g. letters produced in Year 9 following a study of the Holocaust.

251. Overall the quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good and has greatly benefited from the successful appointment of the new team of specialist teachers. Some pupils' attitudes towards religious education can restrict their learning, especially when working with less experienced staff. Examples of some very good teaching were seen, as in a Year 10 lesson on forgiveness, based around the parable of the Good Samaritan and brought right up-to-date with video clips of interviews with the fathers of Stephen Oakley and Marie Wilson. Most lessons are purposeful, well managed and move along at a brisk pace. Good use is made of homework to extend and reinforce the work done in class. However, more attention should be given to the ways in which on-going assessment can be used to promote pupils' progress. Text-based resources are good but artefact resources are very limited and the absence of ready access to ICT restricts opportunities for both teaching and learning.

252. The quality and range of the religious education curriculum is now satisfactory in Years 7-11, with a clear commitment to extending the range of enrichment activities. However, although provision fully meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in Years 7-9, in Years 10 and 11 a small group of vocational experience pupils do not receive their entitlement to religious education. The school is taking action to remedy this.

253. Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as to citizenship, especially in its focus on personal worth and values, the nature of being, and individual responsibility for other members of the community. There is a strong emphasis given to helping pupils understand those from other faiths and cultures. There is a good focus on applying religious values in the local community and in understanding what lies behind some recent local, national and international news items.

254. The new head of department has a clear vision for taking the department forward. She has already undertaken a thorough analysis of provision and performance and has taken major steps to achieve improvements. There is now a very good department handbook and schemes of work, both of which strongly reflect the school's aims and values. The move towards a dedicated suite of rooms improves access to specialist resources but more accommodation improvements are needed if the status of the subject is to be improved further, especially at the lower school. The provision of specialist staff is excellent, although further provision to support the development needs of newly qualified teachers would be helpful. There is clear evidence of strong commitment by the school and the subject team to making this a thoroughly successful department. As a consequence, improvement is very good.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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	83	*	50	*	6.2	*
Chemistry	4	100	*	50	*	6.5	*
Biology	21	100	*	38	*	6.0	*
Physics	8	75	*	13	*	3.3	*
Design and technology	13	85	*	38	*	5.4	*
Business	25	96	*	28	*	5.9	*
Business AVCE	12	83	*	0	*	5.3	*
Economics	7	86	*	43	*	6.0	*
Physical education	15	87	*	20	*	4.9	*
Health and social care AVCE	5	100	*	40	*	6.0	*
Art and design	13	100	*	46	*	7.1	*
Art and design AVCE	5	100	*	0	*	5.6	*
Drama	9	89	*	0	*	3.1	*
Geography	11	100	*	18	*	5.6	*
History	18	100	*	28	*	6.2	*
Government and politics	7	100	*	71	*	7.1	*
Sociology	3	100	*	67	*	8.0	*
Psychology	24	83	*	38	*	5.2	*
English language	22	95	*	45	*	6.4	*
English literature	16	100	*	69	*	7.6	*
Modern foreign languages French	6	100	*	83	*	8.3	*
Modern foreign languages German	8	100	*	25	*	6.0	*

* National comparison data for AS / A Level 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, chemistry and biology. Physics was sampled. In physics, a small number of students sit A -level each year. In 2001, all four attained a pass grade. In 2002, of the eight who took the examination, three-quarters attained a pass grade. In the one Year 13 physics lesson sampled, teaching was good. Students consolidated their knowledge and developed well their understanding of radioactivity due to the good use of a simulation exercise.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Knowledgeable enthusiastic teaching helps students to learn well
- Students' attitudes are very positive; they enjoy mathematics
- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Assessment of students' work and support with difficulties, are good and promote learning

Areas for improvement

- More systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching would reduce the small proportion of teaching that is only satisfactory, and increase that which is good or very good.

255. Teaching and learning are good and this leads to above average standards in work seen, and in Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced level (A) results. Students achieve well and there is a good range of mathematics courses for the size of the sixth form.. Retention rates are good and the number taking mathematics is increasing. There were no specific issues identified for action in the last inspection report.

256. The A- level results in 2001 were in line with national averages. However, the 2002 results are much better, with those of girls being very good. Over the years the results have fluctuated by gender, depending on the profile of each cohort of students. During the inspection, there was no evidence of significant difference in attainment by gender. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is generally in line with national course averages. Students enjoy mathematics, work very hard, make good progress in lessons and over time their achievement is good.

257. Higher attaining students are able to assimilate new ideas well and apply them to new and more complex situations. They develop a high level of critical thinking and reach high standards in their work, for example, as shown in their use of calculus. Average attaining students make steady progress, extending their knowledge and skills and developing confidence in their ability to use these in more testing questions. They reach standards that are just above national averages. This was shown in their ability to sketch a wide variety of curves and interpret the impact of changes in functions on the shape of a graph. The very few lower attainers apply their knowledge and skills to standard situations. They have some difficulty in recall of techniques and in interpreting problems stated in a slightly different way from the ones they are used to.

258. Students feel very well supported in their learning. They feel that regular and detailed assessment helps them to know the standards of their work and exactly what they have to do to improve. There is very good additional support available outside lessons from all mathematics teachers, including regular after school study support. The AS further mathematics course extends the provision for higher attaining students, although as yet there is not a full advanced level further mathematics course.

259. Overall, teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and some very good teaching was observed. Strong teaching communicates an enthusiasm for mathematics to students, receiving a similar response from them. Questioning is used well to probe understanding and to make students think. The level of mathematical debate is high and this is a key factor in good, sometimes very good, learning. ICT is used effectively, and quickly on teachers' portable computers, to improve learning, for example to illustrate work on algebraic functions. When teaching is satisfactory, not better, it is because the teacher tends to talk for too long without sufficient involvement by students.

260. The acting head of department provides good leadership and management to a strong team of specialist teachers. Courses are well structured, with a clear overview provided for students to help them plan their work. However, there is not enough systematic monitoring and evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning still further.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The standard of attainment at A level are consistently above the national average.
- Teaching is good and lessons are well structured with different activities designed to help students learn and improve their understanding.
- The team of teachers all have very secure subject knowledge which allows them to present the subject in different ways.
- The relationships between the staff and students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons teachers do not give sufficient opportunity for students to develop independence as learners.
- The pace of some lessons is too slow and does not allow students to be actively involved all the time.

261. In the years up to 2002, the attainment of students taking A level biology has consistently been very high in relation to national results. Results in biology have been consistently better than in other subjects in the school, with every student attaining a pass grade in the last four years, nearly half of these at grades A and B. However, the average point score has not followed any trend up or down. The first AS results in 2001 showed that all students also attained a pass grade, over half of them at grade A or B. In 2002, more students took both AS and A level examination and there has been slightly reduced attainment at the higher levels.

262. In the current year the increased number of students choosing the subject has meant that there are now three groups instead of the usual two in Year 12. All students start the course having attained higher grades in GCSE double award science and many complete both years. Students make good progress given their starting points and very many exceed their expected grade. Above average attainment by Year 13 students was demonstrated as they developed their understanding of the detailed internal structure of the eye and its

associated nerve pathways. Similarly they were able to refer to previous work on protein structure to explain the chemical reactions involved in the production of waste products in urine. Coursework elements covered in a residential field trip to the Lake District and the coast were used very effectively to enhance students' learning of how plants colonise and stabilise different areas.

263. There are four subject specialists responsible for delivering the subject with different lengths of experience. The standard of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to use a variety of methods to stimulate and interest students and this can lead to good learning. Using dissections of a pig's eye and lamb's kidney in different lessons made learning about the structure of each more relevant. In another lesson, students were able to consider their own views about genetic engineering and cloning by placing a series of statements on a 'moral line'. In the better lessons, teachers set and maintain a brisk pace and fit many different activities into the hour sessions. Students are kept involved and challenged to think about what they are learning by high level questions posed by the teacher. In less successful lessons, the pace is too slow because the different activities take too long or students passively watch a video without being questioned about what it contains.

264. All students demonstrate good application to work and relationships are very good. Files are generally well kept and organised with completed work and notes made by the students themselves. However, the work of lower attaining students sometimes lacks detail and answers are superficial. Often examination questions are used within lessons or set as homework. Marking of these and essays is thorough and informative so students know how to improve.

265. The subject is well co-ordinated by the recently appointed teacher-in charge. He has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and plans improvements in the resources and schemes of work.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they communicate their enthusiasm for the subject.
- Teaching of chemistry theory is very good. Teachers help students to use reasoning skills to develop scientific vocabulary and explain chemical phenomena.
- Students are prepared well for module tests and examinations through supported note-making and regular practice of questions.

Areas for improvement

- Making much more use of practical chemistry (scientific enquiry) to develop real understanding of chemical reactions, patterns and processes.
- Making explicit the demands of the sixth form courses and expectations of students to improve their response to the requirement for independent study and attendance.
- More detailed analysis of student performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of sixth form chemistry provision.

266. The GCE A level examination results from 1998 to 2001 fluctuated varying from well above average in 1999 to below average in 2001. The results in 2002 showed an improvement but there were no national figures available for comparison at the time of the inspection. In relation to their GCSE grades students made satisfactory progress. Except for

two students in 2001, all students who have taken the examination over the past five years have obtained a pass grade. Overall, male and female students do equally well. Each year, a significant minority of students does not complete the course.

267. Standards in work seen are average. During the week of the inspection the attendance of sixth form chemistry students was low for a number of reasons. The students seen in both Years 12 and 13 are working at the standards expected for their courses. Year 12 students show good understanding of introductory organic chemistry and some can explain the mechanisms of addition reactions with alkenes. Year 13 students can describe the reactions of transition metals, using confidently and correctly the terms ligand, co-ordination number and hydrolysis. Male and female students, minority ethnic groups and able chemists all make good progress in theory lessons. In both year groups practical skills are below average.

268. Overall the teaching of chemistry is only satisfactory because practical work is seldom used as the medium through which content is taught. The chemistry teachers teach theoretical chemistry very well. They display very good subject knowledge which they use very effectively in their questioning, explanations, exemplification and structured approach to teaching key ideas. They target questions to involve all students in whole class discussion. Teachers are enthusiastic and students enjoy these lessons, responding thoughtfully, completing tasks and working at a good pace. Students are well prepared for tests and examinations through supported note-making, practice questions with very good oral and written feedback, accurate assessment and useful suggestions for independent work. The weakness of sixth form chemistry provision is that students have too few practical lessons to develop confidence in relating the theory they learn to real chemicals and their reactions. Where there are practical lessons the teacher's knowledge and skill enable the learning opportunities to be fully exploited, students enjoy the activities, work at their own pace and solve a wider range of problems than is met in theory lessons.

269. The attitude of most chemistry students is good. They work hard, participate well in lessons, do their homework and learn from their mistakes. A significant minority fails to attend lessons regularly or hand in homework.

270. The management of chemistry is satisfactory. It cannot be graded higher because the curriculum does not make enough use of scientific enquiry to promote learning. The course is very well organised to develop knowledge and understanding of chemistry theory and to prepare students for tests and examinations. The two chemistry teachers work very well together as a team. The Year 12 students only receive 16% of taught time and the period allocated for private study is not used for supported self-study in order to free time for regular practical chemistry. There is too much tolerance of repeated absence and failure to hand in homework. Good records are kept of test and examination marks to monitor student progress. There is no detailed analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses of the chemistry curriculum and strategies for improvement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology, product design. One engineering lesson was sampled. Standards of attainment are average overall. Students have a sound grasp of mathematical concepts to support their work in designing engineering products. They design work, which is ambitious and functional, such as a motorised ramp for wheelchair access to buildings. Teaching is very effective and, in consequence, students are learning very well.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good
- There are very good relationships between students and teachers

Areas for improvement

- The use of newly introduced systems to monitor progress of individual students is not yet established

271. The course in product design has been introduced recently with the first group of students taking advanced level examinations in 2002. Provisional results for that year show above average standards with very good achievement based on prior learning compared to 2001 national figures. 2001 is the last year for which national comparison data has been published. Retention rates are good.

272. Standards of work are average in Year 13. Higher attaining students produce designs, which are imaginative and functional for their projects using the work of well-known designers to inspire their own work. Students document the development of their designs in well-organised folders using annotated sketches and formal drawings to chart progress. The work of higher attaining students show depth of research and very good understanding of the design process, including how ideas change as a result of realistic evaluation of work in progress. Lower attaining students have a sound knowledge of consumers' needs and wants but their ideas lack originality and their writing is too superficial. Standards are above average in Year 12. Students research work in depth for product development and use of materials. They use computers to present work to a high standard and apply their knowledge of design to produce very effective page layout and use of colour. They show good understanding of design concepts linked to consumers' requirements and justify their design solutions against researched evidence.

273. Achievement is good in relation to prior attainment and experience. Students adapt well to the additional demands of study at this level and use computers efficiently to design and complement their hand drawings and to present information to a very good standard. Some who have only limited previous experience make very good progress with drawing skills and communicating their ideas effectively. All students are making very good progress with managing their coursework assignments because they take account of teachers' comments on their work and have mature attitudes to learning. Students write at length and mainly accurately, communicating information efficiently through good use of technical terms. They make very good progress in learning about different traditions in designs inspired by work of William Morris and that emanating from the Bauhaus. Students often show exceptional focus in lessons and work well independently. Achievement, although good, has been adversely affected by poor accommodation and resources until this year.

274. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to inspire and challenge students. Their relationships with students are very good. They encourage independent learning and provide very good individual guidance to ensure that all students achieve their best. Teachers plan their lessons well. They are introducing improved systems to monitor the progress of individual students, which are just beginning to prove beneficial. The level of discussion, together with contributions from visiting lecturers from higher education, prepares students very well for their next stage of education.

275. Leadership and management of the course are very good. There is clear direction for the work of the subject and excellent communication between teachers. They work as a team to plan and contribute to lessons and communicate their enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject to students. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs and interests of students and provides continuity of learning from Year 11.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- Good, with examples of very good teaching which give students a good range of relevant activity.
- Effective use of up to date and relevant case studies and the links established with business.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for AS and A-level students which does not match modern business environments.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning and opportunities for regular formal discussions within the teaching team.
- Some work is not marked and returned to students quickly enough.

276. In 2001, standards were below average in the vocational and A-level courses. In both cases however, students achieved well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the courses. A-level results and advanced vocational results improved in 2002 and students made significantly better progress than expected from their GCSE results. Retention rates are good.

277. From observation in lessons and scrutiny of files standards in current AS and A-level courses are above average. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE and AS performance. In the vocational advanced course standards are negatively influenced by poor attendance. Standards are below average, particularly in relation to higher grades, but with more regular attendance students could achieve a grade. Achievement currently is just satisfactory.

278. AS and A-level students are able to work independently and carry out enquiry tasks. A good example seen was the use of computers and the Internet to relate motivational theories to students' own experiences in the sixth form. They participate in lessons and in both years show a good understanding of business theory and are able to relate it to the real business world. For example, understanding the characteristics and nature of boom to bust in economic growth and how governments try to control such situations.

279. Teaching on all courses is good and learning matches this in the AS and A-level groups. There is also some very good teaching. When present, vocational students achieve well in lessons as a result of good teaching, but progress over time is only satisfactory as a consequence of poor attendance. Lessons are well planned and structured. Teachers have high expectations and challenge students to become independent thinkers. Up to date case studies are used to help students relate their theoretical knowledge to the real work place.

This was seen in several lessons, for example, the use of SWOT analysis within marketing and the development of 'cell' production techniques. Marking is helpful and enables students to be aware of the standards they are achieving and how they can improve their work. There are occasions however when work is not always marked quickly enough. Students on the AS and A-level courses are positive about their work and most produce good essays and notes. This combined with the good teaching results in good gains in learning. There are however weaknesses in some of the more mathematical financial tasks and essays frequently display lack of detail, indicating limited reading around the subject. Vocational students are making poorer progress in knowledge and understanding, because they are so frequently away from school.

280. The subject is well led and managed. Examination results are carefully analysed and subject development planning is thorough. Students of differing levels of attainment are well provided for and included equally in all aspects of the department's work. Assessment procedures are in place and data is well used to evaluate teaching and learning and the appropriateness of the curriculum. The subject contributes implicitly to students' moral, social and cultural development. Resources are good and accommodation for vocational students is good. It is however unsatisfactory for AS and A-level students. For most of their lessons they are taught in sixth form block rooms, which do not does not match, in any way, modern business environments. Meetings between teachers to discuss lesson planning and students' progress are also infrequent.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was information and communication technology (AVCE). The key skills course was also sampled.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Courses suited to a broader range of students coming into the sixth form.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Individual support given to students.

Areas for improvement

- Results from the 2002 examinations are too low.
- Tasks are not tailored to suit different levels of ability.
- Students have insufficient feedback from teachers on what they need to do to improve.

281. The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) three-unit award was examined for the first time in summer 2002. The emphasis in the department is to offer a range of opportunities suited to the broader spectrum of students entering the sixth form. From September 2002 the department has offered three, six and twelve unit awards. This has been well received with increasing numbers of students taking these courses although boys predominate over girls. There are currently no plans to extend the offer to Advanced Subsidiary, or Advanced General Certificate of Education. The department also offers a key skills course in ICT. This is focused upon ensuring that students are able to acquire and practice ICT principally to level 2, roughly equivalent to GCSE standard.

282. Standards overall are average. Retention rates are good but pass rates are well below the national average. In 2002, the course was run after school as an extra-curricula activity. No student attained pass grades A-C and only 60 per cent attained grades A-E.

There is currently no national comparative data on these results. Standards as seen in the majority of lessons are average overall but with a wide variation. Students opting to study ICT at this level have a wide range of prior attainment and they have widely different ambitions, interests and motivations for the future use of their ICT qualifications. For example, students work showed that some could confidently customise excel spreadsheets using a variety of tools. The user interface was well designed, attractive and easily navigated using a range of graphics and buttons. Automated routines built into the spreadsheets allowed potential customers to calculate prices of different product ranges and equipment levels. Others struggled to reach this level of competency and overall samples of work showed an extremely wide range of interest and competence. There are no significant differences between the standards of attainment or achievement of boys and girls. Achievement is satisfactory although those students taking the three-unit award progress more slowly in lessons. The standards of attainment of students taking the key skills course are below average. For example, students can enter data into spreadsheets and confidently manipulate these using simple formulas but they struggle to perform more complex routines.

283. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They adapt it well to create lessons which are made up of easy to follow sequential steps that create a good framework for further individual learning. For instance, in a lesson using visual basic programming tools to devise instructions to execute simple routines, the teacher used a data projector to show step-by-step how a task might be accomplished. Quick fire questions ensured that students understood the logic of each step and hence could get under the skin of the problem. This enabled them to then work alone with a good degree of confidence and independence. The rapport with the students was very good and they valued the helpful and well-informed support the teacher gave them to complete their work. In a key skills lesson the teacher acted as a facilitator, providing individual advice to students as they worked through a range of tasks. However, because of the relatively large size, and the wide range of prior attainment and interest within some advanced vocational groups, learning can be merely satisfactory rather than good on occasions. This can be exacerbated by the lack of tasks suited to different levels of ability.

284. Students' progress against target grades is not well monitored overall. The department stores a range of data about students' prior attainment and tracks their progress with tests and assignments. The degree to which this is successfully shared with students is unclear. Overall, students are not aware of what they need to do to improve. There is some good practice in the department. For instance, one teacher had broken down the grade criteria for an assignment and clearly explained the extent to which the criteria had been met and what was needed to improve. The tracking of meetings with students was impressive with dates and brief comments of meetings kept.

285. Leadership and management in the curriculum area is satisfactory overall. Teachers meet to moderate the results of assignment work and plan the curriculum. The department is aware of the need to raise standards, particularly by more effectively monitoring students' progress so that they know what and how they can improve.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Students' very good attitude to learning.
- Very good teaching leading to very good learning
- Good achievement in lessons and in examinations.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Information on how well students are progressing is not used efficiently to raise standards further.

286. In 2002, standards at A2-level fell below average for higher grades based upon 2001 national comparisons. This was not unexpected and reflected the prior attainment of the students. This does not represent a trend. There is good evidence to suggest that results in 2003 will return to the previous higher levels. Retention rates are very good.

287. Standards seen in lessons, and in the scrutiny of students work, are above average. All students in the sixth form have very good attitudes to learning and consistently produce coursework and classwork of a good standard. They find advanced level work very demanding, but interesting and exciting. They take an active part in discussions, and show good skills as independent learners when carrying out individual research. Their theoretical work is of a higher standard than would be expected based on their prior attainment. All students have a good technical knowledge and understanding, and a good range of performance skills. They are continually building their portfolios as a result of the demands for quality outputs from their teachers. Students achieve well. They are happy with their choice of courses, and feel able to gain valuable support from teachers when needed. They have a strong feeling of group identity. They respond well to the challenges set by their teachers. Relationships between the students themselves, and between the students and their teachers are very good. The students respect each other's views, and they give mutual support and encouragement. They work well co-operatively in groups of various sizes, and they are enthusiastic about their involvement in physical education. Different groups of students make progress at broadly similar rates.

288. Year 12 students meet the challenges set by well-planned and demanding teaching. All students have a sound grasp of the factors influencing the growth of sport in the 20th and 21st centuries, based on their studies of the traditional sports in Britain in earlier centuries. They are beginning to understand the bio-mechanical functions of anatomical levers, and have gained a clear and personal picture of the pressures of making presentations to fellow students. They have a good understanding of the technical vocabulary of the subject.

289. Year 13 students have a good knowledge of public school athleticism as the basis for sport in schools today, and as the foundation underpinning the Corinthian attitude in this country. Drawing on their general knowledge and understanding of wider issues, they are able to debate and exchange alternative views of this historical development. They also have a good understanding of leadership theory, and are able to debate the advantages and disadvantages of prescribed and emerged leaders.

290. Teaching is very good, and this encourages students of all abilities to learn well. The best teaching is characterised by the clarity of its objectives, which consolidate and extend previous work, and by the challenges it presents to students to take responsibility for their own learning, often by the use of open ended questions. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in their questioning and exposition. They have high expectations of their students in terms of work rate and performance, both physical and intellectual. The students respond with confidence and trust to the demands of the teachers.

291. Leadership and management are very good. Particular staff strengths are well deployed to meet the demands of the sixth form syllabus. The teaching team are energetic and committed and has a strong determination to raise standards even higher. All assessments are regular and give student a clear picture of their own progress. Student performance data could be used more effectively for tracking students' progress in wider context, comparing their own progress with that of other students nationally. It could also be used more effectively to inform curriculum development.

292. Good accommodation and good resources for learning support the effectiveness of well planned and organised lessons.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was on health and social care.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Students make considerable progress, which enables them to identify the appropriate language and to use this in the relevant context.
- Enthusiastic students develop a range of core skills, which are utilised in their written portfolios and homework. They work well together and provide help, support and additional resources for each other.
- Teaching is good: lessons are well planned; teachers give encouragement and provide support to all students. Marking is effective in highlighting both success and areas for improvement.
- A range of technologies is competently and effectively used in students' presentations.
- There is good leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Visits to different settings need to be monitored to ensure that sufficient time is available for observations.

293. There are 13 Year 12 students taking the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Health and Social Care course, with 11 taking the double award and 2 the single award. There are 7 students in Year 13 with 4 on the double award and 3 on the single award. Retention rates are good. Extending links with the community include first year students taking one of the units at a local college. Examination results for 2002 included 2 at grade B; 2 at C and 1 E. Students achieved well in relation to their previous attainment.

294. Overall standards are above average. Students, most with modest GCSE grades, chose the subject because of interest. The work of current students is above average and folders, portfolios and contributions in class indicate good achievement. In lessons they respond with enthusiasm to the effective teaching. In one Year 12 lesson students presented

an introduction to the work of some leading analysts of child behaviour. Working in small groups the students brought together their presentations. A variety of techniques was used with some expertise, including Overhead transparencies and PowerPoint. Students worked closely together and their contributions suggested that many had a working understanding of the theories, particularly when they were asked to explain different terms where these were either complex or needed further clarification. The teacher provided support when difficulty was encountered. In a Year 13 lesson on institutionalisation and mental health, students responded to those activities which encouraged them to analyse the different consequences of maintaining independence in a number of residential settings. Most students use the concepts with familiarity and some could also use information drawn from their other subjects.

295. Students in Year 12 have already developed a range of core skills and an independent approach which reflects the careful balance of the teaching with inputs on science; psychology and social care. The link with the college provides a further opportunity to establish confidence in their approach to the subject.

296. Teaching is good overall. The main features are clear lesson plans and structures which build on the content of other units. Teaching strategies ensure that each student can contribute. Content is chosen to illustrate different theoretical approaches and uses examples drawn from the range of health and care provision. Learning outcomes are clearly identified and students have detailed guidance on portfolio preparations. Core skills are included in each module with greater emphasis on numeracy in the science modules. Marking includes many helpful comments and supportive and encouraging remarks.

297. Good students' assignments are well presented and all the major points are covered. The better presentations provide detailed analysis which uses empirical materials and suggests explanations of these activities. Unit 20 enabled students to explore the work of a specific occupations and evidence suggest that students can select appropriate contributions from relevant websites. Weaker presentations are descriptive and do not develop a more critical approach.

298. Students have positive attitudes to the course. They have confidence in their teachers and in the support of their classmates. They have good communication skills which enhanced by class presentations. Their considerable energy is channelled into the work and they are keen to include everyone in the activity.

299. The subject is well led and managed. There has been a change in leadership and the intention is to expand the provision, not only within the school but to increase the contact with the local college. Outside speakers contribute on their special areas of interest. Schemes of work are detailed and offer staff guidance and advice on the subject requirements. Monitoring is undertaken carefully and students have a clear indication of their specific targets. Resources and accommodation are appropriate for the subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design at AVCE and AS/A level together with drama. Two lessons were observed in music. Teaching and learning were judged to be good.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Results in GCE examinations.
- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Excellent teaching staff.
- Excellent assessment.
- Relationships and attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of drawing for particular purposes.
- The lack of independent learning in the AVCE course.

300. The AVCE art and design results in 2001 were below the national average and less good than recent years or 2002. The AS GCE results were well above the national average in 2001. More than three-quarters of the candidates attained the highest grades. The 2002 AS results were also good. The 2001 A2 results were close to the national average. Almost half of the candidates gained the highest grades. The 2002 A2 results were an improvement on 2001 and those at the last inspection. Good numbers of students begin courses in art and design and the vast majority speak highly of the department and pursue their studies to the final examination.

301. Standards in the sixth form are above average. A significant characteristic of students' work is that of discovery and investigation. The GCE students' practical skills in painting, drawing and mixed media are more highly developed than those following the AVCE course. Students make good connections between their own work and that of contemporary and traditional artists including Helen Chadwick, David Bomberg, Peter Blake, Jackson Pollock and Bridget Riley although they lack the necessary personal view of these artists gained from reading and research. Subject matter is invariably of natural objects influenced by other artists. Sketchbooks are particularly innovative with experimentation and investigation of drawing, collage and mixed media. Students lack an understanding of drawing to collect specific information about space, light or texture or to develop compositional ideas. They use line, shape and colour with great skill but much important information is lost when they go on to 'finish' and thus overwork their drawings. The students' work is ambitious and innovative and ranges from pocket-sized sketchbooks to paintings much larger than they themselves. A particularly successful body of work started with mention of the Victorian artist Thomas Hearne's drawings of Gothic architecture in landscape, that then influenced the student's studies of shells, starfish and plants, culminating in a painting inspired by the rafters inside of a barn. The work had echoes of the linear qualities in the work of the English painter David Bomberg. There are skilful interpretations of shiny metal engineering parts in paint, pastel and ink on various papers and excellent studies of water strongly influenced by Bridget Riley's swirling Op Art. A large sculpture inspired by Andy Goldsworthy's ice sculptures gives an insight into the challenging nature of the work. The achievements of the GCE students are very good. They seize the initiative and develop their work in directions independent of their teachers. The small group of students following the AVCE course do not accept the same responsibility for their work. They are not well motivated, they depend heavily on their teachers for direction and they lack the same self-knowledge of their learning or their performance levels. Their achievements are unsatisfactory.

302. Teaching and learning in art and design are good. Year 12 students made very good progress in a lesson devoted to the development of ideas inspired by graphic designers. The teacher's knowledge of contemporary graphic designers and her insight into their developing ideas from thumbnail to finished product was central to the students' activities. The teacher's inspired presentation referred to arresting imagery and creative typography as an element of the composition. The challenging activity requires students to use small resource packs of cardboard, paper strips and photocopies, to think and be original, exciting designers. The exceptionally well planned activity had huge opportunities for advanced learning. Individual students discussed their work with their teacher, gaining an excellent view of their performance relative to the examination board's assessment objectives. The only unsatisfactory learning occurred in an AVCE lesson when Year 13 students arrived without having prepared for the lesson. The resources they used in the lesson were those provided by their teacher, as were the ideas they were developing.

303. The curriculum in art and design is good with opportunities to work with painting and drawing, print, sculpture, clay, mixed media, computers and textiles. The department arranges visits to museums and galleries both locally and in London. The assessment of the students' work is excellent and occupies a central role in the students' work, providing guidance on learning and making reference to individual student's weaknesses in meeting particular assessment objectives.

304. The leadership and management in art and design are very good. The head of department monitors learning and oversees the professional development of her colleagues. Planning mirrors the school's priorities. Teachers' excellent up-to-date skills and interests are reflected in the quality of the students' work: one student achieved one of the five best A-level marks in the United Kingdom. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Sixth formers do not have studio space, the room equipped for three-dimensional work is dark, and the lighting makes observation and analysis difficult. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. GCE results in the sixth form have improved to above average with higher ability students doing particularly well. Teaching was mainly good but is now good and sometimes very good.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are rising and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is good, and often excellent; classroom management of students is very good and ensures good learning.
- The provision of a high degree of challenge for students of all abilities.
- Students enjoy the work, respond well to it and gain self-esteem through the enhancement of their personal and presentational skills.
- Students acquire self-discipline and an understanding of co-operation, as well as the importance of working as part of a team.
- Students' work is well assessed, enabling them to know exactly how to improve.
- Excellent leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- To place an even greater degree of emphasis on the development of students' oral skills.

305. In 2002, students' attainment in A level drama was broadly average based on the latest national data for 2001 but no candidates achieved the higher A and B grades. Results at AS level in that year were also average. However, since then, the school has changed the A and AS level course to one which has less of a literary base and is more practical and concerned with performance. Numbers in both Years 12 and 13 have risen dramatically and there are almost equal numbers of male and female students following the course. Retention is good.

306. Current attainment in Year 13 is average, but with some very good performance features. It is clear that standards are rising rapidly and students are making very good progress. This rate of progress is even more clearly to be seen in Year 12. Students approach their work with enthusiasm, enjoyment and effort and are keen to learn. They have a clear understanding of the teamwork and trust which are involved in drama activities. They are able to improvise with alacrity, understanding and sensitivity, showing innovative thoughts and approaches. Their work on scripted texts, such as 'Blood Wedding', shows very impressive and concentrated effort and reflection. When working on text in performance, they demonstrate good powers of interpretation and many of the technical skills of stagecraft. They understand and recognise the methods of practitioners such as Stanislavski and Brecht and are able to move between theatre genres, such as the ritualistic and realistic, with growing ease. In their written work, students are able to show the process of building from ideas such as 'Women Who Kill', ranging from material such as newspaper articles on Myra Hindley to Euripides' 'Medea', and their ability to develop these ideas through drama workshops into their own scripted plays. They keep extensive drama diaries, with clear self-evaluation. Their coursework on such plays as 'The Glass Menagerie' is full, coherent and thoughtful. Careful attention is paid to exploration of social, historical and cultural backgrounds of plays and playwrights. Levels of literacy vary greatly, but are satisfactory overall.

307. Teaching is good and often excellent. Both teachers who share the sixth form teaching have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are able to communicate well with students, guiding them very well to develop their skills and understanding. Lessons are planned with clarity and very clear objectives, allowing for activities to be sufficiently varied across the different areas of study. In addition, individual lessons are composed of excellent physical warm-up exercises, which move smoothly into more challenging intellectual exercises and then to the main purpose of the lesson. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 12 lesson, where the teacher was skilfully guiding pupils into building character profiles by placing them in role in everyday situations, such as a supermarket or a library. This lesson produced some very good vignettes, not the least one of a World War Two veteran looking for companionship in the library, which was both engaging and moving. Teachers encourage and advise with good humour and expertise, but ensuring that the pace of work is seldom allowed to slacken and that time is used to the utmost advantage. As a result, students remain involved and engaged. A real strength of the lessons is the use made of the final sessions in the lesson, which is used to draw together, illustrate and, where relevant, to perform what has been accomplished, allowing students and teacher the opportunity to evaluate what they have achieved. The teacher's management of the students appears effortless in the way in which they immediately immerse students in the work in hand, encouraging good rapport and willingness to work and learn together. One of the most remarkable features of lessons lies in the high degree of challenge offered to pupils of all abilities and the way in which pupils rise to meet the challenge. The way in which the subject is taught adds greatly to the development of the self-esteem of all students and good citizenship.

308. Students express very positive views on their enjoyment of the subject and the realisation of its importance to them. It is clear that they feel inspired by their teachers and are prompted to produce work, which is full of effort and response. They value the opportunities for discussion and exploration, understand the aims of the course well and find the emphasis on self-evaluation very helpful. As well as enjoying their work, students, through the enhancement of their personal skills and their improved ability to present themselves to others, gain self-esteem, confidence and a knowledge of their real capabilities, which serves them in good stead in all areas of their lives. Relationships are very good and teachers have an excellent rapport with the students. The course enables students to acquire a strong sense of self-discipline and an understanding of the importance of working as part of a team.

309. Assessment of students' work, both in performance and written, plays a large part in helping them achieve to their full potential. Constant evaluation, by the teacher, their peers and themselves, ensures that they know exactly what they have achieved and how they can improve upon it.

310. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The inspirational subject manager, who has been in post only since last September, is an experienced specialist with vision, energy and a love of her work. Her new schemes of work, together with her priorities for development and her insistence on the importance of as many theatrical experiences as possible for students is so important for the development of the subject. Accommodation for the teaching of the subject is now good. Staffing and other resources are good, except for the provision of more sophisticated ICT equipment to aid the delivery of the curriculum. The course is well supplemented by visits to theatres and presentations by students to the school and to the public, for example the devised pieces on 'Medea' and on 'Ariel', a play about the life of Sylvia Plath.

311. The one area for development to increase progress further is the placing of even greater emphasis on students' oral skills. Some students still find it difficult to express themselves clearly, though they are eager to explore different styles of speech and register. They improvise with alacrity, but it is not always easy to hear what they say clearly.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history, religious education and sociology but geography was sampled. In the one geography lesson observed teaching and learning were good. Results at A level in 2001 were average. Similar results were achieved in 2002.

History

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

Strengths

- A level standards are above average.
- Practical guidance for writing and devices for organising formidable amounts of information raise standards.
- Well-informed decisions about resources have extended provision.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils have too few opportunities for extended talk about complex ideas using historical terms.
- Greater variety of sources is needed to enable pupils to interpret factual knowledge against the spirit of the times.

312. Attainment at GCE "A" level is above average, rising significantly in 2002 because of boys' achievement at grades A and B. Girls' results were below the national average and teachers know they need to raise girls' participation in lessons. The proportions of pupils leaving history after A/S level are in line with intentions at the start of the course. Numbers choosing history are healthy and have increased by being under constant review.

313. Standards of work seen indicate average attainment overall because of the current broader ability range. However higher attaining pupils study after school for the Extension paper. Analysis of results and targets based on previous attainment, including the Year 12 review, have resulted in resources and support appropriate to different ability needs. Bids by the Head of Department for funding through the Learning Directorate, mean that increased demand for texts was met without delay to allow each student to have their own study copy for each topic. Pupils greatly appreciate using library and computer facilities at Edgehill College and Bolton Institute of Higher Education. They learn effective techniques for answering exam questions and benefit from step-by step guidance for the Personal Study. This is particularly good support for students with literacy problems.

314. They use writing conventions to introduce, compare and weigh evidence from conflicting sources and synthesise a formidable amount of judgement-based interpretation into a well argued discourse and conclusion. These skills are supported by pupils' well developed, spontaneous note making and a range of sorting, tabulating and diagrammatic devices for recording information. They use specific techniques for evaluating sources efficiently, which lead them quickly towards confident judgements. This foundation of support and study skills focused at raising attainment also reflects good teaching.

315. Impressive commitment to the subject is reflected in carefully organised files so that reference back and revision is efficient. From the study of 20th century Russian and British history they understand the beneficial and corrupting effects of power. They make comparisons across time, in written and oral work to evaluate the nature of changing political ideologies and the extent to which leaders confront the real effects of policies on peoples' lives. Year 13 pupils for example, were quick to conclude that Russian people's views on Stalin's collectivisation depended on a number of circumstantial factors including age, employment, where people lived and previous quality of life.

316. All this points to good teaching, sometimes very good, that helps pupils to meet the demands of sixth form history. They are actively involved, sometimes in pairs or groups, perhaps preparing one aspect of a topic. This challenges them to be accurate because others will depend on them when the time comes for sharing. Learning is also good because teaching generates a high level of responsibility and commitment. Challenges structured to produce extended oral feedback from source evaluation, for example, would sharpen pupils' ability to question and discuss across the group instead of through the teacher and make them more articulate historians before they move on. Teachers' own passion and broad subject knowledge, carefully interwoven with pupils' contributions deepens understanding. They know their pupils very well and their positive attitude to students makes the challenges achievable. There is a limited range of sources reflecting the spirit of the times (songs and music, novels, film, poetry, paintings, fashionable pastimes etc.) Pupils need this added dimension to broaden their interpretation of factual knowledge.

317. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Leadership is good; careful to protect and develop the features of history that attract pupils to it.

Religious studies

Overall, the quality of provision in religious studies at AS and A-level is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Teachers' have very good subject knowledge and lessons are very well planned.
- The subject is very well led and managed; there is very clear educational vision and a capacity to succeed in raising standards and status of the subject.
- Good monitoring of teaching and learning. One to one mentoring of students is very good.
- Good textbook resources.

Areas for improvement

- Limited access to computers.
- The very limited provision, for non AS and A-level students, does not meet statutory requirements.
- Numbers of students opting for the subject.

318. The current provision in religious studies caters for six students on AS and A-level courses. The school does not meet the statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for the remaining three hundred and fourteen students. Retention rates are good.

319. In 2001 A-level results were well below the national average but students achieved well in relation to both their level of attainment on entry to the course and to their predicted grades. There were no candidates in 2002. In recent years results, with small numbers of candidates, have varied significantly. In 1999, attainment was well above average and in 2000 in line with the national average.

320. Standards of work in the examination groups are average. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE scores and predicted grades. These standards are attained because of good teaching and the enthusiasm of most students for the subject. This was confirmed from lesson observations and scrutiny of files. They are able to carry out research exercises and produce some satisfactory notes and essays. Work in both AS and A-level files does however indicate some vagueness in knowledge and understanding, a lack of detail in some essays and weaknesses in analysing and evaluating evidence. In lessons, they contribute well in discussion, for example, the application of ethical theories to a moral dilemma and in discussions on sources of moral codes and law.

321. Overall teaching and learning are good and in some lessons they are very good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject. Expectations are high and lessons move at a good pace. Lessons are very well planned and structured. Students are challenged to think and express their opinions but, at the same time they are given guidance and support on those ethical and philosophical theories, which they find more difficult to understand. In a Year 12 lesson very good support was observed within the group and from the teacher when students were revising the design and cosmological arguments. Students are challenged to think and in the small groups they have many opportunities for group discussion as well as to ask questions about the ethical and philosophical arguments they are studying. In one Year 13 lesson, good quality discussion on the nature of a 'just war' arose in relation to the current Iraq situation. In one Year 12 lesson good use was made of the computer to show a range of photographs to enable students to reflect upon how different images portray justice, fairness and suffering. Marking is thorough and helpful comments assist students to improve and overcome difficulties. Students are well motivated

and willing to discuss issues and this attitude combined with good teaching results in good gains in learning taking place.

322. This subject is very well led and managed. The two teachers involved in teaching the sixth form work well together and are extremely hard working. The new Head of department has an excellent vision for the development and growth of the subject. Within the teaching team there is considerable commitment and capacity to succeed. Assessment procedures are good and data is well used to evaluate and monitor progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning is very good. Students receive good one to one advice and guidance. Textbook and other supplementary resources are good but the department lacks computers and this restricts access to a wide range of information for students in lessons. Ways to provide statutory entitlement in religious education for all sixth form students need to be tackled. This was an issue in the last report and it has not been tackled successfully. Accommodation for lessons in the sixth form block is just adequate but lacks access to resources, particularly computers. The head of department is fully aware of the need to raise the status of the subject and raise both numbers and the academic balance in the sixth form classes.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Students make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are average for Year 12.
- In Year 13 course work is well organised and reflects the coverage of the subject.
- Teaching is good; lessons are suitably structured and include a variety of activities to engage students' interest.

Areas for improvement

- Limited comments on some essays fail to give sufficient guidance on how students could improve their written work.
- Some students have difficulty in offering critical evaluations of theories and empirical studies.

323. The A level results in 2001 were below the national average. In 2002 they improved albeit with only three candidates which makes national comparisons difficult. All three students passing with grades of 1 A; 1B; 1C. This was an improvement on the previous three years when the number of students achieving grades A-C was below the national average. Very few students fail to complete the course.

324. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are average with student achievement being satisfactory in relation to the predictions based on their GCSE results. Files are well presented and include material that has been introduced in class as well as that carried out in independent study. Adequate progress has been made with written work which includes short descriptions and analysis of theories in religion, research methods and crime and deviance. The better presentations contain more analytical accounts of the explanations and useful interpretations of the evidence. Others concentrated on short descriptive accounts with very little analysis.

325. In 2001 AS levels results were below the national average. The 14 students in Year 12 are making suitable progress with many reaching average standards. The written work shows they have begun to understand different theoretical approaches to the study of the family and their application.

326. Teaching is good. Lessons have clear objectives and these are noted on the white

board. The pace is good and variations are introduced as part of a regular pattern. Lesson plans highlight learning outcomes and the relevant key skills. In one class, students in Year 12 considered the gender differences in achievement in education. There was a brief review of the previous lesson and students responded to the teacher's questions. Three groups were then given a specific task to prepare a presentation on research or policy contributions to the topic. Most students worked on task and the subsequent presentations outlined the different approaches. Some of these were given with confidence demonstrating a clear understanding of the topic. Others, however, provided a limited contribution which covered description but failed to analyse the topic.

327. Written work covers a variety of tasks and includes short answers to specific questions and extended essays. Marking of work is carried out but there is some variation in the amount of commentary that is included. Shorter comments provide trigger points for further improvement but do not always give specific instruction to the student. Year 13 files suggested that higher attaining students can apply different sociological theories to the analysis of religious activities

328. Students are attentive, work productively and respond with interest to the variety of teaching styles. Students support each other and there is a good rapport between teacher and students. The content of the subject contributes to the development of core skills, citizenship and social and cultural understanding. However, such contributions are not always made explicit.

329. Leadership and management of the subject is sound. An analysis of the results has led to a revision of the programme and the introduction of new methods. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to ensuring students reach their appropriate standards. Networks have been established and meetings with different subject groups have contributed to the changes. Schemes of work reflect the subject requirements and lesson plans provide useful guidance on the range of activities that need to be covered. An analysis of an individual student's achievement and progress is in operation. Resources and accommodation are adequate for the current size of the student group. However, the main room is located close to a student common room; the noise level can sometimes be distracting.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English literature and German. English language and French were sampled. One lesson of English language was observed. In 2001, results at Advanced level were above the national average with an above average proportion gaining the highest grades, A/B. An increased number of students gained similar results in 2002 but no national data are yet available for comparison. At Advanced subsidiary level, a total of 51 students were examined in 2001 and 2002. In each of these years, with one exception, all students were successful and approximately one in three gained the highest grades. Students achieved or exceeded the grades expected of them based on earlier attainment. A Year 13 class was observed identifying stages of language acquisition from written evidence. Students showed satisfactory understanding of significant characteristics. They made good progress in developing their understanding because they demonstrated a willingness to think for themselves. They were able to reach conclusions and support their findings with appropriate evidence. Teaching was good because the lesson was carefully planned and conducted at a challenging pace. Students responded positively to the teacher's high expectations of their ability to work productively in-groups and to reach well founded conclusions. Provision is good in French. There is good input from experienced teachers who support students well. The use of computers is underdeveloped.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress and attain average standards.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The positive relationships between students and teachers contribute to good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of the writing of some students is reduced by errors of spelling and sentence construction.

330. Results at Advanced level in 2001 showed improvement on the previous year and matched national averages with an increased proportion gaining the higher grades, A-B. The standards of attainment of students matched and sometimes exceeded expectation based upon their earlier attainment, which indicates at least satisfactory levels of achievement. Provisional results for 2002 show further improvement. In Advanced Subsidiary level examinations taken by students in Year 12 in 2001, all students were successful with a good proportion gaining the higher grades. Provisional results for 2002 indicate that although most students gained the grades expected of them, overall attainment was lower. The proportion of students not completing the advanced subsidiary course in Year 12 has caused concern in recent years. Course entry requirements have been revised to reduce the numbers involved.

331. Evidence of the inspection shows that the work of students in the sixth form continues to match the national average. They achieve well in relation to GCSE scores. Students in Year 13 have good understanding of the texts set for examination. They work confidently in-groups when exploring poems by Coleridge and Sylvia Plath or Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure.' Powers of analysis are well developed and students are able to arrive at clear judgements well supported by evidence and quotation from the text. Higher attainers are able to express complex ideas clearly and effectively both in speech and writing. Others need encouragement by teachers, including the use of additional questioning to achieve clarity of expression. Written work is usually well organised and well expressed. Occasionally, provision of insufficient detail suggests lack of full understanding. The accuracy of writing is improved but some misspelling of words in common use continues from earlier years. Students make good progress because they are well motivated. Because they are confident in their relationships with teachers and each other, students are willing to offer their interpretations and opinions knowing that they will be valued. This contributes much to their quality of learning and gains in understanding so that achievement is good.

332. Students in Year 12 are responding well to the challenges of their work. They work effectively in groups, have good discussion skills and are developing satisfactory levels of skill in textual analysis. They understand the need to make clear judgements supported by sound evidence and most use appropriate technical terminology. Students are confident in making presentations to colleagues with the use of overhead projectors, for example on aspects of 'Death of a Salesman'. They demonstrate good levels of interest in their work and both in lessons and files of work there is evidence of positive response to the expectations of teachers. Most students have now developed a good understanding of the demands of essay writing at this level. Material is well organised. There are now fewer examples of superficial answers or writing in such a leisurely style that insufficient emphasis is given to important elements of an answer. Errors of the kinds identified lower down the

school such as inaccurate spelling and faults of sentence construction persist even in the writing of some otherwise skilful writers.

333. The overall quality of teaching is good and often very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the texts being studied. They plan lessons carefully, linking them to previous and future work and ending with discussion of what has been learned. This helps students to reinforce their learning and teachers to establish that their lesson's targets have been met. Teachers are consistent in their expectation that students should become able to form their own opinions and make their own judgements and not rely on the views of others. They are skilful in using questions to develop students' understanding. They use their own understanding of how the subject is examined to ensure that students recognise what is required of them. The pace of lessons is brisk and teachers demonstrate an infectious enjoyment of the work being done. Students gain confidence from the supportive relationships they have with teachers and each other and this encourages them to contribute to discussion.

334. Leadership and management are good. A strong team contributes to the teaching and there is clear evidence of thoughtful discussion between teachers in the consistently good practice in the classroom. The department builds well upon skills students have developed in earlier years and provides good preparation for any future study.

German

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

Strengths

- Standards in examinations.
- Highly effective teaching which ensures good progress in lessons.
- The quality of relationships between staff and students, which promotes learning.
- The development of students' listening and comprehension skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of ICT
- Upgrading facilities for listening activities.

335. Numbers for German have fluctuated in the last four years between two and eight with an overwhelming majority of the students being female. That profile is reflected in the current Year 13 class but three of the five students in Year 12 are male. Results have varied, but generally they have been at least in line with national averages. In 2001, the two candidates for A level both gained grade B. In 2002, the preponderance of candidates scoring grade C ensured that results were average when measured against the higher grade index; nevertheless two out of the eight candidates gained A grades. Retention rates are good.

336. The evidence from work seen in lessons and students' files demonstrates that average standards are being maintained and achievement is satisfactory. All Year 13 students are on course to reach their target grades which range from A to E. The most capable have well developed comprehension skills since the lessons are conducted entirely in German and students cover a large amount of listening exercises linked to their topic work. Oral skills lag a little way behind and pronunciation and intonation are average. The most able students express ideas at some length using a suitably wide selection of structures and vocabulary. The least able students lack the confidence to speak fluently. The quality of written work reflects oral abilities. The more able students write well-planned essays with a high degree of accuracy and good development of ideas, but the work of the less able sometimes shows a lack of linguistic resources to construct a convincing argument. All

students receive ample opportunities in translation and retranslation exercises to prepare effectively for examinations. Attainment in Year 12 is broadly similar. All students are eager to contribute orally, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy. The groups benefit from the continuity provided by highly experienced and effective teaching. Almost all students can extract meaning when listening and reading for gist, and grammatical competence is steadily developed, although this tends to be done through specific exercises. In both years students' use of ICT is underdeveloped.

337. Teaching in the sixth form is good; some teaching is very good. Teachers are well qualified. Lessons are well-planned and closely linked to prior and future learning. Teachers introduce and develop topics and sub-topics well and employ a variety of successful methods to get pupils to think and to clarify their ideas, for example, 'brainstorming' sessions and pro and contra diagrams. Students make considerable progress in lessons. The course makes skilful use of textbook resources. The teachers ensure time is not wasted by providing students with specially adapted listening comprehension worksheets which contain bullet points to direct students towards eliciting key information. Expectations of students are explicit from the outset and the department's marking is thorough, although assessments are not always tied to A-level criteria. Students receive helpful guidance, which enables them to plan and structure their essays better.

338. Students of German are interested and concentrate well. They interact well with their teachers and this not only makes for enjoyable lessons, but also provides the teachers and students with further opportunities to refine points, which are raised spontaneously by both parties. The teachers praise and encourage their students at all times and provide a large measure of support during "free" periods.

339. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of German has analysed recent examination results and is intent on providing students with further practice in the development of oral skills for the examination. Two students benefited last year from the opportunity the department provided to undertake work experience placements in Germany and the foreign language assistant is suitably deployed to further students' learning. This is especially useful in Year 12 where the students only receive four taught lessons per week. Some of the resources for German need to be updated – most notably the equipment for listening comprehension. The recorders are of good quality, but there is an insufficient number of them and they are approaching the end of their natural life.