

## ERRATUM

**William Brookes School**

**URN: 123567**  
**Inspection Number: 249778**  
**Date of Inspection: 18/10/02**

Please replace paragraph 14 with the following:

Procedures for checking how well the school is doing and planning for improvements are very good. The outcomes of these procedures are very good. The system of performance management has been implemented successfully. The headteacher, governors and senior staff frequently and rigorously monitor information relating to the school's performance. They conduct realistic appraisals of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. Governors hold 'issues meetings' once a term in which they consider various aspects of the school's work. Through these meetings they gain a very good understanding of what the school does well and what could be improved. They follow up these meetings with effective action. For example, governors had been concerned about the quality of music in the school. They worked closely and effectively with senior staff to take appropriate action, including the appointment of new staff, to improve the quality of teaching and learning in music. ***As a result, standards are rising, extra-curricular provision is good and some parents commented favourably upon recent improvements in the subject. Pupils enjoy their work in music.*** The governing body sets very challenging targets for performances in external examinations, following a careful study of pupils' prior attainment and other relevant assessment data. Targets for future performances in external examinations have been set at challenging rather than comfortable levels.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WILLIAM BROOKES SCHOOL**

Much Wenlock

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123567

Headteacher: Mrs P Cooper

Reporting inspector: Mr R Palmer

31198

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249778

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Farley Road  
Much Wenlock  
Shropshire

Postcode: TF13 6NB

Telephone number: 01952 727606

Fax number: 01952 728289

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Levesley

Date of previous inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31198	R Palmer	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19720	D Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students?
3534	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education	
7958	G Lewis	Team inspector		
23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
31986	B Medhurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1994	H Olds	Team inspector	Geography History	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English	
20609	C Worthington	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and Communication technology	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

William Brookes School is a co-educational, community, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It attained the status of a specialist college for the performing arts in September 2002. It is situated in the small Shropshire town of Much Wenlock. The school has 924 pupils (453 boys and 471 girls), compared with 783 pupils at the time of its previous inspection in 1996. It is about the same size as other secondary schools in England. Most pupils come from eight partner primary schools. About three in every ten pupils come from outside the immediate area of the school. More than four out of every five pupils travel to and from school by bus. The attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 is similar to the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds that are above average overall. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (one in every 12 pupils) is below the national average. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Very few pupils are of non-white ethnic background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, about one in every five, is average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, about one in 20, is above average. A learning support unit provides places for 40 pupils who have learning difficulties. A very small number of travellers are on the school's roll.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

William Brookes School is a very good school. Pupils improve their standards from average when they enter the school in Year 7 to well above average by the end of Year 11. The school provides a very good quality of education for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and the good and strong support provided by the governors and senior staff are important factors in the school's continuing success. Achievement is high because teachers and pupils have high expectations of each other. Pupils and students respond very positively to the overall good quality of teaching they receive. The school has many strengths and very few weaknesses. It provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- GCSE results are well above the national average and represent very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work ensure that pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 11.
- The very good quality of care, support and guidance creates a very positive climate for learning.
- Pupils enrich their learning considerably through active participation in a wide range of very good extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, drama and music.

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

- Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and attainment is not as high as that in science and English in Years 7 to 11.
- Reports to parents about pupils' progress are not always informative enough.

*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 previous inspection in 1996 is very good. Numbers on roll have increased and the school is oversubscribed. Leadership and management have improved from good to very good. The head teacher, assisted well by senior managers, makes a powerful and positive contribution to the school's many successful developments and ensures that pupils of all backgrounds receive a very good quality of education. The school



has consolidated its previous strengths. It exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE results in 2001 and again in 2002. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average. They are improving faster than the national rate. Standards in the sixth form have improved well. The proportion of teaching observed that was good or better has increased. In respect of the key issues identified for action, improvement is good overall. The school has the capacity and the commitment to continue to make improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	C	B	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is average. It is above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. This indicates good achievement by the end of Year 9 and very good achievement by the end of Year 11. In 2001, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. Results in English and science matched those of similar schools and were well below in mathematics. Results overall were above expectations based on pupils' previous attainment at the end of Year 6. They are improving at the same rate as the national improvement. Over the past three years, results have improved faster in science and English than in mathematics. Girls have attained higher standards than boys in the national tests. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are currently above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. They indicate good achievement overall.

GCSE results were well above the national average in 2001 for boys and for girls. They were well above average compared with the results of similar schools and indicate very good achievement compared with pupils' previous attainment at the end of Year 9. Over the past three years, boys' results were well above average compared with those of boys nationally. Girls' results were above the national average for girls. GCSE results are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. Results in 2001 were above average in the large majority of subjects and average in the remaining few. Results at grades A\*-C were well above average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, drama, and French. They were particularly high in geography. In mathematics they were above average. GCSE results in 2002 are higher than those attained in 2001. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 confirm the well above average standards indicated by recent GCSE results. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with learning difficulties and those who are gifted or talented, achieve very well by the end of Year 11. Boys and girls both attain well-above average standards. The very good and improving GCSE performance is a result of much very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is usually above average although several students of well above average attainment, especially girls, continue their studies elsewhere. A-level

results are above average. Achievement at the end of Year 13 varies across subjects and is good overall.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy being at school and work hard in lessons. Their very positive attitudes contribute well to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' very good behaviour in lessons and around the school helps to create a purposeful and orderly environment for learning. Levels of exclusion of pupils are below average.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The very good relationships throughout the school contribute to a stimulating yet relaxed atmosphere. Pupils respond very well to the many good opportunities to work independently.
Attendance	Very good. Well above average attendance contributes well to pupils' very good achievement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in the sixth form. Outstanding teaching occurred in a small number of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. On balance, teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good in science and is good in English. Currently, teaching in mathematics has improved and is good. The teaching of literacy and of numeracy is good across subjects. The National Strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented well. They help teachers across all subjects to plan and organise the work in ways that keep pupils motivated to do well. The high expectations of teachers cause pupils to think deeply and carefully about their work. Good and lively discussions in class and in groups help pupils to increase their understanding of topics, to maintain their concentration and to work enthusiastically. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support that enables them to make similar progress as others. Pupils of all levels of attainment make a powerful contribution to their own learning through their very positive attitudes to work. Most teachers, especially in Years 10 and 11, make effective use of marking and assessment to help pupils to improve their work, to set suitably challenging targets and to adjust the work to meet pupils' individual needs. Learning is at least good in most lessons because pupils want to achieve as well as they can. In Years 10 and 11, teachers take particular care to ensure that the work is suited to all levels of attainment in the class. They give pupils a clear understanding of how to attain suitable grades in GCSE examinations. In a quarter of the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, teachers often played too dominant a part and did not ensure that all pupils were involved fully in discussions or practical activities. Occasionally the work was not suited well to the needs of the highest and lowest-attaining pupils.

In the sixth form, teachers make very good use of their expertise in the subject to help students to achieve well. Students contribute very positively to their own learning by working hard and with enthusiasm. Very good relationships between teachers and students ensure

good learning overall. In a few subjects, such as in design and technology, teachers do not use assessment consistently to enhance students' achievement.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The broad range of learning experiences meets the needs of all pupils. Good provision in drama, music and physical education support the school's development as a performing arts college. Pupils enhance their all-round development through very active participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities of very good quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils in all years make at least good progress as a result of very good support. Arrangements for developing the basic learning skills of pupils with special educational needs are successful. The very few travellers receive very good help when they attend school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Very good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural education makes an important contribution to their all-round' personal development. Provision for spiritual education is satisfactory. The lack of daily collective worship slightly hinders spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Form teachers and subject staff know the pupils very well. They have a genuine concern for the well being and progress of all pupils. Very good relationships are based on trust and fairness. Very good personal support creates a caring and safe environment in which pupils flourish. Good use of assessment helps pupils to achieve very well by the end of Year 11.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher, with good support from senior staff, sets a very clear direction for the school's development. Very effective management has enabled the school to make many important improvements, particularly in raising pupils' achievement. Management in departments has improved greatly and is good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are effective, committed and supportive. They know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. They have suitably high expectations for the school's future progress. They carry out their duties well apart from ensuring the provision of a daily act of collective worship and of religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Governors and senior managers make very effective use of information to see if the school is doing as well as it should. They set very challenging targets for improvement. Systems to raise pupils' attainment and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning operate successfully.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Within the constraints of a deficit budget, the school makes effective use of its good staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Decisions about spending are considered very carefully to ensure that they relate closely to the school's stated educational priorities and that best value is obtained. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to

	extend pupils' learning is not consistent across all subjects.
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**PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Leadership and management are good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Expectations of pupils and teachers are high.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Range of activities outside lessons is very good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports about pupils' progress are not detailed enough.</li> <li>• Communication between parents and school could be better.</li> </ul>

The inspection's findings strongly support parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors agree that reports for pupils in Years 7 to 11 could be improved. Reports do not always show how pupils' performance compares with their capability and previous attainment. Inspectors disagree with those parents who think that communication is not good. The range and quality of information provided for parents are very good. The prospectus is suitably detailed, practical and readable. Attractive newsletters of very good quality, containing articles from pupils and staff, keep parents well informed about the school and its activities.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

## WILLIAM BROOKES SCHOOL

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is smaller than in most other schools and is growing in size. It has 115 students (46 male and 69 female) of whom 66 are in Year 12 and 49 in Year 13. Most students study AS-level courses in Year 12 and A2-level courses in Year 13. A few students follow vocational courses. Less than one half of Year 11 pupils continue their studies in the school's sixth form. A small number of students join the sixth form from other schools. Usually, several higher-attaining students, particularly girls, choose to do their sixth-form studies elsewhere. Accordingly, the attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is above average rather than the well-above average level suggested by the school's GCSE results. A few students have special educational needs, including four who have statements. The composition of the sixth form matches that of the main school in terms of ethnic groupings and students' backgrounds. Students require a minimum of five GCSE grades A\*-C for enrolment on the AS-level and A2-level courses. They need GCSE grades in the range of C-E to enrol on the vocational courses. There is no provision for students of well-below average attainment.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good quality of education. It is cost-effective. Very good leadership and management have introduced important improvements in the assessment of students' work and in the provision of care, support and guidance for students. Students learn well and achieve good results overall. They choose from a suitable range of courses though the take-up on vocational courses is not as high as the school would like. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are above average. They represent good achievement. A-level results in 2001 were above the national average and showed good achievement based on students' previous attainment in GCSE examinations. The sixth form meets well the needs of its students.

#### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management have introduced successful measures to improve the quality of education and to raise standards further.
- A-level results were above average in 2001 and represented good achievement.
- Students' very positive attitudes to work help them to achieve well.

#### What could be improved

- Achievement is satisfactory rather than good in biology, design and technology and ICT.
- The absence of the statutory course in religious education, and limited access to ICT facilities in a few subjects, restrict the enrichment of the curriculum.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Achievement is good because teaching is good. Students' very positive attitudes to their work help them to learn well.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and effective use of assessment helps students to achieve well. Few students study chemistry in the sixth form.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A-level results were well above average in 2001 and represented good achievement. More recently, standards are below expectations based on previous attainment. Currently, satisfactory teaching leads to satisfactory achievement. Insufficient checking of students' work hinders progress.
Design and technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A-level results are average and indicate satisfactory achievement. Satisfactory teaching and students' effective use of their study skills enable students to make adequate progress. Teachers do make students sufficiently aware of how well they are doing and how to improve. The pace of learning is sometimes slow.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards on this new vocational course are above average and rising as a result of good teaching.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Achievement on the new courses in sports studies is good as a result of good teaching and students' very positive attitudes.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> A-level results vary from year to year and usually represent good achievement. Currently students in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress as a result of some very good teaching.
History	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are below average. They represent at least satisfactory achievement. In work seen, students are achieving well as a result of good teaching. Lower-attaining students do not have good skills in note taking and do not contribute fully in class discussions.
English	<b>Good.</b> Attainment is above average on the popular English literature course. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and their very positive attitudes to work.

In a few other subjects, work was sampled. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in personal, social and health education and good in physics. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the lessons seen in theatre studies and psychology. A-level results in psychology in 2001 were well above average.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Good.</b> The school provides good guidance and support for students that continue throughout Years 12 and 13. From early in Year 11, teachers prepare students carefully for entry to the sixth form. The choice of courses is matched suitably to students' aspirations and capabilities. The use of assessment to raise standards and to set suitably challenging targets for academic and personal development is good and improving. Students find out how they can improve through half-termly, personal and frank discussions with their tutor. Very good relationships between students and tutors form a good basis for mutual trust. The tutorial programme provides students with very good access to advice and help regarding examinations, university applications and careers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Very good.</b> The very effective leadership and management of the sixth form make a substantial contribution to students' good achievement. Very good planning has resulted in considerable improvements in the quality of education provided in Years 12 and 13. Attendance has improved and is very good. The governing body is supportive and plays an effective part in the leadership of the sixth form. Governors regard the sixth form as a key priority for further development. The school recognises the need to extend the curriculum to provide greater access for pupils of lower attainment. The school does not fulfil its statutory responsibility for the provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship in Years 12 and 13.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching is good and challenging.</li> <li>• Choice of subjects suits their aspirations.</li> <li>• Teachers are supportive and help students to settle in and to work independently.</li> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about future options was lacking.</li> <li>• Advice and guidance were insufficient.</li> <li>• They are not always treated as adults.</li> </ul>

Inspectors confirm the views of the large majority of sixth formers that the quality of education is good in Years 12 and 13. They support the positive views expressed by students. Inspectors disagree with the views for improvement listed above that were expressed by students in the questionnaires completed before the inspection. In the many discussions held with inspectors, nearly all students who were interviewed indicated that they receive very good information and personal advice about current and future options. Staff provide very good support and guidance. Many students feel that they are treated as adults and, for example, value the work of the school council. Inspectors agree with this view. A few students would like to see a relaxation in the rules of attendance when they have no lessons.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**GCSE results are well above the national average and represent very good achievement.**

1. When pupils join the school in Year 7, their attainment is average. Over the past four years, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 was above average. It was well above average in 2000. Results are improving at the same rate as the national improvement. They show that pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils continue to improve as they move through the school. In 2000 and 2001, GCSE results were well above the national average. They demonstrate very good achievement when compared with pupils' prior attainment. GCSE results in 2001 were well above average when compared with the results attained by similar schools.

2. The school's very good achievements in examinations up to 2001 have been recognised by the 'School of Achievement' award from the Department for Education and Skills. Provisional results for 2002 show that GCSE results have improved even further, with seven out of every ten pupils attaining five or more passes at grades A\*-C. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection when fewer than five in every ten pupils attained this standard. Even though the school's results are well above the national average, they have been improving faster than the national rate of improvement. The school is justifiably proud of its success in exceeding its very challenging targets for attainment in GCSE examinations in 2001 and again in 2002

3. Pupils of below average attainment achieve very well in GCSE examinations as indicated by the above average proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades A\* -G in 2001. The achievement of high-attaining pupils is equally good as indicated by the above average proportion of pupils attaining A\* and A grades in 2001 in most subjects, including English and science. A particularly good achievement was in geography in which the number of pupils entered for the subject was much higher than the national average and just over four in every ten pupils who sat the examination obtained grades A\* or A. As befits a school that has recently acquired status as a performing arts college, GCSE results in 2001 were well above average in art and design and above average in drama.

4. Standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of pupils' work are similar to those attained in external examinations recently. Pupils of all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment make very good progress by the end of Year 11 in most subjects.

5. Pupils achieve well in English because the teaching is often very good and pupils are very keen to succeed. Pupils receive plenty of work of suitable difficulty to challenge them, as seen in work carried out by Year 10 pupils on a wide range of language topics such as journalistic prose, figures of speech and media images. Teachers of English make effective and imaginative use of prompts for writing to encourage pupils to think carefully about their work. This was evident in work seen in pupils' books, for example, the detailed analyses of Conan Doyle's 'The Speckled Band'. Pupils have above average skills in spelling that support their work in all subjects. Pupils' books show that they have good skills in writing and expression. Pupils acquire very good skills of oracy and literacy in English lessons. They develop and use these skills to good effect through good opportunities for discussion, reading and extended writing in other subjects.

6. In science, pupils of all levels of attainment achieve very well because they find the work interesting and have many very good opportunities to carry out practical investigations. They learn from the teacher and from one another through discussing and debating their findings. Pupils respond very well to the stimulating experiences they have in many science lessons. Teachers keep a very close eye on pupils' progress in science to guard against any underachievement. They provide special help and individual guidance for pupils at breaks and lunch times. Through rigorous checking of pupils' work, teachers set very challenging but attainable targets for pupils that are successful in motivating pupils to do their best.

7. The GCSE results both of boys and girls are well above average. Girls, as at the previous inspection, attain higher standards than boys. The gap between the respective performances of boys and girls narrowed considerably in 1999. Boys attained higher GCSE results than girls in 2000, but the pattern of girls attaining higher GCSE results than boys has returned in 2001 and 2002. The school has used many different ways to raise and keep boys' attainment, already well above average, to the higher standards attained usually by girls. The strategies used are not only improving boys' attainment they are also helping girls to improve further. The practice of sitting boys next to girls is successful in promoting a good climate for learning and in encouraging good progress by boys and girls, as seen in many lessons. The occasional experiment of single gender classes is effective, as seen in the outstanding work and progress of a Year 11 French class of middle and higher-attaining boys. The use of short-term tasks, rapid feedback and increased use of ICT has helped boys to improve in many subjects and has also inspired girls to do even better.

8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well by the end of Year 11 because they receive very good support from teachers and teaching assistants. The school's documentation provides teachers and teaching assistants with good and clear guidance about the specific help that these pupils need.

9. The main contributory factors to pupils' good achievement by Year 9 and very good achievement by Year 11 are the quality of teaching that is usually good or better, the increasingly effective use of assessment to show pupils what to do to improve and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils that provide a very purposeful and positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils' very positive and mature attitudes to learning play a very important part in raising standards. The school is far from complacent about the very good standards it achieves. It is constantly seeking ways to do even better.

### **Very good leadership and management ensure that the school continues to improve.**

10. The very good leadership of the headteacher is a significant factor in the school's continued success and impressive improvements. Under her very firm, thoughtful and sensitive guidance, the school vigorously seeks to achieve a high quality of performance in all aspects of its work. The headteacher has a visible presence around the school and has a good knowledge of the pupils. She leads by personal example and through persuasion. The headteacher and governing body provide a very clear educational direction for the school. They have very high expectations of staff and pupils. They planned diligently to ensure the recent success of the school's bid to become a specialist college for performing arts. Governors worked very hard and effectively to raise a considerable amount of money to support the school's bid for this status.

11. The school has a determination to succeed. It has a strong commitment to help pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to achieve their best in terms of academic and all-round, personal development. The school has maintained the many strengths identified in its previous inspection report in 1996 and has made very good progress since. It is popular and oversubscribed and deserves its very good reputation locally.

12. Senior managers support the headteacher very well. Together, they focus suitably on raising achievement, assisting pupils' all-round personal development and constantly seeking improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The aim of raising the attainment of all pupils to the highest possible level is evident throughout the school. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard. They respond very positively to try to achieve their best. As a result, standards have improved and are well above average by the end of Year 11. Senior managers are not complacent and want the school to do even better. They are succeeding because the school's GCSE results were higher still in 2002.

13. Governors carry out their responsibilities very effectively apart from those relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. Within the constraints of a deficit budget they manage the school's finances well. They are actively involved in the work of the school and are very well informed about the performances of all subjects. They monitor developments closely and effectively. They review all aspects of the school's performance and take effective action to improve. Governors suitably and sensitively call the head teacher and senior staff to account. They show a keen interest in the all-round development, as well as the academic success, of all pupils.

14. Procedures for checking how well the school is doing and planning for improvements are very good. The outcomes of these procedures are very good. The system of performance management has been implemented successfully. The headteacher, governors and senior staff frequently and rigorously monitor information relating to the school's performance. They conduct realistic appraisals of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. Governors hold 'issues meetings' once a term in which they consider various aspects of the school's work. Through these meetings they gain a very good understanding of what the school does well and what could be improved. They follow up these meetings with effective action. For example, governors had been concerned about the quality of music in the school. They worked closely and effectively with senior staff to take appropriate action, including the appointment of new staff, to improve the quality of teaching and learning in music. As a result, pupils now enjoy their work in music, standards are rising, extra-curricular provision is good and some parents commented favourably upon recent improvements in the subject. The governing body sets very challenging targets for performances in external examinations, following a careful study of pupils' prior attainment and other relevant assessment data. Targets for future performances in external examinations have been set at challenging rather than comfortable levels.

15. The leadership and management of subjects are good overall. They are very good in a few subjects. In modern foreign languages, for example, very effective and enthusiastic leadership helps to spread the very good practice of teaching and learning across the department and succeeds in raising standards. It knows very well the strengths and the areas that need improvement in the subject and sets an excellent example. Standards are rising through the very good use of assessment to help pupils to improve their work. in modern foreign languages. Booklets give very helpful advice to pupils. They provide up-to-date and accurate assessments of pupils' work and progress towards meeting targets and provision for pupils to review and comment on their performance. Pupils with special educational needs receive particularly good support because the department works very closely with the coordinator for special educational needs. This ensures that work is of appropriate difficulty for pupils and that teaching assistants are deployed effectively and efficiently. The teaching is often innovative and makes good use of ICT to enhance learning.

16. Heads of year manage their pupils and staff well to ensure that pupils receive a very good quality of care. Very good leadership in the sixth form is having a very positive influence on attempts to raise achievement and the quality of education from good to very good.

17. Through the commitment and hard work of staff at all levels, the school has made very good progress since its previous inspection in November 1996. The quality of teaching and learning continue to improve and are now good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Attainment in GCSE examinations, which was already above average, has risen to well above the national average. A-level results have improved and are above average. The quality of leadership and management has improved from good to very good. Improvement in dealing with the five key issues identified in the previous inspection is good overall. The successful change from a faculty structure to a system of separate departments has been an important factor in raising attainment. More teachers are now responsible for the quality of achievement and teaching in subjects, and all teachers share this accountability. The school has the capacity and the shared commitment to improve further.

**Good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work ensure that pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 11.**

18. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is good overall. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching was good or better in nearly four out of every five lessons observed and very good or better in two out of five. In Years 10 and 11, nearly half of all lessons seen were very good and the proportion of satisfactory teaching was lower than in other years. A small amount of outstanding teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. On balance, teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good in science and is good in English. In mathematics, as a result of recent staffing changes, teaching has improved and is currently good. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and the teaching assistants make very effective use of the well-written individual education plans to ensure that the work is matched suitably to pupils' needs so that these pupils make similar progress as other pupils.

19. The National Strategies for literacy, numeracy and science have been implemented well. They help teachers across all subjects to plan and organise the work in ways that keep pupils motivated to do well. Most teachers, especially in Years 10 and 11, make effective use of marking and assessment to track pupils' progress closely, to show pupils how to improve their work, to set targets and to match future work to pupils' individual needs. Learning is at least good in most lessons because pupils want to achieve as well as they can. In Years 10 and 11, the more effective use of assessment and the closer matching of work to meet the needs of all pupils in the class are the main reasons that teaching and learning are better than in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form.

20. Teachers have high expectations for pupils, particularly in the GCSE classes in Years 10 and 11. In most lessons, they ensure that pupils learn quickly because they plan the lessons very well and encourage pupils to participate actively. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to create a very positive and purposeful environment for learning. In a science lesson for middle and lower-attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, pupils made very good progress in practical investigations into the displacement of metals. They were clearly used to working independently and in pairs and groups. They have developed good skills in analysing and recording their findings. The mutual trust between teacher and class enabled the teacher to give his full attention to individual pupils or groups as needed, confident in the knowledge that the other pupils would be carrying out their tasks responsibly and enthusiastically. The frequent feedback to pupils on how well they were doing ensured that pupils' motivation remained high. The very close cooperation between the teacher and the teaching assistant ensured that the few pupils with

behavioural and learning difficulties understood and enjoyed the work and made the same fast progress as the rest of the class. This example of very good teaching, coupled with pupils' eagerness to do well helps to explain why pupils' achievement in science is very good throughout Years 7 to 11.

21. In discussions with inspectors, pupils made references to some teaching of very high quality in modern languages. Their assessment was correct. Although the teaching seen in the department was good overall, some outstanding teaching was observed. All teachers in the department have improved their skills in teaching through the sharing of good practice. In a French class, last lesson on a Friday afternoon, a Year 11 group of thirty boys of middle and high attainment responded to excellent teaching in an exemplary manner. The boys worked extremely hard and at a furious pace in response to the very high expectations set for them. They worked very well in small groups and contributed enthusiastically in class discussions. The lesson was conducted almost entirely in French. The teacher was very skilful in getting suitably extended oral answers from the boys that matched their different capabilities. The teacher's excellent expertise in the subject and very effective techniques of class control meant that pupils were constantly challenged to think and were highly motivated. The interesting range of activities and frequent feedback about their work stimulated boys' interest in the subject. The mutual respect and the excellent relationships between the teacher and the class meant that the boys spoke very competently and, for the most part, confidently in French.

22. Pupils of all levels of attainment make a powerful contribution to their own learning through their very positive attitudes to work. They are very keen to do well, pay very good attention in lessons and work hard and enthusiastically to improve their work. Pupils answer questions eagerly in class and discuss their work sensibly and articulately. In the large majority of lessons, pupils enjoy the challenges set in a good range of interesting and well-timed activities. They complete work of suitable difficulty at a fast pace. Pupils acquire very good skills, knowledge and understanding in the different subjects. The quantity and quality of homework set are generally appropriate and help pupils to consolidate and extend their learning. The very good behaviour of pupils contributes to a most effective environment for learning.

23. In the lessons in which teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the teacher tended to do most of the work. In these lessons, the pace of learning was sometimes not quick enough and teachers did not ensure that all pupils were involved fully in discussions or practical activities. Occasionally the work was not suited well to the needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils.

24. In the sixth form, teachers make very good use of their expertise in the subject to help students to achieve well. Students contribute very positively to their own learning by working hard and with enthusiasm. Very good relationships between teachers and students ensure good learning overall.

**The very good quality of care, support and guidance create a very positive climate for learning.**

25. The school is a very friendly and purposeful place in which staff and pupils try very hard and successfully to achieve very good standards of work and behaviour. The very good provision of care and support and the very positive relationships between pupils and teachers create a very supportive environment for learning. In their discussions with inspectors, many pupils said that they enjoyed school, felt safe and that the teachers cared well for pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds.

26. The school cares for pupils well. It provides them with very effective personal support and guidance through its team of caring tutors and heads of year. Form teachers get to know the pupils very well because they stay with the same class throughout Years 7 to 11. They play an effective part in keeping a close watch on pupils' academic and all-round development and providing support when needed. Procedures for promoting good behaviour work very well. Teachers are quick to acknowledge pupils' positive behaviour and achievement. Pupils of all backgrounds and prior attainment are made to feel welcome. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, receive support and teaching of very good quality that enables them to achieve their academic potential and to develop confidence. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are based on mutual respect.

27. The good programme for personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development well. Teachers pay close attention to the physical and emotional well-being of pupils through good procedures for monitoring child protection and health and safety across the school. Pupils acquire good study and research skills and relish the chance to be independent and creative in their work. They show respect and consideration for the beliefs of others. Pupils respond very well to being trusted; for example, few rooms are locked and pupils have free access to most areas of the school at lunchtimes and breaks. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as prefects, librarians and members of the litter patrol. Pupils are proud of their school.

**Pupils enrich their learning considerably through active participation in a wide range of very good extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, drama and music.**

28. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are considerable strengths of the school. They make an important and valuable contribution and extension to pupils' learning. The school's recently-acquired status as a specialist college for the performing arts, its Sportsmark award and its Artsmark silver award recognise the very good provision of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, drama and music. Many pupils told inspectors that they valued these activities highly and appreciated the strong commitment of staff that helped them to extend their all-round development. Although the large majority of pupils travel to school by bus, participation in these after-school activities is high.

29. In music, pupils improve their skills in performance through activities held at lunchtime or after school such as choir, jazz band, the string orchestra and school band. In drama, many groups meet after school. School productions of very good quality are much appreciated in the local community. Pupils are full of praise for the many good opportunities to develop their skills and teamwork in a wide variety of sporting activities and through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and projects to improve the environment. At the meeting for parents held before the inspection parents spoke highly of the contribution made to pupils' personal development through the school's programme of extra-curricular activities. One parent said that his son hated all kinds of sport before joining the school, but staff have boosted his confidence so much that he is now highly motivated and wants to take part in a range of sporting activities.

30. The school promotes the sporting and international aspects of its curriculum through its membership of the world-wide network of 'Coubertin Schools' that involves such activities as visits abroad, projects and partnerships with foreign institutions. Its involvement in the Coubertin network suitably reflects the local area's connections with the founder of the modern Olympic Games movement. The school successfully encourages active links with clubs and organisations in the local and wider community that broaden pupils' experiences. The involvement of the community in the life of the school is increasing through the implementation of the 'Arts College Development Plan'.

31. The school targets carefully those pupils who do not participate frequently in activities outside lessons by providing activities that catch their interest. Last year, such pupils carried out an arts project enthusiastically and well. Summer schools for the gifted and talented have proved successful though a few parents feel that such an activity should be available to a wider range of pupils. The school uses appropriate means to determine which students are most suited to these courses.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and attainment is not as high as that in science and English in Years 7 to 11.**

32. The head teacher, governors and senior managers are aware that achievement in mathematics in Years 7 to 11, though satisfactory overall, should be higher. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are not as high in mathematics as they are in the other core subjects of English and science. In 2001, pupils' GCSE results in mathematics represented satisfactory achievement based on prior levels of attainment but pupils gained lower grades in mathematics than they did in most other subjects.

33. In 2001, the school's results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. Comparing these results with those of similar schools, results were well above average in science, average in English and well below average in mathematics. In the previous year, results were well above the national average in science and English and above average in mathematics. Over the three-year period 1999 to 2001, results in English and science improved at a much faster rate than the national improvement. Results in mathematics improved at the same rate as the national improvement.

34. GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 2001 were well above the national average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Comparing these results with those attained in similar schools, results were above average in science, average in English and below average in mathematics. Set against pupils' prior attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken two years earlier, the results in 2001 indicated very good achievement in science, good achievement in English and satisfactory achievement in mathematics.

35. Two main reasons stand out for pupils not performing as well in mathematics as in the other core subjects. Firstly, staffing changes have had an adverse effect on standards in mathematics. For example, four different heads of department during the past three years have, understandably, meant that the continuity and pace of improvement in mathematics were not as good as in English and science in which the staffing situation has been more stable. Variations in the quality and consistency of marking also hindered pupils' progress. The new leadership and management of the department are developing good policies to raise achievement such as improved schemes of work and effective implementation of the teaching and learning activities suggested in the National Numeracy Strategy.

36. Secondly and until recently, pupils have not been able to make progress at the best possible rate because the organisation of teaching groups was inappropriate. This meant that the curriculum in mathematics did not meet fully the needs of all pupils, particularly the higher and lower attainers. Sometimes, pupils were in classes in which the work was not matched suitably to their capabilities and, accordingly, a few pupils under achieved. Better arrangements for grouping pupils in classes of similar levels of attainment have now resulted in pupils making progress that is often good. The accelerated GCSE course, for example, enables pupils in a Year 10 class to attain a high GCSE grade before proceeding to an additional GCSE course in statistics in Year 11. To enable these pupils to deepen their mathematical knowledge and understanding, they also study in Year 11 one of the AS-level modules in mathematics.

37. In classes observed and scrutiny of work, standards in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 are rising. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have their own textbook. This helps pupils to consolidate their learning. The use of assessment to track pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 has improved and is succeeding in raising achievement. Results in the national tests in 2002 show an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and above. Pupils are making more and effective use of ICT to assist their learning in mathematics, as seen in a Year 7 class.

38. The mathematics department recognises the need to raise achievement in GCSE examinations. The improved arrangements for grouping pupils is helping the process of improvement because pupils receive work that is of suitable difficulty to motivate and challenge them to do well. The department, appropriately, now provides a GCSE course that includes a coursework element of data handling in which pupils can use their skills in ICT. The departmental development plan correctly identifies as an area for priority the development of a coherent and consistent system of marking pupils' work. In the scrutiny of pupils' work, marking of pupils' work varied from very good, in which pupils received very effective advice about how to improve, to satisfactory in which much of the marking was insufficiently informative or encouraging to pupils about how they could improve.

#### **Reports to parents about pupils' progress are not always informative enough.**

39. Reports to parents about pupils' progress are satisfactory. However, the annual reports do not always indicate how pupils' performance and progress relate to their capabilities and prior attainment. The quality of subject reports varies. Some have tick boxes to indicate whether pupils are working at, beyond or below the national average. Others do not. All subjects give a level of attainment but little indication of what this means. Frequently, comments from teachers refer only to pupils' attitudes rather than specify what pupils can and cannot do. The reporting of target setting is of inconsistent quality. In a few subjects, teachers' comments in the reports give clear indications of what the targets are and how pupils should set about achieving them. Often, however, the target is not very clear, as seen in expressions such as 'continue to work hard'. Parents do not automatically receive the good and helpful information contained in the 'subject progress checks'. Reports should be improved so that they are more analytical and relate pupils' performance to their potential and previous levels of attainment. Parents would then receive a more consistent and clear view of the quality of progress made by pupils during the year.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. The school has a very good understanding of its strengths and the areas that need development. In order to improve achievement further the school should include the following issues in its action plan.

- (1) Raise achievement in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 from satisfactory to good or better by:
  - more consistent use of marking to help pupils to improve their work;
  - further improvements to the curriculum so that the courses meet the needs of all pupils;
  - placing pupils in classes that provide work of appropriate difficulty to extend all of them fully.(Paragraphs: 32, 33, 35, 38, 49)
- (2) Improve the quality of reports about pupil's progress so that they give clear and consistent information to parents and pupils about how well pupils are doing and how they can do better.  
(Paragraph: 39)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students. (Paragraph: 64)

### Sixth form

- (1) In subjects in which achievement is reported as satisfactory, raise standards so that they represent good or better achievement by
  - making more consistent use of assessment to help pupils to improve their work in design and technology and biology;
  - increasing the pace of students' learning and improving resources in design and technology;
  - improving students' skills in note-taking, particularly those of lower-attaining students in biology.(Paragraphs: 44, 45, 53, 80, 84, 85, 90)
- (2) Use ICT more effectively to promote learning across the curriculum.  
(Paragraphs: 44, 65, 74, 79, 85)
- (3) Meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 12 and 13.  
(Paragraphs: 54, 64)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	39
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		31

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	1	13	16	9	0	0	0
Percentage	3	33	41	23	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	14	14	10	0	0	0
Percentage	5	35	35	25	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 Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	809	115
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	61	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	123	6

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	72	80	152

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	52	58
	Girls	66	59	63
	Total	114	111	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (79)	73 (71)	80 (79)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (43)	43 (44)	55 (46)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	46	56
	Girls	71	53	65
	Total	123	99	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (79)	65 (72)	80 (82)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (36)	36 (36)	51 (48)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	79	147

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	37	63	68
	Girls	54	76	77
	Total	91	139	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (61)	95 (99)	99 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		
Average point score per pupil	School	47.0 (44.3)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	21	16	37
	Average point score per candidate	19.6	17.1	18.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	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	20	18	38	4	2	6
	Average point score per candidate	19.4	16.8	18.3	0.8	2	1.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

**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	886	34	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	54.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	431

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81
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### Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	21.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2 660 771
Total expenditure	2 738 094
Expenditure per pupil	3 068
Balance brought forward from previous year	(22 047)
Balance carried forward to next year	(100 370)

*Figures in parentheses indicate negative values*

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.1

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	924
Number of questionnaires returned	465

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	54	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	57	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	63	4	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	60	10	4	2
The teaching is good.	26	66	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	55	19	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	45	5	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	45	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	52	18	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	40	55	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	54	1	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	47	4	0	3

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

41. Students' attainment when they join the sixth form in Year 12 is above average. Usually, several of the highest-attaining pupils in Year 11, particularly girls, continue their studies in other institutions such as the large sixth-form college in Shrewsbury. In 2001, for example, only seven of the 21 highest-attaining girls in Year 11 returned to the school's sixth form. However, in 2002, the proportion returning to the school has increased. The large majority of students in Years 12 and 13 follow courses that lead to AS/A2-level examinations. The large majority of students complete their chosen courses of study. After AS-level courses, most students move on to A2-level courses in Year 13. Standards have improved slightly and steadily since the previous inspection and are above average.

42. A-level results in 2001 were above the national average and reflect a rising trend over recent years. Targets set for achievement at AS-level and A2-level examinations are suitably challenging. Boys' results were well above average and those of girls were average. The results reflect the imbalances in attainment between boys and girls based on prior attainment. Overall, these results indicate good achievement based on students' prior attainment. Results in 2001 were above average in English literature, biology, chemistry, French and art and design. They were average in mathematics, design and technology and general studies. They were below average in physics, geography and history, and well below average in economics, theatre studies and religious studies. In several subjects, the number of students entered was small. Although direct comparisons are not possible because the examination system has changed, provisional results for the new A2-level examinations indicate that the school has maintained its recent levels of attainment at the end of Year 13. Results at AS-level taken at the end of Year 12 in 2001 indicated satisfactory achievement overall based on students' prior attainment.

43. Standards of work seen in the sixth-form classes of subjects inspected and sampled, in scrutiny of coursework and written work, and in discussions with students are similar to the levels of attainment in recent A/AS-level examinations in most subjects. They are currently above average. Achievement is good because most of the teaching is good, including much that is very good, and students are enthusiastic and willing to work hard. The few students who have special educational needs, mainly dyslexia, make similarly good progress to other students because the work is matched suitably to their needs. They also benefit from the good support provided by the learning support staff.

44. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good. Students make good use of these skills to facilitate their learning across subjects. Most students have good skills in ICT. They use these to good effect to enhance their work in subjects such as geography and English. They have limited opportunities to make the most of these skills to extend their work in a few subjects. In biology and chemistry, for example, students have insufficient opportunities to use and apply skills in data logging. In design and technology, they have few opportunities to use and develop skills in control technology. Students extend their skills of research and independent study well through good use of the library and its resources.

45. Achievement is good and improving because teachers in nearly all departments make good use of assessment to track every students' progress, to set challenging targets and to show students how to overcome weaknesses. The marking and assessment of students' work are not used as well in design and technology and theatre studies as they are in other



subjects. This is one of the reasons that students' achievement in these subjects is satisfactory rather than good.

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

46. Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They work very hard and show a genuine desire to do well. Most make frank and realistic assessments when reviewing their achievements. They speak very highly of the very good support they have received from staff. Several students feel that their positive attitudes and understanding of what is necessary to be successful in sixth-form subjects are a direct result of the helpful intervention and monitoring by staff. Very good relationships among students and between staff and students are instrumental in creating a stimulating environment in many lessons. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson the very good quality of relationships and students' very positive attitudes produced a relaxed yet productive dialogue on aspects of Tennessee Williams's work. Students were forthcoming with good and interesting ideas. Their responses contributed well to the good pace of learning.

47. Students have a good sense of loyalty towards the school. They take a full and active role in many aspects of school life. The sixth-form council is a very busy group involved in organising activities throughout the school. Students take responsibility for organising many of the activities in their courses in recreation and leisure on Wednesday afternoons. Year 12 and Year 13 students mix together well. Students enhance their social skills very well in the sixth form because staff place great emphasis on the development of students' personal skills, confidence and self-esteem. Students demonstrate their very positive attitudes to school through high attendance, their conscientious approach and very good self-discipline. These values contribute directly to their positive attitudes to study and prepare them well for adult life.

### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

48. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 are good. They help students to achieve well in most subjects. In three out of every four lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good. It was very good in two out of every five lessons observed. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching meets well the learning needs of students of all levels of attainment, including the few students who have special educational needs. The teaching of key skills is good overall. Most students feel that the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 is good and lives up to their expectations. They appreciate the good quality of teaching and the good support and guidance they receive.

49. The quality of teaching seen was better than that reported in the previous inspection. In particular, the teaching in ICT has improved and is now good. However, in design and technology, the variable quality of teaching reported previously remains. This is partly due to current staff absence and partly to an inconsistent use of assessment by teachers to help students to improve.

50. Very good relationships between students and teachers enabled learning to proceed at a good pace. Students' keen attention and their willingness to work hard contribute well to their good progress in lessons and through homework. Students enjoy lessons because most teachers use a good variety of methods and activities to motivate them and to maintain their concentration. In the best lessons, students are involved actively in their own learning. Teachers engage students in thought-provoking discussions that help them to understand the topic more thoroughly. Most teachers do not spoon-feed the students but make them think for themselves. In many lessons, the quality of debate and discussion is high. Students improve their work in many subjects though a good emphasis by teachers on study skills and

research. As a result, students are confident and competent in finding things out for themselves.

51. Features of many of the very good lessons seen were evident in a very good English literature lesson in which Year 13 students made very good progress. The lesson involved students making short presentations about key speeches from Shakespeare's 'Othello' and subsequent evaluations of these presentations by the whole class. Students worked cooperatively in pairs. All students, including the highest attainers, enjoyed the very good challenge presented by the work. They expressed their views clearly to show a very good and detailed grasp of the play. Very good relationships between the teacher and the class enabled students to have the confidence to 'think on their feet' in response to subtle and probing questions from the teacher and other students.

52. In most lessons, teachers use their very good knowledge and expertise in the subject to plan lessons well, to enthuse the students and to support their learning. This was apparent in a Year 13 mathematics lesson for students of high attainment. The lesson resembled a university tutorial session in which the teacher and students engaged in debate and discussion about methods of proof. The teacher extended students' understanding of the work by going further into the topic than the syllabus requires. The work files of students indicate that they have improved their standards through the very good marking and feedback on their work in mathematics given by the teacher.

53. In a few lessons observed in the sixth form, particularly in design and technology and theatre studies, teaching was satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, expectations of teachers were not as high as in many other lessons seen and students did not feel that the work was always of sufficient challenge and difficulty. Students were not sure about how to improve their work. In a few lessons that were satisfactory, teachers tended to be too dominant and students were not engaged fully in the work.

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

54. The range and quality of the curriculum in the sixth form are good. They enable students to match courses to their aspirations and needs. Students receive good advice and guidance before embarking on a course. A series of induction days in the term preceding entry to the sixth form ensures that all students have sufficient understanding of what is going to be expected of them. It results in very few students dropping out of courses because the curriculum for them is unsuitable. The vast majority of students study AS-level and A2-level courses in Years 12 and 13. The school does its best to respond to the requests of students so that courses meet students' needs and aspirations. Very few students show an interest in pursuing vocational courses so that currently the only GNVQ course provided is in ICT. There is appropriate breadth, balance and relevance to the curriculum. Key skills are taught through the personal, social and health education programme and through the courses provided by the coordinator for study skills. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 12 and 13 or for a daily act of collective worship.

55. The programme of enrichment activities is very good. It enables students to enhance their academic and all-round development. The provision of an 'activity bus' daily at 5.15 pm enables the many students who live far from the school to take full advantage of these activities. The recreation and leisure activities on Wednesday afternoons assist students' sporting skills through activities such as swimming. Students develop good team-building skills in activities such as climbing and through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The ASDAN course increases students' involvement in and understanding of the community outside school. Students enhance their learning and social development

through additional experiences that are available to pupils in other years such as activities in music, drama, physical education and games. The school and sixth-form councils help students to appreciate the responsibilities attached to citizenship. Students appreciate the good opportunities for cultural development such as visits to theatres, field trips, and exchange visits abroad. Further and suitable provision for students' continuing spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is made through weekly assemblies, tutor periods and personal and social education lessons.

56. Curricular support for the few students who have special educational needs, including the four who have statements for dyslexia, is good. In addition to the time available for discussion with their form tutors in tutorial sessions, these students meet individually with one of the learning support staff for one hour each week for a one-to-one discussion, to receive advice and to sort out any difficulties. These students have good opportunities to access the sixth-form curriculum.

57. Careers guidance in the sixth form is very good. Students have a good programme of preparation for applying to further or higher education. They have access to a good quality of careers information from the form tutors and booklets available in the sixth-form area. A good proportion of students from Year 13 proceed annually to university or other colleges of higher education.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### ***Assessment***

58. The use of assessment to promote student's learning is good and improving. Teachers use GCSE results and other data to give students a realistic yet challenging target grade. Half-termly meetings between tutors and students on an individual basis are frank and helpful discussions about how students are doing in relation to the target grades and how they can improve their performance. Tutors and students prepare very thoroughly for these discussions so that students gain a realistic and fair understanding of the quality of their achievements. A cumulative record builds up over the year that enables each student to see clearly the progress they are making.

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

59. A well-organised programme of induction, beginning early in Year 11, helps to prepare students very well for entry to the sixth form. Students receive plenty of useful information and advice on all the courses available to them. During a three-day induction course late in Year 11, they have many opportunities to discuss subjects with staff and sixth-form students and to sample lessons. They assess their choice of subjects against their interests and career choice. Most students can follow their first choice of courses. They are helped and supported well if they feel they need to change courses early in Year 12. Throughout Years 12 and 13 students receive good advice and guidance from their form teachers and subject teachers about their future options. Very good relationships between students and tutors create a feeling of mutual trust that enables teachers to provide very good support for all students. The tutorial programme is effective in ensuring that students have very good access to advice and help regarding examinations, university applications and careers. In their discussions with inspectors, students were extremely positive about the quality of guidance available. They had confidence in the staff and said that they could approach them to discuss any problems.

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

60. The school's partnership with parents and students is good. Parents and students hold positive views about the school. The information provided by the school for parents and students is good. The school prospectus contains all the appropriate details and reflects the school's expectations of high standards of work and behaviour. The annual report of governors to parents complies with statutory requirements and is readable and informative. The half-termly newsletters to parents are very good. They are attractive and readable documents, packed full of news on many issues and activities in the school and about subjects. They contain contributions from staff, pupils and students. The newsletters keep parents well informed about such matters as the work of the school council, extra-curricular activities and information about the activities of the Parent Teacher Association. The very good range of information supplied to parents includes specific leaflets containing practical advice, such as the leaflet on the issue of anti-bullying.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

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

61. Very good leadership and management in the sixth form set a very clear agenda for future improvement. They make a substantial contribution to students' good achievement. Sixth-form tutors have a very good understanding of what they are expected to do in order to raise achievement to the very good levels seen at the end of Year 11. The head of sixth form co-ordinates the work of all colleagues very well. She is gradually succeeding in changing the perception of staff and students that advanced courses are 'taught to' students to one in which students play a full and active part in their learning. The shared commitment to supporting students and helping them to realise their potential reflects fully the aims of the whole school.

62. The head teacher and governors have identified the sixth form as a priority in the school's current plans for improvement. Governors are supportive of the school's attempts to retain more of its very high-attaining pupils into the sixth form. They support the extension of courses to include those with a vocational element, though these have not proved popular among students and very few choose to study them. Governors are kept fully informed of developments within the sixth form. Agenda items appear regularly, with reports to governors and periodic updates. The head of sixth form makes reports directly to governors about developments and work in the sixth form. As a result, governors are able to make decisions regarding the sixth form from an informed basis.

63. Very good planning has resulted in considerable improvements in the quality of education provided in Years 12 and 13. More rigorous procedures for monitoring the attendance of sixth-form students have led to very good attendance. The increasingly effective use of assessment ensures that staff and students are well aware of what standards should be attained. Very good systems have been introduced to track students' academic and personal development throughout Years 12 and 13. These are helping students to raise standards. The regular discussions that individual students have with their subject teachers and form teacher motivate students to make further progress.

64. Although students in the sixth form have equal access to the curriculum, the school recognises the need to extend the curriculum to provide greater access for pupils of lower attainment. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and for a daily act of collective worship in Years 12 and 13. This restricts the range of activities to enrich students' learning.

## **Resources**

65. The school makes effective and efficient use of the good staffing, resources and accommodation for the teaching of courses in the sixth form. Resources available for learning in the sixth-form are of similar good quality to those in the rest of the school. Provision and access to ICT are limited in a few subjects such as design and technology, biology and chemistry and restrict the development of students' study and research skills. The accommodation available to sixth-formers is good. Teachers have good qualifications for the sixth-form courses they teach and use their expertise well to encourage good standards. Governors have a good overview of financial affairs. They plan spending in accordance with realistic budgetary information. Priorities are assessed carefully before spending decisions are taken. The sixth form is cost-effective in relation to the school's expenditure as a whole.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	100	71	38	30	3.0	2.2
Chemistry	6	33	87	17	40	1.4	2.8
Biology	5	100	84	0	34	2.0	2.6
Physics	7	100	86	43	39	3.5	2.8
Design and technology	11	82	86	9	32	1.6	2.5
Business studies	14	79	89	14	31	1.7	2.6
ICT	9	56	81	11	22	1.5	2.2
Sports studies	3	100	88	33	25	3.4	2.4
Art and design	8	88	86	25	43	2.0	2.9
Theatre studies	8	63	95	0	40	1.2	3.0
Geography	20	95	91	20	38	2.2	2.9
History	17	88	94	35	41	2.8	3.0
Psychology	17	100	N/A	29	N/A	2.7	N/A
English literature	21	86	95	19	39	2.0	3.0
French	6	100	89	100	40	4.4	2.9

### ***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	7	71	87	43	43	5.1	5.8
Chemistry	3	100	90	67	43	4.7	5.9
Biology	3	100	88	67	34	8	5.3
Physics	6	67	88	33	40	4.7	5.7
Design and technology	6	100	91	17	30	5.0	5.4
Economics	9	78	89	11	36	3.1	5.5
Art and design	5	100	96	60	46	7.2	6.6
Theatre studies	6	83	91	17	31	4.0	5.5
Geography	13	92	92	15	38	4.5	5.7
History	16	88	88	13	35	4.4	5.4
Religious studies	7	86	92	0	38	2.9	5.8
English literature	17	94	95	53	37	6.5	5.9
French	2	100	89	50	38	8.0	5.6
General studies	35	69	85	34	30	4.5	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and biology. Work was sampled in physics. A-level results in physics in 2001, for the small number of students that were entered, were below average. Unconfirmed results for 2002 indicate that A2-level results were slightly above average. There has been a good year-on-year improvement in standards in physics over the past three years with a steady increase in the numbers of students joining the course. Students now do at least as well as can be expected in relation to their GCSE results and sometimes better. In the one lesson observed, teaching and learning were good. Students made good progress in their understanding of refraction of light and total internal reflection. They saw the relevance of the work for applications in everyday life. Most students were able to state Snell's law of refraction and explained the conditions under which the law applies. Higher-attaining students explained the meaning of critical angle and used their good mathematical skills to describe how they would measure the critical angle for a water-glass boundary or oil-water boundary.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve well.
- Student's work improves as a result of good use of assessment and procedures for monitoring progress.

##### Areas for improvement

- Students rarely undertake individual research to extend knowledge and understanding.

66. Mathematics is offered as a modular course, with a suitably broad and balanced content, for students to study at AS and A2-level. Over recent years, the number of students staying on to complete the AS-level course through to the end of Year 12 has been high. It is often the case, though, that students do not pursue their studies further. In 2001, seven students completed the course through to A2 level. In 2002, four did so. This year, only two students are studying the subject in Year 13. The department provides well for students wishing to resit GCSE mathematics examinations.

67. A-level results in 2001 were average. In most years recently, results have been around or above the national average. In almost every instance, students' results have represented good achievement based on their prior attainment. Unconfirmed A2-level results in 2002 indicate well above average attainment.

68. Students in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress and achieving well. Standards of work are above average. This is because teaching is good and students receive challenging and suitably difficult tasks that promote good learning. In Year 13, for example, high-attaining students cope well with a range of abstract concepts, calling on and using very effectively the skills and knowledge acquired previously. In one lesson, students proposed a method of proof superior to that suggested in published texts. This is because they have been taught very well to think about what they are doing rather than just repeating a set of mechanistic processes. Good achievement is reflected in the very high scores earned in modular assessments. In Year 12, students have, in a short time, learned well to handle a variety of statistical processes. They respond enthusiastically to questions. Often, they challenge hypotheses and are confident and competent enough to suggest more complex



models. Most have a good depth of understanding of statistics. They consider carefully how best to apply learned formulae to find and test solutions. Many students, though, do not take the initiative to further their knowledge and understanding of the subject through personal research.

69. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan well and have high expectations of success. They use their good expertise in the subject and their good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics to provide work of sufficient challenge and difficulty for students of all the different levels of attainment. Learning is rigorous and generally proceeds at a fast pace in lessons. Teachers require students to work to tight constraints of time and to think about underlying structures of mathematics. On the whole, because of their very positive attitudes to learning, students respond well and make good progress. However, students are not often challenged to pursue individual or group research. Because of this, teachers miss a few opportunities to help students to broaden their knowledge and understanding.

70. Good leadership and management enable teachers to work well as a team to ensure good continuity and progression in students' learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teachers frequently and regularly review the content of the courses and the methods of teaching to ensure that students are taught well. Procedures for assessing and checking work have improved and are good. Through close tracking of progress and detailed analyses of data about attainment, teachers provide students with realistic yet challenging targets for future success. These targets motivate students well and help them to make consistently good progress throughout the period of study.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching underpins the good progress that students are making in chemistry.
- Good use of assessment shows students what they have to do in order to improve.
- Students work hard and share the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT, particularly data logging, to support learning is insufficient.
- Few students choose to study chemistry at A2-level.

71. In 2001, A-level results for the three students entered were well above average. Unconfirmed A2-level results for 2002 indicate average attainment. Standards are higher now than they were at the time of the previous inspection. The numbers taking A-level have been low in recent years. Rates of retention for students who start the AS-level and A-level courses are good. AS-level results in 2001 were below average. Unconfirmed results in 2002 show a very slight improvement. In the past two years A-level chemistry has been one of the better performing subjects in the school. Results at AS-level were below average in 2001 and represented satisfactory achievement based on students' prior attainment. Achievement at A-level is good because students do better than is expected from their GCSE results.

72. Standards of work in Year 13 are above average currently. Achievement in relation to students' previous GCSE results is good. In one of two lessons observed in Year 13, higher-attaining students showed a good understanding of how to identify the groups present in organic compounds using mass spectrometry. They explained, using the mass spectrum of ethanol, the peaks in terms of fragmentation. Most found the relative mass of the fragments

and deduced formulae. In the other lesson, students had a satisfactory understanding of acid-base reactions and worked out equations for given titrations. They understood the purpose of acid-base titrations, selected appropriate indicators to detect end points in titrations and had a satisfactory understanding of the chemistry behind these.

73. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their AS-level course. Their progress is good and indicates above average standards. Students are developing their practical skills very well. They obtained good results in their experiments, for example, when determining the empirical formula of mercury chloride. In theory work, they explain the difference between empirical and molecular formulae and perform appropriate calculations well. They have good recall and understanding of earlier work including atomic structure and the use of the mass spectrometer in comparing relative atomic masses of atoms.

74. Teaching is good. Students learn well as a result. Characteristics of good teaching are careful planning, the setting of clear learning objectives and targets for students' attainment and the use of well-chosen resources to make good presentations. Systematic and helpful intervention by the teacher enables students to progress at a good rate. Teachers make effective use of their very good subject knowledge to enthuse the students and to help them to raise their attainment. Procedures to test students' understanding work well. An analysis of students' files shows that the quality of teachers' comments and marking are very good and help students to improve. Insufficient access to ICT equipment limits the development of students' skills in data-logging techniques.

75. Students in both years learn well. They talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning. All the students show interest in what they are doing and concentrate well. They respond readily to teachers' questions and ask questions to extend their understanding.

76. Good leadership and management of sixth-form chemistry have a clear commitment to raising standards further. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teachers have a clear vision as to the purpose of the course, and how to teach and assess it. Students raise the standards of their work because teachers' marking and assessment show them how improve. Work provided is of a suitable range of difficulty to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment. Good checking and evaluation of students' work is leading to improved standards.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- A-level results were well above average for the few entrants in 2001.
- Students' good relationships with teachers help them to make satisfactory progress.
- Students are highly motivated. Their very positive attitudes assist their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Support for higher-attaining students is not always as effective as it should be.
- A narrow range of teaching methods and insufficient use of ICT restrict learning.
- Insufficient checking of students' written work and lack of attention to improving their skills in note taking limit progress.

77. A-level results for the three students entered for biology in 2001 were well above average. They represent good achievement when account is taken of students' GCSE grades at the start of the course. Results were higher than those of 2000. Unconfirmed A2-level results for 2002 show a drop in standards to well below average and students did not do

as well as expected in relation to their GCSE results. The numbers taking biology at A2-level dropped substantially after 2000, and although they are improving, are still low. The rate of retention on biology courses in recent years has been good overall, although it was low in the 2001 A-level and 2002 AS-level courses. AS-level results in 2001 were below average. Unconfirmed results for 2002 were also below average. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades at the start of the course these results represent satisfactory achievement.

78. Standards of work seen in the current Year 13 are not as high as those suggested by the well above average examination results of 2001. Standards are average. They are satisfactory when compared to the grades that the students achieved in GCSE examinations. This small group was observed doing a practical investigation involving simple biochemical tests to analyse artificially produced samples of urine. Students were developing satisfactory practical skills. With guidance from the teacher they planned a method, carried out an analysis and concluded which sample contained normal urine and which represented certain medical conditions. A few students have inadequate techniques of experimentation. Most could explain the structure and function of the various parts of the kidney. They explained ultra filtration in simple terms, but did not have a sufficient depth of understanding of the theory needed to obtain the higher grades in the A2-level examination. Students did not readily see the links between work done in previous modules and that being done currently. They take in information but do little with it. For example, they know that most proteins remain in the blood in the kidney, but could not use previous knowledge to explain with reasons, the most common ones likely to remain in the blood and those that might be filtered out. When questioned on other aspects of the biology syllabus, they demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of basic facts and concepts. Analysis of students' files indicates that the majority of work is organised well, with care taken over the copying up of notes. Most students are highly motivated and have very positive attitudes to the subject and their work. A few do not maintain their files well, which is a disadvantage when revising for examinations.

79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good teaching, for example, in fieldwork. The best features of teaching are that teachers are well qualified and enjoy good relationships with their students. In the good lesson observed, students were challenged to think for themselves and to use their initiative. In lessons covering theoretical work, teachers do not always involve students sufficiently in their own learning and students are often expected to do little more than copy notes. As a result, students do not learn as quickly as they should. The planning of individual lessons is rather narrow, concentrating too heavily on the content to be covered rather than ensuring that students gain a good understanding. There is insufficient emphasis on creating a stimulating and exciting learning environment in which students can apply their knowledge, speculate, argue a case and ask questions, which particularly disadvantages the higher-attaining students. At times, the work is not matched well to the differing needs of students with a wide range of attainment in Year 12. Analysis of work indicated that teachers do not check sufficiently students' understanding and the quality of note taking. Teachers mark work in encouraging ways but do not provide enough clear indications of how well students are progressing. There is little use of ICT for research or data analysis other than in fieldwork. Progress in developing techniques in data logging is hindered by a lack of access to appropriate resources.

80. Leadership and management of biology are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There is a commitment to improving standards. The planning of the biology course and the work of individual teachers are sound. However, teaching schemes do not have enough clear references to opportunities for higher-attaining students, the development of key skills, including ICT and references to assessment.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology. No other subjects were sampled.

## Design and technology

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

### Strengths

- Students' mature attitudes enable them to work independently.
- Good guidance on practical projects enables students to pursue their career aspirations

### Areas for improvement

- The setting of targets is not clear enough to ensure completion of work in all lessons.
- Teachers make little use of assessment to provide for students' individual needs.
- The limited provision for control technology restricts learning in design and technology.

81. A-level results in 2001 were average. They were an improvement over the previous two years. They represent satisfactory achievement compared with students' previous attainment at GCSE examinations in design and technology subjects. However, most were short of their predicted grades based on the average points achieved over all GCSE subjects. In the AS-level examinations in 2001, Year 12 students achieved results similar to those predicted from previous attainment. Most students did just as well in this subject as in other subjects taken. The number taking this subject is very small. Rates of retention on the AS-level course are good. Many students do not continue with the subject after AS level. Those who do continue to study the subject complete the A2-level course.

82. Standards of work seen in Year 13 were below average, particularly in preliminary design work, but this is very early in their course and there was not much work to be seen. Students have a very good attitude to their work, are mature and able to work independently. For example, they draw up their own plan of action for work in their major project. Students are capable, practical workers so that, for example, after the teacher's demonstration of electric arc welding, they carried out this procedure successfully.

83. In Year 12, students are only a little way into their course. They are making satisfactory progress, despite the absence of one of their teachers. They carried out research for their first projects adequately, using the Internet appropriately. Most students demonstrate good graphical skills at this stage in the course. However, as in Year 13, there was an absence of sketch designs to show how their ideas were developing.

84. Teaching is satisfactory in spite of the absence of the head of department who teaches a major proportion of A-level. Teachers use their good expertise in the subject to assist students' learning. The regular, weekly sessions of teaching of skills and knowledge enable students to improve their capability and understanding. Through their study of the development of torches, for example, they learn the meaning of specific terms, such as 'reverse engineering', by taking the product apart. Teachers give good careers guidance to students throughout their project work. In Year 13, teachers try to match students' projects to their career aspirations, such as working in the car industry. However, when lessons involve students working on their projects, teachers do not set sufficiently tight targets for the completion of work during the lesson. Students do not have a clear understanding of what is required from them. Teachers do not make effective use of assessment information to plan for future work or to supply students with good information about their progress. This results in a slackness of approach, and students do not achieve as much as they might.

85. Leadership is satisfactory in the absence of the head of department. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The department has barely adequate resources

for the teaching of advanced courses and insufficient provision of equipment to enable students to learn the important modern techniques of computer-aided design and manufacture.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The focus of the inspection was on the new vocational course in information and communication technology.

### **Information and communication technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching of the new advanced course helps students to raise standards.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The range of courses in ICT is limited.

86. There have been no sixth-form courses prior to the current course in Years 12 and 13 for the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). This is a popular course with students. There are no courses at AS-level or A2-level. There is insufficient provision for teaching ICT in subjects across the curriculum. Standards of work seen on the AVCE course are above average and represent good achievement to date. Rates of retention are good. The structure of the course enables it to be tailored to the individual needs of students, who are, therefore, well motivated and continue with this subject from Year 12 into Year 13.

87. Teaching of ICT as a specialist subject in the sixth form is good. A particularly strong feature in the teaching of the AVCE course is the very effective assessment of students' individual needs that allows well-focused short-term action plans to be drawn up. These enable students to make very good progress in their individual projects. The teacher makes students fully aware of expectations and requirements for their future work. Students demonstrate adequate skills in researching and presenting information using Internet and multi-media software. Students' positive attitudes to the subject and very good relationships with the teacher help them to learn at a fast pace in lessons.

88. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. They have led to much improved provision for the subject including up-to-date and relevant hardware and software. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are effective in promoting standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good insofar as courses are now available in the sixth form and they are planned well.

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

The focus of the inspection was on the course of sports studies in physical education. No other subjects were sampled.

### **Physical education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching and students' very good attitudes lead to good achievement.

- Good leadership has ensured the successful introduction of the course.
- Provision for physical education across the sixth form is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The link between assessment and individual guidance of students is not close enough.

89. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are average. This is the second year of AS-level and A2-level courses in sports studies. Numbers following the course have been small but with a good increase in the current Year 12. In 2001, there were no entries at A-level and AS-results were below average. In 2002, students achieved what might be expected at A2-level. A very large number of sixth-form students continue to take part in games and physical recreation as part of their enrichment studies. Physical education has a high profile in the school.

90. Achievement is good by Year 13. Students have a good understanding of anatomy and physiology. They use technical terms with accuracy. In contemporary studies, they have a good understanding of issues in physical education in France and the USA. When considering the principles of training and how to improve a performance, students make good use of their own practical experience. Higher attainers and those of average attainment in both years present their work well. Their work shows good use of research that extends the work covered in lessons. In Year 12, notes made by lower attainers are poorly organised and contain a minimum amount of information. In class discussion, students make a good contribution and have good skills of communication.

91. Students have very good attitudes to physical education. They have very positive views about the sports studies course that motivate them to do well. The majority continue from AS-level to the A2-level course. Very good relationships with teachers promote a very good climate for learning in lessons and for participation in extra-curricular activities and team games. Physical education makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through the study of sport in different social and democratic contexts.

92. Good teaching leads to good learning and achievement. Students make good gains in knowledge because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to lead lively and productive discussions in class. Teachers use a wide variety of methods that interest and motivate students and challenge them to be independent learners. Teachers help students to develop their practical skills in physical education well. Occasionally, planning is not detailed enough to meet all the learning needs of the wide range of attainment in the groups. Teachers prepare good materials and guides to support students and to help them to make good progress in lessons and when they study independently. Work is marked thoroughly and regularly. However, teachers do not always make the fullest use of these assessments of students' work to help students to improve their performances.

93. Good leadership and management have resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection, when there were no examination courses in physical education. The department has the capacity to make further improvements. There is a clear determination to raise standards including the careful analysis and use of results.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

Although subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for the inspection, work was sampled in theatre studies. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. The attitudes towards the subject of a few boys in Y12 are immature. The quality of work in students' files varied considerably. Recently, students have achieved lower results in external examinations in theatre studies than in most other subjects. A few students said

that, particularly at AS-level, they did not attach the same importance to the subject as they did to their other courses.

## HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Procedures for assessment and monitoring progress are very effective in helping students to improve their work.
- Students' very good relationships with teachers create a very good climate for learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- A few low-attaining students have difficulty in writing essays.

94. In 2000, A-level results matched the national average and almost half of the entrants gained A or B grades. Girls' results were above the national average. In 2001, fewer students entered for A-level and results were below average. Twelve of the thirteen students were successful although few gained A or B grades. Achievement was broadly as expected from students' prior attainment. Unconfirmed A2-level results in 2002 indicate that results were below average and students' marks varied considerably in different modules of the new course.

95. In 2001, students entered for the new AS-level examination and results were below average. In 2002, the unconfirmed results indicate a big improvement in standards. Standards improved because teachers helped students to pay more attention to examination techniques and essay writing. Geography is one of the most popular subjects in the sixth form. Almost all students in both teaching groups complete the AS-level course and many continue to A-level.

96. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are currently above average. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning. Standards on the advanced courses are higher than in recent years as a result of teachers' greater knowledge of the new examination's requirements. They make good progress and produce a good standard of work. They make detailed studies of earthquakes such as those in Kobi, Afghanistan and more recently, Dudley. These studies increase students' knowledge and understanding and make them think carefully about geographical events and their causes. Students work well with ICT and statistical information. In coursework, high-attaining students use their geographical and investigative skills very effectively to increase their knowledge and understanding of local, rural and environmental issues. Lower-attaining students achieve well although their diagrams show fewer annotations and their arguments are not so well developed. In a Year 12 class, students build on their good knowledge and skills from their GCSE course and can prepare for a two-day residential field course in Manchester. They interpret statistical tables and draw accurate choropleth maps to show the differences in population density. In Year 13, students use ICT proficiently as seen in the preparation of an annotated diagram to illustrate the extent to which natural hazards can be predicted. The group used this as a prompt sheet for a written essay. Higher attainers make concise, accurate and telling points, as they draft their introduction. Students who find the work more challenging write extensively but not always with accuracy.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Much of the teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to ensure a fast pace of learning throughout the lessons. They encourage students to work productively and to meet the lesson's targets. Their relationship with students is very good. They provide very good support for individual research and help students in the application of ICT to extend their work. Students enjoy their work in geography and say that the opportunities provided for fieldwork 'make their studies worthwhile'. Students respond very well to the challenges offered and teachers' high expectations of what they can achieve. Teachers mark the work carefully and provide detailed and supportive comments that help students to improve their work. As a result, students' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good.

98. Very good leadership of the subject and effective teamwork have resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have a determination to raise examination standards. Students' progress is monitored carefully and regular individual tutorials promote higher attainment. Schemes of work have been reviewed to meet the requirements of the new examination. These include shorter assignments to encourage students, particularly boys to raise their attainment.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Teachers' good planning of lessons and checking of students' work enhance learning.
- Good use of ICT by students promotes a good understanding of history.

### Areas for improvement

- Lower-attaining students have inadequate skills in note taking and do not participate fully in discussions in class.

99. Students' performance in A-Level was below the national average in 2001 and indicated satisfactory achievement overall. In 2002, unconfirmed A2-level results indicate that all nine entrants were successful and that achievement was good. There were inconsistencies between students' attainment in the coursework module and their attainment in other modules.

100. In 2001, results in the new AS-level examination were average. Five students gained A or B grades and the remainder C and D grades. Boys benefited from the modular examination. Provisional AS-level results in 2002 indicates slightly lower attainment than in 2001. Most students complete their AS-level course. Those who choose to continue to study history in Year 13 stay on to complete the A2-level course.

101. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are average. Students made good progress in the lessons seen and in the work completed. Year 12 students built well on their prior attainment at GCSE. They recognised the bias of the video recording used to illustrate the attack on Pearl Harbour. They analysed the photographic evidence in relation to the known facts. The discussion led by the teacher increased students' confidence, knowledge and understanding of the events. Higher attainers presented coherent arguments and participated in informed debate. A few lower-attaining students found the concepts difficult to understand. These students were reluctant to join in class discussion and were hesitant in their written work.



102. Year 13 students achieve well and a few very well. Their preparation for lessons is thorough. In one lesson higher-attaining students had, in preparation, read widely and researched interesting information from the Internet. Their spreadsheets promoted good discussions in class. Students analysed a wide range of evidence from art and design, music and poetry to determine whether the 1960's was a special decade. The liveliness of the period was reflected in their thinking and well-informed oral contributions. However, in another lesson, a few lower-attaining students were reluctant to discuss civil rights issues in the United States. Students recorded their own notes from the teacher, but lower-attaining students did not record their work sufficiently to assist their understanding of issues surrounding equal rights and non-violent protest.

103. The quality of teaching is good. In one of the lessons observed it was excellent. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to support good learning throughout the sixth form classes. The best teaching involved high expectations and effective use of stimulating resources that enabled students to learn quickly from tape recordings, video and illustrated text. Students respond well with their own research and share readily their knowledge of other subjects to provide very good examples of social history in the 1960s. In lessons which were satisfactory rather than good, the teacher dominates a greater part of the lesson and students have too few opportunities to participate and to verify their understanding. Students who contribute willingly in lessons have a high standard of written work.

104. Homework is set regularly. It helps students to enhance their understanding of topics and to develop their research skills. Teachers make the requirements of the examination very clear. Teacher's marking contains supportive comments. Discussions in class provide clear explanations of how students should improve their essay writing skills. The monitoring of students' work identifies individual targets for improvement that help students to raise achievement in history.

105. Students enjoy the subject. Most are highly motivated although they find the subject difficult. They are keen to succeed. They find the well-planned courses interesting and know that they can discuss matters openly with teachers. Essays and personal studies challenge students to think. Students use the arguments of historians to develop their own ideas.

106. The new leadership of the department has a commitment to raise standards and to attract more students to study history. Higher-attaining students have previously been attracted to other institutions. The provision of informative CD ROMs created in the school support students' learning well. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was the AS-level and A2-level courses in English literature. A sample of work in the separate course in English language and literature indicated that the quality of provision is good. In the few lessons seen, students were making good progress as a result of good teaching and their very positive attitudes to learning.

### **English**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching helps students to achieve above average examination results
- Students are enthusiastic about their work so that they learn well.
- Good leadership and management ensure good support for students in their learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always involve and extend the highest and lowest-attaining students

107. Standards of work seen and examination results at the end of Year 13 are above average. Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes help them to learn well. The overall achievement of students is good, taking into account their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form. English literature is a popular sixth form choice. Attendance is good and students rarely drop out.

108. In work seen, attainment is above average by the end of Year 13. Students are confident speakers. They contribute intelligently to discussions in class and groups, as seen in lively exchanges when Year 12 students discussed Tennessee Williams's 'The Glass Menagerie'. Students' close reading of texts shows good observation of detail and sensitive interpretations of meaning. This was particularly evident in a Year 13 lesson in which students compared contrasting war poems by Thomas Hardy and Robert Graves. Students produce careful notes and well-constructed essays. Standards of written expression are above average.

109. The A2-level results in English literature in 2001 were above the national average. An above-average proportion of students gained the highest grades. Provisional results for 2002 are at the national average. Results have improved overall over the past three years. Set against their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form students achieve well in English literature. Although AS-level results at the end of Year 12 were below average in 2001, most students achieve examination results that meet or are above expectations, based on their earlier performance in GCSE examinations. There is no consistent variation in patterns of achievement for male and female students.

110. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan the course well so that students are clear about their work. Marking is thorough with detailed comments that help students to improve. Students organise their notes carefully and make appropriate use of ICT to improve the presentation of their work. They learn effectively in lessons that provide good opportunities for them to discuss their work with others. When talking in class they are knowledgeable and usually resourceful. They have the confidence to challenge others' views and do so in a thoughtful way. However, in a few lessons teachers do not consider fully how well lower-attaining students are progressing. Occasionally tasks do not extend fully the highest-attaining students.

111. Leadership and management are good. Teachers plan lessons well to meet examination specifications. Students appreciate the way that teachers invariably treat them like adults. They find marking helpful. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. The department has maintained good examination results and expanded its courses.