

INSPECTION REPORT

CRANBROOK SCHOOL

Cranbrook

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118888

Headteacher: Mrs A S Daly

Reporting inspector: N A Pett
17331

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th March 2003

Inspection number: 249785

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Grammar (selective) with boarders |
| School category: | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils: | 13 - 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Waterloo Road Cranbrook Kent |
| Postcode: | TN17 3JD |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Anthony Cooper |
| Date of previous inspection: | 10 th February 1997 |

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| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 17331 | N A Pett | Registered inspector | | Standards; How well are pupils taught - Post 16; How good are learning opportunities; How well is the school led and managed? |
| 9748 | C Hayes | Lay inspector | | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How good are partnerships with parents? |
| 9542 | D Jones | Lay Inspector | | |
| 15268 | J English | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 12844 | M Saunders | Team inspector | English; English as an additional language; Drama | |
| 10160 | R Bagguley | Team inspector | Science; Post 16 Biology and Physics | |
| 20533 | D Rogers | Team inspector | Art | |
| 7084 | J Haslam | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| 3827 | J Knight | Team inspector | Geography | |
| 27226 | R Cribb | Team inspector | History | |
| 18032 | I Randall | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | How well are pupils taught - main school |
| 12408 | A Frith | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |
| 31705 | J Mason | Team inspector | Music | |
| 18755 | R Whittaker | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| 4372 | R Fordham | Team inspector | Religious education | |
| 32252 | D Wring | Team inspector | Classical Civilisation; Latin | |
| 28002 | S Taylor | Team inspector | Citizenship; Special educational needs; Equality of opportunity | |
| 32150 | K Redman | Team inspector | Economics; Boarding provision | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This co-educational selective school, with boarding provision, was founded in 1518. It is accommodated on a very large and attractive site in a mixture of old and new buildings, close to the centre of the town of Cranbrook in Kent. There are 431 pupils on roll, aged between 13 and 16, plus 282 students in the sixth form; 240 pupils and students are boarders. The school is smaller than the average secondary school nationally, although the sixth form is larger than average. The school serves Cranbrook and the surrounding area, with a number of boarders whose families live abroad. Pupils and students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, although the large majority experience financial and social advantage. A significant percentage of pupils join the school in Year 9 from the independent sector. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Their ethnic heritage is mainly white European and the proportion not speaking English as their first language is below average. Three pupils are identified with special educational needs, one of whom holds a statement to address their specific need. These figures are well below average. Attainment on entry for most pupils in Year 9 is well above average, although a minority enter with only average prior attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a distinctive school with many strengths, some of which are outstanding. It has a very well defined ethos which enables many of its pupils and students to achieve very high standards, both academically and personally. Results in National Curriculum tests, and in GCSE and GCE examinations, are consistently well above average, although a minority of pupils underachieve. The overall quality of teaching is good. The headteacher leads the school very effectively in conjunction with the senior staff and their leadership and management are good overall. The provision for boarding is very good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Enables most pupils and students to produce high standards of work and to achieve well.
- Teaches well in Years 10 and 11 and very well in the sixth form.
- Achieves very high standards in pupils' and students' behaviour, attitudes and values through the effective provision for their personal development.
- Provides a very good programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Provides very well for pupils and students who are boarding.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in Year 9.
- The use of information from data and assessment analysis and the quality of pupils' reports
- Statutory curriculum requirements for information and communication technology in Year 9, design and technology in Years 10 and 11 and religious education in the sixth form.
- The formal recording of health and safety.
- The quality of the accommodation.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. The overall improvement has been good. In relation to the key issues, the headteacher has initiated effective procedures to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Curriculum shortcomings have been well addressed, although there are still some shortcomings for information and communication technology and design and technology. Standards have improved overall as evidenced in the results and the quality of teaching and in the roles of subject leaders. The school recognises that it still needs to improve the use of assessment data further. Good plans exist for improving the accommodation and there is good potential in the overall management and governance for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| GCSE examinations | A* | A | A* | D |
| A-levels/AS-levels | n/a | A | n/a | |

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

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and overall. The trend line for improvement was above average. Judgements in relation to pupils' prior attainment are masked because not all pupils have taken the tests at the age of eleven in their previous schools. In GCSE examinations, results for the percentage of pupils gaining both five A*-C and A*-G passes and in overall points were very high. Girls achieve better results than boys on average points score. The trend line was broadly in line with that found nationally. Against pupils' prior attainment, results were below average, indicating that a small minority of pupils underachieve. Results in GCE AS and A2 were above average in 2001, the last year for which data is available. Standards for pupils currently in the school are above average overall, although standards in music in Year 9, design and technology in Years 10 and 11 and in the use of information and communication technology are average. Standards are better in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form than in Year 9, the first year that the pupils are in the school and this reflects the variation in their previous experience. Most pupils achieve well and the school has recently received an achievement award for its success over the last three years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and teachers. They enjoy school and work very hard. They are proud of their school and care for resources very well. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | The behaviour of most pupils is very good at all times. They understand the difference between right and wrong. A small minority do not always respond well to the high expectations set. |
| Personal development and relationships | Pupils show responsibility and care. They collaborate well and have very good relationships with teachers and each other. |
| Attendance | Good in relation to authorised and unauthorised absences. |

The overall standards of attitudes, values, behaviour, attendance and strength of relationships contribute significantly to the working and achieving ethos of the school. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations, appreciating and taking good advantage of their opportunities. They contribute well to the overall life of the school. Standards in the boarding houses are very good overall.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 13-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged 16-18 years |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Satisfactory | Good | Very good |

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. Very good or better teaching occurs in four out of 10 lessons and good or better teaching in 8 out of 10. It was outstanding in one out of 10. The very best teaching occurs in Years 11 and 13, but in Year 9 there are some significant shortcomings and one in 10 lessons was unsatisfactory. However, over a third of Year 9 teaching is very good. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good overall, as is the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Teaching of information and communication technology in discrete lessons is very good, but the application of skills in subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent. Teaching over time is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and leads to their good progress and standards. In the best lessons, pupils willingly respond to the teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm. Usually, there is a good match between the work set and the differing needs of the pupils. Where there are some shortcomings, it is because expectations, challenge and teaching strategies are underdeveloped. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are given good support but the challenge for able and talented pupils is inconsistent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | There is good breadth, balance and relevance although statutory curriculum requirements are not met for information and communication technology in Year 9 and design and technology in Year 10 and 11. The curriculum generally meets the needs of the pupils and students. Extra-curricular activities are a significant strength. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Provision for this very small minority of pupils is very good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Strategies effectively support this minority of pupils well and they achieve as well as their peers. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development | Very good provision is made for all aspects of pupils' personal development. The opportunities provide well for spiritual development and very well for social, moral and cultural development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Pupils are very well known on a personal level and this is a strength of the school. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory overall, but the school recognises that it can improve this aspect of its work. Risk assessments are carried out but the formal recording of aspects of health and safety are unsatisfactory. |

The provision of daily care in boarding, through the effective work of the heads of houses and the matrons, is very good. Parents are very supportive and make a significant contribution to the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher's leadership and vision has led to improved standards and the enhanced opportunities for pupils and students. There is an effective partnership within the leadership group and many subject are well led. Monitoring and evaluation strategies have been well developed. The leadership and management in boarding is very good. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The work of the governors is effective and they generally fulfil their statutory responsibilities. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The effective analysis of data has been significantly enhanced and has the potential to inform whole school and individual pupil target setting further, but the outcomes are not consistently used. |
| The strategic use of resources | Resources are well used and strategies for ensuring that best value is achieved are very good. |

There is an appropriate balance in experience and qualifications of the staff to meet the needs of the curriculum and the pupils and students. The resources are satisfactory, but the accommodation has some limitations and these have an adverse impact on standards in aspects of science, design and technology, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. Access for physically disabled pupils is very difficult, because of the many staircases and narrow corridors. The boarding provision is very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtually unanimously, that their children like school. • The standards and progress being achieved by their children. • The high standards of behaviour. • How well the school cares for its pupils. • The good attitudes, values and beliefs being promoted and achieved by the school. • The good quality of teaching. • The very good range of extra-curricular activities. • That the school is well led and managed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information about the progress their children are making. • The amount of homework set – some felt too much and some felt too little. • How the school works with them. • The range of activities outside of lessons. |

The relationship with and overall support from parents are good. There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most. They also consider that the provision for homework is good overall and that the range of activities is very good. Reporting to parents meets statutory requirements, but the quality of school reports requires development so as to give a clearer view of progress and to set targets. Inspectors reviewed information from the school to parents and judge that it is good overall and that the school does strive to work with them. 'School diaries' have the potential to address this matter if they are consistently used.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 282 students in the co-educational sixth form, a significant minority of whom are boarders. It is larger than the average sixth form nationally. Most pupils who attend the school in Year 11 enter the sixth form, whilst a small percentage of students transfer from other schools, locally and nationally, including the independent sector. The prior attainment of the large majority of students is well above average and most remain to complete their courses. A very small minority of students pursue their studies through a consortium arrangement. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic heritage is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision reflects the overall ethos of the school. The courses offered are mainly for AS and A2 subjects and the range of courses meets the aspirations and capabilities of the students very well. The quality of teaching is very good overall and students achieve well. The quality of care is sound and teaching staff provide an effective level of personal and academic support. Students make a distinctive contribution to the life of the school and willingly take on responsibility. They also take good advantage of the opportunities to pursue higher education. Most students show good support for the younger pupils. The overall provision is cost-effective.

Strengths

- The standards being achieved.
- The support given to students in subjects, so that they achieve well for their prior attainment.
- Attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The quality of teaching.
- The involvement of the students in the life of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality of careers guidance other than that given for higher education.
- Meeting statutory requirements for religious education.

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. The following subjects were sampled: information and communication technology, music, politics, psychology and performing arts, where the provision is good overall. A good range of activities are offered for physical education. There is a general studies course and, in Year 13, a critical thinking course, both of which add to the enrichment of the curriculum. Although there is no identified citizenship curriculum in the sixth form, several good examples of incidental discussion of citizenship were seen. However, the statutory requirement for religious education is not complied with.

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|------------------------|--|
| Mathematics | Good. Results are well above average and the students make good progress. The quality of the teaching is good. |
| Biology | Good. Results are above average and students achieve very well. This reflects the good teaching and students' attitudes to their work. |
| Physics | Very good. Results and achievement are very good, and are secured through very good teaching and learning. |
| Design and technology | Good. Standards are above average and students learn well as a result of good teaching. |
| Economics | Good. Results are well above average and students are well taught. Teaching and learning are good. |
| Physical Education | Very good. Results, and students' achievement, are well above average. The quality of teaching is very good. |
| Art | Very good. The standards of work seen were very good and well above average. Teaching is consistently very good. |
| Geography | Very good. Results have been consistently well above average for several years. Coursework is a particular strength. Staff have strong subject knowledge and teaching is very good. |
| History | Very good. Students' attainment is above average. Their enthusiasm for the subject is very good. The challenging and vibrant teaching ensures that they make very good progress. |
| Classical Civilization | Good. Standards and results are above average. The quality of teaching is good. |
| English | Very good. Students' attainment and progress is very good on account of teachers' strong subject knowledge and the very good teaching which engages and challenges them. |
| French | Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is very good and teachers speak French throughout lessons. Students' attainment and progress is very good. |
| Latin | Good. The small minority of students taking this subject achieve high grades and the quality of teaching is very good. |

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well students are guided and supported | Students are very well taught and they consider that they are generally well supported and guided by their subject teachers. There is good pastoral care. The overall quality of guidance for the next stage of their education is very good, but the quality of guidance for alternative pathways and for careers is only satisfactory. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Good. The management and development of the curriculum to provide appropriate courses is effective. Initiatives to monitor teaching and learning are being developed, as are approaches to using examination and assessment data more effectively. Leadership and management for boarders is very good. |

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Views were sought through discussion with the students as the questionnaire was not used. These included both formal and informal sessions, discussing their work and general aspects of school life. Most would highly recommend their school and sixth form.

| What students like about the sixth form | What they feel could be improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers are accessible for help.• Choices generally suit their needs.• They are well taught.• They are well supported in their applications for higher education.• They generally feel that they are treated as adults and listened to. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and advice about alternative career paths. |

Inspectors endorse the students' comments for both positive aspects of their provision and for the need to improve careers advice.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils enter the school following selection procedures whilst they are in Year 8 and they begin at the school in Year 9 when they are aged 13. A small minority are admitted who may not have attained as well as their peers. The school is oversubscribed with approximately 350 applicants for 150 places. Many pupils come from the independent sector and a significant proportion from the local comprehensive school, or other comprehensive schools. A minority of pupils, mainly boarders, do not have English as their mother tongue and there is a significant minority who have some learning difficulties. The overall standards on entry are well above average and are high for a significant proportion of the pupils, although there is a small minority who have only average standards on entry.
2. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high and in the top five per cent nationally in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in overall points scores. A significant proportion of the pupils achieved at the higher levels. Results were highest in mathematics. Girls achieved slightly better than boys overall, although the difference is not great, and boys achieved very well in relation to the national average. Comparisons with pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 7 in their primary schools is difficult to make as many of the pupils do not take the tests in the independent sector. A comparison with similar grammar schools shows that the results were above average in English, average in mathematics and well below average in science for pupils gaining the higher levels, and average overall. The value added comparisons based on 64 per cent of the pupils having test results at the end of Year 7 shows that results were very high in comparison with national results and were well above average in comparison with grammar schools. However, in comparison with all schools based on free school meals, results were above average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science and average overall. The trend line for improvement was above average.
3. Standards being achieved by the pupils currently in Year 9 reflect the selective character of the school and this previous test performance. Standards by the end of the year have the potential to be very high in mathematics and well above average in English and science. Standards are well above average in history and geography, but because of their previous experience, standards are only above average in art, design and technology, information and communication technology and religious education and average in music. Pupils' achievement is generally good. In information and communication technology, the recent developments in the quality of teaching are leading to excellent achievement. However, in mathematics, music, art and German, achievement is only satisfactory because of the quality of teaching.
4. Results at GCSE for pupils gaining 5 A*-C and in overall points were very high in relation to the national average. Results were well above average for pupils gaining 5 A*-G passes. These levels have been maintained over the last 3 years. Girls achieve better results than boys on average points score. The trend line was broadly in line with that found nationally. However, when comparing the results against those achieved in similar schools against pupils' prior attainment in the tests at the end of Year 9, they are below average in relation to average points scored. The targets set for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades was not met. This can be partly explained by the fact that a small proportion of pupils join the school with slightly lower capability than their peers but also that a small minority of pupils underachieve. The school recognises that approaches to assessment require improvement to address this issue and recent developments have the potential to significantly improve target setting and the evaluation of pupils' performance. A significant minority of pupils successfully take GCSE a year early and their success is not included in the overall statistics. The school has recently received an achievement award for its success over the last three years.
5. Standards being achieved by the end of Year 11 for the current cohort of pupils are high in mathematics and well above average in English and science. Above average standards are

achieved in many other subjects, although they are only above average in design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education, German and Latin. This is a reflection in the variation in teaching and in the capability of the pupils taking courses. For example, not all pupils take a course in design and technology, and in information and communication technology; staffing issues, which have now been well resolved, have hampered the provision. Standards in citizenship are above average and in religious education are good in relation to the governors' syllabus. Achievement in subjects across the curriculum is good overall and is improving because of the more rigorous approach by senior staff in the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, in mathematics, music, physical education and religious education, achievement is only good because of the quality of teaching and learning.

6. The very small minority of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs, which are significant enough to be on the nationally recognised Code of Practice, make very good progress and are fully integrated into lessons and the life of the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school also identifies about 100 pupils as having some minor literacy difficulties or care needs and these pupils are making the same progress as their peers. There is an excellent initial screening for pupils' learning difficulties for all through a range of nationally recognised tests; appropriate strategies are put in place in lessons to support and encourage the pupils identified. The overall provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. There is no whole school approach to identify these pupils but within subjects teachers do make effective provision to challenge them with extension work and their overall achievement is good. The small minority of pupils who do not have English as their mother tongue are generally well supported and they achieve as well as their peers.
7. The standards achieved in literacy are well above average. Pupils' literacy is well developed in the English teaching they receive and in many other subjects. Particularly high standards were noted in science, information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and classics. Many pupils are very articulate and converse with confidence in formal and informal situations. They use the correct specialised language across the full range of subjects and do so with understanding. When giving answers in class or entering into discussion, most convey their understanding and hypotheses in well structured sentences. They answer questions accurately showing that they have listened well. Many pupils can produce cogent arguments and some have such confidence in their oral skills that they can be quite stubborn and argumentative in discussions. Written skills are above average, displaying good use of Standard English, and reading skills are also above average.
8. Standards of numeracy are well above average, although many pupils resort to their calculators too readily and do not always choose the most appropriate method for working out particular problems. As a result they are more confident working with decimals than with fractions. Good applications of numeracy are found in many areas of the curriculum, for example, in science, where pupils confidently use algebraic manipulation in work in physics and statistical methods in all areas of study. In history in Year 9 pupils use statistical data well to interpret evidence. In geography, statistical methods are used effectively to help pupils understand data on population changes.
9. Standards in information and communication technology as a cross-curricular skill are below average. Pupils come to Year 9 with a very wide range of prior experience, except in searching the Internet and basic word-processing, giving the majority very low standards. The aspects of the National Curriculum that are taught in the discrete course are very good, but this is a recent development. Pupils are now achieving outstandingly as the direct result of excellent teaching throughout the year. However, there is inadequate co-ordination across the curriculum and consequently there is not enough use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects. Exceptions are found in music and art where good use is made of skills. The school does not have suitable equipment for computer-assisted control or measurement of physical variables and, where they could be taught in design and technology and science, practice is unsatisfactory. The main problem however is lack of access to computer rooms and to adequate computers. The school's ratio of computers to pupils at the time of the inspection is well below national average, with only one room well equipped with up-to-date machines.

Sixth form

10. Standards on entry are generally above average. Most pupils who have completed their GCSE course transfer to the sixth form, where they are joined by a significant minority of students from other schools, including the independent sector. The results at GCE AS and A2 reflect the students' prior attainment and in the 2001 examinations the average points score for A2 was well above average overall and in relation to both boys and girls. No confirmed evaluations are available for 2002 results due to changes in the national reporting procedures.
11. Standards are well above average in all subjects except design and technology, history, information and communication technology, French, classical civilisation and Latin, where they are above average. The very small minority of pupils who have had identified special educational needs continue to make very good progress over time in the sixth form, although no students are on the stages of the code of practice. Those pupils who do not have English as their mother tongue also make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' excellent attitudes, very good standards of behaviour and quality of personal development are very distinctive and are a significant strength of the school. Their standards contribute extensively to the overall ethos and to their academic achievement. These qualities were recognised at the last inspection and they have been very well maintained, reflecting the commitment of the staff.
13. The large majority of pupils are extremely enthusiastic about school. Overall, they display care and sensitivity to each other. Their attitudes to learning are very good and in lessons most pupils show interest, commitment and enthusiasm for their work, maintaining concentration and persevering even when faced with challenging tasks. They generally undertake their work with enjoyment and confidence, listening attentively and making effective use of their skills. In question and answer sessions they often respond well and make full use of their very good vocabulary. Collaborative work is very good and pupils are generally mutually supportive and encouraging. They show initiative in organising and planning their work and their capability to work independently increases as they progress throughout the school, although opportunities are sometimes limited. A small minority do not always display such mature characteristics and they can be disruptive and challenging; this undermines their achievement. The attitudes of the small minorities of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are very good.
14. Behaviour is very good, both within and outside the classroom overall. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They move around the school in an orderly manner, even where space is restricted, for example in some corridors and staircases and in the Dining Hall. There was no sign of graffiti and only small amounts of litter. There is little evidence of bullying but, when it does occur, it is managed well by staff and pupils. There were 13 fixed term and no permanent exclusions last year, a much lower figure than that reported at the last inspection, and, to date, have reduced still further this year. There have again been no permanent exclusions this year. There are a small minority of pupils who do not always respond well to the high expectations expected of them and they can very occasionally disrupt learning for themselves and others. Attendance is very good and punctuality to lessons is sound.
15. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is of a very high standard and a distinctive characteristic of the school. Although younger pupils frequently opt for single-gender friendship groups, by the time they reach Year 11, friendships are cross genders. There are very good relationships between boarders and day pupils. At breaks, pupils and students collect together in groups in the quadrangle and enjoy the opportunity to discuss social and academic events; they enjoy competing with each other and there is a good deal of pleasant banter and humour. No discrimination of any kind was seen during the inspection. Pupils generally respect each other's values and possessions, although the concern about the security of boarders' personal possessions has led to the provision of secure lockers in all Houses.

16. Personal development is very good and pupils respond extremely well to the ethos of responsibility for themselves and their work within a supportive and caring environment. Pupils are generally very polite and courteous to visitors and enjoy entering into discussions. Their response in assemblies is very good especially when they applaud the contributions of their peers in musical presentations and in academic, cultural and sporting activities. Extra-curricular activities are very well supported and pupils demonstrate their positive attitudes as they give of their time in activities such as the lunchtime concert for local residents and as members of the combined cadet force contingents. They respond very well to the many opportunities which are provided throughout the school to make positive contributions to its life and work and that of the wider community. The pupils willingly accept responsibility, whether in organising charitable events or physically helping to improve the Tabora region of Tanzania, a link which has existed since 1984 and the ninth expedition is to leave this summer. The range of roles generated by the School Council and House System are willingly undertaken by pupils and they do so in a mature manner.

Sixth form

17. Most of the foregoing applies equally to sixth form students. In summary, most students have very positive attitudes and respect differing values and opinions. They are fully prepared to voice their opinions, mostly in a mature manner, although they can sometimes be pedantic. Their contribution to the overall life of the school is very good and they generally set a good example to the younger pupils and willingly accept responsibility. Attendance to lessons is good rather than very good. From inspection evidence, students hold very positive views of the school overall and about the provision for the sixth form. The development of students' personal and learning skills is very good.

Boarding

18. The school has maintained the high standard since the last inspection. Boarders are friendly, courteous, self-confident and well behaved. Relationships between the boarders and the boarding staff and between themselves are very good. This was particularly noticeable on a visit to a local bowling alley and cinema complex and in the social setting of the houses, where a relaxed, family atmosphere prevails. The boarding houses provide an environment in which there is a clear sense of right and wrong. This is inherent in house rules and reinforced by house assemblies and tutorial activities. There are ample opportunities for boarders to take responsibility, demonstrate initiative and show an understanding of living in a community. Each house has a range of positions of responsibility to which boarders can aspire, for example Head and Deputy Head of House, Prefect, Student Council Representative, as well as positions involved in organising social events.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, as was reported at the last inspection, and the overall improvement has been satisfactory as there is a larger proportion of good teaching. Teaching was satisfactory or better in well over nine out of ten lessons seen across the full 13-18 age range. The proportion of lessons in which teaching was at least good has increased to over eight out of ten since the last inspection. Very good or better teaching, is now a feature of four out of ten lessons, and in a minority of lessons it is excellent.
20. The proportion of good and better teaching increases throughout the age range. In Year 9, teaching is satisfactory overall. From the 46 lessons observed, it was at least good in seven out of ten, very good or better in a third but unsatisfactory in one out of every ten. This is a significant shortcoming. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good overall. Of the 67 lessons observed, teaching was good or better in over eight out of ten lessons, and very good or better in nearly four out of ten. Teaching is slightly stronger in Year 11. A strength of the teaching is in the relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. The management of pupils is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, with a similar quality of relationships between teachers and pupils in almost all lessons seen. The good or very good relationships between staff and pupils arise out of mutual respect and the desire to produce the best possible work.

21. The teaching of English and mathematics in Year 9 is satisfactory and that of science good. Teaching in other subjects in Year 9 is generally good over time. In modern foreign languages, it is good in French and satisfactory in German. In Years 10 and 11, teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Teaching in art, geography, history and music is very good. It is good in all other subjects except French, where it is satisfactory. The teaching of information and communication technology as a separate subject across the age range is excellent, but teaching to use it across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory in Year 9, but improve in Years 10 and 11 to being good. This reflects the fact that the national strategies for English and mathematics, and also for science, are not well developed. Nevertheless, the very large majority of pupils have good literacy skills which are well drawn on as they move through the three year groups.
22. The quality of teaching is reflected in the quality of lesson planning, which is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The use of assessment, to inform teachers' planning and for target setting, is inconsistently used leading to some pupils underachieving. There are very good examples of effective marking in which teachers provide very detailed comments which show pupils why they have done well or how they might improve their work, but some marking is cursory. This situation inhibits effective planning, although in the best practice teachers plan the development of ideas from the starting point of a firm basis of factual knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 religious education lesson the teacher used pupils' initial research and production of fact sheets on Judaism to promote good use of role-play that broadened their perspectives, reinforced prior learning and developed their understanding. Such very well planned extension is also found in geography, history, information and communication technology and art.
23. This approach is matched by teachers' expectations of pupils. The focus arising out of GCSE examination requirements gives better pace and structure to lessons at Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9, with a resulting rise in teachers' expectations of pupils from satisfactory at Year 9 to good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching makes a good contribution to thinking skills. This is well illustrated by teachers' skilled questioning of pupils, in which initial responses are challenged so that pupils are guided into deepening their understanding of relationships between aspects of subjects. A good example of this is where a history teacher questioning Year 10 pupils about Nazi Germany probed their knowledge in such a way as to help them to work out complex links between causes of the unfolding events. Such questioning is a very strong feature of information and communication technology, where teachers constantly guide and challenge pupils to work their way through to their own solutions. Teachers' planning includes homework that is set regularly, giving good support for learning in Year 9 and very good support at Years 10 and 11. Pupils see the value of this work and therefore a high proportion of them complete it in time for the next lesson. Teachers also organise Years 10 and 11 coursework in ways that promote high standards while giving scope for review. The use of homework is generally effective and provides for some good extension of class work and preparation for future learning.
24. Class management is very good overall and this adds to the effective learning ethos. There is a good range of teaching methods in most lessons, with satisfactory approaches in Year 9 improving to good at Years 10 and 11. One good example is a Year 9 German class in which the arrangement of an oral lesson engaged every pupil in challenging, well-paced German speaking and listening with a large number of people. Given the structure of Years 10 and 11, teachers make better use of time, with brisk pace and clear deadlines for completion of elements of the lesson. They also make good use of equipment and resources. A Year 10 mathematics class was enlivened by the use of an interactive whiteboard that helped pupils to understand the concept of linear symmetry in geometry. Pupils from classes across all age groups are sent to work in the information and communication technology room so that they can, if they wish, use computers to research and communicate their ideas. Overall, however, there is not enough use of information and communication technology in lessons and the approach to independent learning needs is not consistently developed throughout the school.
25. Teaching throughout the school is strengthened by the staff's good subject expertise. In a geography lesson, for example, Year 9 pupils' excellent learning to apply mapping skills to route planning was the result of the teacher's detailed knowledge. Excellent learning in information and communication technology has a firm basis in teaching that reflects the teachers'

understanding of the ways in which pupils learning basic concepts can then apply them to all new learning. Music lessons in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher providing very good practical examples to inspire and challenge pupils. The school acknowledges that staff need more training in the use of information and communication technology, and is acting on this.

26. The teaching meets the needs of pupils who have special educational needs. There are no teaching assistants employed and the needs of the very small minority of pupils identified are met through a combination of teacher help in lessons, additional teaching support for those with literacy difficulties, and emotional and behavioural support through a very strong pastoral system. All of these aspects work closely together. The school successfully integrates the pupils into lessons because staff are willing to find appropriate ways to support them, for example, by putting art onto a computer for a pupil with dyspraxic difficulties. Those pupils who have milder literacy difficulties are provided with extra advice and support from a specialist teacher of dyslexic pupils, who advises them of strategies to circumvent their difficulties and allow them to access the curriculum fully and participate in all written activities. Around 70 pupils receive extra time in external examinations. The strong pastoral system which facilitates teacher access to information about pupils enables their needs to be met and for them to make progress in line with other pupils in the school.
27. There are no criteria for the identification of pupils who are gifted and talented. There is some identification within departments, for example science, which provides additional extension activities for pupils who they have identified. Those pupils with a background of attainment in a language are fast-tracked. However, generally departments do not plan to challenge these pupils by the setting of targets, although they generally make good progress. Pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue are quite fluent and make effective progress. Where necessary, teachers generally provide adequate support as is required.
28. The minority of lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory, mainly in Year 9, but occasionally in Years 10 and 11, are marked by the negative response of a small minority of pupils, teachers' low expectations, or insufficient attention being given to the differing needs of the pupils. For example, in mathematics, where there are weaknesses, these often arise because the pupils' mistakes or misconceptions are not quickly identified, or the course of the lesson adapted to rectify these problems. In physical education, learning can occasionally be restricted by a lack of planning based on outcomes, which means that some pupils are moved onto new activities before they were ready to do so. In drama, learning was affected because of the unsatisfactory planning and management of practical work.

Sixth form

29. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Of the 66 lessons observed, it was satisfactory or better in virtually all lessons, good or better in nearly nine out of ten and very good or better in nearly a half. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. The best teaching seen was in Year 13, with nearly six out of ten lessons being very good or better.
30. Inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching is very good over time. Students benefit in the best lessons from the same style of teaching as in Years 9 to 11 reported above. However, teachers develop strategies very effectively and this is why the teaching is of a higher calibre than in Years 9 to 11. In the best lessons the students are involved in good discussions. They are encouraged by effective questioning to apply concepts that they have encountered in previous work and to bring their overall knowledge and understanding into play. They are often given good feedback, in both written and oral forms, and overall the use of assessment is better in the sixth form. In some lessons, there is insufficient time spent discussing the fundamental concepts to give the students a more secure basis on which to build their knowledge and understanding. Expectations are generally very high. Teachers ensure that students understand the intended outcomes of the lesson so that they know what they are expected to learn. Students respond well to some good tutorial style teaching, inclusive questioning and challenging content and brisk pace. To develop independent learning, students are encouraged to be adventurous and use their own ideas, as in art and history. In a minority of lessons there is too much teacher direction which limits the development of higher order thinking skills of critical

analysis and students become too reliant on guidance from their teacher. Teaching provides individual challenge to pupils who are gifted and talented in the sixth form. However, provision is not mapped across subjects.

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

31. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant for the needs of the pupils in Years 9 to 11. The fact that pupils enter the school in Year 9 from a considerable number of previous schools poses some significant problems for continuity and progression. Overall, this is coped with well and there is effective coverage of National Curriculum subjects, with the opportunity for pupils to continue their language studies of French, German and Latin. National Curriculum requirements are not met for information and communication technology as not all aspects of the programme of study are covered. The introduction of the national strategies for literacy, numeracy and science are in the early stages of development and the school recognises that further work is required to fully implement them. Overall, there is good continuity from Year 9 into GCSE courses. Access and equality of opportunity in the curriculum are good, although there are some limitations. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow courses in English, mathematics, science, in personal, social and health education, which incorporates citizenship, and physical education, and then have a good choice from a range of option subjects. Not all pupils in Year 10 and 11 have the opportunity to take a course in design and technology because of the lack of facilities and statutory requirements are not met. In geography there are insufficient places available for the pupils who wish to study this subject in Years 10 and 11, but plans are set to resolve this from September 2003. Religious education is taught to all three year groups and follows the syllabus agreed by the governors under the school's trust deed. The school provides additional and revision classes, mainly in the core subjects, for students who would like extra help.
32. The curriculum is enriched by the very good links with the community and through extra-curricular activities. Pupils learn citizenship by helping senior citizens, organising charitable events and supporting development work in Tanzania. Local, wider and international links are maintained by the school and visiting speakers enhance the curriculum, particularly in personal, social and health education, as when local magistrates ran a lesson with Year 10 students. Extra-curricular activities are very good. There is an extensive range of clubs and societies. Regular musical and drama productions involve a wide cross-section of pupils. There are regular visits abroad. Sporting and outdoor pursuits, as well as organised activities within the compass of the army and air force cadet contingents, are very well supported. There is an impressive range of sporting fixtures, which take place on weekdays and Saturdays, as well as sports tours to Europe and other countries. The boarders have very good access to cultural and recreational opportunities through this programme and additional activities. A wide ranging programme of weekend social activities, such as cinema visits, go-cart racing, dry-slope skiing, and is organised for them through the Entertainments Committee, which is chaired by a Housemaster. These are optional activities subsidised to an extent by the School. They are much appreciated by the boarders.
33. The boarding houses provide very good facilities for the students to undertake school homework. Older students work in their single or double study bedrooms. Younger pupils have study space in their dormitories or work in a designated room together. Homework sessions are supervised by Tutors and Heads of House and the academic progress of the boarders is closely monitored. Problems are initially dealt with 'in house' but if they persist are referred to teachers in school. Some older students opt to spend weekday study periods in their House, supervised by the Matron. Each house has a small computer network connected to the Internet to aid study. There are also small libraries of reference books.
34. The learning opportunities for pupils' personal development are very good. These opportunities encompass the wide range of extra-curricular activities, posts of responsibility and the personal development programme. The personal, health and social education sessions include appropriate coverage of sex education, drug and alcohol abuse. Careers education up to the age of 16 is satisfactory. Most pupils choose to enter the sixth form and they are given good guidance but there is limited provision for the very small minority opting for further education or

work. Vocational education consists primarily of work experience arranged for Year 11. The school is unusually thorough in helping all its pupils to benefit from the variety of experiences on offer. It requires all pupils in Years 9 and 10 to take part in two extra-curricular activities at least and, in the light of their work for GCSE, only one activity is compulsory for Year 11. Links with the local community are very good, enhancing work experience placements and drawing on them for resources. The community and surrounding area are well used for topic work in subjects such as geography, art and music.

35. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Arrangements for spiritual development are good. Opportunities are taken for reflection in house and year group assemblies, although in some tutorial sessions, opportunities are missed. Some assemblies still do not meet statutory requirements - this was a concern at the last inspection. Visits to the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum and to the battlefields of World War I have offered outstanding moments for reflection. The beauty and acoustic quality of the adjoining parish church provided a high moment with the first public performance of a student's setting of Dylan Thomas's poem 'Do not go gentle into that good night' and generated considerable reflection. Opportunities occur in subjects, such as English, science, geography, history, art music and religious education to discuss literature, world issues and ethical problems which lead to the development of pupils' personal values and beliefs. The newly established Amnesty International support group has attracted about 40 participants. This work is well linked to the moral provision which is very good.
36. Pupils' very good behaviour is the result of the very good moral provision. A strong sense of justice exists throughout the school. Pupils have a secure understanding of right and wrong. The behaviour policy spells out the code of conduct expected of them. Staff and senior students act as exemplary role models. School and house assemblies, and discussions in tutor groups, further strengthen students' understanding of what is acceptable.
37. The school's tradition of 'houses' enhances its very good social provision. All pupils belong to a boarding or a day house and representatives from all year groups work together on their house's musical and dramatic performances. Each house raises funds for charity. Sport plays a major part in building pupils' teamwork and leadership. Up to 200 take part in competitive sport each weekend. Games afternoons provide equal opportunities for the pupils who are not sporting stars. As pupils' social understanding increases, the school gives them ample opportunity to develop their sense of responsibility.
38. The very good cultural provision ranges across a huge range of activities in the arts. Professional theatre companies perform in the Queens Hall each term. There are frequent visits to drama and music locally and in London. Life-drawing weekends focus their attention on how artists think and work. The school has a high standard of solo, group and orchestral music. The school works hard to develop pupils' multi-cultural awareness; it has a link with Tanzania, established over 25 years ago. In alternate years, pupils, students and teachers go to Africa and an African teacher comes to the school. It has just set up a similar exchange programme with a school in Kerala. An additional advantage is that some pupils are domiciled abroad and their experiences are well used in activities to broaden all pupils' awareness of the rich diversity of society.

Sixth form

39. The overall curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides very well for the students' potential and their aspirations, the majority of which are for entry to higher education. The courses offered are mainly for AS and A2 subjects and the provision builds very well on students' prior attainment. Additional subjects are introduced into the sixth form curriculum, for example, classical civilisation, economics, politics, psychology and performing arts. Arrangements exist for a small minority of students to undertake their chosen courses in AVCE through a consortium arrangement with the nearby comprehensive school. There is a general studies course and, in Year 13, a critical thinking course. A good range of activities are offered for physical education. However, the statutory requirement for religious education is not complied with.

40. Personal development is good and the students organise their own council which is effective in raising issues with staff. There is a very well established prefect system, offices of Head Boy and Girl, and House and sporting leadership, all of which add to the overall development of personal responsibility. Students willingly accept these responsibilities and discharge them in a very mature manner. They support Year 9 newcomers in paired reading and supervise homework, detentions, registrations, lunch queues and movement in and out of assembly. They contribute to the wider community; for example, students act as the chair and secretary of the Youth Parish Council. Students keenly support a 'sleep out' in aid of Shelter each December. Some sixth form students work as volunteers for Shelter over the Christmas period. Within the past two years, the school has re-established the high quality of its student debating teams. Aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development mirror those reported for the main school. Last year, the school offered eight international exchange visits, which students eagerly accepted. At the start of Year 12, students from different countries, faiths and heritages join the sixth form. These are intelligent, articulate young people. They include themselves fully in the life and thought of the school. They broaden the understanding of students of life in our multi-cultural world.
41. Support for higher education is good, but students report the overall provision of careers education is mixed and that advice on alternative pathways, other than for higher education, is not covered sufficiently. As in the main school there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is satisfactory overall; there are strengths and areas to improve. Strengths are found in the way that the overall personal welfare of pupils and students is attended to and in the quality of promoting behaviour and attendance. Most staff are very committed to their pupils and this does much for the overall ethos of the school. The standards of care, welfare and staff supervision of the boarders is very good. The staff give freely of their time and effort and individual boarders are known well by the Head of House, the House Tutors and the Matrons. However, procedures for assessment and health and safety are unsatisfactory overall.

Assessment

43. There are very good links with the feeder schools through which a wide range of information is gleaned. There is outstanding assessment of all pupils on entry to identify any literacy difficulties and a specialist teacher provides advice. The excellent links with the strong pastoral house system enables tutors and subject teachers to be very well informed about any difficulties pupils may be encountering. However, the on-going systems for assessing pupils' attainment and for monitoring the progress for pupils in Years 9 to 11 are unsatisfactory, due to the lack of consistency of practice. Overall marking lacks consistency; marks are given for effort and attainment, but frequently there are not enough comments relating to National Curriculum levels and what pupils might do to improve their performance. In Year 9, there is some good practice in languages and design and technology, where on-going assessment and feedback given to pupils is related to their National Curriculum level. In Years 10 and 11, assessment in art and information and communication technology is very good, because the purpose of assessment is to monitor progress and inform the next teaching steps; pupils know the grade they are working at, have targets set for them, are encouraged to self-evaluate and know what they have to do to improve. Underachieving pupils in Year 11 are identified in science and they are assigned a department mentor to help them to progress. In geography, the schemes of work are being rewritten in the light of information gained through assessment. There is unsatisfactory assessment in religious education, physical education, music and languages due to the lack of a departmental approach, which allows rigorous assessment of attainment in relation to national norms, the setting of targets for pupils to improve their performance and advice and support to enable the pupils to achieve them. There is also variation of approach between teachers within the same department. In the best practice, pupils' progress is tracked and related to subject levels, so that pupils know what they must do to improve. In some subjects, for example art, the purpose of assessment is to guide the planning of what is taught within the subject.

44. Work has begun on further developing the collection and analysis of whole school assessment data. Information about pupils' progress is being gathered and kept on a central database and so those pupils who are underachieving, or not being sufficiently challenged, can be efficiently identified. The school does monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, for example, boys and girls, but not for those with English as an additional language. It has looked at the attainment of pupils who are boarders compared with the rest of the school population. There is some comparison of different groups within some subject departments, for example, the history department has looked at attainment by gender. Through the work of a senior member of staff, work has begun to address this shortcoming so that better comparisons and analysis can be made.
45. Assessment arrangements for the statutory aspects for special educational needs are very good. The annual review of the one statement is up to date and the pupil has made such good progress that the provision of a teaching assistant is no longer needed. This is largely due to the wealth of other support systems in the school. The school is very well aware of pupils who are "looked after" and supports them very well through the strong pastoral support system. There are no individual education plans for the pupils on the Code of Practice register and this is unsatisfactory, because it does not allow their progress to be monitored. Links with other agencies are used as appropriate through the county support services such as the cognition and learning team and behaviour support.

Advice, support and guidance

46. Students receive satisfactory educational and good personal, support. The House system of tutor groups aids the developing maturity of students, who feel confident that support is available from several sources should they have academic or personal concerns. Regular progress reports contain grades for attainment and effort. Pupils told inspectors that they understood the significance of their grades and that classroom feedback was better than in the past.
47. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and eliminate oppressive behaviour are in place and are good. An example of a positive initiative in this area is the appointment of "student listeners," trained senior students who may be approached by anyone who feels they are being bullied. The respect and excellent relationships between staff and students, and skilled classroom management of students, contribute largely to the success of behaviour policies. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are based on very good and rapid links with parents and are highly successful. There are very clear rules about boarders' absence from the houses. Times at which they can be off-site are strictly controlled and are age related. There are effective signing in and out systems. Boarders are allowed weekend exeats and great care is taken to ensure that the arrangements are appropriate. They are only allowed to take place when the receiving family's arrangements for supervision have been established and the boarder's parents are in agreement.
48. There is very good provision for the pupils' welfare. The arrangements for child protection are comprehensive for both day pupils and for boarders, although there is the need to ensure that formal training is maintained, especially for boarding staff. The Child Protection policy complies with the Local Education Authority's procedures. There is a well-equipped medical centre, which is staffed 24 hours a day by qualified nurses, providing a very good service to pupils and boarders. Good arrangements exist for boarders to seek outside help and support when they deem it necessary. These arrangements, along with details of the complaints procedure, are clearly stated in the School Calendar booklet carried by each boarder. There are good telephone facilities in each house where a boarder can make a call in privacy and the number of Childline is always on display. The school, with the help of Childline, has trained sixth form students to be 'Listeners'. They listen to problems and refer boarders to outside agencies. They do not undertake counselling. Two initiatives in particular exemplify the extent of the school's care. There is a "drop-in" clinic where students may receive confidential counselling from an external professional and the school chaplain has established twice-weekly chat sessions for students who have a parent involved in the Iraq conflict.

49. Boarders take most of their meals in the School Dining Room. Meals sampled during the Inspection were nutritious and appropriate. There was always a choice of food for each course. At lunch and dinner times this included hot food and salads. A range of hot and cold drinks was likewise available. Student opinion on the quality of food varied. Some were critical and this was an issue raised in the responses of boarders and their parents in the questionnaire survey conducted two years ago.
50. The administration of health and safety has some shortcomings and is unsatisfactory overall. The health and safety committee have not met regularly and, whilst some risk assessments are carried out, there is no overall structure for the formal monitoring and recording of matters which require attention. The adviser has recently established procedures for health and safety reviews. There was no up-to-date school policy for health and safety. Every effort is made to ensure that the boarding houses provide a safe environment. Safety hazards when identified are dealt with promptly mainly through the school's maintenance team which is on 24-hour call. Individual departments have health and safety policies, for example, physical education, science, information and communication technology and design and technology, but there is no cohesive whole school approach. In the resistant materials work area equipment and shelving units were not made secure and flammable gases were not identified. At various times, pupils leave their bags in corridors, obstructing the easy movement and occasionally access to fire escapes is compromised. Not all electrical apparatus has been regularly tested.

Sixth form

Assessment

51. The assessment of students' attainment and progress is good overall, and contributes to the teaching being better than in the main school. It is very good in English, biology, physics and art. It is characterised by thorough marking and tracking of individual students' progress. There is a developing element of student self-assessment, through time allocated to reflect on their performance. They know how they are doing in relation to national standards, what is expected of them and what they need to do to achieve. Some subjects are using the school's newly introduced system of half termly target setting in relation to national standards, which provides pupils with useful feedback on their progress. Students gain knowledge about their progress and attainment through thorough marking of their work and consistent, on-going individual oral feedback.

Advice, support and guidance

52. Attendance management practices in the sixth form are as rigorous as those applied in the main school. There are satisfactory procedures for supporting academic progress. As well as regular reports to parents, progress cards are used and the school is in the process of improving both the content and usage of these by sharing them more proactively with students. Good advice, information and guidance is provided on a day-to-day basis by teaching and tutorial staff. Careers education in the sixth form is good for the majority of students who will move into Higher Education. Less attention is paid to those who may be better served in alternative pathways or careers.
53. The school makes very good provision for students' personal development. It has extended the strengths noted in the last inspection. The school's high ethos leads it to value its students as individuals. Students know teachers are willing to listen to any of their concerns, as are boarding staff. Teachers and older students commit themselves intensely to running a wide range of activities outside lessons.
54. A small team of specialist teachers provides high quality personal and social education. Students learn in timetabled lessons. There is a dedicated classroom, with appropriate resources. Year 12 students include personal and social education as part of their Key Skills course. Most of the school's sex and drugs awareness education takes place in these lessons. Outside specialists come in to answer students' questions on specific topics. Recent visitors include the local crime prevention officer and a speaker on female health issues. There are

close links to topics covered in other subjects, including religious education, English, citizenship, history, geography and biology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. Parents hold generally positive views of the school. A high proportion completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and a minority attended the parents' meeting. Opinions were particularly positive about students' liking for the school, the high expectations the school has of its students, the progress students make, their developing maturity and the high standards of behaviour and teaching at the school. Inspectors totally agreed with parents' views on students' behaviour and maturity and that they like to come to school. They agree that students make good progress overall and very good progress in the sixth form. They found that both expectations and the quality of teaching were satisfactory for Year 9 pupils, good in relation to Years 10 and 11 and very good at sixth form level.
56. Parents registered concern about the amount of homework and the narrow range of extra-curricular activities. They also raised concerns about the 'approachability' of the school and, to a greater degree, about information received on students' progress and the closeness with which the school works with parents. Inspectors found no evidence to support concern over homework levels or the school's approachability. They disagreed with parents on extra-curricular activities, finding that there is a wide range of sporting and non-sporting activities. Inspectors disagreed in part with parents regarding how closely the school works with them. They found that in many ways the school has rapid and meaningful links with individual parents. The prospectus and annual report met requirements. There are ample opportunities for the exchange of information. Parents can telephone or visit boarders at any reasonable time and House staff ring parents to consult about weekend exeats or matters of concern. Inspectors agreed where the concerns about close working were linked with those about the reporting of progress. Inspectors judged that progress reports, though regular and frequent, failed to provide important information, for example about national grades, targets, ways to improve and student self-evaluation. The school is aware that reports need improvement and is currently addressing that issue.
57. Notwithstanding that the quality of information provided is judged to be unsatisfactory because of progress reports, in other respects the school's links with parents are felt to be very good. There is a good range of information sent to parents and boarders on entry to the school. The school works closely on matters concerning attendance, behaviour and day-to-day academic or personal concerns. Parental involvement in the school's affairs is excellent, ranging from supporting an active Staff-Parent Association, Boarding House Parent Representatives, providers of transport and attendance at parent evenings to running a tuck shop/café after school for day and boarding students. They contribute well to learning in many ways, for example by providing finance for additional resources, subsidising the school's educational and charitable visit to a school in Tanzania, hosting visiting teachers from Tanzania and India, acting as a sounding board for school ideas, responding well to opportunities to discuss their children's progress and, not least, by ensuring that pupils and students attend regularly.
58. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a high standard of parental liaison and continues to work well with parents on educational and pastoral matters. The previous report indicated that parents received good information which met statutory requirements. Inasmuch as progress reports are now judged to be less than satisfactory, the school has not shown improvement in this area.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

59. The headteacher, who was appointed since the last inspection, is providing effective leadership which ensures clarity in the vision and educational direction for the school. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and they set high expectations. The aims of the school are being well met. There is a very good professional partnership within the leadership group

which comprises the headteacher, deputy, three assistant heads and the bursar. All have clear responsibilities and generally discharge them well. Two of the team are recent appointments but are assimilating their roles very well. Since the last inspection considerably more rigour has been achieved in the overall monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning outcomes, and this has led to some good improvements. It is being achieved through the development of 'Cranbrook Learning and Understanding Departments' (CLAUD) in which senior staff work with subject leaders to review and evaluate departmental provision. In essence they comprise a mini inspection and the most recent review of science was very well structured and highlighted the salient points for improvement. The senior staff are aware that the overall approach to assessment is an area for improvement and appropriate plans are beginning to address this matter. A significant number of the subject leaders are new in post since the last inspection and subject leadership is good overall; there are examples of very effective leadership but also instances where there are shortcomings. Subject management is good where there is effective monitoring of teaching and learning and assessment is developing well and raising standards. However, there are instances where this good practice does not exist, and this inconsistency is now being addressed by senior staff.

60. The leadership and management of boarding is very good. The headteacher and her senior colleagues, along with the governors, provide very good strategic direction. Two governors take a specific interest in boarding, visiting the boarding houses and attending meetings. The Houses are very well led by hardworking and enthusiastic teaching staff that live in their respective Houses, often with their families, giving freely of their time, day and night. They identify appropriate priorities and targets, take the necessary action and review progress towards them. There is clearly a shared commitment to succeed. The weekly meetings of the heads of houses, headteacher and other senior colleagues demonstrates this and ensures consistency and continuity. Heads of House set clear expectations and promote high standards. They motivate and inspire colleagues and lead by example. They produce clear documentation for staff, boarders and parents, making every effort to involve the boarders in the running of the Houses. The matrons make a major contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of boarding. In the words of one of them they 'perform the maternal role, acting both as hotel managers and social workers'.
61. Governors are generally aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are competent and, while delegating day-to-day operations to senior management, they maintain a watching and advisory role. They operate through a clear set of structures and have a good professional relationship with the headteacher. There is an appropriate range of whole school policies which have been agreed by the governors and which provide effective guidance to staff. Governors have a good vision for the school's development and a careful approach to ensuring that appropriate strategic and financial planning is in place to allow the achievement of their objectives. They do not fully meet their statutory responsibilities with regard to the curriculum and health and safety matters.
62. Whole school development planning is strategic; there is a comprehensive well structured one year plan with effective skeletal planning for the next three years. It is very well linked to budget. All departments have development plans which contribute well to the overall plan. The financial management is very good and funds are very well administered in relation to the main school and the boarding provision. The boarding budget currently supports some tuition costs, where appropriate, and 'picks up' most catering costs and a significant part of the cost of the maintenance and accounts teams. The bursar is currently reviewing this with the headteacher and governors. Significant sums of money have been earmarked for boarding house maintenance and refurbishing in 2003–2004. This is reflected in the overall income and expenditure and the need for a significant contingency fund. A recent audit found nothing of note to criticise. The annual budget is constructed with diligence and supports the school's development plan. Individual account holders have responsibility for expense control in their areas. Best value is operated very well and the school gives good value for money.
63. There is a good match of appropriately-qualified teachers to the demands of the curriculum. The school's strategy in the critical area of appraisal and development is good. Staff are appraised regularly and a new performance management system has been introduced to achieve effective integration of the appraisal and staff development systems. The appraisal and development of

non-teaching staff is in its infancy but is being addressed by appropriate senior managers. Professional development of staff contributes to their individual effectiveness but is only beginning to be integrated with whole-school and department objectives. The induction of newly-qualified and other new staff is good. There are good procedures to ensure that all new teachers quickly become familiar with whole-school issues and that those newly-qualified are given good support in and out of the classroom. Administrative, caretaking and dining staff make a very good contribution to the running of the school.

64. The school occupies an attractive site of 75 acres and contains many buildings of historical interest. The school has been extended at various times and there is a very interesting combination of architectural styles. The learning resource centre/library provides a very effective area and has been very well refurbished. Some facilities are very good, including the Queen's Hall, a fully equipped theatre with excellent modern stage and lighting, an open-air, heated swimming pool, a sports hall and an Astroturf surface. Access for physically disabled in some buildings is impossible because of the stairs and narrow corridors, although in more recently built areas there are lifts and ramps. Some classrooms are poor; they are small, have limited computer facilities and limit teaching strategies. Many departments are spread around the school and there are shortcomings in information and communication technology, science and religious education. A new building programme scheduled to start this summer will provide a dedicated Performing Arts Centre, for use by the local community as well as the school.
65. The 234 boarders - 156 boys and 78 girls - are accommodated in six houses. Three houses cater for boys aged 14 to 18, two for girls aged 13 to 18 and one for 13 to 14 year old boys. They are all very conveniently located in pleasant grounds either on the school campus or in town within easy walking distance of the school. The overall quality of boarding accommodation is very good and helps to create the caring and productive atmosphere in the Houses, which are well decorated, maintained and cleaned and have a very good range of facilities. Older students are accommodated in pleasant single or double study bedrooms. Younger ones occupy larger shared rooms or dormitories. Some of these require a reorganisation of the space available and new furniture. Boarders generally have adequate personal space and facilities for storage and the display of posters and other materials. There are good toilet, washing, shower and bath facilities in all Houses. They are well kept and boarders can shower or bath in privacy. Each House has a range of social spaces including common rooms and games rooms. Sixth Formers often have separate facilities. Common rooms contain televisions and video players. The school has embarked on an extensive refurbishing programme which will continue next year.
66. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The only concerns are with the higher than average ratio of students per computer, the shortage of information and communication technology measurement and control equipment and the need for updated information and communication technology equipment and software in science.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall. It is led by an assistant headteacher who is part of the school leadership group. He has a sound vision and is providing a clear direction for the development of assessment, building a structure whereby students' performance can be more rigorously tracked. The responsibility for the development of the curriculum is effectively managed. The development plan for the sixth form is apposite and takes into account the demands of changing funding and examination opportunities. In line with whole school developments, he is involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning, although this is done mainly by subject and not specifically through the teaching and learning in the sixth form. Most students feel that they are treated as adults and listened to and value their sixth form experience, although a minority proffered the opposite opinion. The main area of concern for students was to improve the information on careers as they feel very well supported otherwise.

Resources

68. The overall situation for learning resources and accommodation mirrors that of the main school. The accommodation available to students in the sixth form for socialising and independent work is sound for the numbers on roll, although facilities, such as computers, to support independent learning, are inadequate. Students do have access to the library which they use well. Those students who are boarders have good recourse to facilities in their boarding houses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

- (i) raise standards still further by:
- improving the quality of teaching in Year 9;
(paragraphs 20-24; 28; 72; 83; 128; 135)
 - improving the use of information from data and assessment analysis, and the quality of pupils' reports;
(paragraphs 43-45, 56, 72, 83, 90, 102, 107, 114, 120, 129, 136, 142, 148, 176, 189, 209, 213, 219)
 - meeting the statutory curriculum requirements for information and communication technology in Year 9 and design and technology in Years 10 and 11;
(paragraphs 31, 97-102, 116-125)
- (ii) address the shortcomings in the formal procedures for safety;
(paragraph 50)
- (iii) continue to address improvements in quality of the accommodation.
(paragraphs 64, 90, 124, 171, 189, 220)

Sixth form

- Meet the statutory requirements for religious education (paragraph 39); and
- improve the overall quality of guidance for careers and other pathways (paragraphs 41, 52).

Other issues to consider are:

- improve teaching and learning in drama (paragraph 73);
- identify able and talented pupils so that their needs are more fully met (paragraphs 6, 27, 30, 95, 145); and
- produce individual education plans for pupils on the special educational needs register as appropriate (paragraph 45).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 9 – 11 | 113 |
| | Sixth form | 66 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | | 46 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 9-11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 7 | 33 | 48 | 17 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 6 | 29 | 43 | 15 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 3 | 28 | 27 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 4.5 | 42 | 41.5 | 10.5 | 1.5 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y9 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 431 | 282 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 5 | - |

| Special educational needs | Y9 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 1 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 2 | 0 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 30 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 5 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 1 |

| Boarding provision | No of pupils |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Boys | 156 |
| Girls | 79 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.0 |
| National comparative data | 7.8 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

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

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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2002 | 72 | 73 | 145 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 71 | 70 | 71 |
| | Girls | 72 | 70 | 70 |
| | Total | 143 | 140 | 141 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (94) | 98 (99) | 97 (98) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 96 (77) | 97 (98) | 92 (96) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 69 | 71 | 71 |
| | Girls | 73 | 73 | 73 |
| | Total | 142 | 144 | 144 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (99) |
| | National | 67 (65) | 70 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 79 (83) | 94 (98) | 94 (93) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 44 (42) | 34 (33) |

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 86 | 59 | 145 |

| 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 | 85 | 86 | 86 |
| | Girls | 54 | 55 | 56 |
| | Total | 139 | 141 | 142 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 96(97) | 97(97) | 98(97) |
| | National | 50(48) | 91(91) | 96(96) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 59.9 |
| | National | 39.8 |

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

| Vocational qualifications | Number | % success rate |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | n/a |
| | National | n/a |

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

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 78 | 56 | 134 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | | | | | | |
|---|------|--------|------|--|--|--|
| | Male | Female | All | | | |
| School | 22.1 | 21.9 | 22 | | | |
| National | 16.9 | 17.7 | 17.4 | | | |

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

| Vocational qualifications | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | n/a |
| | National | n/a |

| International Baccalaureate | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied | School | n/a |
| | National | n/a |

Ethnic background of pupils

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – White and Black African |
| Mixed – White and Asian |
| Mixed – any other mixed background |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean |
| Black or Black British – African |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background |
| Chinese |
| Any other ethnic group |
| No ethnic group recorded |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 240 | 4 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 9 | 0 |

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|--|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 49.51 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 14.4 |

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of education support staff | 0 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 0 |

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 74 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 26 |
| Key Stage 4 | 27.7 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001/2002 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 3906779 |
| Total expenditure | 4024078 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 5757 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 363356 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 246057 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 13.77 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 14.32 |
| | |
| 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 | 713 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 238 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 53 | 45 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 48 | 46 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 29 | 61 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 23 | 51 | 14 | 1 | 8 |
| The teaching is good. | 25 | 64 | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 24 | 51 | 17 | 8 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 43 | 38 | 14 | 3 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 63 | 32 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 16 | 43 | 28 | 10 | 3 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 34 | 49 | 6 | 3 | 8 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 45 | 46 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 45 | 37 | 13 | 3 | 2 |

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The relationship with and overall support from parents are good. There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most. They also consider that the provision for homework is satisfactory overall and that the range of activities is very good. Reporting to parents meets statutory requirements, but the quality of school reports requires development. Inspectors reviewed information from the school to parents and judge that is it good overall, and that the school strives to work with them. 'School diaries' have the potential to address this matter if they are consistently used.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attainment is very high compared to national averages and similar schools.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- Teacher-pupil relationships.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning in drama.
- Ensuring that the learning objectives are made consistently clear in lessons.
- Consistency in the quality of marking and target setting.
- Development of the National Literacy Strategy.

69. Attainment in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 was very high compared to the national average and also well above average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was much greater than the national average. Boys and girls attained at the same levels, although results were below those in mathematics and science. Girls do better in English than in mathematics and science. Boys do better in mathematics. The overall trend of improvement is better than the national picture. These results represent very good achievement compared to pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades in the 2002 English Language examinations was very high compared to the national average; boys performed slightly better than girls. Girls performed better than boys in English Literature where few boys achieved the highest grade in 2002. In both language and literature boys and girls make good progress, although pupils' average performance in other subjects is better than for English. The overall comparison with pupils' prior attainment is below average, even though they attain above average results. The head of department has begun to implement appropriate strategies to remedy aspects of teaching and learning to raise achievement.
70. Standards observed during the inspection were well above average by the end of Year 9 and 11. Pupils' writing in Year 9 covers a range of styles and purposes successfully and to a high standard. Some lower attaining pupils have minor difficulties with spelling and expression but nevertheless write at length and in well ordered ways. Procedures for self-assessment encourage awareness and a serious approach to the work. Middle and higher attaining pupils produce writing of sometimes exceptional quality. For example, a well-researched biography of Jesse, a local farmworker, was beautifully produced (word processed) and alive with interest in, and respect for, its subject. By the age of 16 further progress is clear. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment write accurately and often with real flair. The use of computers is a regular feature of drafting and presentation. For example a piece which explored how adults and children see the same events differently used different fonts as well as nicely judged voice and style to distinguish points of view. Boys and girls make equal progress. The minority of pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, also make equivalent strides in achievement.
71. Standards of reading are similarly very good. All pupils read aloud with good expression and understanding. Wider reading is encouraged and tracked in collaboration with the librarian. Pupils of all prior attainment read a range of increasingly demanding texts. They respond to stories, plays and poems appreciatively, critically and intelligently. These skills connect to very good speaking and listening capabilities evident in all years. Pupils are articulate, confident and generally respectful of others' views and contributions. When given the opportunity, as in a lesson where pairs and larger groups joined to compare interpretations of scenes in Macbeth,

pupils show commitment and enthusiasm. They use talk to take their learning forward. In some lessons, dominated by talk from the teacher, those opportunities did not occur.

72. Standards of teaching are good overall, although only satisfactory in Year 9. Nevertheless, the very strong subject knowledge of all teachers, and the evident warmth and respect of teacher-pupil relationships, meant that all lessons were at least satisfactory in Year 9. In Years 10-11, three quarters were good or better. Pupils' learning, because of their very good attitudes and commitment, is generally at least good. In the best lessons there is a sharpness of purpose and motivating pace and variety. An outstanding lesson on Educating Rita, for example, involved pupils in reading the text, discussing the distinction between 'tragic' and 'tragedy', viewing a video extract and preparing group presentations for the benefit of the whole class. It was thoroughly engaging and challenging work to which all pupils, including the careful monitoring of those with special educational needs, responded with real commitment. Teachers generally use questions very effectively to require pupils to justify or expand upon their answers. Fewer have the skill of varying groups for different learning purposes. For example, nearly all discussion groups in lessons were single sex groups, so that perceptions and talents are not fully shared and developed. Similarly, in a number of lessons, learning objectives were implicit rather than overtly announced, leaving pupils insufficiently aware of the purpose of what they were asked to do. The marking of pupils' work in Years 9-11 is uneven in quality. At best it is both supportive and challenging, indicating clearly what pupils need to do to develop. Sometimes it fails to advance achievement because all that is offered is a brief 'Well done'.
73. Teaching and learning in drama is unsatisfactory overall. Results at GCSE are well above the national average and the extra-curricular contribution made through plays and theatre visits is strong. However, in two out of three lessons observed during the inspection, pupils did not make sufficient progress because of unsatisfactory planning and management of their practical work. The timetabling of drama in Year 9 for one lesson a fortnight does not give pupils sufficient grounding in the skills and concepts of drama to inform their option choices for Years 10-11.
74. Curricular provision is good. Information and communication technology is explicitly provided for, though access within school time can be problematic. The extensive extra-curricular opportunities associated with English, as in the recent development of debating and mock trial competitions, contribute substantially to standards achieved and the enjoyment of the subject.
75. Pupils' literacy is well developed in the English teaching they receive and in many other subjects. Particularly high standards were noted in science, information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and classics. Only in physical education was the promotion of pupils' literacy skills judged to be unsatisfactory. This generally good picture could be improved upon. The impact of the national literacy strategy is not yet clearly seen in the planning and delivery of many English lessons and there is not yet a school literacy policy to develop and evaluate pupils' skills in the context of the whole curriculum.
76. The leadership and management of the department are good. In the 18 months since her appointment the head of department has introduced a new GCSE syllabus and a range of extra-curricular activities to better match pupils' interests and aptitudes. The library has undergone substantial redevelopment. The department now accepts and mentors students training to teach. It meets on a regular basis to discuss and develop good practice. A good start has therefore been made on establishing a more collaborative, and professionally aware, style of working. There is a clear vision for the future. Schemes of work and associated lesson planning, for example, require agreed development. The department is largely staffed by people with other substantial leadership or pastoral roles and this limits the principal focus for the development of teaching and learning.
77. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The report noted that drama and information and communication technology should be better integrated in Year 9. Although there are still problems with drama, and with access to information and communication technology, progress has been made. Very good progress has been made in extending pupils' opportunities for wider reading and this is now a strength.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The students maintain the high levels of attainment with which they enter the school.
- The department is well led.
- There is some very good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Assessing pupils' understanding to ensure that the work is correctly matched to their needs.
- Increasing the level of challenge and involvement for pupils.

78. Standards on entry to the school are high in relation to the national average. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, the proportion of the pupils attaining the expected level or above was high. A quarter of the year group achieved the highest level, and this was very high in comparison with the national average. Standards have improved steadily over the last five years compared to national progress. Overall the boys perform slightly better than the girls and results were better than those achieved in English and science, although results were below average in comparison with similar schools. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, all the pupils gained a grade A*-C, which was high in relation to the national average. Approximately a third of the pupils entered gained grade A or A* and boys performed better than girls. Standards have held fairly steady over the last four years, although the proportion of pupils scoring the top grades has decreased slightly.
79. Standards are high by the end of Year 9 and 11. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Year 9 because the quality of the teaching varies and because of the time taken to settle pupils from widely different backgrounds in a short time. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11, in part because of the setting arrangements, better quality of teaching and the very good attitude to learning of the majority of the pupils. Taking all three years together, in most lessons the pupils make at least satisfactory progress and in two lessons in every three they make good or very good progress. The small number of pupils whose mother tongue is other than English, or who have special educational needs, achieve as well as the other pupils.
80. Pupils cover all areas of the curriculum at an appropriate level. Standards in algebra are well above average. Pupils show confidence manipulating algebraic formula and solving equations. Standards of graphical representation and of geometrical drawing are above average. Pupils are more confident working with decimals and using calculators than in looking for the most appropriate method in particular cases, for example the use of fractions. As a general rule most pupils are more comfortable when applying standard processes to routine questions, and are much less happy tackling unusual problems. Pupils can use information and communication technology well in, for example, investigations.
81. Standards of numeracy are very good, although many pupils resort to their calculators too readily and do not always choose the most appropriate method for working out particular problems. As a result they are more confident working with decimals than with fractions. Good applications of mathematics are found in many areas of the curriculum, for example, in science, where pupils confidently use algebraic manipulation in work in physics and statistical methods in all areas of study. In history in Year 9 pupils use statistical data well to interpret evidence. In geography, statistical methods are used effectively to help the pupils to understand data on population changes. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy and emphasis on the role of mathematics as a problem solving activity, are underdeveloped.
82. The pupils' attitudes to the subject, and their behaviour in the classroom, are generally very good in all years. In a small minority of lessons, some disrespectful behaviour towards the teacher slowed down the pace of the lesson. In one lesson the pupils had been asked to bring their calculators and only half did so. In all other lessons the pupils are cooperative and conscientious. They listen very attentively whenever the teacher is explaining work to the whole class. Pupils work hard during the lesson and, when doing individual tasks they support each

other and maintain a high level of concentration. Standards of presentation in exercise books are very good: most pupils take a considerable pride in the quality of their work and try to be precise and accurate. Most pupils do not contribute actively in lessons, rarely ask challenging questions of the teachers and seem more comfortable as relatively passive receivers of knowledge and understanding.

83. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory in Year 9 and it is good Years 10 and 11. In most classes there is a very good relationship between the teachers and the pupils, which enables time to be well used throughout each lesson. Explanations of the tasks to be done, and the mathematical processes to be used, are clear and accurate and encourage the pupils to use precise language and methods. The teachers generally ensure that the pupils organise their work well, taking accurate notes, so that they have an excellent source of reference material for revision. Homework is often very well used, not only for routine work and consolidation, but also to do time-consuming tasks whose results can be effectively discussed in the next lesson. The best teaching occurs when the teachers vary the activities for learning and spend time ensuring that the pupils understand the key principles and points before setting the pupils to work on individual tasks. There is some very effective use of an interactive whiteboard for teaching. However information and communication technology is not yet consistently used by most of the other teachers as a routine tool to enhance teaching and learning. The performance of the pupils is assessed in regular periodic tests, and teachers generally track the pupils' progress well and take action where there is underachievement. In lessons where there are weaknesses, these often arise because the pupils' mistakes or misconceptions are not quickly identified, or the course of the lesson adapted to rectify these problems. In these lessons, teachers do not assess the pupils' level of understanding and adjust the work appropriately to meet their differing needs. There is generally not enough emphasis on understanding the underlying concepts as opposed to being able to learn a process, or on encouraging the pupils to discuss the concepts being studied. Mathematics in many lessons is still taught as an activity where pupils learn processes for answering routine questions, rather than as an active problem solving activity.
84. The department is well led and organised. The teachers have traditionally worked with a high degree of independence and are now being encouraged to work as a team, providing mutual support and sharing good practice in planning and teaching. Further work is needed in this aspect. Resources are well managed. The department is fully staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. National Curriculum requirements are met. The improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment have remained stable overall, with a higher proportion of Year 9 pupils achieve the highest levels. The pupils' long-term achievement, as shown through the progress they make, remains good. Monitoring the professional standards of the department has improved and, whilst there is now more very good teaching, there is also some unsatisfactory teaching. The use of information and communication technology for teaching and learning is inconsistent.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils' standards and achievement.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Very good opportunities for practical work.
- Pupil mentoring in Year 11.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Developing the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Consistency in the use of assessment data.
- Consistency in the implementation of the National Science Strategy.
- The use of information and communication technology.

85. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high when compared with all schools nationally at the expected and higher levels. Comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment is insecure as not all pupils took the tests at the age of eleven. Both boys and girls have attained much better results than their peers nationally, with boys performing slightly better than girls. Results were below those in English and mathematics. The trend in results over recent years is in line with the increase in national figures. Teacher assessments are broadly in line with the test results. The 2002 GCSE examination results for double science were significantly above the national average. Results for both girls and boys are well above the national figures, although boys do better than girls. The trend in results over recent years has remained steady.
86. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average; pupils are on course to achieve similar results in the national tests to those attained in previous years. Pupils are achieving very well, as seen in a Year 9 lesson during an assessed practical on the factors affecting the rate of decomposition. Following the previous lesson all pupils had produced a good and sometimes excellent plan for their investigation. The highest attainers could discuss the health and safety issues around growing bacterial cultures in the laboratory and were responsive to challenging questions posed in the plenary. All pupils displayed very good practical skills and worked safely. They were confident dealing with a range of variables applicable to this investigation. Pupils are applying previously acquired knowledge to new situations. They are developing their ideas and understanding very well. All pupils are keeping very good records of their work. They respond well to being challenged and employ very good literacy and numeracy skills to support their achievements but information and communication technology skills are not employed.
87. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average in each of the separate science units. By the age of 16 pupils are developing their independent learning skills very well and they are continuing to work safely. They work quickly, accurately and achieve significantly through discussion work. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were studying the manufacture of fertilizer from ammonia. All were achieving at the expected levels with girls doing particularly well. They were discussing with the teacher the history of the Haber process for the production of ammonia and the need to increase food production rapidly after the First World War. The pupils posed some very good questions. All carried out the activity that followed quickly, with the higher attainers completing the extension exercise. In this lesson pupils were able to discuss how well they are progressing towards the GCSE examination and what they need to do to improve their grades.
88. Pupils' attitudes to work are generally very good and sometimes excellent and make a considerable contribution to their learning and to the standards they attain. They are very well behaved and well focused in lessons, and take care of the laboratories and equipment. They share very good, constructive relationships with their teachers and with each other and all support each other well. Most work hard, take a pride in their work and enjoy lessons.
89. Teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are very well planned and structured, start promptly and proceed at a good pace. All teachers are very well qualified and enthusiastic about their subjects. They know their pupils, have high expectations of them and support them well. Pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue and those identified as having learning needs are making very good progress through the support of their teachers. The mentoring of underachieving pupils in Year 11 is an example of the teachers' commitment to raising standards for individuals. As a result of this good teaching pupils are interested in their work and acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a good pace. The most effective teaching was when clear learning objectives were shared with the pupils, where pupils experienced a variety of learning activities and when a strong plenary occurred, as in a Year 9 lesson when pupils were studying ionic bonding. The teacher worked hard to inspire and to challenge pupils creating models with them and using drama effectively: pupils took on the roles of differently charged particles of the atoms of elements of the periodic table. Their very good progress was assessed at different points in the lesson and again in the plenary. Both girls and boys enjoyed this lesson. In this and other very good lessons in Year 9, teaching practices were related to the National Strategy. However, such practice is not widespread in the department. Teachers mark pupils work regularly. Pupils find corrections and comments useful to understand how well they are doing but they are not given specific short-term targets. There was a lack of a structure to a Year 11 supported self-study lesson that lacked sufficient rigour.

90. Leadership and management are good. Science staff work hard and there is a shared commitment to improvement of the subject and a capacity to succeed. The department handbook is a useful document to guide staff working practice. The action plan does not address all of the recent changes taking place in science teaching such as the introduction of the National Strategy and the need to address cross-curricular themes, although the curriculum is very well organised. Assessment data shows that the department adds very good value to pupils' attainment. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is sound and that of subject performance is very good overall. However, the practice of sharing the assessment data with pupils and setting targets varies across the department, particularly for Years 9 and 10. Targets set for the department are exceeded. The level of general teaching resources is good but there is a shortage of information and communication technology equipment. Some laboratories are small, especially for classes of over 25 pupils, and accommodation is unsatisfactory overall as it places limitations on teaching and learning strategies.
91. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. A good range of teaching strategies are now employed. Work is varied and stimulating and the high attainers are well supported by teachers and challenged by the use of extension exercises. The time allocated to the curriculum is now appropriate particularly in the light of the school's bid for specialist status.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in GCSE examinations.
- The very good quality of teaching.
- Very strong emphasis on the development of good drawing skills and very effective use of the work of traditional and contemporary artists to stimulate learning.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology.
- The use of homework for pupils in Year 9.
- The display of pupils work around the school to celebrate their achievement.

92. There is limited data available to establish pupils' levels of attainment but teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average for the levels expected for the pupils' age. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average for A*-C grades and above average for A*-G grades. This trend has been maintained in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades is very significant as a result of good teaching and high expectations.
93. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. This is the result of good planning and teaching, with a particular emphasis on the development of good observational drawing skills. As a result, all pupils make good progress. The extensive and successful drawing work inspired by Gothic traditions, using the local church as a resource, and the very disciplined approach to objective drawing in response to Renaissance studies are good examples of achievement and progress. Pupils learn to use a wide range of two- and three-dimensional materials with confidence. This includes clay, plaster of Paris and construction materials. Pupils also have access to dark room facilities. Whilst time is a strict limitation, more could be done through the use of homework to encourage research skills, to advance learning and extend knowledge and understanding.
94. By the end of Year 11 standards for most pupils are well above average and they make very good progress. Many pupils have developed observational drawing skills and shading techniques that show impressive levels of concentration. Skills in the use of colour, in paint, acrylic and oil pastels are also very well developed. Processes of research and experimentation are frequently extensive, well annotated and show the development of skills in a wide variety of well used media. The resulting finished pieces of work are developed to high standards of

artistic competency and originality. The well conceived and highly imaginative construction work on headwear, in response to the theme 'identity,' is a very good example of this in Year 10. The skilful drawing and painting work inspired by the still life work of Cezanne is another good example. Pupils' knowledge of artists and art movements is broad and strongly influential in much of their work. Whilst the cultural diversity of western civilisation is used very effectively by teachers in the development of pupils' work, more use could be made of the artistic richness of other cultures as a means of extending knowledge, understanding and personal development. From the outset of their examination course in Year 10, pupils are encouraged and expected to become independent learners and to pursue individuality of response to a common theme. This is a strength of the department that is developed within a very good framework of effective teacher support and subject knowledge.

95. The overall quality of teaching is very good and on occasion it is outstanding. Teachers are well organised and have high expectations of pupils in terms of behaviour, pace and output of work. Planning is good. There is a well considered balance between instruction in technique and process and the encouragement given to pupils to explore the potential of a wide range of media. End of lesson reviews and opportunities for reflection are sometimes used well to involve pupil opinion on learning outcomes, but could be more consistently effective. There are examples of good and very good teaching in differing year groups where teachers make demands on pupils' ability to think about their work and to explore different forms of expression. The Year 11 lesson on examination planning procedures is an outstanding example of this intellectual rigour. Procedures for assessing work are well established and very effectively used to inform pupils of their standards of attainment and ways in which they can improve their work. Individual target setting is used with increasing effectiveness in Years 10 and 11. Pupils at all levels enjoy art and respond well to the challenging work they are given. Behaviour and attitudes are very good in all years. Pupils sustain concentration, become actively involved in class discussion and talk intelligently about the development of their own work over time. Many pupils are enthusiastic about their work and take a pride in their achievements, due to their increasing success as the result of very good teaching skills which many acknowledge. The use of information and communication technology has been successfully integrated in some years, but more can be done to develop this as part of the taught courses for all. Pupils of all capabilities make good or very good progress, including those with special needs, as well as those for whom English is an additional language. Strategies for accelerating the learning of gifted and talented pupils are satisfactory.
96. Leadership and management are good. The department is successfully led by a very experienced and dedicated specialist who sets and maintains high standards of artistic achievement. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good. Well resourced and challenging schemes of work are in place for all year groups, but these need to be more detailed in their references to the extent and impact of information and communication technology and in the influence of multiculturalism on art education and personal development. A wide variety of resources is very effectively managed to support teaching and extend knowledge and understanding. A very good range of extra curricular activities further extends learning opportunities. Progress since the last inspection has been good as seen in rising standards and overall provision. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school, but could do far more to celebrate pupils' achievement if good displays of art work were prominently displayed in the public areas of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision is **unsatisfactory as National Curriculum requirements are not met.**

Strengths

- The attainment of 14 year olds and 16 year olds.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are structured well and proceed at a good pace.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment procedures.
- Meeting National Curriculum requirements.
- The provision for computer aided design and manufacture.
- The management procedures, including health and safety issues in resistant materials work areas.

97. The 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that pupil performance is above average. At the end of Year 11 pupils achieve the results expected for their prior attainment. Not all pupils follow a GCSE course but results achieved by those entered were well above average.
98. Inspection evidence shows that standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils are very enthusiastic and well motivated by the activities provided because learning is relevant and they are successful. They learn about a wide range of materials and they use a good range of small and large equipment competently and safely, for example when preparing a pasta dish. They are proud of new products they have developed in food technology and in resistant materials lessons. Pupils plan their work and evaluate it objectively against specific criteria and carefully evaluate how well they have worked. Higher levels of attainment are achieved by girls because they manage their learning well, setting themselves targets, priorities, taking more care with their work and producing better quality outcomes.
99. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. Pupils have sufficient confidence, knowledge and understanding to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs and specifications. Pupils work very well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. They use information and communication technology well, particularly to present their work but not for designing and manufacturing products. Pupils' design work and practical work shows progression in development and a very good level of craftsmanship in their execution. They critically analyse their work well. Pupils, regardless of gender, achieve well because teachers expect them to learn well. The statutory curriculum requirements are not fulfilled because not all pupils study the subject to the age of 16. This was a point for action from the previous report.
100. Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good overall. In food technology it is very good. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages pupils. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables pupils to be successful. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are always very good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. The teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared work sheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. Pupils are very proud of what they achieve. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In lessons there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages pupils to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of the lesson is sufficiently focused and the objectives are shared appropriately with the pupils. There are good introductions to lessons which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their own vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their designing and making skills

are sufficiently developed. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words extending pupils technical vocabulary. Whilst computers are used across a range of software applications, opportunities are not written into schemes of work to enable teachers to use information and communication technology effectively during lessons. There is no provision for computer aided design or manufacture. There is an emphasis on hygiene, health and safety during lessons. The display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department needs to be improved to provide interest for pupils and help with the development of ideas.

101. Lessons are characterised by the quality of teachers' focus on the progress and needs of individual pupils. The effective challenging, but supportive, relationships between the teacher and the pupils, coupled with on-going individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make good progress. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning.
102. The two heads of department provide satisfactory leadership and management overall. The departments have specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all which was reflected in the work of the department. Schemes of work give details of long term planning to show what knowledge, skills and understanding it is intended that pupils should achieve. The heads of departments have regular informal meetings but there are no formal meetings to discuss issues to improve policy and standards in the subject. They are fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils at ages 14 and 16 through better assessment and the monitoring of attainment and progress. The recording of assessment using National Curriculum levels linked to the schemes of work is not used effectively enough to set targets for individual pupils. The marking system is used to make predictions of grades at GCSE but there is insufficient focus given to levelling and moderation of pupils' work in each year group. Similarly the planned use of information and communication technology, particularly coverage of computer-aided design and manufacture, requires improvement. The development plan does not include the necessary focus on raising standards, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning. It does include targets for the review of the curriculum, staff development and the use of resources. The time table arrangements have an adverse impact on the time available for practical work. The number of rooms available is adequate, although food technology rooms are small and in need of refurbishment. The work areas in resistant materials need reorganisation as there are a number of health and safety issues which need to be resolved quickly. The technicians provide a sufficient level of support and make an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory as, whilst standards have improved, the meeting of curriculum requirements remains as key issue.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Examination results, which have been consistently above average.
- Teaching is very good: guidance on coursework methodology is outstanding.
- Pupils achieve very well; their coursework submissions are very good.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for development

- Matching of tasks to the capabilities of individual pupils.
- Extension of the good work begun on assessment of pupils' work and progress, and by gender and ethnicity.

103. Levels achieved in 2002 National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. There was no significant gender difference in performance. Results in the GCSE examinations have been consistently well above average since the previous inspection. There has been no consistent pattern of boys' or girls' superiority in that period. Relative performance figures show that in 2002 geography was the strongest GCSE

subject in the school. A higher proportion of pupils achieved grades A* or A than at the time of the last inspection.

104. By age 14, inspection evidence shows overall attainment to be well above average. Pupils have made very good progress since entering the school. All pupils have good map-reading skills, as seen in a Year 9 lesson on route finding, and produce clearly annotated maps and diagrams. In their fieldwork they set up hypotheses and test them using simple graphs to display and interpret data. They use technical vocabulary confidently, have good factual knowledge and a well-developed sense of place. All pupils express themselves clearly, both orally and in writing.
105. By age 16, overall attainment levels remain well above average and in line with the latest examination results. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language, have made very good progress since the end of Year 9. All pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. Their very good coursework has received commendation from examination board moderators. They test hypotheses by analysing their fieldwork observations, using a variety of statistical methods. Some comparatively less competent pupils experience some problems in analysing their findings, but still produce accurate graphs. As a result of thoughtful teaching, all pupils are developing good thinking skills. There is no obvious gender difference in observed attainment in any year group. In coursework and other extended research work, pupils make good use of computers to enhance the presentation of text and graphs. They also access the Internet frequently for information on a variety of topics.
106. Overall, teaching is very good, never less than good and occasionally excellent. All teachers display very good subject knowledge, not only in what they say, but also in the way they give effective guidance in the use of learning resources. Pupils' response to this quality of teaching is overwhelmingly positive. They behave well, stay on task and work collaboratively when required. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. Lessons always start with a clear statement of aims. The use of aids such as interactive whiteboards shows pupils the advantages of using information and communication technology in learning. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were required to use previously learned map-reading skills to devise an itinerary for a walk, taking into account distance and changes in elevation. The teacher's expert guidance in the use of Ordnance Survey maps ensured that pupils made excellent progress in that lesson. A Year 11 group was challenged after initial guidance, to determine the causes and effects of rapid industrialisation in South Korea. In successfully completing this task they reached a good understanding of the effects of industrial development in previously underdeveloped countries. In comparatively less successful lessons, which are still good overall, there is insufficient matching of tasks to the capabilities of individual pupils. In a small number of lessons, insecure time management results in over-long introductions. There is also a tendency for some lessons to be very teacher centred, thus reducing opportunities for pupils to organise their own learning. Homework is set regularly, providing valuable reinforcement to classroom learning. The marking of work is very thorough and includes helpful comments pointing the way forward for pupils. Teachers are generous in the time they spend in helping pupils with their learning outside normal lesson times.
107. Geography is deservedly a popular subject in the school. More pupils wish to study the subject in Years 10 and 11 than the department can currently accommodate. A good range of learning resources, including reference materials in the school library, provides pupils with a wealth of information. Good leadership and management have ensured that high standards have been maintained. A thorough revision of schemes of work has been completed. The response to key points raised by the last inspection has been good. A good start has been made to improving the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The department has yet to carry out a thorough analysis of attainment by gender or ethnicity. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in the quality of teaching and in the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A* or A. Well-organised fieldwork gives pupils opportunities to enjoy the practical aspects of the subject. Displayed work illustrates to pupils the high expectations of their teachers and the standards to which they should strive.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- A very good programme of study is very well used to challenge and engage pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Pupils are very well supported in developing higher level skills.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the planned use of information and communication technology.
- Further develop the assessment policy.

108. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding well above average. In 2002 teacher assessments, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 was well above average. The GCSE results for 2002 were well above average in both A*-A grades and A*-C grades achieved. This is satisfactory improvement from the time of the last inspection and shows good achievement.
109. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average. In general, the quality of pupils' extended writing is well above average, as are their standards in oral work. They talk about historical events and interpret source material most competently. They are able to fit their historical studies into a wider context. For example in their written work the majority of pupils show the relationships between social, economic and political factors in respect of the Industrial Revolution very well. Their knowledge of key developments is very good and they have a very clear understanding of how historians find out about the past. Achievement is good.
110. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average. Pupils ask perceptive questions and challenge interpretations relating to events they are studying, often making reference to knowledge drawn from wider reading around specific issues. This was particularly evident in very good work on the rise to power of Hitler. The majority of pupils have very well developed skills in the use of evidence to support their views. They can construct accounts of events in a very thorough way and draw conclusions that they support well with relevant evidence derived from their own research. Achievement for most is very good.
111. Pupils are well motivated. There is a very high uptake of GCSE option courses and considerable enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils work very well in pairs and collaboratively. Boys and girls work very well in harmony, taking control of their own learning and are eager to question and challenge their teachers and fellow pupils, to develop their understanding of history. They are very supportive of one another and relationships are very good and often excellent.
112. Teaching and learning are very good. Learning is very good because pupils work very hard, are very focused and develop very good analytical skills. They respond very well to the challenging questions and tasks in lessons. Pupils' written and oral work shows they make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding between Year 9 and Year 11. They develop higher level skills that allow them to analyse source material very well. The level of debate, on the right of women to vote in a Year 11 GCSE lesson, illustrates how well the pupils can challenge the reliability and provenance of the sources they read. They show a very clear understanding of cause and effect and they work well together to develop and test their ideas. They extend their understanding through role play, such as acting out the role of a Nazi child in Year 10 GCSE lessons, and produce very good extended writing in response to challenging questions.
113. The key to their very good progress is the high quality teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11. The high expectations and subject knowledge of the teachers challenges and engages the great majority of pupils. Pupils are typically faced with skilful and pacy questioning that probes and

searches throughout lessons. They are set tasks that continually stretch them to think and analyse. Good use is made of well-chosen video extracts, challenging source material and well-planned activities to engage all pupils, no matter what their level of attainment. Homework is used very well to further develop pupils' independent learning skills. However, there are insufficient planned opportunities to use information and communication technology in learning. Pupils are well supported in their studies. Marking of completed work, particularly essays, is generally thorough, helping pupils to focus on how to improve their standards. Consequently, pupils' writing is particularly good. However, the marking of work, particularly in Year 10, does not always ensure that some pupils fully understand the level at which they are working. They need clearer guidance as to how to improve their work.

114. Leadership and management are good. New schemes of work have been written which ensure that pupils gain good access to and a very good understanding of citizenship, making them continually compare historic events with current events in the world. The wide range and balance of the course gives pupils opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The development of assessment of work against National Curriculum levels in Year 9 has the potential to introduce more rigour into assessment procedures. However, the assessment procedures that are being developed are not being used sufficiently in lesson planning to give individual pupils targets that will challenge them even more. The developing monitoring of teaching is successfully starting to identify areas for development. Good planning for change has taken place in the department and senior staff have given valuable support, particularly in the development of assessment. There is clear recognition of the need to update teachers' skills regularly and training is well used. The planned use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning is a priority that has to be addressed.
115. Progress since the last inspection is good, because the number of pupils gaining A*-A grades in GCSE has been increased. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in teacher assessments is now well above national averages. The quality of teaching has risen and high attainers are generally being well engaged.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall provision for information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory as National Curriculum requirements are not met.**

Strengths

- Recent achievement in all year groups.
- Very good use of assessment to develop planning at all levels from individual support to the design of the whole curriculum.
- Excellent teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Meeting statutory curriculum requirements.
- Improving resources and staff expertise in other subjects to develop the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum further.

116. There was no assessment of standards at the end of Year 9. Results at GCSE in 2002 were well below average for A*-C grades and below average for A*-G grades. More boys than girls choose to study the subject at GCSE, but they perform at similar levels.
117. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average in spite of very low standards on entry to the school. Pupils come to Year 9 with a very wide range of prior experience, except in searching the Internet and basic word-processing, giving the majority very low standards. Pupils, learning the purpose and structure of a database, have very limited prior experience of the topic, but their understanding of ideas underpinning the work gives them a good basis for learning. They can transfer knowledge and skills from one program to another; for example drawing tables in a word-processed document they used their recent experience with spreadsheets to inform their techniques. Their achievement over the year is therefore excellent.

118. Year 11 pupils have above average standards in spite of their very low attainment at the start of this school year. By the time of the inspection they can now research and plan individual projects using a database, then analyse and test their solutions. The evidence they present about the progress of their thinking shows understanding of course requirements and application of databases that is well above average. They show very good appreciation of the importance of the intended audience in designing presentations. The extent of work to 'catch up' with projects has left little time for the general theory but in this they show good understanding of areas that they have covered. They also show excellent achievement over the course of the last two terms.
119. This achievement is the direct result of the highly improved quality of teaching in the discrete lessons, which is excellent. Teachers plan lessons very well to meet clear objectives linked to the requirements of all courses. In all year groups, pupils are taught to think by teachers whose excellent initial and supplementary questions guide them towards higher level understanding. Their relationships are outstanding in the trust and enthusiasm for work that the teachers have earned by their very high level of commitment to learning. This is demonstrated in the attention given to the needs of individual pupils and in the many extra lessons provided for Year 11 to help them to catch up with course requirements. In return, teachers have very high expectations of hard work at a fast pace. They used their impeccable knowledge of examination requirements to give all aspects of courses due weight. They encourage pupils, by using contexts that appeal to their interests and help them to relate to their teachers, such as favourite sports and music. They use homework very effectively to prepare for lessons. Teaching therefore has an excellent impact on learning both in many individual lessons and also over time. This compares very favourably with the lack of focus evident in the work from previous years.
120. The teachers' detailed and effective attention to the needs of individuals is the result of their very thorough marking with detailed attention to points for improvement and relevant general advice that indicates areas of strength and weakness. At GCSE, the teacher uses very well designed report sheets that give credit for successfully completed work and comment on areas still needing attention. Candidates therefore know precisely where they stand and how they can improve. In addition they all know that they are expected to reach the highest levels. Teachers evaluate the impact of every series of lessons on learning and redesign tasks on the basis of needs that have been demonstrated both in lessons and as a result of assessment. They also adapt lessons in advance on the basis of the level of understanding shown in practical work. Assessment is therefore very well used to improve course planning. The teachers, both of whom have worked in the school only during this academic year, are therefore dealing very successfully with the redesign of the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals. Their work with certificate classes is firmly based on the criteria for examinations. They still have not linked Year 9 to the attainment target of the National Curriculum, but are planning to do so when they have completed planning for Years 11 and 12.
121. The department's approach is very inclusive. Their care for the needs of individuals has resulted in learning that is at the same excellent level for boys and girls, for pupils of all capabilities including those with special educational needs and for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
122. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in the taught course and there is significant variation in the use of computers in subjects across the curriculum. The aspects of the National Curriculum that are taught in the information and communication technology course are very good, but this is a recent development. There is not enough lesson time for Year 9 to cover the entire course. The school does not have suitable equipment for computer-assisted control or measurement of physical variables and, where they could be taught in design and technology and science, practice is unsatisfactory. The Year 9 course covers well those areas of the National Curriculum that it addresses, with excellent emphasis on the development of thinking skills, good impact on literacy and due attention to numeracy.
123. Arrangements for leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as the use of information and communication technology is not co-ordinated across the curriculum. Throughout the school there is not enough use of computers to support learning in other departments, with the exception of very good use in music and good use in art. English and mathematics use

computers as required, but do so infrequently. Pupils studying religious education used the Internet and presentation software well during the inspection to research and organise their work on Judaism. All subjects make some use of computers but opportunities are not planned for to ensure consistency in any one year group. This is in part the result of lack of training for all teachers in the past. Pupils are encouraged to use computers in their private study and for homework. The main problem is lack of access to computer rooms and to adequate computers. The school's ratio of computers to pupils at the time of the inspection is well below national average, with only one room well equipped with up to date machines.

124. In spite of the lack of a head of department, the school has recognised that the weaknesses have had a serious impact on teaching and learning. The new assistant head has already acted to improve accommodation, resources and staff training, but these have not yet had their full impact. The teacher who is teaching almost all discrete information and communication technology has dealt very effectively with the shortcomings in the aspects of the curriculum taught in lessons. The amount of work entailed, sustainable in the short term has placed a heavy burden on the teachers, both of whom have considerable other responsibilities.
125. Improvement since the last inspection was unsatisfactory until this year; it is now good, in that accommodation, resources and the quality of teaching and learning have all improved, but the statutory requirements are still not being met.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 and in GCSE.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Good leadership and very good plans for future development.

Areas for development

- Assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of Information and communication technology to support the learning of all pupils.

126. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average. Results in 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average by a wide margin, with boys doing particularly well in comparison with national results in French. The pupils entered for GCSE in French achieved similar results in this subject as they did in the average for all their other subjects. Those entered for GCSE in German in 2002 achieved slightly better results in this subject than they did in the average for all their other subjects. Results were slightly higher in French than in German. Both boys and girls exceeded the national average. Not all candidates gained grade C or higher, however, and, given their prior attainment, this indicates some underachievement.
127. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average overall in both French and German. They are not quite as high as the National Curriculum levels given by teachers for the previous cohort of pupils. This reflects the changes that are being made in the procedures to ensure that assessment is accurate. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average in both languages. The most highly developed skill is listening. Pupils understand their teachers speaking the foreign language throughout the lesson and many can respond appropriately to the use of humour. Speaking skills are more limited and most pupils prefer to say single words rather than phrases or longer responses. When teaching focused on the development of conversation, some pupils developed their social skills very successfully in French. Pupils in all year groups can speak at length when reading from prepared scripts. Reading and writing are well developed, with examples of pupils drafting and re-drafting their work and acquiring a good level of grammatical accuracy.
128. Teaching is good overall. It is good in French in Year 9 and satisfactory in German. In a minority of lessons observed in both languages, teaching was very good or excellent. In these lessons, conducted entirely in the foreign language, pupils were actively involved at all times;

they received instruction tailored to their needs and many opportunities for putting their language skills into practice. In one lesson, in which they learned to understand traffic announcements in French, the teacher gave specific advice on how to negotiate in small groups and most pupils proceeded to speak the language to each other for the rest of the lesson. In another, pupils spent a good period of time intensively interviewing each other in German about their favourite school subjects, constantly working with a different partner. In each case, they learned a great deal and had fun. In lessons where the teacher gave pupils less time to engage in practical activities, they remained passive for long periods and learning was less secure. In one unsatisfactory lesson in German, achievement was low, as were the teacher's expectations. Teaching is satisfactory in French and good in German in Years 10 and 11 and teachers use the foreign language as the medium of instruction in most lessons. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils to produce language of their own without support and pupils rise to this. Pupils' attitudes varied according to the quality of the teaching, but were generally good for both boys and girls. There is good equality of opportunity.

129. Assessment procedures have been developed for pupils in Year 9, but they are not yet in use with every class and not all pupils can state with certainty what level they are on and what they need to do to improve. Assessment procedures for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are organised in different ways and each teacher keeps a record of their own pupils' progress. This is unsatisfactory as the department is not able to keep track of all pupils' progress and compare this with expectations. The department is aware of this deficiency and has plans for development.
130. Literacy is well taught within the languages curriculum. Pupils gain a sound understanding of the grammatical framework and acquire enough knowledge to enable them to manipulate language effectively. In a Year 11 French lesson, pupils revised the gender of nouns in a lively and active way by challenging each other to categorise words of their own choice. Number work is included in the schemes of work, but few examples of the development of numeracy were seen in lessons or in pupils' work samples. The use of information and communication technology is only satisfactory as there is insufficient planning to ensure that opportunities are taken. Provision is good where it is made, as seen in one lesson when pupils researched the topic of Victor Hugo by using the Internet. They learned how to make the most of computers to gain information and willingly cooperated with each other to make their learning more effective.
131. The leadership and management have improved in significant ways since the recent appointment of the head of department and practice is now good, with several examples of very good recent developments; for example, prioritising the development of assessment procedures in Year 9 has been a wise decision, with on-going development into Years 10 and 11. The new departmental handbook provides a clear vision for future development and the department has made very good plans for monitoring teaching and sharing good practice. Improvement since the last inspection has thus been satisfactory. It was delayed by slow progress in the years following the last inspection, but, since September 2002, many developments have occurred. Plans for the future are good, but there is not yet enough detail relating to how the quality of teaching will be improved.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are well above the national average.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The excellent provision for instrumental tuition and extra-curricular music-making.
- The use of information and communication technology.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures.
- Liaison with feeder schools.
- Subject management.

132. Between 2000 and 2002 the school entered 25 candidates for GCSE in music. This is a low proportion in relation to the national average. Viewed over this period, results are well above the national average and above the average for selective schools. The school has no information on teachers' assessments in music at the end of Year 9 for 2002: no evaluation of the standards of 14 year-olds against national standards can be made.
133. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the average and achievement is satisfactory. In Year 9, pupils readily grasp how venue, occasion and purpose are reflected in music, as illustrated in their response to the development of the blues. Most pupils have at some stage had instrumental lessons and can perform from notation. A significant minority play and sing expressively in a range of different styles. Pupils improvise and refine material when composing within given structures and with some awareness of stylistic differences. They use computers very well to generate scores and to experiment in composition.
134. Standards for the minority of pupils who take the examination course in Year 11 are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Most pupils have a very high level of performance skill, contributing to ensembles very effectively. Several produce outstanding compositions which, while based on prescribed models, express individuality and character. They make excellent use of computers as a tool for composition and for accurate presentation of their musical intentions. They use correct musical terminology and understand the underlying musical concepts. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified formally. There is no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls, although in Year 10 and above, girls comprise the clear majority in music classes.
135. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching in Year 9 is satisfactory. It generally ensures that basic skills are well taught. However, the quality of lesson planning undermines pupils' achievement, especially when there is sometimes insufficient rigour in applying strategies to consolidate and extend learning. This, in turn, leads to teachers not setting pupils high enough challenges to which to aspire. A potentially stimulating composition exercise, for example, was not allotted enough time. The exercise was rushed and performances and opportunities to learn by evaluating them were lost. Similarly, pupils' folders revealed several instances where higher attainers were not encouraged to strive for standards above the rest or, indeed, where less experienced pupils did not log their progress in musical performance. Overly informal monitoring and assessment of pupils work means that exercises are often not completed. Despite this, standards remain good in Year 9 and improve dramatically in the small and highly motivated GCSE groups because of the outstanding musicianship and comprehensive knowledge of the staff and their enthusiasm to communicate this to the pupils. This ensures that pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and that relationships are very good. It also creates a very strong empathy for learning, especially with the highest attainers. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good and its impact is both subtle and powerful. The constant manipulation of musical material, for example when accompanying a song, and the clarity of articulation of musical responses by the teachers is so well absorbed by the highest attainers that, almost subconsciously, they acquire a rich palette of musical techniques. As a result, they are able to forge individuality in

their compositions with relative ease. Probing questioning elicits good intellectual responses from the pupils and can be used to consolidate learning, especially when combined with the very good choice of thought-provoking materials. Variety of media – audio, video, PowerPoint presentations, books – all contribute to making learning about music interesting. Information and communication technology skills are very well taught and significantly enhance learning. Aspects of citizenship, literacy and numeracy are well taught, but incidentally rather than through planning.

136. The difficulty in obtaining information on prior attainment in music from the diverse feeder schools presents special challenges for developing the Year 9 curriculum. Liaison is not in place to establish this and there is not enough information to plan the curriculum coherently. Statutory assessments at the end of Year 9 are not completed. To a small extent the small group sizes and the very good relations mitigate this. However, with a strong bias to western musical styles in Year 9, it is very unlikely that many pupils experience an ethnically diverse range of music between the ages of 11 and 14 overall. Parents need to be informed to help them support pupils from home. Schemes of work do not formally plan for cross-school initiatives to be integrated into music lessons. However, the excellent provision for and quality of both music instrumental learning and extra-curricular music-making very strongly promotes the talented, encourages active citizenship and makes for excellent opportunities to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural horizons of all pupils. The reflective impact of the violin solo at assembly, performances to the community at large in a range of public concerts, the social and artistic cohesion of the annual production are just a few of a stream of high quality initiatives, desirable, but too numerous, to mention in full.
137. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The very good commitment and dedication of the 19 full and part-time music staff to make music a central part of the ethos of the school is very well managed, especially given the lack of secretarial support. However, from the perspective of the curriculum and the procedures for assessment, it is unsatisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour. Since the last inspection, the time allocated for music in Year 9 has markedly improved; attainment and motivation is much better, although many criticisms are still pertinent. The quality of staffing has improved and ambitious and advanced plans for a performing arts centre with excellent integrated accommodation for all aspects of music are a stimulus for staff and pupils alike. Overall, the department has made sound progress since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers.
- The moral and social development of pupils.
- Extra-curricular provision and take up by pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management.
- Elements of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical education vocabulary.

138. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of prior experience. No teacher assessments are available for the end of Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying on the GCSE physical education course are the first and second groups to do so. This means that there are no GCSE results to compare with national averages. However, teachers' predicted grades, supported by inspection evidence, shows that standards are well above average.
139. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the average. Pupils make good progress in their first year. They develop competence of some basic techniques in hockey and basketball. In Year 9 hockey pupils have good technique of reverse sticks in order to avoid opponents. Their development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively

in pairs and small groups. However, pupils are not always aware of what they should be learning by the end of a lesson. This means that some pupils are not clear about the basic technique of dribbling in basketball. They are unable to perform the correct foot movement and do not understand when it is appropriate to use the dribble in a game situation. Standards by the time pupils reach 16 are well above average as most pupils have been making good progress. Pupils working towards the physical education examination develop knowledge and understanding of the relationship between diet and physical performance. They are able to transfer their theory knowledge into examples using their own chosen sport. In core physical education lessons progress made by pupils is varied. In some lessons pupils are clear about the techniques and so develop generally good control skills in a range of games. The progress of many pupils is restricted by a lack of opportunities to develop their understanding and use of physical education vocabulary.

140. The overall quality of teaching is good, although it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. This is because teaching is not formally monitored against appropriate criteria to identify areas for development and so ensure consistency in teaching across all lessons. Teaching strengths include good subject knowledge, class management, organisational skills, positive interaction with pupils and a commitment to their moral and social development. This means that pupils learn through appropriate activities and in an environment which encourages learning. There is good planning and provision for pupils with special needs. In lessons where teaching is not so effective, learning is restricted by a lack of planning based on pupil outcomes, which means that some pupils are moved onto new activities before they are ready to do so. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good; they are well motivated and attitudes and behaviour are very good. Most pupils enjoy physical education and participation levels are very good.
141. The importance of extra-curricular activities is very well recognised, organised and managed, and the overall provision is very good with some excellent standards being achieved by teams and individuals. The emphasis is placed on the participation of all pupils in extra-curricular activities and there is a wide range of activities to meet the needs of the pupils. Many staff, both within and outside of the department, give freely of their time both after school and on Saturdays, for inter-school matches and outdoor pursuits. Because of the commitment and expertise of the individual teachers most pupils respond very well and this enhances their progress.
142. However, within the subject there is not a clear vision for the future based on raising standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but the implementation of development strategies is not monitored fully and results in inconsistency, and this leads to unsatisfactory leadership and management. The head of department does not monitor lesson planning nor consistently monitor teaching and learning, which limits the overall awareness of how the curriculum is being taught and how pupils are making progress. Systems and procedures to assess pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels are not yet in place and pupils are not fully aware of what they can do and how to improve. More planned opportunities for pupils to improve their knowledge, understanding and use of physical education terminology and teaching based on achieving intended pupil outcomes would raise standards faster. In general, the quality of accommodation and resources has a very positive effect on learning. There is a very good sports hall and an excellent all weather facility.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Attainment in GCSE is well above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' opportunity for reflection.
- The use of assessment.
- Leadership and management.

143. Standards in Year 9 were above average in 2002 for 14 year olds in relation to the school trust deed syllabus. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well above average for all schools and above average for similar schools at A*-C, with many pupils achieving A*-A grades.
144. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above expected levels. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There are good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. Pupils understand the importance of moral standpoints, as seen in a well-structured lesson on how Christians understand the creation stories. This enables them to begin to examine their own attitudes and opinions. They are able to provide useful links with the Christian view and the views of various thinkers. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on how they can apply religious principles to their everyday lives. The use of key words, technical language and some discussion work are useful aids to improve speaking and writing skills. Overall, learning is good.
145. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above expectations for the agreed syllabus and in the GCSE course. In Year 10 GCSE, pupils achieve well. They show a very good understanding of issues such as racism. Through a well-planned lesson, pupils were enabled to make good gains in knowledge and understanding of Jewish practices and how they could apply these in their own lives. They show a clear respect for the views of others, enabling all pupils to feel confident in expressing their views in an open and honest way. In Year 11, a very good revision lesson using video illustrations enabled pupils to consolidate their learning and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. The teacher's use of a variety of approaches to biblical material enabled them to explore and use reason to support their views and judgements. Pupils demonstrate very good skills of critical analysis and the ability to present balanced arguments. Overall, learning is very good. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. All pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make satisfactory progress in Year 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11.
146. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good Pupils' behaviour makes an outstanding contribution to their achievement and progress. They are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. Teachers support individual pupils both academically and personally through very effective teacher-pupil relationships.
147. Teaching is good and has a significant impact on pupil achievement. Teachers manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to a very effective climate for learning. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed. In these lessons, teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work, but this needs to be extended to enable pupils to explore their own feelings, attitudes and values. The opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning in order to apply religious principles to their own lives are sometimes undermined when lessons tend to be too teacher dominated, and teachers use a limited range of styles to enable pupils to explore their own views. These need developing further for pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion more effectively. Extension work and homework are used in an appropriate way, but the use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.
148. Assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory, as the procedures do not provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment does not inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. Although some helpful comments are made in exercise books, the department does not use levels of attainment, nor does it set targets for pupils. As a consequence, pupils are not aware of where they are and what they need to do to improve.
149. The syllabus is determined by the governors of the school in accordance with the requirements of the trust deed to provide an essentially Christian education and, overall, it meets the needs of pupils. Curriculum time in Year 9 is well below the national recommendation and has an adverse impact on opportunities for pupils to reflect on the knowledge they have gained. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils,

providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs.

150. Departmental management is satisfactory. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and total commitment to the pupils. The departmental development plan is not detailed enough and does not take sufficient account of current priorities. Monitoring of standards, and of teaching and learning, along with a systematic approach to curriculum planning and delivery are underdeveloped. Resources are generally satisfactory, but the lack of a specialist room for the subject does not enable quality display that celebrates pupils' achievement. The resources in the library require considerable updating if they are to be used effectively for research purposes.
151. Since the last inspection, improvement has only been satisfactory. Examinations have been successfully introduced and this has had a good impact on pupil attitudes to religious education. Standards have improved significantly. However, insufficient progress has been made in planning, assessment and the development of teaching styles.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Good, specialist teaching.
- The appointment of a co-ordinator to take charge of citizenship has given direction and leadership.
- The audit of provision across the curriculum.
- Activities such as the school council and focused assemblies successfully involve pupils in the wider and practical aspects of citizenship.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and the coverage of citizenship.
- The development of areas for the teaching of citizenship within subjects.
- Structured assessment procedures to monitor the progress pupils are making.

152. As the subject was formally introduced in September 2002, there is as yet no basis for the national comparison of standards. However, standards seen in the school are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. In lessons where citizenship was an important element, pupils were beginning to acquire knowledge and understanding of different aspects of society, for example, about the legal system through a high quality interactive presentation by two local magistrates to pupils in Year 10. They are also developing their skill to discuss social and moral issues, such as "fashion and sweatshops" in Year 11, and are able to justify their opinions orally. Most pupils are enthusiastic participants, take an interest in their work and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils.
153. The school has chosen to teach citizenship in time allotted to personal, social and health education (PSHE) and additionally as part of the curriculum in all subject areas. Planning has been satisfactory and provision meets with the national requirements. All three strands of the citizenship curriculum are being taught through a mixture of time allowed in PSHE lessons and in topics identified by subject departments. An audit has been carried out to plot coverage across departments. However, monitoring of cross-curricular teaching has not yet been done and so there is no reliable evidence that the subject is being taught in sufficient depth or that it is linking well with other aspects and activities. There has been no monitoring of provision for those pupils aged 14 to 16 who are taking a variety of subject options and so their access to citizenship may be variable. Additional activities such as assemblies, which contribute to the curriculum, are being logged.
154. Effective teaching was seen in lessons where citizenship was taught in PSHE by specialist staff. Good teaching of citizenship issues was also observed in other lessons. However, sometimes

the requirements for citizenship are not yet well understood by teachers and pupils are not clearly aware when they are studying a citizenship theme. Although subjects have identified citizenship topics, it is not yet embedded in lessons; it is accidental in music where a lesson on the blues included discussion of human rights and gender issues and in geography where lessons included work on the nuclear debate and population movements, but pupils were not aware that they were looking at citizenship. Pupils generally have positive attitudes, although a minority of them do not have a serious approach to citizenship lessons. Pupils are involved in charity work. Very good assemblies, such as the one seen on practical approaches to helping people in Tanzania, contribute to developing their skills of participation and responsible action. The school council is a very effective and well-supported body that allows pupils to participate in decision making related to the school, for example, improving areas of the school environment and issues raised by members of the school community. Teachers make little assessment of pupils' progress with the exception of the occasional use of quizzes.

155. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed and a good range of resources has been assembled. The co-ordinator has a clear view of what is required to develop citizenship within the curriculum, but it remains in the early stages of development. The time allocation has been found to be inadequate and so it is planned to extend activities into tutorial time. The present level of provision represents a satisfactory start for the subject. No judgements can be made about the improvement in citizenship, as it was not reported on at the last inspection.

LATIN

The overall provision for Latin is **good**.

Strengths

- Results at GCSE.
- Pupils' positive attitudes.

Areas to improve

- The overall quality of teaching.

156. Standards are broadly in line with the national average. In 2002 GCSE examinations, results were high for the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C. In Year 9, standards are in line with expectations. There is no national data for classical subjects below GCSE level and the judgement on standards is based on work seen during the inspection.
157. In Year 9, pupils' language skills are developing steadily and they are making good progress with the Cambridge Latin Course. Pupils are placed into classes based on their previous knowledge of Latin and this enables teachers to meet the needs of individual groups of pupils. Higher attaining students have a good range of vocabulary and they can translate a range of tenses and understand the noun cases they have been taught. In addition, those who have been studying Latin for just one year can translate a range of tenses and they make a good attempt at translating extended passages under test conditions.
158. Standards of work produced by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are broadly in line with expectations. Pupils have a sound grasp of grammar and vocabulary. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were able to identify and translate both passive and active participles and explain why they had translated in a particular way. They use dictionaries well, although they are encouraged to work out the meanings of words through English derivatives and from memory. Pupils show commitment in their lessons and in their written work.
159. Teaching is good overall. It was satisfactory or better in two thirds of the lessons seen. However, one lesson was unsatisfactory. Where teaching is very good, lessons are well planned, expectations are high and the teacher's delivery is lively. For example, in one lesson the teacher led a class translation of a passage and then broke off the story at a critical point, thus creating a sense of suspense. All of these factors lead to a stimulation of pupils' interests and to the very positive attitudes of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are given detailed feedback on their work and they respond well to the challenging questions asked of

them. However, when the pace of the lesson is slow and pupils are allowed to chatter, they make little progress and lose interest in Latin.

160. The department makes a good contribution to literacy through the teaching of grammar and the reference to the roots of words. In one lesson observed, pupils gave the results of vocabulary tests using Latin numbers. No information and communication technology was seen during the inspection.
161. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to raise the overall quality and standards. No judgement can be made for improvement as Latin was not inspected at the last inspection.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-B | | % gaining grades A-E | | Average point score | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Computer Studies | 7 | 29 | 13 | 100 | 74 | 2.86 | 1.75 |
| French | 2 | 50 | 13 | 100 | 78 | 3.50 | 1.65 |
| Full Design and Technology | 5 | 40 | - | 100 | - | 3.20 | - |
| German | 1 | - | 13 | 100 | 82 | 2.00 | 1.85 |
| Mathematics | 3 | 33 | 15 | 100 | 62 | 2.00 | 1.51 |
| Music | 1 | - | 29 | 100 | 84 | 3.00 | 2.41 |

GCE A level and AVCE courses

| Subject5.74 | Number entered | % gaining grades A-B | | % gaining grades A-E | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Art and Design | 19 | 58 | 46 | 95 | 96 | 6.95 | 6.57 |
| Biology | 54 | 46 | 34 | 96 | 88 | 6.33 | 5.25 |
| Chemistry | 42 | 52 | 43 | 100 | 90 | 6.76 | 5.90 |
| Classical Studies | 5 | 80 | 49 | 80 | 95 | 7.20 | 6.51 |
| Communication Studies | 12 | 42 | 31 | 100 | 93 | 7.50 | 5.53 |
| Economics | 25 | 56 | 36 | 96 | 89 | 6.64 | 5.52 |
| English language | 14 | 29 | 30 | 100 | 91 | 6.57 | 5.27 |
| English Literature | 35 | 57 | 37 | 100 | 95 | 7.54 | 5.91 |
| French | 9 | 67 | 38 | 89 | 89 | 7.33 | 5.59 |
| Geography | 21 | 67 | 38 | 100 | 92 | 8.19 | 5.74 |
| German | 4 | 25 | 40 | 100 | 91 | 6.50 | 5.81 |
| History | 38 | 68 | 35 | 89 | 88 | 7.16 | 5.45 |
| Home Economics | 9 | 56 | 28 | 89 | 83 | 5.78 | 4.73 |
| Mathematics | 40 | 60 | 43 | 100 | 87 | 7.30 | 5.80 |
| Other languages | 2 | 50 | 56 | 100 | 93 | 5.00 | 6.84 |
| Other Social Studies | 11 | 82 | 34 | 100 | 87 | 8.73 | 5.3 |
| Physics | 39 | 62 | 40 | 95 | 88 | 7.38 | 5.67 |
| Spanish | 1 | - | 39 | 100 | 89 | 4.00 | 5.70 |
| Sports/PE Studies | 14 | 21 | 25 | 100 | 92 | 5.71 | 5.09 |

Intermediate vocational qualifications

| Qualification | No in final year | % gaining qualification | | % gaining merit | | Average point distinction | |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| n/a | | | | | | | |

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The main focus of the inspection was in mathematics, biology and physics. Chemistry was sampled. Examination results were well above the national average in 2001. Students are making very good progress and their attainment is in line with expectations and with the history of previous results. Teaching is very good and students' attitudes to learning are very positive.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The students achieve high standards and make good progress.
- The teaching is good and students benefit from very good individual support.
- Leadership and management are effective.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that teaching provides a greater degree of challenge and students have a more developed capacity to work from first principles.

162. In recent years the number of students taking A level has declined: from 64 in 2000, to 36 in 2002. This latter cohort started the AS the year before with 42 students, so the rate of continuity from AS to A2 is fairly high. This year there are signs of an upturn in the numbers, with 56 students enrolling. A greater number of boys choose mathematics than girls. Attainment overall in the 2001 A2 examinations was well above the national average. Results in 2002 were even better, with a good increase in the percentage obtaining a grade A or B and about a half achieved grade A. In the AS examination in 2001, results were satisfactory, with a fall from the previous year.

163. Standards of work seen in the AS and A2 level courses are high in relation to national expectations. The students study a course involving modules of pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics, and there is provision for students to do further mathematics. Lesson time provision for the basic A2 courses is adequate, but is inadequate for the further mathematics. In pure mathematics the algebraic capability of the majority of the students meets the needs of the other parts of the curriculum. In work seen, students were confident using partial fractions to integrate appropriate functions. In mechanics students could solve equations concerned with momentum and the conservation of energy. In a statistics lesson, students confidently calculated standard deviations for sets of discrete data. The students show an easy facility with the definitions and processes involved. In all the courses offered, the students cover the syllabus requirements comprehensively.

164. The students' progress over the period of the course is good. They are very well motivated to succeed and use the time available in lessons well. They use the precise processes modelled for them by the teachers confidently. They keep very clear notes of the topics they are studying, with plenty of worked examples by way of illustration, giving them a good basis for revision. Their work is generally well presented, accurate and of a good standard. However, they are more comfortable learning standard processes and applying formulas and rely too

much on memory recall rather than on their ability to work out solutions to problems from first principles. Many students are fairly passive in lessons and only a few ask challenging questions or request further clarification.

165. Teaching is good overall: lessons are very good, good or satisfactory in about equal proportions. The teachers have a good understanding of the key requirements of the course and are generally confident mathematicians. Lessons are well organised and the students' work and periodic tests are well marked. In the best lessons, the mathematics is taught so that the students understand the interrelationship between different parts and solutions are interrogated to extract their underlying meaning. In other lessons, there is a greater emphasis on providing students with a clear and precise model of the processes and the language required to deal with the range of problems that they encounter. In some of these lessons there is insufficient time spent discussing the fundamental concepts to give the students a more secure basis on which to build their knowledge and understanding. Assessment of individual progress is good and students are given good feedback in a variety of ways so that they know what to do to improve.
166. The course is well planned and managed. Leadership is good. Resources are good, although information and communication technology is not yet confidently used by all members of the department to enhance learning. The students are generally appreciative of the quality of the teaching and the personal support and encouragement that they receive, but those who also do physics are often confused by the differences in approaches in many of the common areas. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment and the students' achievement have been maintained.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Support for individual students improves their learning and achievements.
- Students know about their achievements and what they have to do to improve.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Questioning skills to challenge all students and to maintain the pace of teaching and learning.
- Use of information and communication technology to support independent learning.

167. 2001 GCE A-level results were well above the national average. The performance of female students was well above average whilst that for males was above average. Results were below those attained in chemistry, physics and mathematics. The trend in results over recent times has remained steady with a 100 per cent pass rate being maintained. Value added is very good when comparing the A-level results for the students with their attainments at GCSE.
168. The standards being achieved are well above average, in line with recent examination results. All students keep a very good record of their work that contains a balance of theory, practical work and assignments. Their very good levels of literacy and numeracy are significant factors in supporting their high achievements. They discuss their work well. The highest attainers work quickly and are confident when challenged giving accurate answers to questions. In a very good lesson in Year 13 when students were studying the function of the kidney all students could explain the processes associated with the loop of Henle and all readily took part in a very good question and answer session that tested their prior knowledge of the subject. The highest attaining students could explain how to calculate the pressure at different points in the loop. In a Year 12 lesson students demonstrated very good practical skills when dissecting a kidney. They worked carefully and produced accurate drawings of what they could see.
169. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and often excellent and are a significant contribution to the high standards achieved. They are well focused and highly motivated. Relationships are very good. Students work hard and support each other well. In a Year 12

lesson on immune response there was an excellent rapport between teacher and students that increased their understanding of the role of B-Lymphocytes.

170. Teaching is good overall, with some very good practice observed. As a result students learn well acquiring a very good level of knowledge and understanding. Lessons are very well planned and structured and teachers' expectations of their pupils are high. They use a range of teaching strategies that stimulate interest and focus the students. At the start of a Year 12 lesson students' preparation was reviewed. This was a very lively session with the teacher spelling out her expectations after some students had given answers to questions more appropriate to GCSE than to AS level. The use of exemplar answers given by some students promoted a very good discussion with students developing their ideas very well. As a result all students were focused for much of the lesson but in this and other lessons this challenge was not maintained throughout and some passive learning occurred towards the end of the lesson. In all lessons teachers supported individual students well, making them well aware of their progress and of what they need to do to improve.
171. Leadership and management, within the science department, are good and contribute to the high standards achieved. There is a shared commitment to further improve students' achievements. Well-qualified and experienced teachers are well deployed; the level and use of general teaching resources enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. However, there is a shortage of some expensive items of equipment, in particular for information and communication technology, and the accommodation is unsuitable for teaching modern A-level schemes of work. The management and work of the laboratory technician is significant to the quality of teaching and learning. Good monitoring of the performance of the subject is used well; one result being that units of study are being rewritten. Assessment data is used well in support of students and in setting targets for them.
172. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. Teaching has improved in that planning is now a strength and most students are challenged well using a variety of teaching methods. Monitoring of teaching and learning has improved as a result of a whole school initiative but not as formal, regular practice led by the head of department.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning secure well above average results.
- The quality of support given to students in their development as independent learners.
- Very good monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance.

Areas for further improvement

- Sharing of learning objectives with students and use of plenary to assess their attainment.
- Use of information and communication technology in lessons and to inform independent learning.

173. In 2001 A-level results were well above the national average. The performance of male students was well above average whilst that for females was above average. However, female students gained more of the higher grades. Results in physics were above those attained in biology, chemistry and mathematics. The trend in results over recent times has remained steady. Value added is very good when comparing the A-level results for the students with their attainments at GCSE.
174. Standard being achieved are currently well above average and reflect very well the pattern of results achieved in the external examinations. Students bring to new situations prior knowledge and understanding. Their independent learning skills are very well developed. They are capable mathematicians and communicators and these are significant factors which support their high achievements. In a Year 13 lesson students were working on a variety of self-study options: telecommunications, nuclear, health and cosmology. All of the students had been researching well and were very confident about their knowledge and understanding of their chosen topic.

They were sharing their research findings with each other and asking searching questions of the teacher to assist their progress. Each has produced a very good plan for their learning programme and has shared this with the teacher and with the technician to ensure that equipment was always readily available for their practical investigations. In this and in other lessons students displayed a high level of practical and mathematical skills. In a Year 12 lesson on electromagnetism the highest attaining students were very confident with the mathematics involved and responded very well to the challenge of extension work.

175. Attitudes to learning are very good and at times excellent. Students are ambitious for both themselves and for other group members as shown when a Year 13 student shared his research findings with others during a lunchtime presentation. Physics is a popular option choice for the male students. Most students taking AS in Year 12 move on to take A2 in Year 13 with the highest attainers taking the extension papers. They enjoy their self-study option best and praise the teachers for their ability to explain difficult concepts and for the level of support they give them.
176. Teaching is very good. As a result learning is very good for the majority of students at AS level and for all at A2 level. Lessons are very well planned and have a good structure but the sharing of learning objectives with the students and the use of plenary sessions are not always clearly defined. Very good use is made of learning resources, but only limited use of computers. Teachers are well qualified and expectations are high. Their understanding of the expectations of the external examining board is significant in relation to the standards achieved. Teaching is consistently very good in support of students working on their self-study options. Teachers plan well with the students and maintain a very good pace of learning both in lessons and during preparation time. They punctuate giving support to individuals with mini lessons that respond to the learning needs of all students working on similar topics. During a very good evening lesson students enjoyed the extra challenge. Some very good questioning teased out the issues for students, who made very good progress in their understanding of modulation as part of their study of electronics. Students are well aware of their progress and of what they need to improve.
177. Leadership and management within the science department are good and contribute to the high standards achieved. There is a shared commitment to improve students' achievements further. Specialist physicists are well deployed; the level and use of general teaching resources enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. However, there is a shortage of some expensive items of equipment, in particular for information and communication technology, and the accommodation is unsuitable for teaching modern A-level schemes of work. The management and work of the laboratory technician is significant to the quality of teaching and learning. Very good monitoring of the performance of the subject is used well. Examples are in looking for patterns and advising students as to which self-study units produce the best results for the school and the recent change in the order in which units are taught. Assessment data is used well in support of students and in setting targets for them.
178. There have been some good improvements since the last inspection. Teaching has improved. Planning is now a strength and higher attaining students are challenged well using a variety of teaching methods. Monitoring of teaching and learning has improved as a result of a whole school initiative but not as formal, regular practice led by the head of department.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was for design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience.
- The level and commitment in teaching.
- The standards achieved in Year 12 and Year 13.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers for recording of work and in computer aided design.

179. The department offers courses at AS and A level in food technology, product design and resistant materials. The courses are popular in Year 12 and Year 13. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year and take the examination. When compared to national averages, students achieved standards that were above national averages for A and AS level in 2001.

180. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in the current Year 12 and Year 13. Students are achieving good standards in relation to predictions based on GCSE results when they came into Year 12. They make good use of their research and investigation skills but in Year 12 their project folders show less attention to detail in the presentation of design solutions. In lessons students demonstrate good levels of practical skills and can use tools, equipment and processes with confidence. In Year 13 students produce good design folders and practical work to a high specification. Students are doing well as a result of effective teaching which demands much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning; students drew well on their knowledge of design and meeting the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge and understanding well and apply it effectively.

181. Students learn very quickly. They make very rapid progress, concentrating hard and taking pride in producing high quality work under pressure. This results from teaching which is consistently good; it has a high impact on students' work and they respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In practical lessons, students learnt skills and techniques of cutting, shaping, machining and joining different materials. Their skills improved through practice. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. In the lessons time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion, seen in lessons where they investigated the use and application of different manufacturing processes.

182. Teaching is good. The principal features of the good teaching were clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and the tasks set. Lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and their skills and techniques improved as the sessions progressed. Students had opportunities to carry out detailed research working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. The teacher drew together their ideas and provided explanations. Students responded confidently to the activities. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it. Their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their work during the course.

183. Planning effectively reflects the course requirement. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance through review is well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused. The level of display of work in classrooms and the open areas around the department needs to be improved. Better use needs to be made of the computers for the design and manufacture of projects. Leadership and management are good and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This subject was sampled and the overall provision has improved this year to being good. Results in the AS examination were average. Standards of the Year 12 students studying the AS IT course are above average in spite of their low GCSE results from last year. The majority of the projects are well above average. Students show very good awareness of the importance of the needs and evaluations of the end user, and so have both researched and acted on them very well. Their achievement in comparison with attainment at the start of the course is therefore excellent.

BUSINESS

The focus was only the subject of economics.

Economics

Overall the quality of provision in economics is **good**.

Strengths

- Results at AS and A level are well above the national average.
- Teaching is good and encourages students to work hard.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good and make a positive contribution to their success as learners.

Areas for improvement

- Approaches to assessment.
- The further use of information and communication technology.
- Departmental documentation.
- The teaching environment.

184. Economics is a popular subject. Thirty students are following the AS level course in Year 12 and 24 students are following the A2 course in Year 13. This necessitates two teaching groups in each of the years. In 2001 A Level results were well above the national average. In 2002 the attainment of the 22 students entered for the A level examination in economics was very good. They all gained a pass grade, with the majority attaining the highest grades, A and B. In the AS level examination, there was a 100 per cent pass rate, with three quarters of the 32 students gaining A and B grades.

185. The current standard of work in Years 12 and 13 is well above average. Nearly all students in Year 13 are achieving grades above those predicted in terms of their GCSE results. In lessons students demonstrate very good levels of knowledge and understanding. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good, as is their relationship with their teacher. Year 12 students demonstrated very good capability to understand a range of concepts relating to inflation and the balance of payments. They enthusiastically participated in class discussion and answered questions enthusiastically and very competently. Their own questioning extended the learning process. They effectively relate the concepts of aggregate demand and aggregate supply to inflationary pressures. Year 13 students had a very good understanding of the relationship between inflation and unemployment. They understood Phillips curves and more recent refinements of theory such as non - accelerating - rate of unemployment (NAIRU). Most were active learners, participating in and contributing to lively discussion.

186. The scrutiny of students' work revealed systematic record keeping. Topic notes are detailed, reflecting a clear structure provided by the teacher. There is evidence of the reading and use of textbooks and some use of the Internet. Students' own notes are supplemented by relevant, photocopied extracts from economics journals. Marked essays and tests are filed systematically. Students use graphs confidently and demonstrate other numerical skills in calculating figures relating to the Retail Price Index and elasticity of demand. They are able to analyse data contained in tables, bar graphs and pie diagrams. Their folders will provide a very sound revision base for examinations.
187. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Expectations are good. In all of the lessons observed the teaching and learning was predominantly teacher led. Lessons were well prepared and at the start of each lesson the learning outcomes that were anticipated were highlighted. Time was spent consolidating work from previous lessons and in one instance this took the form of an extended analysis of an examination question set for homework. The nature and importance of evaluative skills was highlighted and reinforced and the teacher ensured that higher level concepts, appropriate to the capability of the class, were emphasised. The teacher's very good subject knowledge enabled themes and arguments based on students' responses and questions to be well developed. In a Year 13 lesson good use was made of a newspaper article to illustrate current inflationary pressures. In all lessons the teachers' approach was systematic and facilitated good note-taking by students. Discussions with students clearly indicated that they find the teaching structured, interesting and demanding. One commented that 'I leave my lessons feeling that I have really learnt something'. However, further gains in learning could be achieved by ensuring that lesson planning and practice incorporates time for end of lesson consolidation and setting the scene for the next lesson. During discussions with students they referred to their involvement in a debate on the Euro and that they had made presentations to the class on environmental issues, such as town/city centre congestion. However, there is room for the extension of teaching techniques and varying the approach to learning. Students would benefit from more pair and small group discussion, access to computer facilities and more varied stimulus materials, such as video clips. They do benefit from the regular purchase of an economic journal and there is further scope for using this and the standard text book in lessons.
188. The department enters a team in the Bank of England /Times Interest Rate Challenge This requires students to take on the role of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee. The team assesses the state of the economy and the outlook for inflation, and then sets the interest rate to meet the Government's inflation target of 2.5 per cent. Having considered a range of information relating to current economic decisions the team prepares and gives a short presentation to the judges, arguing its case for its interest rate. This requires very good economics, co-operation and presentation skills and provides a high level of challenge for those involved. The school team reached the Regional Final in 2001 and 2002; in the latter year it was narrowly beaten into second place.
189. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The strengths of the department lie in the sound strategic thinking and planning, thorough preparation of lessons and regular and detailed marking of students' work. However, the departmental handbook is very basic and does not provide, for example, sufficient guidance on how teaching strategies and resources are integrated into the schemes of work. There is little evidence of systematic, individual target setting and monitoring using the information held on the school database nor of student self-review. However, essays, data response questions and 'mock' examination papers are regularly set and marking is detailed and helpful to the students. They appreciate the prompt return of their marked work. There is the need to review the provision of accommodation, timetable arrangements, and computer resources. No judgements can be made on improvement since the last inspection as the subject was not inspected.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The main focus of the inspection was physical education. Provision is made for AVCE leisure and recreation and travel and tourism at a nearby comprehensive school for a very small minority of students. No inspection was possible of this provision.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- The very good teaching and learning.
- The very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of core physical education for all students.

190. The percentage of students gaining higher grades in AS and A2 examinations was in line with the national average in 2001 and, when judged against attainment on entry to the course, results represent very good achievement.

191. Standards are well above average. Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of cardiovascular processes and can relate this knowledge to performance in their own personal sporting expertise. The higher attaining students have very good understanding and use of technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately and effectively in both written and oral presentations. Most students demonstrated good use of presentation skills including the use of information and communication technology. Students across all capability levels in Year 13 are making very good progress, showing very good knowledge of social facilitation. They are able to identify reasons for external influences on performance and used examples from their own experiences. Students can support their opinions with additional information when responding to more challenging questioning.

192. Teaching in the sixth form is very good overall, and in one lesson it was excellent. The most effective teaching involves high expectations and a good pace to lessons. Teachers ensure that students understand the intended outcomes of the lesson so that they know what they are expected to learn. The teacher has very good knowledge of students' prior learning and plans so that they are able to learn at their own level. Activities and outcomes are varied so that they are appropriate for the levels different students are achieving. Higher attaining students are challenged by the use of extension activities.

193. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic. Most students can express themselves clearly in conversation and discussions. Students take every opportunity to develop their own personal performance through school clubs, inter school matches and competitions and through linking with local clubs.

194. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge of examination courses has a clear vision for the future, which is based on raising standards more quickly. She has a secure knowledge of areas for improvement and is developing appropriate strategies. Assessment procedures are now effective, so that students are aware of what they can do and how to improve. There is appropriate provision of examination courses. However, the timetabled core physical education programme does ensure that options meet the needs of all students, and procedures to ensure secure knowledge of students' attendance are unsatisfactory. There is very good extra-curricular provision. Students take part in most major games. Many students take lead roles in extra-curricular activities and gain selection to school and representative teams and competitions. Standards achieved are very high. There is also a wide range of outdoor activities and travel abroad, which enhances students' social and cultural development.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Psychology was sampled and it is the only subject taught under this heading. Provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment of attainment and progress is unsatisfactory because students are not aware of the levels they are working at in relation to examination grades. This is the first year the course has been run and one of the teachers is not a specialist.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus of the inspection was art, although music and performing arts were sampled. Very small numbers have taken music to A level before 2001 and a comparison of results is not viable. Larger group sizes have been sustained into the current Years 13 and 12, where standards seen are well above the national average, with much outstanding work in the field of composition and performance. Teaching and learning is very good. The subject is very well led and managed with the facilitation of independent learning skills and many opportunities for students to extend their skills and abilities. However, results of practical and theory examinations from the national music colleges, which now count towards university entrance scores, are not collated across the sixth form. The current group of six students in Year 12 taking performing arts is the first cohort to take this course. Standards seen are above average and students are progressing well. Their attitudes are very good. The subject is well led and managed, involving liaison for dance with the town's other sixth form.

Art

The overall provision in art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they are enthusiastic.
- Independent learning skills are very well developed.
- Assessment procedures and individual target setting are used very effectively to help students improve their work.
- Strong emphasis on the development of drawing skills.

Areas to improve

- There are no significant areas.

195. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in the Advanced level examination fell last year in what has otherwise been a sustained period of very good achievement that has consistently and significantly exceeded national averages. This was largely due to earlier changes in course management and delivery resulting from the introduction of the Advanced Supplementary course in Year 12.

196. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average, with students making very good progress. Opportunities for life drawing, in the evening and at weekends, result in the development of very impressive representational drawing skills. This disciplined approach to work also has a very positive impact on the high standards of finished work that students achieve in painting and sculpture. Very well developed independent learning skills lead to research and experimentation that is very diverse, prolific in output and extremely well presented in many cases. Processes are very thoroughly explored and tested. Artistic influences are very wide ranging and strongly influential in the development of highly individualised and large scale work. Students select their own themes for research and development within a very good framework of teacher guidance and support. This results in the emergence of strong personal styles and significant personal development. Teaching is very good. It allows time for reflection and involves students in setting individual targets for improvement. The teacher places great emphasis on student individual accountability and students are informed, articulate and opinionated when discussing their work and personal development.

197. The good humour, intellectual rigour, levels of challenge and interaction skilfully orchestrated by the teacher in art history lessons provide examples of very good teaching. Assessment procedures are well established and very effective in establishing standards and prescribing ways to improve work. Students' attitudes are very positive and enthusiastic. They are very aware of their own progress and personal development over time. They are very appreciative of the teaching and course management style that has contributed to their success. Students have access to a wide range of learning resources, including information and communication technology, to enhance and extend their learning. The dedicated sixth form working area and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities are additional factors that contribute to their success. Art is very well managed by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist with very good subject knowledge. The Head of Art has already made substantial changes to the structure of the course delivery at Advanced level. Predicted grades for current Year 13 students indicate clear improvement at the higher grades and assessment information on current Year 12 students indicates the potential for significant improvement at higher levels of attainment next year.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was for geography, history and classical civilisation. Politics was sampled and standards are above average with good teaching. Students respond very well and the overall provision is good.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on the A-level course are well above the national average.
- Students achieve well; their practical and fieldwork assignments are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.

198. Standards overall are well above national expectations. The high standards in the GCE A-level examinations, noted at the time of the previous inspection, have been improved. Results are well above the national average. In 2002, three quarters of the candidates achieved grades A or B. This proportion has not fallen below half in the last three years, representing an improvement since the previous inspection.

199. Inspection evidence shows standards well above the national expectation, and in line with recent examination results by Year 13. These standards represent very good progress since Year 11. In both Years 12 and 13, students compile comprehensive notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources. In only a small minority of cases is work in students' files poorly organised, lacking the coherence desirable in a good revision source. Teachers are aware of this and are taking steps to correct the situation. Students have a very good grasp of concepts in both human and physical geography. Year 12 students were observed dealing confidently with the causes and effects of population movements between cities and rural areas. Year 13 students have a thorough understanding of the causes of tsunamis (tidal waves associated with earthquakes) and the influence of the Common Agriculture Policy on farming.

200. Students' coursework is of a very high standard. They propose hypotheses and test them using advanced statistical methods to analyse their fieldwork data. They use computers to enhance the presentation of both text and graphs and to assist them in statistical analysis. Even the coursework of the least competent students is of a higher standard than the national average. There is a steady improvement in geographical maturity, both in oral work and in writing between Years 12 and 13. Most students write fluent and well-argued essays. A small minority

have yet to achieve that fluency in writing that would assist them to gain the highest examination grades.

201. Teaching is very good overall and never less than good. This represents an improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Lessons have a clear structure. A range of learning resources is used very effectively. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and an obvious enthusiasm for the subject that produces very positive responses from the students. The large numbers choosing the subject, and then continuing with it into Year 13, illustrate their enthusiasm for it. Students learn very well. They use resources well and enjoy practical and fieldwork assignments and related activities, benefiting greatly from them.
202. The best teaching is characterised by a good tutorial style, inclusive questioning, challenging content and brisk pace. Such qualities were seen in a Year 13 physical geography lesson. The teacher's detailed subject knowledge and expert guidance enabled students to make very good progress on the effect of tidal waves in an earthquake zone in Papua New Guinea. This is just one instance of where learning is advanced by teachers' good use of well-chosen examples. The expert teaching of coursework skills and examination technique has a direct bearing on the high quality of work produced by the students. Extended pieces of writing are marked regularly and students are given clear and accurate judgements on the quality of their work, which help them to improve it. A slight weakness in the teaching is that some lessons were too teacher centred and did not give students sufficient opportunities to learn independently.
203. Work in the subject is led and managed well. The good sequencing of topics and themes, in the newly revised schemes of work and relevance of case studies, contribute significantly to teaching and learning. The recent introduction of student review sheets, enabling students to assess their own progress, is having a beneficial effect. The department holds good stocks of reference materials. It has responded well to the previous inspection report and there have been significant improvements in teaching and examination results. The department is not resting on its laurels and realises that further development of independent learning is needed. Under current leadership the subject will continue to thrive if the developments envisaged in its forward planning are put into effect.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students promote an effective learning culture.

Areas for development

- Procedures for assessment.

204. The inspection covered the AS and A-level courses. Both the take-up and retention rates for these courses are very high. Students enter the sixth-form with a very good background of results from GCSE. Standards attained in GCE A level examinations in 2001 were well above average. This is a good improvement on the standards reported at the previous inspection. Students tend to perform better in history than in their other subjects, making very good progress overall from their GCSE work as a result of very good teaching and their own hard work.
205. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in both Years 12 and 13. The achievement of students in Year 12 is good and that of Year 13 very good, when compared to the predicted standards of attainment drawn from value added analysis. The standard of analytical writing is good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Students are particularly good at using and evaluating different interpretations of history in debate. They are very well read and can interpret and evaluate historical sources very effectively.

206. Students are very committed to their studies and enthuse about their history lessons and individual projects. A high number in Year 13 are seeking to read the subject at university. The relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students are very aware of the high quality of the teaching support they receive, creating a very good working environment in which the challenge is high and expectations of high achievement are very evident.
207. Teaching and learning are very good. Students learn very well because of their high level of commitment to their studies. They make very good use of the opportunities to learn collaboratively. The high calibre questioning in lessons very effectively challenges students to think and develop their ideas. They accept the opportunity to take risks and draw their own conclusions, knowing they will be required to defend them with reference to valid and reliable sources. Students also learn well because they have the opportunity to choose between two courses, Early Modern or Modern History. Students particularly enjoy the challenge of having to research for individual project papers and see this as an extremely good preparation for the type of work that will be required in university.
208. The high quality of teaching ensures very good progress. The teachers use their very good subject knowledge to effectively plan the vibrant learning environment that both engages students and challenges them. A wide range of interesting activities, such as role-playing Charles I's trial or presenting a PowerPoint display, are provided. Both teachers and students have high expectations of quality outcomes. Good use is made of video, Internet and a wide range of source materials. Students are given very good opportunities to extend their personal interest in history through an individual study. The range of these studies, including ones on King Alfred, Martin Luther King and Yasser Arafat, shows how keen their interest is. Extended writing on the English Civil War shows how well the students have been taught higher order skills in the subject.
209. Students are given very good support in improving their study and examination skills. They are very well prepared and confident about taking examinations. Very good support is given to help students with their application to higher education establishments and several apply for Oxbridge entry. The clear guidance on how to improve work is backed up by teachers giving very good individual verbal feed-back on students' work. However, several students in both Years 12 and 13 are unclear about their standard of work at present. The development of new assessment procedures will help them by providing clear targets for improvement.
210. The good leadership and management of the subject are important factors in its popularity and high take-up at AS and A-level. Good teamwork supports this and there is considerable commitment to continuing development. Schemes of work are well planned and meet the needs of the students very well. Work still needs to be undertaken to give students better access to information and communication technology in their work. Overall, progress made since the time of the last inspection is good.

Classical Civilisation

Overall, the provision in classical civilisation is **good**.

Strengths

- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Good teaching.
- Good extra-curricular provision.

Areas for development

- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment.

211. Standards at the end of Year 12 and 13 are above the national average. In 2001, all students passed at A2 level, with the large majority gaining A and B grades well above average. Results in AS were also above average. The number of students studying the course has increased

steadily over the past three years and many continue their studies from AS to A2 level. In addition, a number of students apply to study a classical subject at university.

212. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average. Students are mature in their approach to their work and essays and notes are well researched and well presented. Students are quick to draw references from literature other than that studied in class; for example, in a Year 13 lesson a student was able to draw a comparison between the 'hubris' shown by Turnus in the Aeneid with that of Creon in Antigone. Most are able to use literary terms effectively both in written work and discussion. They have a detailed understanding of Greek architecture and sculpture and most have a very good grasp of the main characteristics of the archaic period. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students compared, with confidence and from memory, the pediments of the temple of Aphaia on Aegina with the pediment of the temple of Artemis on Corfu. Many students ask searching questions of their teachers to advance their understanding and knowledge.
213. Overall, teaching is good. The good subject knowledge and high expectations of teachers have been instrumental in the increase in student numbers in classical civilisation and the enthusiasm of those students for the subject. Teachers use challenging questions, comparisons are made with other modules studied and there are very good working relationships between teachers and their students. In lessons seen, teachers demonstrate very good subject expertise but at times too little account is taken of the needs of individual learners. In some lessons the teacher's exposition is rather long but usually some variety is introduced just in time. The written assessment of students' work is frequent and it is graded according to the examination board mark scheme. However, the use of assessment across the department is inconsistent. When teacher comments are detailed, students make good progress and there is very good oral feedback during lessons which students value.
214. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is led by a committed and experienced practitioner with a clear vision for the subject. The departmental development plan has identified appropriate targets to move the department forward. Results are above the national average and the popularity of classical civilisation has led to an increase in the numbers of students studying it as a new subject in the sixth form. A wide range of enrichment activities has been developed, including attendance at lecture days, visits to classical sites and the organisation of visits to and from the Actors of Dionysus Theatre Company. However, there is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching within the department and departmental meetings to discuss issues relating to teaching and learning are not formalised. No information and communication technology was seen in the teaching of classical civilisation during the inspection, although students use it in their research. Schemes of work have been developed but lack detail of teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students and assessment opportunities. There is limited display of classical material in the teaching classroom due to insufficient display boards.
215. Classical civilisation has been taught for three years and consequently was not inspected during the last inspection. However, it is making a good contribution to the range of curriculum subjects in the sixth form and students are both enjoying their studies and making good progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus of the inspection was for English, French and Latin.

English

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Teachers use questions very well to challenge and deepen students' responses to texts.
- Students make very good progress.
- Results in literature examinations are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students' active participation in lessons to extend opportunities to show and develop what they know and can do.

216. There are some 120 students following AS and A2 courses in English Language and English Literature. In 2001 standards achieved in the A level literature examinations were very high in comparison to the national average. In English Language they were a little below. Most students make very good progress, however, and achieve above expectations.

217. The work seen during the inspection was in line with these standards and above average. Students, when given the opportunity, are confident speakers. They have very good command of technical terminology, both literary and linguistic, and use it to offer perceptive and intelligent interpretations of a wide variety of texts. Students of both genders achieve equally well in this respect. Similar qualities occur in students' writing. It clearly improves in standard over the two years of the A2 course, is always capable and often remarkably assured. Good use is made of information and communication technology for drafting and presentation and of the Internet for research. The very high quality of reading and writing is shown in this example from an essay considering Seamus Heaney's memories of childhood. "The contrast between the 'straining rump' of his old father as Heaney looks out of the window and 'stooping in rhythm' 20 years before suggests not only the physical changes in his father but also a significant shift in their relationship." This level of achievement is not unusual. Students respond to the high expectations of their teachers by producing work of real quality.

218. Teaching is very good overall. At its best it is challenging and supportive in equal measure. For example, in a Year 12 Language lesson, the teacher used students' essays, their self-assessment and his marking to engage them in a thorough analysis of each other's work in relation to the AS grade criteria. It was very good teaching which gave students easy access to the teacher's expert linguistic knowledge and involved them directly and relevantly in the business of assessment. Similarly a Year 13 lesson on *Othello* ensured students' active engagement with the text and with each other through effective reading and through giving space and time for students' own commentaries on particular scenes and sequences. The teacher's sharp and sympathetic questioning kept students on their toes and made the session useful and intellectually stimulating for all concerned. The satisfactory lesson was also characterised by the teacher's strong subject knowledge, but, because students spent the bulk of the time passively listening, their involvement and independence was not encouraged or capitalised on. As with teaching in the lower school, the department would benefit from formal arrangements to share good practice to make the most successful practice general.

219. An important feature of the very good teaching is the marking of students' written work. It is consistent in its detail and in clearly identifying points for development and improvement. For example, the various drafts of a successful pamphlet on the gap year showed a Language student responding progressively to his teacher's close marking to produce a final submission of high quality. Most marking has this quality of interested and well-informed dialogue, from which students greatly benefit and they appreciate teachers' attention in lessons and in individual tutorials. They rightly feel very well supported academically and pastorally.

220. The leadership and management of the recently appointed Head of English are good, providing a very good model of well-planned, student-centred practice in her own teaching. The accommodation is cramped, but best use is made of it through display and a seminar arrangement for the desks. There has been remarkable improvement in Literature results over the past three years. Attainment in Language has remained steady, though with growing numbers of candidates. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the overall provision and in standards.

French

Provision for French is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers speak exclusively in French and teaching is very good overall.
- Assessment procedures are improving.

Areas for development

- Opportunities for using computers to enhance language learning.
- Enhancing the extra-curricular provision.

221. The results obtained by students entered for A2 in recent years have varied considerably from year to year. In 2001 they were well above average and candidates achieved better results in this subject than they did in the average for all their other subjects, with boys doing particularly well. However, no trends can be identified, as both these indicators were negative in 2000, when results were well below the national average, and one of the best sets of results occurred in 1999 when girls excelled. The numbers entered for French A level in recent years have, with only one exception, been in double figures.

222. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Their listening skills are highly developed and they have no difficulty understanding their teachers when they sustain the use of French throughout the lesson. Students can read a variety of source material fluently, including websites, newspaper articles and text books, and develop useful study habits, for example, by using a highlighter for significant passages. They can read and speak about issues relating to French-speaking countries and examples seen included immigration and economics. All students keep copious notes on French grammar and some are able to write about these topics with a high degree of accuracy.

223. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with some good and some excellent. Teachers conduct all lessons entirely in French, students practise the full range of skills and find the topics chosen important and relevant to their interests and aspirations. In the best lessons, teachers deploy a range of different learning activities, giving students the chance to develop their own learning styles. The most effective activities are those which give students the opportunity to converse with each other on abstract themes and which teach them the means of doing so. In one lesson, students studied a list of phrases to add variety to their conversation and then used them in a relevant context. In another, they were asked to sit opposite one another in a horseshoe shape and ask and answer questions related to the theme of the lesson. They worked very hard on this and spoke a large amount of French in a short space of time. Lessons are less effective when the teacher provides limited opportunities for pair and group work, allowing little opportunity for students to become independent. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and is very good when teachers provide opportunities for them to improve their skill at working with others. Students have respect for their teachers who respond with warmth and encouragement, both in lessons and when marking their work. Students are good at taking the initiative and develop good study skills.

224. Curricular provision is satisfactory. Teachers help students to organise their work and become independent in their learning. They draw material from a variety of sources, but, whilst these sometimes include documentation printed from the Internet, students make little use of information and communication technology during the course. The library contains a good

selection of literary and reference books, aimed at a variety of levels. Work experience placements have been arranged this year for the first time and students see this as a very positive development. Otherwise, provision for extra-curricular activity is limited and there are few opportunities for students to make visits and excursions and to organise activities within the school to promote languages and the learning of languages. Students particularly appreciate lessons where active and practical learning styles are encouraged and feel that some lessons are too theoretical.

225. The leadership and management are good, with several examples of very good recent developments. The department has, for example, introduced new and effective systems for monitoring students' work and progress. There is now a clear overall direction for the work of the department and the team of teachers is starting to develop a vision for the development of language teaching. The head of department has introduced systems to enable teachers to form a view of what constitutes good practice and to monitor each other's work so that teaching can be improved. These systems include regular departmental meetings and lesson observation. The departmental handbook is very well written and organised. It includes policies and procedures covering all important areas. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Latin

Overall, the provision in Latin is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes.

Areas for development

- Formal monitoring of teaching and use of departmental meetings.
- The use of assessment.

226. Group numbers in Latin are insufficient to make a judgement on standards in comparison with national statistics. However, in 2001, all students passed Latin at A2 level, with most gaining A and B grades. At AS level, the one student gained a grade A.

227. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average. In Year 12, students are beginning to translate more complex sentences and they are becoming skilled at working out the subtleties of the Latin language. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students worked well in pairs and discussed the uses of *qui* with the subjunctive and the indicative. However, some students do make some basic grammatical errors but are encouraged and supported by their teacher to work out the correct translation for themselves. In addition, they are making good progress with the study of Latin literature and their responses to the context questions, set on Virgil's Aeneid 6, are both perceptive and detailed. Their written work is well presented and their files well organised. In Year 13, students are able to translate more advanced unseen passages and their literary skills are also developing well. For example, in one Year 13 lesson students were able to scan an unseen section of Ovid with ease and feed back to their teacher the principles of scansion.

228. Overall, teaching is very good. Lessons seen were at least good and one in two was very good. In the very good lesson, a variety of activities encouraged student participation and developed their enthusiasm for the study of Latin. In this lesson, students used the CD-Rom of the Oxford Latin Dictionary to prepare an unseen translation; they worked well as a group, discussed the various alternatives in an informed manner and clearly enjoyed the task. Teachers demonstrate expertise in Latin at this level and they provide good support for their students. At the start of Year 12, students are informed of the expectations of them from the examination board and the department through a summary sheet. Teachers have set high expectations, encourage students to think for themselves and use challenging questions. Assessment is frequent and language work is accurately corrected but teachers do not give detailed written guidance to

students on how to improve the next piece of work. Students in Year 12 have very positive attitudes to Latin and most are intending to continue to A2 level.

229. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is led by a committed and experienced practitioner with a clear vision for the subject. The departmental development plan has identified appropriate targets to move the department forward. A wide range of enrichment activities has been developed which enhance the curriculum and teaching and learning opportunities. Much of this work is done in association with classical civilisation. The formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is an area for development. Schemes of work have been developed but lack detail of teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students and assessment opportunities.
230. Latin was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.