

INSPECTION REPORT

MASCALLS SCHOOL

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118911

Headteacher: Mrs Vanessa Everett

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sylvia Richardson
1038

Dates of inspection: 7th to 11th October, 2002

Inspection number: 249792

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Maidstone Road Paddock Wood Tonbridge Kent
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Simpson
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1068	Ms Jan Allcorn	Team inspector	Mathematics Numeracy	
19499	Mrs Barbara Baughan	Team inspector	English Literacy Drama	
1249	Mr Joe Edge	Team inspector	Science Physics	
18032	Mrs I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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19983	Mr Haydn Webb	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
19530	Ms Jennifer Bray	Team Inspector	Geography	7 Co-ordination of the sixth form inspection
13122	Mrs Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History	
31687	Ms Helen Singh	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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20585	Mr James Fuller	Team inspector	Physical education	
15941	Mr Colin Phillips	Team inspector	Religious education Inclusion	
2480	Mrs Christine Gilder	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
2521	Mrs Sandra Killman	Team inspector	Business studies and economics	

1526	Mr David Meaden	Team inspector	Media Studies	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mascalls is a larger than average 11 to 18 comprehensive school operating within the Kent selective system. It serves 1116 pupils and students between the ages of 11 and 18, of whom 153 are in the sixth form. The school is located in a relatively prosperous area but the pupils do not all reflect the prosperity of the surrounding villages and the town of Paddock Wood in which they live. Between 1997 and 1999, the school's roll dipped. It is now rising again. Being in a local education authority where selection by ability occurs at the age of 11, attainment overall has generally been below average on entry for the last five years, with limited numbers of the highest attaining 11 year old pupils. It is average in the current Year 7. The number of pupils who arrive with attainment well below average or with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. There are more boys than girls in the school in all years except Year 7 and Year 13. There are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds but slightly more than in most schools with English as an additional language, most of whom are unaccompanied asylum-seekers, mainly from Afghanistan. There is an above average number of pupils from Traveller families, mostly permanently resident locally. Teacher turnover was high in 2000 and 2001, but has largely stabilised in 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school with many good features. The school recently received a DfES School Achievement Award in recognition of improvements in its examination and test results. Results are now above average in comparison with those in all schools nationally. This is as a direct result of very effective management action focused on school improvement. Much teaching is good and some is very good, with examples of real excellence. The school's budget is well spent to promote pupils' learning and action taken to reduce a deficit developed in the past is proving effective.

What the school does well

- Pupils make much better than expected progress as they go through the school and do well in GCSE examinations.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, providing it with very good leadership; this is reflected in the enthusiasm and commitment of her immediate colleagues.
- There is excellent teaching by leading staff, and good teaching by many.
- The school evaluates its own performance well, knows its strengths and weaknesses and acts to improve itself.
- It makes pupils welcome and strives to meet all their individual learning needs.
- There is good provision in the sixth form overall.

What could be improved

- Inconsistency in teaching results in some pockets of unsatisfactory or poor work in history, ICT, mathematics, music, languages, physical education and science.
- Careers guidance in 2001 did not adequately support course choices for post 16 study.

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. At that time, areas for improvement included weaknesses in a significant minority of teaching, curriculum provision and assessment, management, the provision for religious education and collective worship. Improvement has been satisfactory overall. Teaching is better overall although pockets of weak teaching remain, in part the result of difficulties in teacher recruitment

in recent years. The curriculum, pupil organisation and timetable are now significantly more efficient and broad ranging, and make good use of resources. The deterioration in standards and the fall in pupil numbers which occurred between the last inspection and 1999 have now been rectified. Religious education is available for all, standards in RE are high and RE option courses are popular. Collective worship occurs on a regular, though not on a daily basis. Management is now good overall, and the school is clear about where it is going and how to reach its goals. Line management is generally very effective and the school improvement plan is clear. Pupils' work is generally well and helpfully marked and assessment and other data are well used.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school is compared with all schools nationally and with 170 non-selective schools in selective areas around the country. These have intakes that are limited by local arrangements for transfer at the age of 11. Pupils in Years 8 to 11 arrived with attainment that is below the national average. In the current Year 7 there is an average intake. Pupils achieve standards above the national average and well above those in similar schools by the time they are 16, making good progress overall. There has been satisfactory improvement in test results achieved by pupils at the age of 14, although progress in Years 7 to 9 is significantly less pronounced than in Years 10 and 11, when the rate of improvement accelerates. Standards have risen in line with the national rate of improvement in Years 7 to 9, and faster than the national trend of improvement in Years 10 and 11. Performance in GCSE is a strength of the school. Some of the variability in standards in subjects from year to year results from high staffing turnover, now resolved. In the sixth form, standards in most subjects are now again in line with national average figures after a dip in 1997 to 1999. In work seen, standards in the sixth form were satisfactory. Students acquire the skills they need in numeracy but writing skills are in some cases inadequately developed. In work seen in Years 7 to 11, standards were good in geography, religious education and physical education. They were satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, history, design and technology, art and languages. In information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school, including the sixth form, standards are low in comparison with expected levels. Some pupils and students are still developing basic skills in all year groups because of the lack of continuity in their experience, and so have not developed overview or judgement in the use of ICT. A few individuals are exceptions, because of their experience at home. Pupils who speak little or no English on arrival at the school or who have special educational needs make very good progress because of the amount of individual support they usually receive.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are good. Most pupils show interest and enthusiasm, enjoy their work and strive to make good progress. Sixth form students grasp opportunities to take responsibility, supporting younger pupils well.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall and often good or very good. A small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, where teaching is weak, adversely affects progress.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils get on well together and with their teachers. They are courteous and friendly to visitors and thoughtful about the interests of others.
Attendance	Good in the main school but unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

In most cases, pupils respond well in lessons. They concentrate on their work, respect the feelings and values of others and develop their understanding of other faiths and cultures in multi-cultural Britain. When given the opportunity to take responsibility they behave with maturity. There are too few opportunities for them to show initiative. Attendance in the main school has improved significantly since the last inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching for pupils between 11 and 16 is satisfactory overall. The best teaching provides all staff, new and less experienced or well established, with fine models for continuing the general improvement in teaching towards which the school is moving. In these lessons, teachers convey a love of learning which is reflected in pupils' interest and care with their work, and their very good progress. Given the very high turnover of staff in recent years, this shows the priority given to induction, training and reviewing teachers' work. However, there are pockets of weaker and occasionally poor teaching, generally resulting in some behaviour problems and a slower pace of learning. The teaching of the skills of reading and writing, speaking and listening in English is good, and in other subjects is generally satisfactory. However, accurate writing and developing pupils' and students' ICT skills are not sufficiently a focus beyond the end of Year 9 in subject teachers' planning.

Sixth form teaching is good with a high proportion which is very good or excellent. Teachers have clear expectations and good subject knowledge. They plan well and use an appropriate range of resources and teaching methods to stimulate interest. Assessment is rigorous and homework is well integrated. As a result, students sustain concentration, behave well and acquire good specialist knowledge. They work with increasing independence and are aware of the progress they are making.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; a broad, balanced programme of studies is offered, including work-related courses, matching student needs and aspirations.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; the learning support department supports pupils with special educational needs very well. Support by subject teachers is less consistent.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good: specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language is very effective. Pupils make very good progress and quickly are able to make headway with the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Good: opportunities for moral, social and cultural development are good and spiritual development is satisfactory. There has been significant

development	improvement in provision for collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: there is a secure, welcoming environment in which pupils can learn and develop.

Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are very well supported in the learning support department but support in class is less good because subject teachers' use of individual education plans is not sufficiently focused and they do not sufficiently contribute to developing subject based targets. The school works hard to ensure that parents are well informed and can participate fully in supporting their children's education. The arrangements for care, protection and welfare of pupils in the main school are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting better attendance are effective, resulting in improvement overall. Assessment methods and the recording of pupils' progress and personal development assist well in setting targets and raising standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except for the continuation of religious education into the sixth form for all and language learning for all in Years 10 and 11.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership overall is good. The headteacher provides very good strategic direction to the school. Together, she and her senior leadership team work in a clear line management system which is improving the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and provide effective support to the headteacher and school. They have been supportive of the bid for specialist status and active in planning for future site development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses. It monitors teaching and learning rigorously in response to its self-improvement agenda and perceived weaknesses in teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used with effective development of new technologies. Financial planning is prudent and targeted towards reducing the overall deficit quickly.

The head and governors have concentrated on raising standards of attainment and ensuring that pupils and students achieve as well as they can. This intense focus is bearing fruit and standards are rising steadily, with attainment at 16 which exceeds that in most similar schools. The school is now coming out of a period of transition, with a high proportion of new or relatively new staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of what children can achieve. Pupils make good progress whilst at the school Their children like school They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closer working with them The amount of homework set Information about pupils' progress

The inspectors agree with parents about the things that please them. They believe that links with parents are satisfactory. There is, however, scope for the school to review its procedures for linking with parents by letter. Parents expressed concern in equal measure that there was too much and too little homework; inspectors believe that homework makes a good contribution to pupils' learning at Mascalls and the amount is appropriate. The system of reporting pupils' progress to parents is efficient and regular. The range and quality of other information to parents is good.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

MASCALLS SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school has an open access policy to the sixth form but loses a number of its high attaining students to the local grammar schools. A few students join from other schools at the beginning of Year 12. Approximately four fifths of sixth form students are enrolled on the programme of 18 AS and A2 courses which are offered each year. The remainder follow either intermediate or advanced vocational courses, or a combination of these with AS or A2 levels. The number of students in the sixth form declined in the late 1990s but now stands at 153. There are now approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. About half of all Year 13 leavers continue into higher or further education, while one third enter the employment market.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall provision is good and it is cost-effective. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The pattern of attainment in the sixth form has been variable since the last inspection within subjects and over time. Progress is satisfactory. The new head of sixth form has a very clear vision and realistic plans for improving and monitoring standards. Rigorous systems for the monitoring of students' attendance, academic progress and behaviour are now in place. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have clear expectations of what students must achieve and good subject knowledge. The sixth form meets the needs of students well.

Strengths

- Open access to a broad programme of studies
- The commitment and leadership of the new head of sixth form and her vision for raising standards
- Good teaching and learning in most subject areas
- The new system for monitoring attendance, academic progress and behaviour
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities and involvement in working for charity.

What could be improved

- The strategies to continue to raise attainment for all sixth form students require further implementation
- Sixth form attendance
- The teaching and incorporation of Key Skills for all students, especially the skill of writing well
- The enrichment and general studies programmes, which are fragmented.

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.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and Design	Good ; students are achieving well as a result of consistently good teaching and rigorous assessment which aids progress. Staff have very good subject knowledge.
Business and Economics	Good ; teachers' expertise, experience and thorough subject assessments enable students to make good progress in relation to their GCSE results. There is insufficient use of ICT, and some unaddressed weaknesses in the lower attaining students' literacy skills, especially their writing.
Design and Technology	Good ; well qualified staff work together as a team to provide a stimulating and challenging environment for learning. Standards are in line with national averages and all students make good progress.
English	Very good ; provisional results in 2002 were above the national average. The courses in both language and literature are stimulating, attracting large numbers of students. Teaching is very good and students make good progress.
Geography	Good ; strong leadership, teamwork and good teaching have led to continued and significant improvement in attainment. The standard of coursework is very high.
Mathematics	Good ; results at A level over the last three years have ranged from well above average in 2000 to below the national average (provisional) in 2002. Most students make good progress from GCSE, given their ability on entry to the course. Teachers have good subject knowledge
Media Studies	Good ; the students' work seen indicates above average attainment for this early stage of the course.
Physical Education	Good ; in both dance and PE, students are achieving well as a result of outstanding teaching and their own positive approach to learning.
Physics	Satisfactory ; standards in 2001 were low but these are now improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but with weaknesses. Staff changes have hampered effective implementation of the new AS and A2 provision.

The following subjects were also sampled:

biology, chemistry, engineering, enrichment and general studies, French, German, history, information and communication technology, leisure and tourism, performing arts, psychology, religious studies, supervised study. Work seen and lessons observed confirm the expected levels and sound progress made by students, and the quality of teaching was generally good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Assessment of students' progress is good and well used to guide curriculum planning. Educational and personal guidance is generally satisfactory. A few students have been allowed to follow inappropriate courses in relation to their previous attainment.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The new head of the sixth form is providing effective leadership. She has a clear vision for improvement which is reflected in detailed action plans for the short and medium term raising of standards.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are accessible for help • Students are well taught and challenged • Courses suit their talents and aspirations • They enjoy the sixth form and recommend it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor advice on future options • Lack of response to the views of students • Students are not sufficiently treated as responsible young adults • They are not well enough informed about their progress

The inspectors concur with the positive views of the students. They believe that some of their negative views reflect a transitional situation this year. The new head of sixth form has introduced both close monitoring of attendance and progress and an appropriate revised dress code.

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. Pupils generally enter Mascalls School with attainment that is below average, except in the present Year 7 where attainment is average. Pupils' attainment is assessed on the basis of their results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 6, and to tests, nationally standardised, which the school undertakes when pupils arrive. These tests show that relatively few of the highest attaining pupils come to Mascalls, although some do. The school is deemed by Kent Local Education Authority as 'all-ability' because of the wide range of learners who choose to come here. This is an accurate description of the intake, although it does not make clear the small proportion of the highest attaining pupils. There are approximately 170 similar schools nationally, which are non-selective schools in a selective area. This is the group with which Mascalls is compared because of similarities in intake.
2. The school received a national School Achievement Award for achievement in 2000-2001 for improved standards. Performance targets for the school in GCSE, which were set in conjunction with Kent local education authority, are rigorous, especially in the light of pupils' previous learning and known standards of work. In 2001, the target for all GCSE results in the school was reached and in 2002, exceeded. Overall GCSE results are above the national average. In comparison with the results in similar schools, they are well above average. This indicates that the school has significantly improved upon pupils' attainment on entry.
3. At the time of the last inspection, standards were approximately the same as they are now, but this picture masks the real trends of performance in the school. An important factor in assessing progress since 1997 relates to events in the two years following the inspection, when both standards and the numbers on roll fell precipitately and did not start to rise again until 1999 – 2000 when the present headteacher arrived. Since that time, considerable efforts have been made to ensure that all pupils achieve some examination success – with the result that the proportion of pupils being tested or entered for national examinations has increased. In many subjects there is an encouraging three-year trend of improvement with no signs of the ceiling having been reached. In particular, there were significant improvements across the board at the end of Year 9 in 2002 in national tests. English, mathematics and science improved to a position where results are above the national average (provisional).
4. In 2001, by the age of 14, when compared with schools with results in similar intakes, pupils' results were still below or just below average in English and science and average in mathematics. English results were average in 2002, showing significant improvement; results in science also improved. Few pupils reach the higher levels in the national tests, with only mathematics having a significant number reaching level 6. Nonetheless, this represents satisfactory progress from the time of entry at age 11. The rate of progress accelerates during Years 10 and 11 in these core subjects.
5. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 11 and take their GCSE examinations, results are well above average when compared with those in similar schools. When compared with results in all schools, including all those that are selective and all comprehensives, the school's results are above average. This means that, overall, pupils have made much better than expected progress from below average at the age of 11 to above average at the age of 16.
6. Attainment is above average in English, and satisfactory in mathematics overall. Standards in science have improved recently, especially between 2001 and 2002. There is, however, inevitably some variation from subject to subject. For example, attainment ranges from unsatisfactory in music, to good in geography where the high proportion of A*, A and B grades reflects the very good coursework produced. Attainment in religious education is high with a very high number of pupils (110) taking their GCSE examination in 2001. Almost three-quarters attained the higher

grades of A* to C, well above average. In 2002, all 184 pupils in the year group took the examination and results were in line with the national average. In design and technology, standards have improved over the last three years. By the end of Year 9 they are in line with national expectations. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results have been below the national average as a result of the staffing changes the school has experienced, but current work is improving. In history, results are broadly in line with national averages at the end of Years 9 and 11. In modern languages, by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, attainment is above the national average with clear evidence in work seen of continuing high standards.

7. Progress is good throughout the school in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. In other subjects, the task of raising standards and expectations of what pupils can achieve is accelerating, as newly appointed staff become familiar with the school's expectations. Design and technology is a good example of where younger pupils are sometimes producing better work than older classes, because they have had more consistent teaching. In history, modern foreign languages and science, work seen indicates that in Years 7 to 9 not all pupils' needs have been met, as a result of insufficient individual support. Some pupils with special educational needs have particularly felt the effects of not having the opportunity for more individual attention, although overall, their progress is good. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is very good. Staff have taken great care to identify their learning needs and meet them quickly, with the result that most can make good headway with their National Curriculum subjects within a few months.
8. Literacy levels are satisfactory throughout the school. Speaking and listening skills are good in English, religious education and geography. In most subjects pupils have enough competence in reading to be able to cope with the text books used. Little use is made of the school library for teaching apart from the introductory unit given in the Year 7 English course, but most pupils throughout the school use the Internet for independent research. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are satisfactory in most subjects and there are good opportunities in religious education, as well as in English, for the writing of more extended pieces. The National Literacy Strategy is in place in English and is beginning to take effect in most subjects, at least in the awareness and use of technical and specialist vocabulary.
9. Pupils have sound numeracy skills. These skills are better developed amongst pupils in Years 7 and 8 than among older pupils. The work of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools has led to the good recall of basic number facts and a wide range of mental calculation strategies. In geography, pupils' ability to handle graphs and numerical data is good. In art, Year 9 pupils use ratio and proportion well in portrait work and Year 7 pupils show good skills in estimating size and weight in work with clay. This reflects the commitment these departments have made to incorporating the use of numeracy skills into their schemes of work. Pupils' numeracy skills are adequate for work in science. In design and technology only the highest attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 handle numbers confidently in their work and the use of estimation and approximation skills is weak.
10. In relation to their prior attainment and learning difficulties, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The lowest attaining pupils gain in confidence as learners, developing their basic skills sufficiently well in most cases to have access to the learning opportunities the school offers. Those pupils who arrive at the school with little or no English, predominantly unaccompanied asylum seekers from Afghanistan, make very rapid progress with their English and then in their subjects. The standards in their work rise quickly as they gain in fluency and confidence in speaking and writing.

Sixth form

11. There has been a general improvement in standards in the sixth form over the last two years. After the last inspection, results and recruitment dipped. They are now rising steadily again and the school has moved back to its present position of sixth form results in line with the national average. The major reasons for students not achieving the highest grades in a number of subjects

and for not accelerating improvement further are twofold – staffing change (a national problem) and relatively weak application of writing skills. High turnover has particularly affected certain departments such as science and design and technology and parents have expressed strong concern on the subject. In other subjects, such as music, students have a poor foundation for advanced study resulting from staffing problems for the preceding four years. In art, for example, results in 2002 deteriorated after having been consistently well above average for many years.

12. Results are variable from year to year in English at both AS and A2, but, in lessons and work seen, there were high standards in written and oral communication. In mathematics, performance has ranged from well above average in 2002, to a provisional assessment of well below average in 2002. Many pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, but some are not well suited to the courses they take, and this has an impact on results in the sixth form. Science results have been poor, but have improved, although they are still below the national average for A2 and AS
13. In art, standards have improved at AS over the last three years but fallen in 2002. Some work seen in the sixth form, however, gave significant evidence of strong drawing skills and good use of tone and texture. In work seen in design and technology, students are in line with expectations for this stage of their courses and results have been in line with national averages. However, as a result of staffing difficulties, there have been major fluctuations from year to year. Results in physical education in the sixth form are in line with national averages but there have been few A and B grades. Work in media studies shows above average attainment for this stage of the course, but there are no results to compare as this is a new course.
14. In work seen in the sixth form, for example in design and technology, there is an evident lack of confidence which holds students back from using more creative ideas and taking risks. This comes in part from a lack of a solid foundation in knowledge, skills and understanding which is now being addressed. It also comes from insufficient early identification of the needs of students with particular gifts or talents. In languages, however, fluency and accuracy increase as students become more confident in their work. They respond well to encouragement and individual attention.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are all good and have been maintained since the time of the last inspection. Attendance in Years 7 to 11 is good. The overall attendance rate is above the national average and unauthorised absence is below the national average. Registration is undertaken morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements.
16. Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school. Discussions with pupils in all year groups indicate they have positive attitudes to learning. They are able to identify favourite subjects and a large majority of pupils participate in a wide range of extra curricular activities provided by the school. The majority of pupils is interested in what they are doing and take an active part in their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain concentration for appropriate periods of time and make a positive contribution to classroom discussion. For example, in a Year 9 design and technology lesson, pupils were engrossed in preparing scale drawings of mobile phones they were designing. They responded enthusiastically to the task, worked well and maintained their concentration throughout the lesson. They enjoyed sharing ideas and supporting each other and therefore made good progress. Most pupils take a pride in their work; they are willing and able to talk about their work and explain their ideas to inspectors. Pupils with special educational needs generally show good attitudes to work and behave well in lessons and around the school.
17. Overall the standard of behaviour is satisfactory. In almost all lessons, behaviour is at least satisfactory, ranging from satisfactory to excellent, with almost three quarters at least good. For example, in a Year 11 games lesson, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the lesson. Pupils entered into the lesson with enthusiasm, but were prepared to listen carefully to their teacher's instructions and to each others' ideas, which had a positive impact on their

learning. Most pupils are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. They like the school's merit system and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour.

18. Nevertheless, in a significant minority of lessons, behaviour is unsatisfactory, and on occasions disrupts the learning of others. Often this is linked to the quality of teaching and teachers' inconsistent application of the school's behaviour management strategies. Outside lessons, pupils play well together, before and after school, at lunchtimes and breaks when they chat and socialise without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Generally, pupils treat school equipment with care and respect. Bullying is an occasional problem but the school has in place an anti-bullying policy that makes clear it will not tolerate bullying, and both parents and pupils have indicated that these procedures are effective. The number of permanent exclusions has fallen significantly, whilst fixed term exclusions have risen, mainly due to the introduction and application of a rigorous new behaviour management policy. However, the rates of exclusion generally match the national average for a school of this type and size.
19. Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. So too are relationships between pupils, who co-operate well together in pairs and groups and are willing to listen and consider the views of others. These relationships have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are developing their understanding of other people's cultures and beliefs, and are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, mainly through their studies in religious education and in personal, social and health education (PSHE). For example, in a Year 9 PSHE lesson when considering people's attitudes to disabled people, pupils made constructive and quite mature contributions to classroom discussion, accurately identifying the negative ways that disabled people are often portrayed in the media. They were willing and able to identify and reflect on their own attitudes to disabled people. Pupils in all year groups show a willingness to take additional responsibilities, undertaking a range of duties as classroom monitors, and all classes elect form captains and vice captains whose duties include presenting their peers' views at the school council meetings. Older pupils assist younger pupils to settle into the school and many are involved in raising funds for charity. However, pupils have too few opportunities to use their initiative to develop their own analytical skills through the use of independent research or alternative materials and methods.
20. Pupils with special educational needs are highly motivated to learn. They concentrate and persevere, respond to coaxing and challenge and the majority completes their tasks. Attitudes to learning are very good and pupils show pride in their work and progress. They value the support they receive from the learning support department very highly – none regarded withdrawal lessons as a stigma. This is especially true of asylum seekers, whose enjoyment of their support sessions and pleasure in their progress and understanding is evident. One pupil, after one year in England at Mascalls, said: ' Everyone has been very good to me. They helped me with my English and now I am getting on very well in my lessons. I could not speak it at all when I came. I have made many friends and want to do well in my subjects.' Pupils support each other very well in small group sessions.

Sixth form

21. Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good. Year 12 students have settled well into sixth form routines and show a good level of interest and commitment in their studies. They value the support of their teachers who they say are readily available to give guidance and support. They are developing well their ability to work independently, whilst demonstrating the ability to work co-operatively together in pairs and small groups. Students consider that the courses available to them meet their needs; however, many are dissatisfied with how the school provides careers advice or treats them as young adults and listens to their views. Inspectors believe that some of the students' negative views reflect a transitional situation this year. As a result of discussions with students, inspectors consider the opportunities available in 2002 for individual careers advice, prior to selecting courses for further education, were unsatisfactory.

22. Students' behaviour in the sixth form is good. Behaviour in lessons was never less than satisfactory and often good or very good. Relationships between students and adults in the school are good and so too are relationships between students. They use their initiative and take responsibility for organising charitable fund raising activities and assist at school open evenings. Students operate a "Buddy System" for pupils in Year 7; they are available to give advice and guidance during the afternoon tutorial session and they take these duties seriously.
23. Attendance in the sixth form in the last academic year was unsatisfactory. Overall attendance was well below 90% and unauthorised absence was excessive, all of which have a negative impact on students' learning. The new head of sixth form has introduced new procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance, and in the first few weeks of the academic year there has been significant improvement in attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. This is a significant achievement, in that it implies that the effects of the high turnover of teachers which occurred principally in 1999 to 2001 have been well handled, and that management's rigorous approach to a review of teaching and learning has paid off. Improving teaching has been a focus of management action for the last two years. Guidance, for example, has been given on how to improve the performance of boys through adaptations to teaching. This guidance is simple and straightforward and draws well on national experience and has been effective in improving teaching, for example in the areas of speaking, behaviour management and the setting of useful homework.
25. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is lower than it was at the time of the last inspection, although still significant. Parents and students in the sixth form take the view that teaching is generally good, and that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The inspection confirms that this view is correct in the most part; there are, however, still pockets of unsatisfactory teaching in several subjects. A minority of teaching is highly creative, with real flair and panache, employing innovative strategies - for example, some of the work in physical education and dance. The very best teaching is inspirational.
26. There is considerable contrast between the best teaching, which is quite excellent, and the weakest. There are some very fine examples of excellence in teaching. In English, history, Spanish, physical education, religious education and biology, leading teachers provide models of excellence from which pupils benefit greatly. Many of the new teachers taught well during the inspection, despite their short acquaintance with their classes. In all, almost a quarter of the teaching was very good or excellent and almost two thirds was at least good. One lesson in ten was unsatisfactory. Teaching is consistently at least satisfactory in religious education, art, English, geography and learning support.
27. There were examples of very good teaching, sometimes reaching excellence, in virtually every subject of the school curriculum. Very good subject knowledge enabled a teacher to enliven a Year 11 physical education topic and make it relevant to pupils on both a personal and a community level. High expectations of effort, behaviour and attainment provided the background to the lesson and ensured that all pupils participated well and made very good progress. Year 10 religious education pupils, in a lesson on relationships, experienced a stimulating and challenging environment which inspired learning and resulted in them dealing with issues of contemporary living thoughtfully and sensitively and demonstrated a commitment of a high order to their own learning. A well-structured English lesson for a Year 7 class, researching aspects of space and helped by the use of ICT, led to pupils becoming more independent in their learning and working productively in groups. The effective use of planning between teachers of mathematics and ICT resulted in pupils of lower attainment in Year 10 reaching much higher levels of understanding of spreadsheets than is often the case.
28. The key characteristics of these excellent or very good lessons were:

- a good pace which ensured that pupils retained interest and effort throughout the lesson and showed the desire to continue learning;
 - languages lessons using the foreign language as the teaching medium all the time;
 - very good individual attention from the teacher, as in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where a small group of lower attaining pupils were catching up on mathematical skills such as plotting a graph;
 - clear goals for learning which pupils understood from the outset;
 - a variety of teaching methods, well-judged to provide pupils with opportunities to learn in ways which met their learning needs well. Role plays were used very well, for example, in geography;
 - well-chosen tasks which made clear the knowledge, skills and understandings which were the underpinning of the lesson;
 - good rapport with pupils, as in a Year 10 German lesson, enabling sharp focus on GCSE requirements for higher level examination success;
 - very good use of questioning, especially with lower attaining pupils to build their confidence, for example in science;
 - good subject knowledge, for example in learning support where there is very good knowledge of the disabilities which pupils present and strategies to deal with them;
 - good behaviour management;
 - evident enjoyment of the subject by the teacher, which enlightens, motivates and results in excellent learning, as in a Year 9 English lesson on 'horror';
 - well designed and well integrated homework tasks.
29. In contrast to solid examples of good teaching such as these, there were pockets of much weaker teaching when pupils found it hard to maintain their interest and often lost concentration and became poorly behaved. There were such examples in history, ICT, mathematics, French, music, physical education, science and PSHE. Some of these unsatisfactory lessons were taught by staff who were new to the school, but this was not at all a consistent picture. Insufficient attention to the match of the teaching methods to the needs of individual pupils was the main reason for unsatisfactory teaching. This resulted in pupils lacking the motivation to do well. In some classes, the lack of praise for effort caused pupils to feel dissatisfied with the subject. With some lessons in French, where pupils had minimal exposure to the language as the teaching vehicle, they consequently were unable to develop a sense of the sound of French. Occasionally, teachers' own knowledge of what pupils might have learnt in their primary schools meant that work was too repetitive and unchallenging, as in a few music lessons.
30. Information and communications technology (ICT) is not yet an integral part of all teachers' planning for improving learning. Some departments make good use of ICT in planning their lessons, for example, history, geography and English. The use of ICT is now developing well in mathematics.
31. Ironically, some of the best and some of the least satisfactory teaching occurred within the same departments. There was both excellent and unsatisfactory teaching in physical education and in science. In French, for example, unsatisfactory use of the language as the teaching medium contrasted with the excellent use of Spanish as the teaching medium in Year 7, where pupils after only one month were well ahead of national expectations.
32. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, a common feature was that pupils responded with poorer behaviour. However, on occasions, a small group of pupils responded badly to very good and well-thought out teaching, with the result that the relaxed learning atmosphere, evident with the same teachers and other groups, deteriorated rapidly with these classes. In some lessons the pace was insufficient to motivate pupils and in a very few, there was a lack of understanding by the teacher of how to assess pupils' National Curriculum progress.
33. A well-motivated and effective team of learning support teachers and assistants provides an effective blend of skills and knowledge which supports pupils in receipt of school action and action plus very well. In Individual lessons and in the provision of support, language and social development for asylum seekers, it is excellent. Teaching is consistently good or better in all settings, with some excellent features in the one to one support, where specialist knowledge

clearly informs the effective choice of teaching methods. In an excellent example of individual tuition and support, a recently arrived asylum-seeking pupil was being reviewed. The learning support teacher showed outstanding skill and flexibility in response to signs of understanding, rapidly built rapport with the pupil and used a battery of methods to probe and extend the pupil's understanding. The teaching of English and mathematics by members of the learning support department is the improving standards and attitudes of pupils in the small lower sets recently created. Pupils clearly value the support they receive, benefit in their learning and development, achieve well in relation to their difficulties and make good progress in relation to their abilities on entry, particularly in Years 7 to 9. However, the impact of learning support teachers and assistants is reduced at times by class teachers' limited advance planning of activities in lessons where learning support staff are present. Although class teachers identify the additional special educational needs of pupils in their planning documents, few strategies are included for meeting these needs. In class teaching, individual education plans do not sufficiently inform teachers' actions in relation to individual pupils. Some departments do not engage sufficiently closely with learning support staff and do not make an input into individual education plans from a subject point of view.

34. The school has recently reorganised its setting systems, in order to give pupils with special educational needs smaller groups in both Year 7 and Years 10 and 11. These smaller classes are supported by well-judged deployment of learning support staff. However, there is only limited external support overall available for meeting the specialist needs of some individual pupils. This particularly affects what can be done to help subject teachers provide for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Sixth form

35. Teaching is good in the sixth form, with much which is very good and excellent. Such examples of excellence occurred in many subjects.
36. The key characteristics of the best sixth form teaching were:
- challenging use of questioning;
 - evidently high expectations of hard work and full student participation;
 - stimulating and creative use of materials and methods, as for example, in an A2 lesson in French on anti-Semitism in wartime France;
 - excellent timing and use of time, as in a Year 13 English lesson on Keats and a Year 12 lesson on Henry IV Part II;
 - close attention to safety not limiting creativity, for example in dance;
 - willingness to experiment with distance learning and finding effective ways to support it, for example in German;
 - collaborative teaching where teachers share the curriculum and preparation;
 - development and encouragement of independent learning;
 - use of email to correct students' work, contact parents and students at home and to support homework tasks;
 - rigorous assessment procedures feeding both into students' target-setting and self-improvement and into future lesson planning.
37. In a Year 13 biology lesson on population ecology, students made exceptional intellectual efforts, responding to the very exacting standards set by a very expert teacher. Similarly, in a Year 12 geography lesson on demographic transition models, the teacher's support, reinforcement and challenge resulted in very good progress and deepening understanding of a complex idea. Very good use of questioning by the teacher in a Year 12 religious education class enabled students to enter into debate about whether Aristotle's view of the soul is relevant to today's thinking. This use of questioning to extend students' thinking was also evident in a very well taught art lesson in Year 13, where the work of Matisse and Picasso was used to encourage a growing understanding of different types of composition, in turn leading students to improve their own work. In a Year 12 physical education lesson, the teaching went far beyond the usual confines of the subject to contribute very well to students' writing skills.

38. Where teaching was less effective in the sixth form, the main reason for lack of progress was reluctance on the part of the teacher to allow students enough opportunities to become independent as learners.

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

39. At the time of the last inspection, curriculum policy was deficient. There is now a clear approach to curriculum development and management, and the school's guiding principles, as well as statutory requirements, are well expressed to meet the needs of all pupils. Since 1999, a sophisticated and complex method of organising classes to meet pupils' learning needs has been in place. Following careful testing and analysis of pupils' previous attainment, classes are organised in all subjects into two main ability bands. Subdivision within the bands varies according to the pupils' needs, subject requirements and staffing availability. This results in a good match of learning, schemes of work and teaching methods to meet the needs of all pupils. A good example of this lies in the way the time is allocated for lower attaining pupils in relation to literacy and numeracy, and other basic skills, which receive an appropriately high priority during Years 7 to 9.
40. Recent efforts at further refining this effective system have given priority to meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils, and small groups have been set up to maximise these pupils' contact with the teacher. The limited amount of support for pupils with special educational needs is well deployed in these classes to assist teachers. However, there is insufficient additional adult help to ensure that pupils are consistently well managed, and in a few cases, this has an impact on the way teachers can manage the resulting unsatisfactory behaviour. Future planning for the curriculum takes on board the need to inject more opportunities for creativity and the application to become a specialist college for the visual arts is consistent with this objective.
41. The school meets all statutory requirements for curriculum provision with only two exceptions. Firstly, in Years 10 and 11, currently too many pupils no longer study a foreign language – the provision envisaged in a recent Government 'Green Paper' having been assumed too soon to be applicable. Secondly, there is insufficient provision for religious education in the sixth form and a minority of students does not have sufficient opportunity to follow a course of religious education. The school meets requirements for provision in music, but there is very limited use of and access to ICT, so this element of the National Curriculum requirement for music is not well met. Provision overall for religious education was a weakness at the time of the last inspection, and in Years 7 to 11, it is much improved, with all pupils now studying the subject, which has improved greatly in both popularity and results.
42. In the last two years, the school has enhanced the breadth of its curriculum provision at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in a number of ways. There is a better opportunity for younger pupils to access creative subjects such as dance and drama. The school has added a range of vocational courses to the options available at the end of Key Stage 3. This meets students' needs well. Alternative programmes for those finding difficulty in settling on a traditional GCSE course are meeting some pupils' needs, providing them with a core of GCSE subjects and a range of options at the local further education college. However, the degree of individual support that these challenging pupils require is not routinely available, with the result that the school has decided rightly to review this route again.
43. The post of literacy co-ordinator is currently unfilled and the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is only fully satisfactory in the English department, where teachers have made very good use of guidance. There has been a day of training for staff on implementing the National Literacy Strategy across all subjects and there is a draft literacy policy, recently produced. This covers the three aspects of language: speaking and listening, reading and writing. When it is in place it will support provision in all subjects. At present provision is uneven. Little structured use is made of the school library to support literacy. Some subjects, notably science and geography provide extra support, such as writing frames, to help with essay writing, and most subjects

display the vocabulary needed for their work.

44. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place, although the numeracy work observed during the inspection did not fully reflect the range of teaching strategies it promotes. Following a whole school training day in spring 2002, each department undertook an audit of the numeracy skills within their subject area. As a result, opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are now written into some subject schemes of work. Where this is well in place, such as in geography and art, pupils use their numeracy skills well. GCSE physical education pupils have good opportunities to collect, analyse and draw conclusions from first hand data in work on health related fitness. However in information and communication technology, design and technology and science, specific strategies to promote pupils' numeracy skills are not fully in place. There is, for example, satisfactory work in science in Years 11 to 16.
45. The languages department provides a range of opportunities to broaden pupils' knowledge of the world, and Europe in particular. For example, there is a regular lunchtime Italian club and a wide-ranging programme of foreign visits. There is also a new link with a local importer of fruit and vegetables from Spanish speaking countries which is expected to provide a highly worthwhile work related experience for pupils. Other subjects encourage participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities which all benefit learning, for example clubs in trampolining, soccer, drama and dance are purposeful, educational and well-attended. At Christmas and in the spring term, there are public presentations of work from performance studios, and in the summer term a number of departments join together to work on a school production.
46. There have been significant improvements in the provision for personal, social and health education since the time of the last inspection. The subject is now taught by a separate team of teachers who give it priority in planning their use of their time. The programme is well planned and delivered for 11 to 16 year olds. Much effective use is made of themes that span the curriculum, such as citizenship, for which the school is planning a whole day of study later this year. All pupils will be involved, and subsequently, an audit of the contribution to be made by subject teachers will be completed so that a comprehensive provision is in place. At the moment, good contributions to developing pupils' sense of citizenship are made by several departments, such as history, business and English. However, the school's plans for intensive training of the staff are thorough.
47. The school is successfully promoting a curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language can proceed effectively through the National Curriculum. The different needs of boys and girls are generally well met by schemes of work, which recognise that the tasks which are appropriate for one gender may not sufficiently interest both, so adaptations are regularly made.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

48. Moral, social and cultural development opportunities are generally good, and provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The ethos of the school is strongly promoting a sense of social responsibility and of right and wrong. These areas of the work of the school show significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. Few subjects or other activities contributed to pupils' personal development at that time. Many more now contribute, and many contributions are very effective.
49. Geography for example makes a particularly good contribution to cultural development, through the many case studies selected from both more and less economically developed countries, such as the slums of Cairo and Brazil, and the effects of cyclones in Bangla Desh. Geography also makes contributions towards pupils' moral and social development in the role play and decision making exercises such as the choices for coastal management strategies on the Dorset and Yorkshire coasts. Opportunities for spiritual development are created through the time given for reflection on the tropical rainforest, the importance of respect for what might be lost forever and how an understanding of these areas can take forward our understanding of our own planet. Discussions on the fragility of our environment were particularly valuable.

50. The teaching and learning of art is making a significant contribution to pupils' understandings of other cultures, such as Australian aboriginal and Islamic. The subject's wide reference to the work of modern artists and schools of art also broadens pupils' understanding of the creative arts in general. Some of the themes on which pupils work in art have a strong spiritual dimension and encourage discussion and reflection on mood, symbol and emotion. Some clubs also make a contribution towards pupils' personal development: the creative writing club, held at lunchtime, encourages pupils to be creative and unselfconscious at the same time. The status such activities give to poetry is also an encouragement to empathy.
51. Opportunities are created in design and technology to discuss social, moral and environmental issues. For example, pupils are encouraged to consider the recycling possibilities of materials before selecting them for their designs.
52. The contribution of assembly to reflection and moral and spiritual development is also making an improved contribution to pupils' personal development. Religious education classes, now a popular feature of the whole 11-16 curriculum, make an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students. Lessons provide many opportunities for reflection and encourage pupils and students of all ages to participate in the careful consideration of moral and social issues. They also encourage the development of a good understanding of a wide range of cultures and beliefs.

Sixth form

53. The sixth form courses available for students provide a wide range of opportunities which appropriately match students' aspirations and needs. For those students who wish to study AS and A2 courses, there is a sufficient range, supplemented in the case of languages with a valuable link to a local specialist language college for A level German. For students wishing an alternative model, the school has developed a good range of GNVQ and AVCE courses at a range of levels to meet needs. Most groups are of appropriate size so that students have the opportunity to discuss and debate issues which arise, but there are some classes which are very large, and some which are very small. Such groups would be unlikely to be able to run in many schools, and it is to the school's credit that they are maintained here in students' interest.
54. However, in a period of transition the quality of advice available for students selecting sixth form courses was insufficiently detailed or individualised to ensure that students selected the courses they would both enjoy and in which they would have an appropriate basic knowledge. Individual interviews and guidance were last year only offered to Year 11 pupils who were referred by a member of staff, which left several feeling dissatisfied with their access to external, objective advice. A few students have embarked on courses, as a result, without the necessary GCSE preparation or with standards which leave them ill-prepared for long-term success. Sixth form students similarly do not receive individual external guidance on future career and study routes although their tutors manage issues related to university applications well and create worthwhile opportunities for discussion about all related issues. There is a well stocked careers library which also provides access to the Internet so that students can research their career and further study options. Other aspects of guidance are well received - for example, a module of study on managing personal finances.
55. The school no longer formally teaches and assesses the key skills of literacy and numeracy in the sixth form. The responsibility for such reinforcement and delivery now lies with subjects, with the result that there is some variability. In general, there are good opportunities for improving the skills of number but there is some inconsistent practice. There are opportunities for developing skills in ICT, but the fact that several sixth form subjects, such as business studies, give evidence of the need for better writing skills, indicates a deficiency in the school's curriculum planning. Communication skills, such as those needed for making presentations are generally satisfactory and students have sufficient opportunities to practise speaking. There are good opportunities for students to listen to outsiders who come to provide a lecture programme as part of enrichment studies. Whilst each contribution is appreciated, this programme is fragmented and individual

themes are not followed through. The resulting provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form, whilst having considerable strengths and being satisfactory overall, lacks co-ordination.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The school provides a friendly and welcoming environment in which pupils are happy and secure and can learn and develop. Pupils are provided with a good level of educational and personal support. The school's pastoral system is well organised and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour.
57. The school has in place a health and safety policy that meets statutory requirements. It is in the process of reviewing health and safety requirements, and has established good strategies for the implementation of the health and safety policy. However, in a number of key areas the school has not made sufficient progress in the application of health and safety procedures and the headteacher was advised of the areas which need attention.
58. The school has very good procedures for child protection. The deputy headteacher is the designated teacher and has received appropriate child protection training. Staff are provided with a copy of the school's child protection policy, which contains appropriate guidance on the recognition of child abuse; they receive appropriate training on child protection procedures on an annual basis, and heads of years attend case conferences as required.
59. The school's pastoral system is well organised. Form tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and are responsive to pupils' needs both inside and outside the classroom. Staff value pupils and form tutors staying with pupils throughout their time in the school enhance continuity of care. Pupils say that this has increased their confidence in approaching staff should they have any problems either of an academic or personal nature and that appropriate advice and guidance would be forthcoming. Overall, the pastoral system provides pupils with a good standard of personal and academic support that has a positive effect on their learning.
60. Overall, the school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. A school attendance officer has been appointed, who monitors attendance on a daily basis, and makes first day contact with the parents of pupils who have been identified with poor attendance records. There is an effective system involving the attendance officer, form tutors and year heads, who meet on a regular basis, and they make contact with parents should this be considered necessary. Pupils are awarded certificates for good attendance, which has motivated some pupils to improve their attendance.
61. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and a well-established school behaviour policy and code of conduct that provides a system of rewards and sanctions. The merit system is popular with pupils who readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to poor behaviour. The school operates a "ladder of sanctions" which pupils may move up and down according to the level of acceptability of their behaviour. Parents are advised as soon as their children are placed on level one of sanctions; they are told why their children are subject to sanctions and what they need to do to improve, and are notified when they have met their improvement targets. This has helped improve pupils' behaviour overall. There are effective procedures to discourage bullying and oppressive behaviour.
62. The school makes every effort to welcome pupils who arrive at times other than the start of Year 7 and who may be experiencing difficulties as a result of relocation or isolation from family, for example, pupils new to this country. It also takes good care of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds and those from homes with limited income. This is particularly evident in the provision of computer clubs where pupils without access to a personal computer at home can process and develop their work beyond lesson times.

63. The learning support department undertakes ongoing discussions with other staff, parents and pupils so that they can target the scarce staffing resources at their disposal towards dealing with the highest learning priorities pupils present. The department responds very effectively to improvements and changes in performance and emerging pupil needs. It tracks pupil progress well, recording and monitoring changes regularly. Assessment and identification of pupils' special educational needs, particularly in Year 7, are excellent, with the result that action is appropriate and very helpful. Statutory procedures for pupils with statements of special educational needs or on the school's register for action in their support comply fully with requirements. There is excellent support for the most vulnerable pupils, who receive priority for targeted additional resources. Excellent liaison within school and with families ensures that this is well co-ordinated and purposeful.
64. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. The school has improved its approach to assessment and the use of assessment data since the last inspection. There is a clear whole school policy for assessment and marking, which is used effectively to provide assessment information, which is recorded on the school central data base. The information available to staff to help them track pupils' progress is of very good quality. Assessment arrangements and marking are good in English, science and mathematics.
65. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good overall and very good in English, mathematics and science, good in ICT, geography and physical education and satisfactory in history and religious education. Marking to support the quality of pupils' work is very good in physical education, good in science, ICT, geography, history and satisfactory in modern foreign languages and English.
66. However, there are some further deficiencies in the provision to support special learning needs. Firstly, there is little targeted support for meeting such needs in class by subject teachers, who rely on the system of banding and setting pupils to ensure that individual needs are met. Too little use is made by subject teachers of pupils' individual education plans within their lesson planning to guide their choice of methods and materials. Individual education plans are inconveniently located and this does not encourage teachers' use of them as reference in their planning to meet individual needs. The learning support department is not leading on managing pupils with behavioural difficulties, as this work is co-ordinated by heads of year. This arrangement is failing to take full advantage of teachers' skills and thus reducing progress in addressing pupils' difficulties and impacting on the learning of others.
67. Practice in the development and use of Individual Education Plans by subject teachers is inconsistent. In particular, targets are too general and the balance between subject or learning targets on the one hand, and behavioural or personal targets on the other is not yet wholly appropriate. Teachers in the core subjects particularly have little input into devising and monitoring the individual education plans. Specialist provision made by the school is too little overall, with the result that the full range of needs is not met. Finally, the amount of time provided by the LEA's behaviour support specialists is very limited and is sufficient only to help one pupil.
68. Overall, assessment data is used effectively to guide curriculum planning. The information is used very well in English, it is used well in science and ICT and its use is satisfactory in geography, physical education, history and religious education. Assessment information is conveyed to parents through annual reports, and although a significant minority of parents felt that they do not receive adequate information about their children's progress, inspectors consider that reports are of a good standard. They indicate for each subject pupils' strengths and weaknesses and what action they need to take to improve.
69. There are good procedures for tracking the progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs, and matching work to their abilities. Pupils with English as an additional language are carefully monitored, with very good effect. The school's senior managers use data very effectively to target resources and plan the curriculum to match pupils' needs. This data

provides very clear guidance to staff on their approach to maintaining and developing pupils' progress. Information generated is shared effectively with parents, helping to reinforce a partnership on learning between the school and the home.

Sixth form

Assessment

70. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. They are outstanding in physical education, very good in English and mathematics and good in ICT and modern foreign languages; in other subjects they are at least satisfactory.
71. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is generally good. It is very good in English, where staff have frequent meetings to assess progress and attainment and to modify planning accordingly. The department holds its own moderation sessions as well as those required by the examination boards. Satisfactory use of assessment data is made in mathematics. The school's system of minimum target grades is clearly in place and students can compare their performance with the rest of their group on the departmental grids displayed in the mathematics area.
72. Teachers make satisfactory use of information to diagnose the learning needs of individual pupils. In English all writing is assessed against examination assessment objectives, and in all other subjects except science, assessment of written work is at least satisfactory. In science the diagnosis of individual learning needs and provision for action is unsatisfactory.

Advice, support and guidance

73. Advice, support and guidance are unsatisfactory. Most students indicate they enjoy the sixth form experience, that their choice of subjects suits their talents and aspirations and that they are helped to study independently. However, a majority of students indicate that they did not receive adequate advice about future options, they were not well informed about their progress and did not always receive appropriate pastoral support. Inspectors consider that some of the students' concerns are well founded. A small number of them are not well placed in the subjects they are now studying, either because of the nature of their achievements at the end of Year 11 or because they lack interest in a subject slotted in as a last choice. The procedures for the support and guidance provided by the school have been reviewed and revised for the present Year 11 choices. The promotion and monitoring of attendance in the last academic year were unsatisfactory. However, revised procedures have been put in place for the current academic year, with a view to improving attendance levels.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

74. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall. Most parents who expressed a view are pleased with the progress their children make in their learning, the quality of teaching, the expectation that their children will work hard and the standard of behaviour in the school. Parents also indicated that their children enjoy coming to the school and that the school is helping them to become more mature and responsible. They believe that the school is well led and managed. Evidence from the inspection mostly confirms these positive views of the school. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about aspects of the school, including the information they receive about their children's progress. They felt that the school does not work closely enough with parents and the amount of homework set is inappropriate. Inspectors do not support these concerns in the main. They consider that the school works hard to involve parents in the life of the school, that pupils' reports give good quality information about progress and the school's homework provision make a good contribution to pupils' learning. The school is endeavouring to put in place easy to access procedures to ensure that parents feel confident that their concerns

will be well handled. The headteacher runs a weekly 'clinic' to meet parents and take action on their behalf. Attempts to encourage parents to use email to contact the school failed initially because of technical problems, which have now been overcome.

75. Overall, parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. The school works hard to involve parents in the life of the school. For example, it sends out focus questionnaires to ensure parents' views are taken into account in the school's decision-making process. Tutors and heads of year indicate they have good relationships with parents and receive strong parental support when required. However, some parents have expressed concerns about the tone of some written communications, and inspectors agree that these concerns are well founded. There is a small but active parents teacher association (PTA) that organises social and fund raising events; the monies raised by the PTA have been used to provide additional learning resources that have had a positive effect on pupils' learning.
76. The quality and range of information provided for parents are good. The school prospectus and annual governors' report meet statutory requirements and provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities. In addition, parents receive a comprehensive guide, and school calendar of events, together with regular newsletters. Letters about specific events ensure parents are aware of current school issues. Parents receive two progress reports and a full report on their children's progress each year. Annual reports are of a good standard and provide information on pupils' strength and weaknesses and areas for development. The school has good arrangements to involve parents of pupils with special educational needs in the development and review of their individual educational plans.
77. The learning support department links very well with parents and carers, providing regular reports, materials for parents and guidance on how to help with specific learning difficulties such as literacy, Asperger's syndrome and autism. This support is highly valued by parents, one of whom wrote to the inspectors: "transfer to secondary school has, in fact, been very smooth and successful and my son is very happy at Mascalls. The special needs department and the school can take the credit for this, and my heartfelt thanks."

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The governors, headteacher and senior leadership team are strongly committed to the aims and values of the school and to the raising of standards throughout the school. Parents speak highly of the improvements made since the appointment of the headteacher and students are positive about the school.
79. The headteacher is a firm and determined leader who ensures very clear direction for the work of the school. She clearly puts the interests of the pupils and students first and focuses the work of the staff on achieving high standards in every aspect of the life of the school. She is well supported by the restructured leadership team, which shares her commitment to equality of opportunity and to school improvement. Roles within the team and line management responsibilities are clear. Members of the team are supportive of each other and work co-operatively to ensure the effective running of the school on a daily basis.
80. There is very good middle management in many individual departments and strong leadership in the sixth form and by the special needs co-ordinator. Open and effective communication amongst all members of such departments leads to effective planning and a consistent and shared overview of teaching and learning. In English, mathematics, languages and geography, for example, subject leaders set high expectations of the quality of teaching from their colleagues and ensure that schemes of work are implemented. In the learning support department, priority has been given to building a team which contains relevant expertise in the key learning disabilities which pupils present – specific literacy difficulties, autism and Asperger's syndrome and language development including teaching English as a foreign language. Leadership and management of this department is very good. Heads of year and their tutor teams provide good personal guidance for pupils.

81. A satisfactory system for appraisal and performance management is in place. Lesson observation by senior line managers ensures that the quality of teaching and learning is adequately monitored. The very good self-reviews in some departments are already used well to diagnose strengths and to establish priorities for improvement. They reflect a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to school self-evaluation and development. This system of review effectively challenges both the department under review and the senior staff who work with departments to put in place continuing improvements. However, the large number of relatively new appointments to the teaching staff, at a range of levels within the management structure, is bound to test the robustness of this system over the coming months.
82. The governors are supportive of the school and give generously of their time to ensure that the work of the school is effectively monitored. Their committee structure works well. The headteacher provides them with full reports and they follow school developments closely in the context of national initiatives. Effective and straightforward policies are in place which cover all the areas of legal responsibility. The governors are developing their role as strategic planners in determining future educational directions for the school and have played a major role in planning for new building developments. The deficit, which had built up in recent years, is now under control, and an effective plan, agreed with the local education authority, is in place to reduce and eventually remove it.
83. The governors and senior staff have sharpened their analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement plan is closely focused on raising and recognising achievement, both in public examinations and in the extra-curricular life of the school. Targets are achievable but challenging and governors monitor them annually. Most individual departmental targets reflect the same determined focus. Educational priorities are well supported through the school's financial planning and the governors ensure that best value principles are applied. Strategies for financial control and administration are efficient. There is tight budgetary supervision with a view to eliminating the accumulated deficit as quickly as possible.
84. There is a very effective induction programme for teachers new to the school and for newly qualified teachers. Turnover has been very high in recent years and this level of priority has been essential and effective in enabling staff to settle in quickly, teach well and become productive team members as well as contributing to the ethos of the school. A clear example of this is in the English department where only two of the nine teachers have been in the school for more than one year and many of them are in only their second or third year of teaching. This rate of turnover, due in large part to retirements and promotions appears to have stabilised in the current academic year. New teachers are monitored and supported well by senior staff and mentors throughout their first year. The school has managed well the difficulties of teacher recruitment, although some classes have had a high turnover of staff and this has led to some unsatisfactory achievement. There is a thorough staff handbook that makes for easy reference to all the major areas of school policy. Professional development budgets are now being tailored to match the priorities identified both in the school improvement plan and through the performance management system.
85. The recent staff turnover has coincided with changes in curriculum and assessment and with the introduction of the revised code of practice for pupils with special educational needs and the need to ensure full access to the curriculum by all pupils. These have been in addition to the school's identified priorities for the management of change, and the school is in the process of identifying a clear strategy for planning to meet such multi-layered challenges to staff expertise.

Resources

86. School accommodation is used to capacity. Most faculties have suites of rooms, generally well furnished, in good decorative order and adequately maintained. Resources are satisfactory in most departments. Access to computer facilities, both for class use and individual research, has been considerably improved since the last inspection and is now good. Specialist software to support some pupils in their learning, notably with peripherals and input devices, is insufficient. The library remains underused for back-up for lessons. The lack of space and poor equipment and resources limit the delivery of the curriculum in design and technology. Rooms for the teaching of

music and the storage of musical instruments are unsatisfactory. In physical education, the deficiencies reported in accommodation and facilities at the time of the last inspection remain and there are some shortcomings in the accommodation for dance. The sixth form students have adequate social space and access to an appropriate range of sizes of teaching rooms.

87. The school has developed its use of new technologies well. Administrative staff make effective use of ICT in their work and electronic registers are in use. Senior managers use data well. There is a large quantity of detailed data on the individual performance of students, including predictors of performance. Line managers can access complete sets of data and are using this well to set individual targets for students.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

88. The aims and values of the sixth form mirror those of the whole school, emphasising the raising of standards and the monitoring of all aspects of sixth form activities. Both the headteacher and the head of sixth form lead by example in setting high expectations and in ensuring clear educational direction. They are committed to strategies to increase the retention rates, both from Year 11 and between Years 12 and 13, as well as the total numbers on roll.
89. The governors are well informed about curriculum developments in the sixth form. It is a policy of the school to ensure that the curriculum remains broad and balanced, and with open access, so a range of both AS and A2 and vocational courses are offered. The sixth form is cost effective overall, despite the small numbers and high unit costs for some of these courses. Governors are very supportive of the sixth form leadership.
90. The head of sixth form is new in post and has clearly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and areas for development. Attendance and some aspects of behaviour have been unsatisfactory and she has put clear procedures in place to monitor these very closely. She has a clear vision of the need to build a strong team of form tutors and of the tasks that can be shared and delegated within this team.
91. The sixth form development plan, which has both short and medium term targets, is clearly linked to the school's own priorities for improvement. The transition between Year 11 and the sixth form is not yet a wholly smooth one. The head of sixth form therefore targets quality guidance on the choice of sixth form courses and future options, and the placing of all students on appropriate courses. She has recognised the need to revise the general studies and enrichment programmes so that they are less fragmented, and to ensure the acquisition of key skills, as well as giving appropriate attention to religious education for all. Accommodation and resources for the sixth form are satisfactory.
92. Monitoring of the quality of sixth form teaching is in place. Detailed assessment data is available to track student progress and value added. Most staff are now active recipients of this data and are using it to set challenging targets so that all students can improve their learning.
93. The timetabled distribution of lessons in the sixth form is satisfactory. The school has experienced recruitment difficulties but the AS, A2 and vocational courses are almost all taught by qualified staff. Support staff make a valuable contribution to the delivery of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

94. Mascalls School is improving steadily. In order to support this well-established trend further, governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) address as a matter of urgency the pockets of weak or poor teaching, by

- supporting teachers to teach consistently well
- reviewing the operation of classes on an alternative curriculum, devising new plans for working with these groups
- ensuring the consistency in application of the new behaviour management policy
- planning, as soon as funds allow, to provide early identification of talents and a greater degree of one to one support for the most gifted pupils
- ensuring that the high quality of teaching expertise evident in the best lessons is seen by all teachers new to the school;

(See paragraphs: 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 40, 115, 118, 124, 125, 161, 171, 180, 189, 198, 212, 217)

- (2) review the problems which occurred in the last school year in relation to careers education and guidance in Year 11, so that students receive appropriate individual guidance. Ensure that links with external agencies are effective in supporting course choices for post 16 education;

(See Paragraphs: 21, 54, 73, 91)

Sixth form

- (1) improve attendance by implementing, reviewing and following up the innovations of recent weeks; (See Paragraphs: 23, 90)
- (3) review the coherence of the enrichment and general studies programmes, so that they are less fragmented: give priority to careers education and guidance for choices of work and higher education opportunities; (See Paragraphs: 55, 91)
- (4) promote raised standards and improved examination results, for example by ensuring that all sixth form students acquire appropriate key skills, such as those required for extended essay writing. (See Paragraphs: 55, 92, 210, 217)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	143
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	8	22	48	51	10	4	0
Percentage	5.6	15.4	33.6	35.7	7	2.8	0

Sixth form

Number	4	10	19	14	0	0	0
Percentage	8,5	21.3	40.4	29.8	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils**Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	963	153
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	84	6

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs assessment stages for school action and school action plus	101	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	106	75	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	73	63
	Girls	43	47	43
	Total	85	120	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (47)	67 (69)	59 (59)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (18)	35 (40)	15 (28)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	77	71
	Girls	59	51	57
	Total	132	128	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (55)	72 (72)	73 (68)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (18)	40 (45)	42 (30)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	103	84	187

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	51	96	100
	Girls	56	83	84
	Total	107	179	184
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (45)	96 (94)	98 (97)
	National	48 (47)	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	42.2
	National	39

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	77
	National	NA

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	42	33	75

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	42	31	73
	Average point score per candidate	14.7	13	14.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	38	27	65	4	7	11
	Average point score per candidate	15.5	12.5	14.2	7.5	9.4	8.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British		48	2
White – Irish			
White – any other White background		1	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background		1	
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			

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.08

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	276

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	23.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3382401
Total expenditure	3373105
Expenditure per pupil	3112
Balance brought forward from previous year	-126772
Balance carried forward to next year	-118560

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	44
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	62

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	1116
Number of questionnaires returned	184

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	58	10	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	52	12	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	57	17	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	49	26	9	3
The teaching is good.	15	63	12	3	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	45	20	9	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	43	9	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	52	5	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	20	47	23	8	3
The school is well led and managed.	28	49	10	3	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	55	10	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	54	11	2	8

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

- Improvement in performance by the end of Year 9 in 2002
- Very good leadership by the head of faculty
- Stimulating, well-planned lessons within a clear and thorough programme of study.
- Careful analysis and monitoring of pupil progress.

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of day to day marking across the school
- Provision for different levels of pupils' attainment within teaching groups

95. The standard of pupils' English when they join the school has for some years been below national averages, although the most recent entry of pupils into Year 7 shows a general rise in attainment to a level very close to expectations. Results in the national tests for fourteen year olds have varied considerably over the last few years, reflecting not only lower than average prior attainment but also a period of staffing instability within the department. There was a sharp decline in results in the two years up to 2001 when they were well below national averages, and below averages for similar schools. However, in 2002 there was a great improvement and the results achieved by 14-year-old pupils are above national averages.
96. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are at least in line with national averages. In 2001 there was a sharp improvement in numbers of pupils reaching the higher grades (A* to C) and a further improvement in 2002, although there are lower than average numbers gaining grades A* and A. In 2001 girls were above the national averages for girls in both English and English literature. Boys were in line with averages for boys nationally. The department enters all pupils for both examinations and there is regularly a hundred per cent pass rate at grades A* to G, indicating good progress by the pupils who have low levels of attainment from Key Stage 3. This is above the national average.
97. Standards observed in lessons confirm the improvement. Pupils in all classes approach their work seriously, are confident clear speakers and attentive listeners. Lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 were characterised by very good oral involvement by pupils, showing good understanding of topics studied. This included the nature of vampires in Year 9 work on horror literature, the rules of punctuation of speech in a class in Year 8 and of different kinds of sentences in Year 7. Most pupils are competent readers who can go beyond simple interpretation and who are developing skills of analysis and comparison. For instance a boy in Year 8, in a comment about Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott', referred to the work done previously on the poems of William Blake. The small number of pupils whose reading skills are well below the national expectation make good progress through the intensive help they are given in small groups. Standards in pupils' writing are more variable. Almost all written work is carefully presented, with neat clear handwriting and a good standard of layout. The pieces by the highest attainers are engaging and impressive. The portfolios of work by these pupils in Year 9 show good progress since their arrival in the school. They write at length, with good levels of correctness. Other pupils whose work was sampled have also made progress but their writing is less controlled, and they make more mistakes in their expression. Pupils in the small classes for the lowest attainers are gaining benefit from the more structured support they are given and from the work in lessons of the team of learning support assistants.

98. Standards of written work in English in Years 10 and 11 were good. A sample of course work showed good progress by every pupil, and that of the highest attainers was very good indeed. There was particularly good work at all levels on the Shakespeare texts and the media assignments. Standards of behaviour in class are variable but most pupils take their work seriously and are anxious to make progress.
99. Teaching in the English department is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The vast majority was good or better and a quarter was very good or excellent. For several of the teachers this is their first post. They bring to their work recent training, good understanding of their subject and of current issues in education, and enthusiasm. Planning of lessons, supported by the programme of study and the imaginative schemes of work, is very good. Lessons start promptly, follow a clear structure and include a range of activities that are stimulating and well resourced. There are high expectations of behaviour and of what will be learned. Relationships are good, between teachers and pupils and among the pupils. Work is carefully assessed through the formal assessment tasks that are moderated across the department to ensure even, consistent standards. To some extent different levels of attainment are well supported by the very careful grouping of pupils into ability sets. However, although there is some provision made for different levels of attainment within these sets, it is not always enough to cater properly for the full range. Learning support assistants work very well in classes for lower attainers; their support is planned for and they are involved in the assessment and planning of the lessons. A GCSE class in Year 11 derived great benefit from the presence of a support teacher and three assistants, all of whom took an active part in the lesson. The leading teacher's planning for this resource was exemplary, with the result that all pupils learned through small group discussion and all made very good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are a more passive presence in the lesson, but the excellent teaching they receive in small groups outside the lesson gives them understanding of the topics.
100. The English course meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The programme of study and its schemes of work have been completely rewritten following the arrival of the current head of faculty, and the course is extremely coherent and well organised. The National Literacy Strategy is in place in Years 7 and 8. The English-based elements of the information and communication technology (ICT) requirements are well understood by the English teachers, all of whom are competent users of ICT. Good use is made of the computer room in the English subject area, although provision for all classes is still a little uneven.
101. Leadership and management of the department, and of the English and communication faculty, are very good. Only three of the nine teachers have been in the school for more than one year and many of them are in only their second or third year of teaching. The head of faculty gives clear direction to his colleagues and he supports them well. He provides an excellent role model in his own organisation and practice as a teacher. With his deputy in the English department he carries out systematic monitoring of standards of teaching and learning, and the results of this are recorded on the departmental database. Details of pupil attainment are also meticulously kept and all teachers are given full lists of past test results and future predictions for all the pupils they teach. The faculty has good accommodation and teaching resources are also good.

Drama

102. The courses in both key stages are coherent and progressive. At Key Stage 3, drama is taught in modules lasting half a term, alternating with dance. At Key Stage 4, the subject is part of the option programme for pupils to choose as a GCSE course.
103. Standards of work seen in Year 9, the last year of Key Stage 3, are good. Pupils take their work seriously and are well behaved. They collaborate well in groups and they enjoy presenting their work to the rest of the class. They are also effective as critical audience and, by sharing an analytical and assessment role with their teacher, they gain understanding of the skills they are learning. They show good awareness of space and relationship with audience, and they have some technique of voice variation and of memorising lines.

104. The most recent results at GCSE were below the national average. However, work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was at least in line with expectations for their age. A class in Year 11 working in groups on the presentations for their practical examination assessment were purposeful and self-critical. The better groups managed, in spite of lack of space in the teaching area, to locate themselves as though on stage and to be aware of a potential audience. In a Year 10 class, pupils at the start of their GCSE course were already confident in performance, showing excellent control of voice and using it to express a range of emotions.
105. Teaching of drama is very good. Lessons are planned carefully with time for review of learning in the last part, through presentation of group work or through discussion. Class management is of high quality, based on excellent relationships between teacher and class and on a clear code of behaviour that is accepted by the pupils as a necessity for productive and enjoyable lessons. Relationships among pupils are good, supported by the teacher in her organisation of groups, which are not based on pupil choice and which are carefully balanced to share expertise and to mix the genders.
106. There is a clear drama curriculum. The courses in both key stages are coherent and progressive, with aims and objectives for each year group. As well as the development of drama skills, there is an element in each year of history of theatre, and specific links are made to other subjects in the school curriculum. Drama gives good opportunities for increased awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues as it explores relevant topics. It makes a good contribution to the school's extra-curricular provision, running two lunchtime clubs, putting on public performances three times a year, and taking pupils to the theatre.
107. Management of the department is good. At present the head of department works almost alone, although she has strong links within the performance studies faculty with teachers of dance and music. She has, in a very short time, organised drama in the school to make it a strong subject. She has addressed many of the issues raised specifically and more generally in the last inspection report – such as use of time in lessons, setting of homework, assessment and monitoring and use of technology.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management by the head of faculty
- Pupils achievement by the age of 16
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, hard work and commitment to the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching styles used by teachers, particularly questioning of pupils to check their understanding and to explore their methods of approach to a problem
- The proportion of A* and A grades at GCSE
- Feedback to pupils on how they can improve.

108. Standards are in line with those expected nationally. By the time pupils leave school at 16 years of age they have achieved well given their below average attainment on entry at the age of 11. They do better than pupils in similar types of school. Performance targets are reached. This is a creditable achievement as staff turnover has been high in the last few years. It owes much to the hard work and commitment of the two senior members of the mathematics faculty over this time.
109. Pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds has been in line with that nationally for the last three years, and has risen at a faster rate in 2002 than previously. It has

shown steady improvement and in 2002 the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was equivalent to that nationally. It was below average in the previous two years. Pupils perform consistently better in mathematics than in English and slightly better than in science. At GCSE the proportion of the year group gaining a pass is better than that nationally. In 2001 pupils made better progress in their GCSE years than most pupils nationally, with performance at the higher A*-C grades equivalent to that nationally. In summer 2002, whilst progress was still good overall, pupils did not do as well. The faculty's analysis of results for summer 2002 shows that where classes had an experienced teacher with reasonable knowledge of the school, the pupils did best. Where there were several changes of teacher, pupils did less well. Pupils did not achieve as well as they could in their coursework. The faculty has reorganised their teaching programme for this year to try and improve these results. Work leading up to coursework tasks now specifically covers and revises the skills needed. Staffing is now stable.

110. Inspection evidence shows the attainment of current 14 and 16 year olds is at the level expected for their age and equivalent to the standards achieved in national examinations in recent years. This represents better than expected progress overall when pupils' attainments on entry to the school are taken into account. Pupils in the top sets in Year 9 already cover work that will enable them to achieve the highest levels in tests for 14 year olds in summer 2003. They have sound number skills, use competently formulae for the area and circumference of circles, and calculate successfully different types of average. Pupils in other groups cover an appropriate range of work and show sound skills in working with fractions, decimals and percentages. Year 11 pupils in the top sets use accurately the trigonometric ratios of sine, tangent and cosine in right angled triangles and can manipulate quadratic functions, all work needed to obtain the highest GCSE grades. Whilst other pupils cover work that is appropriate for previous achievements and their GCSE course level, their ability to recall previous learning is sometimes weak. Where questions require them to decide the mathematical technique to use or to interpret information, these pupils are less successful. Nevertheless pupils have built well on previous achievements.
111. As at the time of the last inspection too few pupils obtain the highest A* and A grades at GCSE. This is because the highest attaining pupils do not develop sufficiently well their ability to interpret and analyse information and to generalise results. These are essential skills for the highest grades. These pupils also have the opportunity to take GCSE statistics, and an excellent pass rate, mainly at the higher C grade, is obtained. The faculty has yet to assess fully the impact of this extra work on these pupils' results at GCSE mathematics.
112. Numeracy skills are particularly good for pupils in Years 7 and 8. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools has had a positive effect on their learning. They have better strategies for undertaking mental calculations than many older Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. Their quick recall of times tables to 10 is more secure. The faculty recognises this and through the introduction of starter activities throughout Years 7 to 11 pupils have more opportunities to practice their basic number skills and to reinforce previous learning. In a Year 11 class this strategy was used to recap work on ratio and proportion, an area of weakness identified in recent testing.
113. Whilst pupils in all years have made good progress since entering the school, their current progress is more variable. It is at least satisfactory and where the teacher is experienced good. In most lessons pupils are attentive and try hard. They want to do well. Lower attaining pupils do well, especially when the teaching is matched closely to their individual needs. However in some classes the teachers show a lack of awareness of the strategies identified by the learning support department to support pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils are aware of how well they are doing and of their minimum target grades for national tests and examinations. They are less aware of what they need to do to improve. Whilst books are regularly marked, teachers give very little feedback to pupils on how to improve, and not enough attention is given to corrections. The use of key mathematical words in lessons is not systematic enough to ensure all pupils use them with ease and understanding.
114. For the last two years boys have done better than girls in national tests for 14 year olds and in summer 2002 better than girls at the higher GCSE A*-C grades. This is against the national trend,

where boys perform slightly below girls, and also the trend in the school. The mathematics faculty has carefully analysed these results. Results for 14 year olds in 2002 reflect a slightly better intake of boys. At GCSE in summer 2002 a small number of girls underachieved. Information available in the school and classroom observation indicate no specific reasons for these differences. Boys and girls respond equally in lessons. Most teachers implement the school's strategy of boys and girls sitting next to each other as part of its action plan to improve the performance of boys. The school has a lower than average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English. Lesson observation indicates appropriate class placements and these pupils work well.

115. Teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons seen were satisfactory or better, with a third good or very good. Two lessons were unsatisfactory. The teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons carefully, and have good relationships with pupils. This leads to an orderly learning environment in most classes, and pupils take good advantage of the competent teaching they receive. By the end of a Year 10 algebra lesson, pupils successfully solved more complex equations because of the clear structured development of different types of equation by the class teacher. This included good strategies to support those pupils whose previous learning was not secure. In all year groups, the clear schemes of work at different ability levels and the regular testing and monitoring of pupils' attainment ensure that teachers, whether new or longstanding, can build on work previously covered and revise areas of weakness. Homework is an essential element of each lesson and contributes well to pupils' learning. It is faculty practice to set at least a small amount each lesson. Teachers often use the marking and recap of this at the beginning of each lesson to check what pupils know and can do. They adjust their teaching programme accordingly.
116. Pupils make good or better progress in their learning when teachers time their lessons well and use a range of resources and teaching approaches to motivate and interest them. For example in a Year 7 lesson with a small group of below average pupils, the well-planned structure of the lesson and the use of a range of materials from the National Numeracy Strategy kept this group of pupils on task and enthusiastic about their learning. The starter, by the use of individual white boards, involved all pupils in the question and answer session to revise previous work on averages. Each pupil showed his or her answers to the teacher for each question. The teacher was able to check quickly pupils' ability to recall previous work and to explain any errors. Previous learning was consolidated well. Simple graphical work which followed was based on pupils' journey times to school. Good clear instructions and the use of the support teacher helped most pupils to be successful. Sufficient time was left to clearly set homework and to recap pupils' learning. Good use of praise throughout kept pupils motivated and on task.
117. The good use of the new computer room and the interactive white board are beginning to support effectively pupils' learning. In a Year 9 lesson, well prepared examples on loci, projected onto the interactive whiteboard, introduced pupils clearly to the concept of the path traced out by a moving object (locus). This enabled the pupils to move quickly to the investigation of different loci in pairs and to accomplish a lot of work in the lesson. The current data-handling project in Year 7, where pupils manipulate and explore a database about themselves on the computer, creates interest and enthusiasm. However much other data-handling work does not involve pupils collecting and analysing information of relevance to themselves or the world around them.
118. Although teachers plan lessons carefully, they do not always deliver them well enough to promote the best possible learning by pupils. Teaching is satisfactory but in some lessons opportunities are missed to involve pupils in practical activities, the exploration of possible strategies to solve a problem, or a discussion of results. Questioning does not probe sufficiently pupils' learning by asking them to explain their answers. For example in one lesson, pupils had measured the circumference and diameter of circular objects for homework. However, the teacher did not use this information to explore with pupils the relationship between the two measurements. Whilst pupils successfully carried out subsequent calculations with the relevant formula, their understanding of its application to circles was limited.
119. The leadership and management of the faculty are very effective. The head of faculty is

knowledgeable, hard working, and very supportive of all members of the faculty. Her own teaching is a very good model for other members of the faculty. She has clear priorities for raising pupil attainment further, and has good strategies to ensure this happens. Challenging targets are set for achievement in national tests and examinations. Pupils' attainment and progress are regularly monitored through tests, half-termly analysis of pupils' books and classroom observation. The well written faculty handbook is helpful to both new and longer standing members of staff. It makes expectations of classroom practice clear. The teachers in the faculty, the majority new to the school in the last year, are committed and hard working. The school's priority on training and staff development will support the development of their classroom practice. This is essential in order to maintain the standards and progress currently achieved. The school has gone through a number of changes since the last inspection. Given this, the recent better performance of pupils in national tests and examinations, and the difficulties in recruiting mathematics staff, the improvement in the faculty's work has been satisfactory.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improvements to standards over the most recent years
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision
- Some excellent and very good teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistencies in teaching and learning for all ages
- Focus on the quality of learning for pupils aged 15 and 16
- Standards in physics
- Better information and communication technology, both provision and use

120. Standards in science have improved since 2001 for pupils aged 11 to 16. Standards have risen in the national tests taken at age 14, and in GCSE, taken at age 16. Overall progress and achievement year by year is satisfactory. Most Year 11 students take the Double Award GCSE examination. A group of high-attaining students, about 16 per cent of the total cohort, take GCSE in all three sciences of physics, chemistry and biology. The overall attainment of the cohort was in line with national averages in 2001. Attainment in the double award GCSE examination was below national average in 2001. The results for 2002 show significant improvements in double award GCSE. Attainment in the three separate sciences in 2001 was overall in line with national averages, with exceptional results in biology. The results for 2002 show that this standard was maintained for chemistry and biology, but was seriously reduced for physics.
121. The results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below national averages. Attainment at levels 6 and above was below average. In that year, the standard was well below similar schools. The results for 2002 show higher results, including much better outcomes at levels 6 and above, for high-attaining pupils. There is no consistent pattern to the differences in outcomes for boys and girls, over recent years.
122. The standards of work seen and pupils' achievements in lessons were in line with national standards in the most recent year. The grouping of pupils according to their previous attainment and learning needs is used well, so that the level of work set matches pupils' capabilities. A good example of this is the opportunity for gifted and talented pupils to take three science GCSE subjects. Another example is the opportunity for Year 11 pupils with special educational needs to work in a small group, well supported by their science teacher and a learning support assistant. This arrangement is influential in extending these pupils' achievement and interest in science. Lesson by lesson, care is taken by most teachers to provide suitable work, although there is some inconsistency in achieving the best match for all pupils.

123. Overall, the progress since the previous inspection divides into two parts. In the years following the last inspection, progress was initially unsatisfactory. In the last two years it has been much better, with the result that in Key Stage 4, the department added significantly to the standards pupils achieved and is building successfully on the scientific knowledge they brought with them from primary schools. Hence, although standards are currently only as good as they were at the time of the last inspection, the serious dip which occurred has been rectified. The value added by the school is now well above average, with real signs of improvement overall. There has recently been significant improvement to schemes of work, and teachers now have much better opportunities to learn from the results of monitoring and evaluation of their work. Many of the difficulties the subject experienced in sustaining and developing good standards came from staffing problems which have now been overcome.
124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. The inconsistency in teaching and learning is, however, significant, and lessons range from excellent to unsatisfactory. There was an isolated instance of poor learning. Instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning make most impact on progress in Years 10 and 11. The weaknesses are the relatively slow pace of work and the limited effort made by pupils. Teachers sometimes restrict the demands they make, often as a result of the need to use too much time to deal with pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Even well-planned, firm and expert teaching does not always deal with poor behaviour, nor overcome low levels of interest and short spans of concentration. The very good teaching sets suitably hard tasks, promotes interest and fosters a growing independence about learning. In those circumstances, pupils gain substantial extra knowledge and understanding.
125. The inconsistencies in teaching and learning also apply to pupils aged 11 to 14, though differently. In this key stage, the unsatisfactory teaching involves unchallenging targets, so that some pupils lose interest in their work and underachieve. In contrast, the best teaching is excellent for this age group, as it is for all the others. Highest standards are demanded immediately pupils enter the room. The planning ensures a fascinating variety of methods, with rigorous assessment and feedback throughout. Pupils are inspired to give of their very best. They enjoy every aspect of their work, particularly the well planned investigations.
126. The department recognises the importance of supporting learning by out-of-class activities and the teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop an interest in science. For example, there is some good display of scientific themes in the science area and the teachers run well-attended and much appreciated lunchtime activities which give pupils an opportunity to experience non-curricular aspects of science. One such science club held during the lunch hour had more than forty pupils in attendance and their enthusiasm for their work was evident. The school also promotes pupils' interest in science by encouraging successful participation in inter-school competitions.
127. Other factors have a bearing on standards. Recently, important steps have been taken to provide good leadership, for example, to ensure that the staff apply the points learnt from the extensive monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision. The high proportion of new science staff has been inducted effectively and current staff are managed effectively. These strengths are a much-needed improvement after a period of high staff turnover. Leadership and management of the science department are now satisfactory overall. Technician staff, a stable element in the department, provides an excellent service. The innovation of providing the single award GCSE course for a very few pupils is not yet a well-integrated part of their new vocational package. There is a lack of provision, and hence learning, using information and communication technology in science: teachers are ready to resolve this. Assessment systems are thorough, and used well for grouping pupils and setting targets. Pupils recently arrived in this country are progressing very well in science, including learning the technical vocabulary and scientific methods needed to make good progress using newly acquired English.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge of their subject
- Good planning and class management, allowing all students to make good progress
- Teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work to include greater awareness of spiritual and moral aspects of selected themes
- Pace and productivity in some Year 11 groups
- Opportunities for raising further the standards amongst the most gifted and talented.

128. In 2001, teachers assessed students' standards at the age of 14 as above the level of expectation for their age. This was not confirmed by work seen during the inspection. In 2002, teachers assessed students' standards at the age of 14 as being in line with expectation and this is confirmed by work seen during the inspection. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* to C in 2001 was well above the national average and continued the trend for results to be very good. Students made much better progress than had been expected. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* to C in 2002 was well below the national average with students having made much less progress than was expected.

129. By the end of Year 9, students are working at the level expected for their age and have made good progress when taking into account standards of work when they entered the school. Students with special educational needs make similarly good progress comparable to that of their classmates. Gradual improvement is noticeable through the key stage, evident in the increasing control in the uses of pencil and understanding of colour. Higher attaining students draw sensitively and use tone effectively to make their self-portraits look three-dimensional. Texture is created well to show the differences between curly and straight hair and eyes in some pictures look shiny.

130. By the end of Year 11, students are working at a level expected for their age and have made satisfactory progress in relation to their standards of work at the end of Year 9. Students of all levels show that they understand how to work independently to research themes and use a variety of methods to record what they know. High attaining students show good development of ideas, relating them to the work of established artists, for example relating the work of Van Gogh to their own studies of local landscapes and being inspired by the work of J.M.W. Turner in their studies of skies.

131. Students behaved well in all classes at both key stages. They showed interest and enthusiasm for their work. This is because teachers use appropriate teaching styles and have very good class management. Relationships are good between students and with the teacher, creating a pleasant atmosphere in the art areas. Consistently good teaching is responsible for the good learning that takes place in all years. Strengths lie in the good quality attention given to students in lessons, occasionally enhanced by learning support assistants, ensuring good progress is made by all students including those with special educational needs.

132. All teachers have strong subject specialist knowledge, which benefits all pupils but especially those in the sixth form. The effective use of visual aids and practical demonstrations helps all students to understand the aims of the lesson and to rise to the high expectations all teachers have of them. Occasionally pace slackens and productivity is slow in some groups in Year 11 which, if allowed to continue, will affect marks for course work. Marking of work is consistently supportive and constructive across the department and the key stages and relates to National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 and to examination criteria at Key Stage 4. Teachers regularly record assessment data to chart students' progress. This process supports learning by giving early indications of underachievement and makes progress easier to understand for students and their parents. Teaching in the sixth form was often very good.

133. Staffing changes have been considerable over the last two years, with three teachers in the head of department role and the other two teachers new to teaching and the school. These fluctuations account for the sharp dip in exam results in 2002, when standards historically had been very high. However, staffing is now stable with three good teachers with strong subject knowledge, supported by a technician for 20 hours a week. The new head of department has a clear vision of where he would like the department to be in five years time, supported in great detail by the proposal for Visual Arts School status. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory, although many systems are newly or not entirely in place. For example improved access recently to computers means that work using information and communication technology will be included far more in future projects and planning for this is good. There are good assessment and monitoring systems in place already. The schemes of work that have been reviewed are comprehensive whilst others are being evaluated and are in need of being made more topical in Key Stage 4 for example, by including some issues related to spiritual and moral aspects of the curriculum. The department is set to be moved forward by a head of department who leads and manages it well.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching
- Good leadership under a new head of department and good teamwork amongst the teachers
- Good emphasis on the designing and evaluation elements of the curriculum
- Good computer facilities

Areas for improvement

- Computer control technology
- Quality and quantity of hand and machine tools and other teaching equipment
- The buildings, to increase safe space for practical work and provide better dust extraction and ventilation
- Poor facilities for practical work which impede further improvements to learning
- Insufficient amount of technician time in food technology.

134. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in all the subjects of design and technology combined (resistant materials, systems and control, graphic products, textiles, food technology) is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who passed in the range A* to G is also below the national average. Pupils studying graphics did better, with ten per cent of the pupils achieving an A* or A grade. In GCSE examination courses girls consistently out-perform boys.

135. The faculty has seen a number of staff changes since the last OfSTED inspection and as a consequence has not maintained its position within the school in terms of performance and direction. Much of the good practice and structures in place at the time of the last OfSTED inspection were lost due to changes in leadership, staffing and the curriculum. A new head of faculty started in September 2001 and standards in the subject are now rising again.

136. In recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment was above the national average. Standards are above national expectations in the work seen of the younger pupils between the ages of 11 and 14. This is the consequence of an improved scheme of work and the smaller classes for this age range. However, the pupils lack experience of control technology, particularly in writing a sequence of programmable commands to enable a computer to detect input signals from sensors and then to switch devices such as lights and motors on and off to control mechanisms such as a model of traffic lights or a mechanised level crossing.

137. In Year 9 they know, for example, that different ratios of fat and water produce pastries of different

taste and textures. They can design and make such things as a flaky pastry product by raising the fat content of the pastry mix. In evaluating the effects of what they have done, they can successfully complete a tasking chart and star diagrams to analyse texture preferences. Working in another medium, they are able to produce designs for the predicted casing shapes of the next generation of mobile phones. They know how to present their ideas graphically in three elevations and produce a prototype that they model from Styrofoam.

138. Overall, the standard of work is below national expectations at Key Stage 4. However, there are strong indications of improvement in the work seen. Older pupils in some subjects, for example in systems and control and graphic products are already working to standards that are in line with the national expectations. Year 11 pupils working in the textiles option can, for example, design a dress for a specific function. They research market preferences and trends and experiment with combinations of cloth of different weights, finishes and colours. They also consider their washing properties. They record their design ideas and explain how they arrived at the final design which is then made into the final product. Their skills in both hand and machine sewing are of a high standard.
139. The quality of teaching is good and there are high expectations for learning. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They organise their pupils and manage practical work to good standards. Pupils of all attainment are supported and encouraged, enabling all to be fully included and to experience success, despite the fact that at times poor equipment impedes learning opportunities for some, for example, blunt saws are less successful in learning how to control the tool properly. Some pupils may have to wait a long time to get access to machine tools.
140. The staff work well as team and team teaching strategies are used very effectively to support pupils when they are working on their individual design projects. Much of the learning involves pupils working individually in construction or design. While they are engaged in this work they all receive valuable help, advice and support from their teacher. They are encouraged to embark on projects that are challenging but within their reach. In this way, all pupils are fully included in the learning process. This also ensures that gifted and talented pupils are also suitably challenged. Homework is set regularly and the assignments are often discussed with the class in advance to ensure that they know what is expected of them
141. Very good teaching was seen in Year 11 when pupils were individually designing a casing for their electronics project. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher engendered excitement by assisting pupils to develop original ideas and open up many possibilities. This was also reflected in the wide range of electronic projects the pupils had chosen. Another teacher working with the pupils at the same time helped them to use a computer to turn their ideas into 3D designs that could be viewed from different angles.
142. It is the synergy between the teachers' enthusiasm and the pupils' interest in practical subjects throughout the faculty that gives rise to good quality learning. In all lessons pupils have a very positive attitude to their work. Many are enthusiastic and they clearly enjoy their studies, taking pride in the quality of their practical and written work. In all classes pupils co-operate, sharing and using equipment sensibly and safely. Pupils are keen to demonstrate and explain the things that they have designed and made.
143. Before September 2001 schemes of work had become fragmented, with teachers of different design specialisms working individually. Under new leadership, substantial progress has been made towards creating a cohesive scheme of work for Years 7 to 9. There is also an integrated assessment system to improve the monitoring of pupil progress. For Years 10 and 11, there is a wide range of options. The scheme of work now meets National Curriculum requirements and it is still being developed to meet the expectations of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's exemplary scheme. Currently, younger pupils have insufficient experience of computer control technology. They do not learn how to write a procedure to get a computer to detect events from input sensors and act upon them to switch devices on or off and control event. There has been an improvement in the schemes of work and their co-ordination since the last inspection.

144. ICT is used effectively to develop and enhance older pupils' work. Those studying textiles use computer aided machining to produce stencils for screen-printing fabrics. Pupils studying graphic communication and resistant materials use computer aided design to rotate their three dimensional designs. Many of the pupils use a word processor application to present their work often illustrated with word art and pictures. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection.
145. Opportunities are missed to develop literacy skills by recording key words on the board, although teachers use appropriate technical language, which helps pupils when they come to explain their ideas. Numeracy is developed progressively as pupils first learn to measure accurately using metric units and then to draw to scale, moving on to creating computer aided graphical representations of their designs. Social and moral issues are discussed where the opportunity arises. For example pupils are encouraged to consider the recycling possibilities of materials before selecting them for their designs.
146. The standard of assessment is good. Younger pupils keep a process diary and older pupils a logbook for their work. These are assessed regularly. Assessments matched to National Curriculum levels of attainment are made at the end of every unit of study. This is based on an assessment of their project work and an end of unit test. Older pupils are given valuable guidance and advice on their coursework for their GCSE projects. There has been much improvement in the procedures for assessment during the last year. The pupils' progress is monitored. The curriculum and the pace of the work are adjusted to suit the pupils needs and to enhance the quality of learning.
147. The recently appointed head of faculty leads this subject very well. The staff work well as a team and there is a clear and effective improvement plan. This corporate effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning is already beginning to show in the rising standards of work of the younger pupils. The resistant materials, textiles, graphics and food technology facilities and resources are inadequate. In some classes the workshops are too small for the number of pupils when they are engaged in practical work. This has safety implications. The resistant materials workshops have poor ventilation and insufficient dust extraction. During the inspection they were not cleaned to a satisfactory standard. The part time technician provides vital and valued support.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The good standards reached at both key stages and the commitment to raise them further
- The very high standard of coursework
- Leadership and teamwork among the teachers
- Improvements since the last inspection in fieldwork and the use of ICT
- The quality of teachers' planning and subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of activities which especially challenge the most gifted and talented pupils
- Consistent use of individual education plans in lesson planning and teaching
- The use of assessment to develop pupils self-evaluation and target-setting.

148. The standards reached by students by the age of 14 were above the national expectation in 2001, as reported in the statutory teacher assessment results. The GCSE results were above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. The proportion of A* to B grades was well above the national average and this reflects the high quality of pupils' coursework. It was also well above the proportion of such grades achieved in other subjects. There is no significant difference in the standards attained by boys and girls. There is also no consistent pattern of underachievement by specific minority groups from year to year. Students with special

educational needs and with English as an additional language achieve well.

149. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 14. All acquire a broad geographical vocabulary and are able to use technical terms with accuracy. They can describe geographical features in detail and explain the underlying processes. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were able to describe the characteristics of fast food shops and explain their location requirements. In a Year 8 lesson, they could explain the processes of coastal erosion in Dorset and consider alternative viewpoints about coastal management. Their written work shows that they can balance the impact of physical and economic factors on the environment, as in the building of a by-pass or the expansion of Gatwick airport. There are fieldwork opportunities in the Paddock Wood area to develop the skills of geographical enquiry and evidence of individual research or use of the internet.
150. Pupils make generally good progress, always at least satisfactory, between the ages of 14 and 16. They understand the impact of economic changes on the physical landscape and on the social and cultural life of an area. Year 10 pupils explained the advantages for Brazil of developing its inland iron ore reserves while recognising the environmental effects of destroying the tropical forest. Pupils can also analyse the consequences for urban planning of rapid change over time, as in the provision of basic services in Cairo. The GCSE coursework in the local area shows that they are able to set an objective, conduct their own surveys and evaluate their methodology.
151. Students with special educational needs made good progress in two Year 7 and 8 lessons, where the learning support assistant kept them on task by explaining new vocabulary clearly and by checking their understanding of each stage of an exercise. Individual education plans are not yet consistently used to inform lesson planning. Asylum seekers seen did not have specialist English language support. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress but would benefit from the provision of more regular enrichment work. For most GCSE classes, the schemes of work contain a range of resources for foundation and higher level pupils.
152. Geography makes a good contribution to the teaching of numeracy and ICT. Statistical data from a range of sources is interpreted accurately and presented through a range of charts and graphs. In a Year 9 lesson, the whole class worked in a computer room to produce Excel graphs showing the relationship between crude birth rate and development. All GCSE coursework is word processed and in Year 8 pupils publish their own newspaper reports. The skills of literacy are less well taught. There are good opportunities for reading and for contributions to discussions but students do not write well for their age, which has an effect on their coursework.
153. The overall quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and was good or very good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. Planning is very good in both content and timing. Explanations of new concepts are very clear and concise, so that pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding. The teachers' enthusiasm for geography is shared with the pupils who are motivated and mostly sustain concentration, although some distracting behaviour was seen towards the end of lessons. Homework is regularly set and marked, although the positive comments do not always clearly tell pupils how to make improvements, set targets and evaluate their own work.
154. In the good lessons seen, expectations were high and lesson objectives for all pupils were clearly stated from the outset. There was a brisk pace throughout and a range of challenging activities, which were planned to take account of pupils' different styles of learning. They responded well to opportunities to work in pairs or groups, as in a Year 8 lesson on Spurn Head. Role play and decision making exercises developed aspects of citizenship and contributed to pupils' cultural and moral development. In those lessons that lacked momentum, there was insufficient challenge to the high attainers.
155. The department is very well and conscientiously led. There is clear direction as to how the curriculum should be implemented and documentation is comprehensive. Teamwork is good and support and guidance offered to all colleagues, new or experienced. Since the last inspection, there has been good progress in extending the fieldwork programme in both key stages and in the

use of ICT. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is now regularly carried out and assessment in Years 7-9 is based on a secure knowledge of National Curriculum levels. Departmental planning reflects the overall aims of the school improvement plan.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching in GCSE classes is good
- The department is managed well and assessment procedures are good
- Computers are used effectively to promote learning
- The contribution of history to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good
- Pupils are achieving well because there is a clear focus on developing skills in history.

Areas for improvement

- The occasional poor management of pupils and use of resources in some lessons adversely affects the learning of a significant minority of pupils. In classes affected, behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory
- Assessment information is not always used to match tasks and resources to the needs of pupils
- There is insufficient opportunity for independent learning
- Work in Year 7 does not always build on what pupils have learned in Year 6.

156. Attainment at the age of 14 in history is close to that expected of pupils of similar age. Although the higher attaining pupils can reach the higher levels required, the majority of pupils show a level of knowledge and understanding close to that found in other schools. Pupils are clearly achieving well in relation to their standard on entry to the school. Boys and girls achieve equally well although pupils with special educational needs do not progress as well as other pupils.

157. In GCSE examinations, attainment in 2001 was in line with the national average. The number of pupils who were awarded the higher grades was lower than in other schools in 2002, but the trend over the last three years has been for results to be close to the national average. The numbers of pupils taking the subject has increased noticeably in the last two years. In 2002 the results of some girls was disappointing as was the quality of some coursework. Standards in the present Year 11 are satisfactory and it is clear that pupils in GCSE classes, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Both standards and the number of pupils choosing to take the subject at a higher level have improved since the last inspection. Standards of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are high because of the quality of most teaching within the department and because of the positive attitudes of pupils.

158. In Year 9 the majority of pupils are able to talk about the topics that they are studying and they have an understanding of the ways in which historians find out about the past. Their knowledge of key developments is sound because they are able to use a variety of resources to find out about the past. Many of them make very good use of appropriate web sites and clearly understand that this is a vital source of information. The written work of higher attaining pupils is good and in discussion individuals show a very high level of understanding. They are able to fit their studies into a wider context and to show how economic and other factors link together, for example in comparing the environmental effects of different power sources used during the Industrial Revolution. Lower attaining pupils find written sources difficult but can clearly understand why a cigarette advertisement showing soldiers in the trenches might be an unreliable source of evidence about their real living conditions.

159. In Year 11 the majority of pupils have a secure knowledge of the topics that they have studied. For example, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand about the conflicts of the twentieth century and about social and political change such as the emancipation of women. The highest attaining pupils are able to use of documents and extracts well and to undertake research in preparation for course work. Pupils of all levels of attainment understand

the motivation of individual leaders for example when considering the objectives of Stalin in 1945. The highest attaining pupils clearly show the level of skills, knowledge and understanding to reach the higher grades at GCSE. Individuals with special educational needs contribute well to discussion showing that they understand the motives of those who opposed Hitler and tried to assassinate him.

160. Attitudes to the subject are good. Most pupils work hard and contribute well in lessons. They enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. They enjoy visits to places of historical interest such as the battlefield sites in Belgium. The response of boys is often good and they are very eager to contribute. However in some classes of average or lower attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 attitudes are unsatisfactory in that pupils do not use time well and are poorly behaved. Where behaviour and response are unsatisfactory or poor it is a result of weaknesses in teaching.
161. Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly in GCSE classes. Teaching in one lesson was unsatisfactory and in another poor but the majority of the teaching was good or better. One excellent lesson was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge. There is now a more consistent focus on providing the opportunity for the improvement of skills in literacy. The identification of subject specific vocabulary, a good variety of tasks and help for those of lower potential attainment are features of some lessons. Good use is being made of computers but they are not available in the classrooms yet. The department focuses very well on the teaching of skills and this enable pupils to achieve well despite weakness in literacy. Homework is set consistently. In the best lessons pupils are actively learning, working in groups and using a variety of resources. They all compete projects but they do not have enough opportunities for really independent learning or research and not enough use is made of the school library. There is not enough awareness of the range of ability. Higher attaining pupils are not always given that extra challenge and lower attaining pupils are not always given enough help. Support for pupils who are learning English as an additional language is inconsistent. Assessment through questioning is used well by some teachers and assessment information is managed well but this information is not always used to match tasks and resources to the attainment of pupils. There is insufficient support in class for pupils with special educational needs and because of this their progress is sound rather than good in Key Stage 3. In a few lessons learning is unsatisfactory or poor because of poor pupil and classroom management and use of unsuitable resources
162. Overall planning is good and the subject clearly makes a good contribution to citizenship and pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Good use is made of the local area, for example pupils visit the local war memorial to gain a better understanding of the number of casualties. At the beginning of Year 7 pupils learn to use a range of skills and work is based on discovery methods. However links with work at Key Stage 2 have not been developed and because of this some pupils are not settling as well as they should. The department has identified and taken steps to rectify the problem that occurred with unsatisfactory coursework, affecting the performance of girls.
163. Management of the department is good. Curriculum development has been effective and schemes of work are very detailed. Support for teachers in training is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. This has been achieved by a head of department who has a clear vision of the way forward and an understanding of the potential of both the literacy strategy and computers to raise standards in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The ICT curriculum now meets statutory requirements both in the discrete subject and also across the curriculum.

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils and among all staff provide a positive environment for learning.
- New allocations of time and resources give potential for improvement in standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in ICT in all year groups and particularly in public examinations.
- How well pupils can use their judgement to research, plan, analyse and evaluate their work.
- ICT across the curriculum, so that its use in all subject areas meets recent National Curriculum requirements and develops pupils' abilities to make independent decisions.

164. Examination results in information technology are well below national average both in Year 11 and in the sixth form. Fewer than half of the national proportion of pupils gained grades A* to C in the combined information technology GCSE examination in 2001. In 2001 and 2002 pupils' results were lower than in all of their other subjects. Girls performed better than boys, but there were substantially more boys than girls in the groups. AVCE results in the sixth form were very low in 2002, but a much higher proportion of girls than boys attained a pass grade. The GNVQ Part 1 taken by Year 12 students shows a similar picture, with only two students, both girls, attaining one pass and one merit.
165. The clearest reason for poor performance is the previous unsatisfactory arrangement for ICT. Pupils in every year group from Year 9 to Year 13 are learning or revising basic skills before they can begin to work at the level suitable for their year. All of them have had at least one year without ICT lessons. The gap ranges from the present Year 9 who had no ICT lessons in Year 8 to the situation in Year 12 where half of the group seen had not studied ICT as a subject in any year since they joined the school. This lack of continuity has had an impact on teaching and learning. The school has recognised this so new arrangements now in force provide ICT lessons for all of Years 7 to 9. ICT is still only an option for Years 10 to 13 whose experience is otherwise confined to its growing use in other subjects.
166. Pupils' standards in ICT throughout the school are consistently well below expectation, and so their achievement by the end of Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The same features of performance are common to all year groups. Almost all pupils throughout the main school and in GNVQ option groups have skills that are at least satisfactory but they have poor awareness of why, when and how best to use ICT. The highest performing pupils seen during the inspection are confident using internet, downloading material to word-processing and multimedia software. The majority are able to do so with close guidance and support. A substantial proportion of lower attainers and those with special educational needs have little confidence or experience, needing step by step instructions from teachers. They follow the same course as the others, working more slowly and with more guidance. Girls are less confident than boys but are more thoughtful in their approach to the work, so that their standards are higher throughout the school. Pupils who speak English as their second language make progress that is better than expected, producing high quality written work. Attainment on entry to the school varies widely according to pupils' prior experience of ICT but is improving each year as they gain greater access to ICT in their primary schools. Only a very few of the present Year 7 state that they have rarely used computers.
167. By the end of Year 9, pupils work well below expectation. Pupils learning to create a web site using desktop publishing software can follow instructions when designing a page. A few of the highest attainers can write programming instructions to create the site, with one pupil thinking about the relationship between the content, the purpose of the site and the design of its appearance. This level of thinking is unusual. Almost all of the others work well below expectation in that they design pages to please themselves without considering the needs of their audience. This is also true of pupils throughout the lower school in Years 7 and 8. In other areas of the ICT curriculum their experience is below that expected, for example in simple computer control.
168. Year 11 pupils, following the school's newly introduced GNVQ course, still work well below expectation. Most of them are still catching up with skills that they missed or lost when they had

no ICT lessons in Years 8 and 9. In work seen and in conversations with pupils the majority show a lower than expected knowledge of the purpose of spreadsheets, with lower attainers experiencing problems when writing formulae for simple calculations. A few higher attaining pupils can design a spreadsheet or database for a particular purpose. Two such pupils seen, both boys, can consider the requirements of a task before designing it and can justify their decisions in writing. Pupils can all design a multimedia presentation. A few can describe the needs or preferences of their potential users but the remainder give little consideration to the target audience. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11, with no formal lessons, use ICT to support their learning in other subjects, either independently or in their lessons. All do so at lower levels than expected for their age.

169. Sixth form students have good basic ICT skills by Year 13, but their work is below expected levels because they do not analyse the requirements, plan in the light of research or show the stages of evaluation and redesign. Their commentary is almost wholly descriptive rather than analytical. Most of the students in Year 12 either gained low grades in Year 11 or have no prior experience of IT lessons. They are still consolidating their basic skills across the range of applications in the course. Students who already possess such skills show the same defects in their work as in Year 13.
170. Throughout the school the majority of pupils enjoy ICT. The general picture is of positive relationships with each other and with the teachers, resulting in a good working atmosphere in almost all classes. In a few classes, poor behaviour prevents pupils from making the expected progress. Pupils are keen to the extent that large numbers come to work in the computer club run by ICT staff in one or more rooms every lunchtime, and some come after school to extra lessons.
171. Teaching seen in lessons during the inspection was good in almost all lessons for pupils of all ages, so that pupils made good progress in development of basic skills. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, building on the group's prior experience. They give clear instructions, making good use of interactive whiteboards and supporting instructions with written sheets. Teachers expect pupils to work hard so that pupils quickly understand and learn how to use the software. The pupils' learning over time is less good than in each lesson because of the lack of balance in the curriculum between skills development and teaching of judgement about their application. Whereas teachers have very good knowledge of processes, their awareness of course requirements for national curriculum and GNVQ is unsatisfactory. They under-emphasise the importance of research, planning and evaluation of the set tasks. They ask pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form to use discrimination in applying ICT to situations, but are only beginning to teach them how to do so. The result of this concentration on basic skills is the GNVQ and AVCE groups' failure to learn the importance of systematic research, planning and evaluation of their work.
172. Although teachers give good individual help during lessons and helpful advice at the end of an assignment, the department's assessment practice does not ensure that pupils know what they have to do in order to improve. Regular weekly marking does not give clear guidance for improvement. Teachers do not set specific targets. Most teachers do not plan their lessons on the basis of the needs of individuals in classes. They do not challenge the highest attainers, sometimes holding them back until the rest of the class have understood the lesson, but one small group of boys was encouraged during the inspection to work at a much higher level than their less experienced peers. Learning support assistants give valuable help to some pupils. There is no specific track for pupils with special educational needs, who therefore struggle to understand and to apply the basic skills. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, in lower ability sets, the teacher allows poor behaviour by some pupils to prevent the remainder of the group from learning. As a result pupils with special educational needs make poor progress in ICT. This contrasts with the very supportive help written by one teacher specifically for pupils who speak English as an additional language, as a result of which they make good progress.
173. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements but is still thin, bringing about low standards across year groups from Year 10 to Year 13 where experience for most pupils is confined to

application of ICT in other subjects. The school has improved use of ICT to help learning across the curriculum, covering during the year of the inspection specialist areas of data logging, modelling and control, but the standard required is at lower levels than expected in the national curriculum orders for IT. There is no reliable overview to ensure that all pupils receive the whole of the ICT curriculum. Nevertheless pupils in all subjects except music use ICT. In mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and geography teachers design particularly effective tasks. The sixth form do not yet have specific teaching in the key skill of IT, either separately or in their chosen subjects.

174. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection, although standards in ICT have yet to benefit. This department has grown rapidly since then, and now has enough specialists to cover the present arrangements. Teachers work closely together to share their different areas of expertise. They show a high level of commitment to pupils in the popular computer clubs running daily. They are aware of the areas of their practice that they need to develop and have already begun to take steps to improve. In this they are well supported by the school senior management and governors who have invested heavily in the subject. The school now has sufficient computers and other equipment to cover the whole of the National Curriculum, coupled with reliable technical support from the network manager and ICT technician. The potential for improvement is good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **very good** in **Spanish**, **good** in **German** and **satisfactory** in **French**.

Strengths

- Results in GCSE and in national tests at the end of Year 9 in French are above the national average. Boys' results are particularly impressive.
- The subject leader is an excellent role model in the classroom and has a clear strategic vision for the department.
- All teachers are well qualified multi-linguists and, in the best lessons, use very little English.
- There is very good use of new learning technologies to improve language learning, especially in the sixth form, where it also broadens the range of opportunities for students.
- Pupils' attitudes towards language learning are very positive, with some Year 7 to 9 pupils being outstanding in this respect.

Areas for improvement

- In French, teachers often use too much unnecessary English and attempts to create an authentic French atmosphere are ineffective.
- In some lessons, teachers do not plan to enable pupils, especially those with special educational needs, to learn effectively.
- Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 do not help teachers to ensure that all pupils progress from year to year.
- Data about pupils' previous learning is not well enough used to inform planning and set appropriately challenging expectations for all pupils.

175. In 2001 Year 9 pupils' achievements were almost in line with national expectation in French and German. In 2002, Year 9 pupils were assessed well above the national average with over two thirds of the year group at National Curriculum Level 5 or above. Both boys' and girls' standards are well above the national average at Level 5 and the boys' achievement at Level 6 **in German** is also well above. The difference between girls' and boys' achievement this year is similar to the one across the country.

176. Standards in 2001 in Year 11 in GCSE examinations were above average in French with girls doing better than did the boys. In German, GCSE results are below the national average with both boys and girls doing significantly less well in German than in their other subjects.

177. The pattern of language learning has changed since the arrival of the new Head of Department. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 study French. Pupils in the upper band study an additional language – either Spanish or German. Current standards in Year 9 are, for the majority of pupils, in line with those expected nationally in French. Some lower ability pupils have limited language skills and are able only to retain single words or very short phrases. The standard of these bottom set groups, where pupils study only one language, is well below the nationally expected standard for their age group. Although pupils studying Spanish in Year 9 as their second language are currently below national level, this is because, due to previous staffing issues, they have only begun the language in Year 8. Standards seen in Spanish in Year 7 and 8, where pupils are studying two languages, are well above national average and some pupils are on target to reach exceptional standards when they reach Year 9.

178. The particularly high standards seen in Spanish in Key Stage 3 are as a result of teaching that ranges from good to excellent. The features of the very best teaching are swift pace, high expectations and very challenging work. Teachers of Spanish have very high expectations. They expect pupils to speak Spanish exclusively in lessons, following their own example. For example in a Year 7 Spanish lesson pupils, on arrival in the classroom, used Spanish automatically to talk to the teacher and moved quickly through a well sequenced lesson which included days of the week, months, birthdays and the time. As a result of the demanding pace, pupils remained

focussed and sustained high levels of concentration. The pupils clearly enjoyed the lesson and were ambitious about the levels they hoped to achieve by the end of Year 9.

179. Standards of work seen in the exercise books from those upper band pupils studying German were above those expected nationally. Pupils have a secure grammatical base of case endings, word order and tenses, which encourages them to be inventive in their writing.
180. Standards in French are more variable due to the inconsistent teaching. Some pupils are achieving in line with national expectations. However others are underachieving. For example a Year 7 class of very able pupils were not being challenged when they were engaged in a number of different activities at a very basic level when a majority of pupils clearly already had a very good command of the vocabulary being reinforced. Other pupils' learning in French in the lower school is affected by the lack of attention given to individual pupils' specific needs.
181. Currently standards in French in Year 11 are below the standard expected nationally. This is a result of undemanding teaching that did not properly build on knowledge and skills already mastered in earlier years. Although the higher attaining, as seen in examples of coursework, are confident users of the language, willing to take risks and be adventurous in their use of vocabulary and grammatical structures, they were not suitably challenged in lessons. Too often the work in lessons merely consolidates work covered from Years 8 and 9. Pupils were only given opportunities to use pre-learnt phrases as opposed to being encouraged to use the language for their own purpose or apply grammatical rules and manipulate the language. In the unsatisfactory French lessons, and in others where teaching was no better than satisfactory, there are two main weaknesses; use of the spoken language and planning. Firstly, the amount of French which teachers use to conduct the lesson varies too much between classes. Challenge is reduced, critically, for pupils in the higher and middle ranges when the teacher and pupils speak English unnecessarily. Secondly, in some French lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to enable pupils to learn effectively, either because instructions are unclear or the steps which might enable them to meet the challenge are not planned carefully. For example in a Year 10 lesson on free time, pupils were asked to use dictionaries to make a list of hobbies when they clearly already had a wide range of vocabulary on the topic. As a result of the poor planning and unclear expectations, pupils were uninterested and negative and clearly performing below their prior attainment levels.
182. Standards seen in a Year 10 German top set were above national expectations. The teacher, well aware that all the group were above the national average at the end of Year 9, clearly planned to ensure that similar progress would be made in the GCSE work. Again the lesson was conducted almost entirely in German, and pupils responded in a way which clearly indicated that such practice was the norm. The lesson – dealing with school systems in Germany – was very well received by the group in which boys were in the majority. Good use was made of the experience of two pupils who had lived in other countries and the teacher's good rapport with her pupils and her sense of humour were key motivating factors.
183. All teachers in the department are confident users of new technologies. These technologies are used both to improve the presentation of pupils' work and, more impressively, to broaden their linguistic skills. The Internet is used as a good resource for deepening pupils' cultural insight into other countries and cultures. In two Year 8 Spanish lessons, pupils were clearly interested in learning about people from other countries. Their vocabulary had widened as a result of their research and the most able pupils had produced some outstanding projects.
184. Achievement can be affected when teachers do not plan to meet the needs of individuals. As a result pupils lose interest and, at times, become disaffected. In a Year 9 French class, not enough thought had been given to the best use of both a learning support teacher and the foreign language assistant. As a result, learning opportunities were lost. Some inconsistency was seen in marking in the sample of work provided. In some books, there was little evidence of work being marked with a clear intention of providing guidance for pupils to improve their performance. Other books showed that pupils were encouraged to achieve high standards by clear expectations of grammatical accuracy and word order. Marking was sometimes not sufficiently focused on

informing pupils of the standards they have reached and how they can improve.

185. There have been many recent changes in the languages department, which is ably led by an exemplary teacher, who has vision and a clear sense of direction to ensure future successes. The staff of the modern languages department are a committed and enthusiastic team who give freely of their time. The opportunities they create contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development. Bright, interesting and well-presented displays are features of all rooms in the department. The current targets in the departmental development plan are relevant to the ongoing improvement of provision. However some greater detail needs to be provided in the action sections in order to ensure that targets are reached. Systematic checks on the quality of teaching to ensure that the excellent and very good practice seen in some lessons are a feature of all modern language teaching are not yet in place. The department, assisted by the Senior Leadership Team, is starting to use data on each pupils' attainment to identify how well they have progressed and whether standards are high enough. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The commitment of the staff to the improvement in standards of attainment and the raising of the profile of music across the school;
- Very good management of pupil behaviour across all key stages.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in music across all Key Stages, not currently sufficiently supported by secure assessment procedures;
- Schemes of Work and lesson plans, including regular opportunities for the use of ICT and structured singing activities;
- Accommodation for music, ensuring compliance with Health and Safety guidance.

186. There have major changes in the past year with two new members of staff taking up appointment in September 2001. The Department is therefore currently in a state of transition with both members of staff working hard to address a number of areas, including the writing of appropriate schemes of work, the establishment of extra-curricular activities and the management of a variety of resources, including accommodation and instruments. Much has already been achieved although there is still much that needs to be done.

187. Overall standards of attainment are unsatisfactory at all Key Stages. Pupils do not reach the expected levels in lessons or over time. In the recent 2002 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, under half reached the expected levels with the remainder achieving below the expected standard. Only a very small proportion of the students achieved level 6, the higher end of average. Standards of attainment in work seen were unsatisfactory in most lessons. When standards were in line with national expectations, pupils were able to use appropriate subject vocabulary, maintain a part and sing in tune and were able to develop their ideas creatively. In lessons where they were set challenging tasks they made good progress. However, many pupils have the potential to achieve better work.

188. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory in lessons seen. However, the 2002 GCSE results were well below the national average with only one fifth of pupils entered obtaining a higher grade pass. In recent years there have been very low numbers being entered for both GCSE and A/AS Level with some years not entering any candidates at all. There are currently no students studying music GCSE in Year 10 or Music AS Level in Year 12.

189. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Where teaching is particularly strong, teachers

offer clear introductions to lessons. Classroom management is effective with pupils being managed very well. Expectations of behaviour are particularly high and this encourages good relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the curriculum, using appropriate language associated with the subject. However, when teaching is less effective, it is in lessons where work is not sufficiently adjusted to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class, expectations are low of what pupils can achieve and work is not planned using the National Curriculum as an indicator of standards. In some lessons, musical ideas are not taught in an appropriately musical way with symbols and notation preceding sound. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form some lessons are not planned rigorously enough to allow for effective learning to take place. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are consistently good across the Key Stages. No pupils were seen to lose concentration in any lesson. Concentration and interest are good, particularly in lessons where pupils are stretched, their own expectations of what they can achieve are high and where they have the opportunity to discuss and evaluate their work.

190. Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum are barely being met with scant use of ICT and a lack of structured singing work at either Key Stage 3 or 4. A scheme of work has only recently been implemented across the school since the arrival of the new members of staff and the newly devised units of work show very good progression and expectations. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is currently unsatisfactory and undeveloped. The head of department is aware of this and is working hard to identify levels of attainment within the schemes of work. This will enable both teachers to have a shared understanding of standards of achievement in practical work. There is a developing range of appropriate extra curricular activities but at the present time these attract low, but dedicated, numbers of students. There are also a small number of instrumental teachers that visit the school.
191. Leadership and management is satisfactory, with music staff working hard to raise the profile of music across the school. The day to day management of the subject is also satisfactory. Although the subject handbook of guidance to teachers shows good regard for whole school policies, the priorities for the development of music do not place enough emphasis on the strategies needed for raising standards across the curriculum. Although there is the need to increase the ICT facilities for pupils at both Key Stage 3 and 4, there are good number of instruments to support learning including a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, a set of steel pans and a good number of orchestral instruments. Many of these are not yet in full use but offer a good base for future expansion. Accommodation for the subject is poor with much needing to be done to improve the quality and decoration of the teaching, storage, office space and practice rooms as well as the wiring facilities for keyboards. Security is poor.
192. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the raising of the quality of the teaching, the good management of pupil behaviour and the formation of secure schemes of work but much still needs to be done in raising standards of attainment across the school. The appointment, and work, of the new staff should help accelerate this process.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management and positive working relationships
- Induction of new teachers
- Some teaching is outstanding and some is very good
- Exemplary schemes of work and lesson planning in both PE and dance
- Girls' attainment, learning and attitudes to study

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning
- The spreading of good practice to ensure equal entitlement for all pupils
- Aspects of accommodation in PE and dance
- Length of teaching modules in Years 7 to 9

193. Though statutory teacher assessments in 2002 indicate that the pupils' attainment is well above national averages by the end of year 9, observations reveal that overall attainment is in line with the expectation set out in the end of key stage descriptions. Girls' attainment in all strands is better than that of boys and above expectation. In dance, trampolining and gymnastics, for example, girls perform with precision, control and fluency in creating sequences of movements. In soccer, some boys execute volleys and drives effectively, but in both soccer and basketball, passing and the pupils' exploitation of space require further attention. In dance, the pupils' movement memory is impressive. Boys and girls work in unison when required and dance in time to musical stimuli. More able pupils perform with poise and demonstrate an excellent awareness of shape, pathway and direction in both dance and gymnastics. The pupils' ability to plan and evaluate performance is in line with expectation but their competence in assessing their own and each other's performance or to act as a coach or official varies with the level of support provided by the teacher and the co-operation of their peers.
194. In the 2002 GCSE PE examination, attainment was consistent with the national average with 50% of pupils achieving A* to C grades. Though in previous years the percentage has been much higher, the pupils' performance in this examination generally surpassed their own average result in all subjects. The attainment of pupils in year 10 and 11 examination classes is above expectation and in line with expectation in core PE. GCSE candidates define sponsorship in sport and explain the benefits and responsibilities it imposes. They accurately explain the movements possible at different joints using appropriate technical terms, define the functions of the human skeleton and locate and name various muscle groups accurately. They use information gleaned from relevant websites to augment and enhance their coursework folders. More able pupils need further challenges in written work. In netball, girls pass accurately and at pace, using disguise to outwit opponents. They know and apply the rules of the game and compete in a sporting fashion.
195. Results in the 2002 GCSE dance examination were above the national average, with sixty-seven per cent of pupils achieving A* to C grades. In the current Year 10 and 11 examination groups, attainment in dance is above expectation. Pupils make informed comments about set design, lighting and accompaniment in analysing the performance of professional dancers seen on video. They possess a good technical vocabulary and identify the effect of music on pace and mood. They recognise dancing styles and choreographic devices such as unison and canon.
196. The progress of all groups of pupils in acquiring and consolidating knowledge, physical skills and understanding is good. The pace at which boys learn and apply tactics in invasion games and composition in gymnastics is not as good as that of girls, however.
197. Pupils' attitudes towards PE and dance are positive. Although there is some off-task activity, the behaviour of pupils is good overall and very good in girls and in all examination classes. Pupils respect their teachers and co-operate with each other in, for example, supporting a partner in assisted flight in gymnastics and working in groups to produce posters in GCSE theory lessons. In composing sequences in dance and gymnastics, pupils engage in mature discussion and analysis. They make oral contributions confidently but teachers could make greater demands on the accuracy and precision of pupils' responses. The majority of pupils show high levels of concentration and, when required, sustain a heavy physical workload without complaint. Many enjoy PE and dance and attendance at extra-curricular activities is very good. In the minority of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, pupils demonstrate a lack of respect for their teachers and behaviour and concentration are poor.
198. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching. Overall it is good but in a minority of lessons, it is unsatisfactory or poor. Some teaching is outstanding, however. All teachers are

specialists and their subject knowledge is rarely less than good. They know examination requirements and draw information and data from a variety of sources to make subject matter relevant and contemporary. With the notable exceptions of dance and gymnastics, warm up and cool down activities are inadequate.

199. Lesson planning is very good and teachers involve pupils in plenary sessions to test their understanding and promote learning. A wide and appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies is used to motivate and interest pupils. Some is highly innovative and requires dissemination. In a year 8 lesson, for example, an enjoyable warm up activity not only prepared pupils for physical activity but also tested their knowledge of muscle groups. In devising tasks and practices, insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils sustain a physical workload that places demands on muscular endurance and cardiovascular fitness.
200. Pupils are treated respectfully and teachers are quick to introduce humour when an opportunity arises. Greater use could be made of praise in motivating a minority of pupils presenting challenging behaviour. Lessons have good pace and resources are used effectively. Marking in pupils' GCSE folders is exemplary, being comprehensive, sensitive and focused on needs. The department could, however, make a stronger contribution to the school's literacy policy in both practical and theory lessons. Peer assessment is effective when success criteria are shared with pupils and the teacher assists in providing a conducive atmosphere.
201. Dedicated, dynamic leadership, constantly seeking improvement, has a positive effect on both teachers and pupils. Staff appreciate a strong yet sensitive and participative leadership style that has resulted in a shared commitment to further development in the subject. Excellent schemes of work and staff handbooks in both PE and dance provide clear guidelines for the work of staff and assist lesson preparation, particularly for non-specialists in dance. A first class monitoring system for pupil attainment has been introduced and action has been taken to achieve more effective links with the partner primary schools. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements but modules of work in years 7 to 9 need to be studied in greater depth to improve attainment and progress.
202. Accommodation problems, identified at the last inspection, have not yet been rectified but are considered a priority and bids for financial assistance have been sought. All-weather outdoor pitches and improvements to the sports' hall, netball courts and dance studio would improve safety and permit greater usage throughout the year. Action plans are not sufficiently focused on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and sharing some of the exceptional practice and high standards demonstrated by some teachers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good and often very good, and students of all ages enjoy the subject.
- All students in Years 7 to 9 receive a full programme of religious education in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus, and all students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE short course in the subject.
- Good numbers of students follow AS and A2 courses in the sixth form.
- The subject has improved considerably since the last inspection and is continuing to develop well.

Areas for improvement

- Individual lessons do not always make sufficient provision for the differing needs of students.
- There is no general programme of religious education in the sixth form.

203. Changes in the courses followed and the numbers of students following each course mean that

direct comparison of the results achieved in different years is difficult. It is clear, however, that overall standards at GCSE in recent years have been in line with the national average for the number of students gaining A*-C grades. A small group of students following the A/S level course in 2001 all achieved pass grades. A larger group in 2002 is currently awaiting the review of its results, but a significant proportion are expected to have achieved high grades. Both students who completed their A-levels in 2001 achieved pass grades, whereas, of the four students completing the course in 2002, all achieved grades in the range of A-C, and three achieved either A or B, showing considerable improvement. These results are very commendable, showing the good progress being made throughout the school, as well the motivation and interest of the students and the effectiveness of their teachers. The numbers of students now following these courses has increased considerably, current performance is at least in line with national expectations, and Religious Studies is clearly a strong sixth form examination subject. Girls tend to outperform boys overall in each of the examination courses, and they outnumber boys in the advanced level courses followed in the sixth form, but these differences are not significant when compared with national trends.

204. These results are indicative of overall standards in the school. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are at least in line with those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus, and are continuing to rise, with many students achieving above that level. Students of this age do particularly well in their thoughtful, personal response to the ideas and beliefs they encounter, as when a Year 10 group discussed questions of relationships with openness and sensitivity. They also acquire detailed knowledge of a range of practices and beliefs of religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, relating these well to their own experience. In this, they are able to draw on the knowledge they have acquired in their earlier years in the school, where they are encouraged to develop a good awareness of religious belief, to understand why people believe and to explore their own ideas. Standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with the level expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. The students show interest in and respect for the ideas, beliefs and practices they are encountering, gaining quite detailed knowledge of a range of religious traditions. They show their understanding in their often sensitive response in discussion and in the quality of their written work, such as the newspaper accounts about the life of Mohammed and poems about care for the environment by Year 9 students, produced to a high standard using a range of computer skills.
205. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good for each group, and there are examples of very good and excellent lessons. There are two full-time specialist teachers, who teach throughout the school, with the support of a teacher from another department. Each of the teachers brings particular strengths to his or her work, and many lessons achieve a very high level of interaction between teacher and students. There are very good relationships between teachers and students, which is a strong feature of the department. The teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and have high expectations of their students in terms of both behaviour and what they can achieve.
206. In the very best lessons, the students clearly feel valued, and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. The best teaching draws on a breadth of subject knowledge, interests and humour that the students find stimulating and exciting. They respond very well to this, with most showing good and often very good motivation and interest. There are occasional examples of behaviour that is less than satisfactory, and the overall quality of learning in these lessons is then affected because too much time is lost on control. Throughout the school, however, most are keen to learn, and they enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities presented, as when Year 11 students considered with interest and enjoyment a range of Christian artefacts, including vestments. Students of all attainment levels, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs, make good progress overall because of the interest in the subject that is stimulated and sustained by the teachers. They are taught in the setted groups that operate for all subjects, but in some lessons insufficient provision is made to ensure appropriate levels of challenge for the range of abilities in the class. Homework is used well in all years to extend and reinforce the students' learning through a range of activities, which also encourage the students to become more independent in their learning. All work is marked carefully, and useful arrangements for assessment and the recording of students' progress are in place.

207. The subject makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students, providing many opportunities for reflection, the careful consideration of moral and social issues, and the development of a good understanding of a wide range of cultures and beliefs. It also contributes to the students' development of skills in literacy through, for instance, an emphasis on the development of appropriate language and the provision of many opportunities for different forms of writing and for discussion. It makes a limited contribution to the development of skills in information and communication technology whenever possible.
208. Since the previous inspection, the subject has developed very well, particularly in terms of its standing with the students and the way this has generated examination groups. Standards have risen substantially, and are still rising, and the quality of teaching has improved markedly. The head of department very well leads the subject. Appropriate time is allocated to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus and examination courses, but there is no general provision for religious education in the sixth form, which is contrary to statutory requirements. The subject is adequately resourced, but the funding available limits development and training. Book resources in the library provide only limited support for current courses, and educational visits are rarely possible.

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

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	11	72		27		4.91	5.80
Physics	10	70		10		2.60	5.67
Design and technology	6	50		50		5.67	5.38
Business Studies	1	100		-		4.00	5.09
Information and communication technology (ICT)	6	83		-		2.67	
Physical education (PE)	1	100		-		4.00	
Media Studies (communication)	21	86		15		4.76	5.53
Geography	25	76		20		4.72	5.74
English	7	100		-		3.43	5.91

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	12	92	N/a	25	N/a	8.00	
Leisure and tourism	9	78		11		0	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

209. Mathematics was inspected at A2 and AS levels. The focus for science was on physics. Chemistry and biology were also sampled. Standards in the most recent year in biology and chemistry, and for the current cohorts, are improving. In biology, excellent teaching secured a very high intellectual effort from the students. As a result they attained a secure and above average understanding of the complexity of predator/prey relationships. In chemistry the cohort size is improved, and current and recent standards are stronger. Overall, the numbers studying physics have been higher than those for chemistry and biology. Currently the numbers taking these subjects are evenly balanced. The numbers of students studying advanced level science courses have stabilised in recent years. The number joining the current Year 12 AS physics course continues the upward trend.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Management of sixth form courses is good.
- Most students on A level courses work hard and as a result achieve well for their abilities.
- Teaching is good overall, with well-planned lessons based on a clear scheme of work.
- There are good opportunities for higher attaining students to achieve at the highest levels through taking a Further Mathematics course.

Areas for development

- The range of teaching approaches to improve students' understanding of basic principles and to encourage students to contribute more to discussion and to finding solutions
- The management of the wide range of learning needs in Year 12 AS groups.

210. Performance in A level examinations over the period 1999-2001 has been good. It was above the national average in summer 1999, well above average in 2000 and in line with the average in 2001. This represents good achievement. It was disappointing in summer 2002, although the small number of candidates makes national comparisons unreliable. Girls do as well as boys, even though fewer take the A level courses. In summer 2001 and 2002, results in the new A level Subsidiary (AS) examination reflected students' commitment to continuing with mathematics for a second year. The less successful results represent mainly students who had not gained the highest GCSE grades and did not plan to continue with mathematics in Year 13. After a recent fall in numbers and the attainment of students taking A level, the current uptake in Year 12 is good, with a significant number of GCSE A grade students.
211. Standards for students currently taking the A2 course in Year 13 are overall below expected levels for the course, although comparison with national expectations is difficult given the small size of the group. Results in the AS examination in Year 12 for these students show better than expected progress for most. Currently they make steady progress. They understand how a sample mean can be used to find the mean of a population. In mechanics they can explain why someone walking up a hill is working harder than someone walking on a level. The students show a sound understanding of their work, although they do not always find it easy to explain the principles behind the problems that they study. The progress of Year 12 students is variable. Most have made a good start to their advanced level studies, but a few have difficulties. Higher attaining students in both Year 12 and Year 13 make the best progress and they take full advantage of the knowledgeable and competent teaching they receive. Students are motivated, listen well in lessons and work hard at the tasks set. Course work shows care and application. Students work well together in lessons, and share solutions with each other outside lessons. This makes a good contribution to their learning.
212. Teaching on the advanced courses is good overall. A significant strength is the good subject knowledge of the teachers. They enjoy their subject and create a good climate for learning. They regularly mark students' work and the students' files indicate the good support they receive for examinations. These include model solutions, copies of the syllabus and useful hints on how to approach examination questions. A lunchtime workshop helps students with difficulties, particularly those who have started the AS course in Year 12 with a lower than usual GCSE grade. Teachers use some good strategies to support students' learning and to probe and deepen their understanding of basic principles. They encourage students to explain their attempts at a question to other members of the class and organise them to work in pairs to prepare presentations to the class or to practise their skills, for example to find the differential of the sine and cosine functions from first principles. Through good questioning, teachers help the students to draw on knowledge from previous work and to focus clearly on what they know already and what they need to find out.

213. Where teaching is less successful, the teacher works through examples emphasising mostly the technique and with too few questions to check that all students understand the purpose of each step. Sometimes they give students insufficient time to respond to a question, continuing too quickly with the answer after a short silence. Because of this, the underlying mathematical principles are not always clearly understood. The Year 12 class has a wide range of previous attainment from GCSE A grades at the Higher level to C grades at the Intermediate level. The lower attaining students struggled to find the factors of a cubic expression using the factor theorem. This was because their knowledge of the algebraic concepts and techniques required for success is not fully secure. The class is large and the teacher needed to check, through more detailed questioning, these students' understanding.
214. Results on the GCSE retake course vary over the years, ranging from half the group obtaining a grade C to only a quarter. They represent the commitment of the students concerned. In 2002 the comparatively low results reflected difficulties in staffing the course. This year, the timetable ensures students retaking GCSE can attend all lessons, and the course has an experienced teacher. The faculty expects this to improve results. The timetable during the inspection week did not allow this aspect of the faculty's work to be inspected fully.
215. The numeracy skills of students in the sixth form are sufficient for work in other advanced level courses. In geography they use graphs and handle data well. In physics, students receive good systematic support from their teachers and generally cope competently with the mathematical requirements of the course. Sometimes they make mistakes in calculations and plot graphs incorrectly. The delivery of the key skills course has been revised for this school year. Most students concentrate on communication and information and communication technology rather than numeracy. Students are expected to identify the numeracy skills achieved from their work in subjects across the sixth form curriculum.
216. Sixth form courses are well managed by the head of faculty. A clear scheme of work is in place and the analysis of AS results has led to changes to improve students' performance. The statistics module is now in the first year of the course rather than the second. Teachers monitor students' progress regularly through homework tasks and tests. These and the analysis of modular results for the advanced courses provide ongoing feedback on how well students do. Computers now make a better contribution to students' learning than at the time of the last inspection. The students use graphic calculators competently and are able to explore the menus to find the process they need to use. However a wider range of information and communication technology resources, such as videos, and the use of the INTERNET have not yet been fully explored. At the time of the last inspection results at A level were good. Students continue to do well, although in recent years the attainment of students entering the courses means standards are now lower. Overall improvement has been satisfactory.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved although they are still below national averages
- Teachers' accurate assessment of how well pupils are progressing aids improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results
- Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, lesson planning and range of methods, in order to ensure steady gains in knowledge and understanding for all students

217. Standards in A level physics, in 2001, were well below national averages. The same students attained significantly better in their other A level subjects than they did in physics. In the most

recent examinations, A level physics results were relatively weaker than biology and chemistry for the one-year course Advanced Subsidiary [AS]. The results for the second year of Advanced Level [A2] in the most recent physics examinations are significantly improved. The trend over the years immediately leading up to 2001 is a fall in standards for A level physics. Most recent and current standards still show weaknesses. The coursework completed last year includes work completed well, to a satisfactory standard, and other work in which students missed components vital to attaining a pass grade at A level. The work of students in their second year of study is a mix of satisfactory and unsatisfactory work, with the result that standards are not yet secure. Attainment and progress at this early stage in Year 12 were mixed. For example, some students gained a grasp of how to use vectors, though at a basic level, whilst others made insufficient progress because they were not set enough new work.

218. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory, ranging from unsatisfactory to good. Sometimes the planning for the lesson, and the methods then used, do not generate well-structured, steady learning. As a result the gains in knowledge and understanding are insufficient. Students who make only small steps in learning lack the opportunity to practice at an appropriate level, whilst higher attaining students lack sufficient opportunity to progress further. This is especially relevant because the students choosing to study A level physics include some who rely on clear direction to move on from previously weak GCSE attainment. A general strength of teaching is the accurate assessment of how much progress students are making. In the best teaching, good progress is made when the teacher guides learning very expertly. The result is that gaps in students' knowledge and understanding are recognised and filled. For example, students concentrated well, and made real intellectual effort in some lessons, with the result that they left well aware that they had made an important step in their overall progress.
219. The key reason for the fall in standards up to 2001 is staff turnover. This has led to inconsistencies in provision, and hampered the impact of planning by departmental leadership. Experienced teaching and non-teaching staff are now well used, with the result that the current situation is better. Unqualified staff provide effective teaching, and this work is supported and monitored well. A sound scheme of work is now in place. Assessment systems are thorough and there is extensive monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision. There is systematic support for Year 12 in the development and reinforcement of their mathematical skills which supports improvement in coursework.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

220. The range of courses in the sixth form includes engineering which was visited twice. Teaching and learning were good in both lessons and students' response to the subject at least satisfactory.

Design and Technology

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

Strengths

- Good team teaching that enhances the quality of learning
- Students and teachers work together as a team to generate a stimulating learning environment
- Very good leadership

Areas for improvement

- Poor facilities, other than the new visual imaging suite
- Limited range of subject options.

221. Well-qualified staff work together as a team to provide a stimulating and challenging environment for learning. All students achieve to their best and standards are in line with course requirements. In 'A' level examinations (2001) in product design, students passed with an average point score that was in line with the national average. The standard of work in the AS and A2 courses in product design are in line with course requirements. There are now 16 students studying product

design in Year12, a measure of the popularity of the course. There are students in this group who are predicted to achieve the higher range of pass grades. Students' work is also in line with course requirements on the newly established course in GNVQ intermediate engineering.

222. A thorough command of the processes of product design was seen in the work of a Year 13 student. She was developing the advanced skills of designing with the client's needs at the centre of the design process, in this case to design and make tactile visual aids to encourage and support young pupils who have difficulty in learning mathematical skills. The client was a teacher of mathematics and the student worked closely with the client to identify the problem and to develop and try out a range of possible solutions. The student's work shows good progress in achieving the required advanced skills of client focussed design communication and product evaluation.
223. The quality of teaching is good. There are high expectations for learning and good support and encouragement is provided when the pupils are working on their design projects. The teachers know their subject well and the quality of their technical explanations is good. They use examples of good practice and innovations from around the world. Good teaching that generated a high level of interest was seen in the Year 12 engineering lesson. Students were shown practical applications of new materials including bearings made from metal fused with low friction plastics. They compared these with conventional ball bearing races. A plastic that could be shaped at the temperature of boiling water yet sets hard when it cools was also demonstrated. Possible uses for making grips and aids to suit individuals with physical handicaps were considered. This also helps the students to develop their social awareness of the effectiveness of technology in improving the quality of life.
224. The staff work particularly well as a team. The Year 12 product design group has the benefit of specialist teachers in computer-aided design, textiles and graphics. This enhanced the overall quality of teaching when they were designing, modelling and evaluating a new range of furniture and fittings for conservatories. The teachers' own careful use of language develops in students the correct use of language that is specific to the subject. Good teaching was seen in a Year 13 group when the teacher was working with individual students on their projects. The teacher had very good communication skills and engaged the student fully in a well-focused discussion about her work. In this way he was able to help by consolidating the student's thinking and provide pointers for possible ways forward. He listened carefully and facilitated the way forward without over-directing the students' thinking. He preserved the student's own ideas and initiative and enabled her to build upon them and turn them into reality.
225. It is the synergy between the teachers' enthusiasm, high expectations and expertise and the pupils' interest and dedication that gives rise to this good learning. When interviewed, students said that they appreciated the stimulating environment in the department where they could freely bounce ideas off each other. There was a stimulating atmosphere for learning. The students are interested in their work and committed to their studies. They are prepared to spend the time needed independently researching the background of the products they are designing and doing market research. They talk intelligently about their designs and enthusiastically about the evaluated usefulness of the manufactured product. The students on the product design course are highly self motivated and they work with confidence using the ICT design applications and research facilities available in the department. They take care with the quality and presentation of their work. Whilst students in the GNVQ group are not so self-motivated they too are interested and concerned to work to the best of their abilities.
226. The product design A/S A2 course is an appropriate option, which allows the students to follow on well from their GCSE courses. There is now continuity in the style of teaching and syllabus content. It is this factor that indicates the rise in standards in the current Year 12. The GNVQ engineering option broadens post 16 choices but these are still limited. The product design course enables pupils to explore a wide range of interests. They take advantage of this and their projects show much awareness of the use of technology to directly improve the quality of life. Others are firmly rooted in meeting real identified need. One student is designing for the rebuilding and

refurbishment of the interior of his father's car repair workshop. This is to increase productivity and improve the working environment of the mechanics. The students thought that the subject also supported their studies in other subjects such as art.

227. The quality of assessment is good. The students' work is closely monitored through discussions and formal assessment. When interviewed students said that they received lots of feedback to see how they were progressing. Many want to go on to study related subjects in further and higher education. The head of faculty has brought a new vitality and vision for post 16 education in this subject area. This has already resulted in a three-fold increase in the number of students studying this subject at AS, A2 and GNVQ Levels. This represents substantial progress since the last OfSTED inspection.

BUSINESS

228. Courses in business and economics were visited. The focus was on the AS and A2 business and economics courses. The range of business and economics courses has been narrowed this year. The GNVQ and AVCE syllabuses have been discontinued because they attracted only a very small number of students and were therefore not viable. The numbers taking A level (A2) have declined over the years, but there is a significant increase in the number of students currently taking AS level this year.

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

Strengths:

- Most students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and also compared with other subjects offered in the school
- The teacher has a very secure subject knowledge and lessons are well taught.
- Planning is thorough and assessments systems are secure.
- Students are making good progress overall and the standard of their work, particularly their coursework, is improving.

Areas for improvement:

- Ensure students are given even more structured and focused support in their writing, note-taking and research skills.
- Provide a greater range of exemplar materials to show students how to improve and progress to higher grades.
- Use computers more widely, for example in spreadsheet modelling.
- Provide a wider range of enrichment opportunities eg visits and speakers.

229. Results at A level have been mostly average at grades B to E for both 2001 and 2002. However, results at AS level in 2002 were significantly higher than in 2001, with all but two of the students passing, and three gaining a grade A. This represents satisfactory progress overall since the last inspection. However, in 2002 the bottom three candidates under-performed in their AS coursework. The school explains this under-performance as being due to some students having part-time jobs, which detracts from them working as hard as they might on their school work. The poorer results in 2001 were explained by teething troubles in planning for the introduction of a new AS level syllabus. However, it is clear from the analysis of the coursework carried out during the inspection, that some students require greater support with their literacy skills, particularly their writing. A small number of students drop out from the AS course, but this generally occurs at the beginning of the course when students are settling into their sixth form course choices. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the examination, though in the current AS level group, the lowest attainers tend to be boys.

230. Much of the work seen at AS level is about what would be expected at this time in the course.

Most students are achieving satisfactorily and some are achieving well. They are beginning to use business and economic concepts accurately and in context. For example, they understand the tension between the desire for profit and the ethical objectives of companies such as the Body Shop. Some written and oral responses from the higher attaining students are mature and succinct - for example, when they refer to 'social and environmental stakeholders'. Lower attaining students sometimes struggle to convey their ideas through appropriate economic rationale and terminology, though they do seem to have grasped the general concepts well. There is wide variation in the quality of note taking in lessons. Some students make accurate notes in the form of bullet points and diagrams. However, there is a significant minority who make scrappy, incomplete notes, which will provide them with little help when revising or constructing more extended written arguments.

231. Most A-level students work accurately from the information and figures provided. They are achieving well and improving on the work completed at the end of the first year at AS level. In one lesson, students were divided into four groups in preparation for a competition examining the factors that could lead the Bank of England to increase or reduce the bank rate. Most are able to take a broader view of the factors influencing economic decision-making, and their understanding and use of key concepts is good. For example, when examining the labour market and its impact on inflation, one group distinguishes between unemployment trends in the north and south of the country. Another group can explain concisely the tension between the rising oil prices contributing to inflationary pressures, and the counter pressures of static retail prices thus keeping inflation low. Coursework assignments are improving, but vary considerably. The highest quality reveals sophisticated arguments weighing up evidence drawn from a variety of relevant sources, the weaker assignments contain insufficient analysis and evaluation.
232. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher's expert knowledge and past experience as an examiner ensures clarity and accuracy in student's responses. Classroom question-and-answer sessions are well led and behaviour management good. Students' answers are teased out, supported and extended. Deeper understanding is probed well, and answers rephrased orally by the teacher into suitable economic and business terminology. The teachers' strong subject knowledge and supportive style gives confidence to all students who subsequently contribute willingly to discussion. Business and economic theory is explained with topical examples that students find interesting. Lessons are methodically planned and this ensures that the full range of the course is covered and that work is mostly completed on time. The completed coursework is thoroughly marked for content and constructive, stepped guidance is provided to students to help them cover the essential components required by the examination board. However, lower attaining students often 'write as they speak' and do not include sufficient analysis and evaluation to help them gain higher grades. There are insufficient support materials, for example annotated model answers, to help them gain insights into how to access higher grades. In addition, more support should be given to weaker students to help them make accurate and complete notes of the concepts discussed in lessons. Although students do use the Internet for research and also email their work to the teacher (thus providing fast feedback), there is insufficient planned use of other relevant software, for example spreadsheets and graphs, to help them develop and extend their ideas. Students are well behaved and most clearly enjoy the subject as shown by their sustained attention and enthusiastic participation and response in lessons. Homework is regularly set, effectively supports work being carried out in lessons and most is completed on time.
233. The subject leader is the sole teacher in the department. He has a good track record of self-development and plans the course well. Students are provided with a course textbook and useful information sheets during lessons. However, the range of enrichment activities is meagre, and this limits the range of direct experiences available for students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Lessons in physical education and dance were seen, as both are available at AS level.

Physical Education (PE)

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

Strengths

- Teaching is outstanding in AS level dance courses and in physical education.
- Teachers and students use ICT effectively to promote independent learning.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they are very positive about their courses of study.
- Student/teacher relationships are positive and conducive to learning.
- Students' attainment is good and their progress is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Succession training for teachers in future AS and A2 courses
- Involving sixth form students more in extra-curricular provision in Years 7 to 11

234. In 2002, almost half of students achieved A to C passes in the A level examination. Though this is consistent with national averages for PE, no students attained A or B grades although a number of appeals have been lodged. The number of students opting to study PE and dance in the sixth form has risen since the last inspection and the attainment of those currently studying the courses is above expectation. In PE, students appreciate the use of short and long-term memory in decision-making in games such as soccer, netball and badminton building on their prior learning of theoretical models. They predict strategies that may lead to the acquisition of skill. In dance, they are aware of the value and use of kinaesthetic, poetic and visual stimuli. In performance, students possess very good muscular control and use refined and aesthetically appropriate movements expressively. The progress of all groups of students in acquiring and consolidating knowledge and understanding, physical skills and ICT competence is very good.
235. In the core physical education programme for all, students use appropriate technical terminology in soccer and apply effective defensive techniques. Their control, ball retention and tactical awareness are good. In badminton, students use a range of strokes but lack tactical awareness in doubles play where footwork and movement around the court are areas requiring attention.
236. Attitudes towards PE and dance are positive. In examination classes, students are highly motivated and, sharing the high aspirations of their teachers, keen to gain a good qualification. Some students exhibit leadership skills and a majority display initiative in, for example, researching Internet sites both to prepare for lessons and to extend or consolidate their understanding. They engage in mature and informed discussion and are supportive of each other's learning. Relationships between teachers and students are characterised by warmth and mutual respect and the example provided by their teachers has encouraged a number to explore a career in the leisure industry.
237. In examination classes, teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of their students' performance, setting demanding, yet achievable tasks. They insist upon the use of a technical vocabulary appropriate to this level of study. A wide, appropriate and, on occasion, innovative range of teaching and learning strategies is used to motivate students and promote positive attitudes to study. Discussion by students in small groups is particularly successful when there is a clear focus and a deadline for the completion of the activity is agreed. In dance, the teacher inspires students to high attainment through example and personal commitment to the subject. Resources such as the electronic whiteboard are employed effectively in PE and e-mail is used appropriately to facilitate communication between students and their parents and the teacher. Students are fully involved in assessment being required to respond to the teachers'

marking of their assignments and to set their own targets following an analysis of examination requirements.

238. In core PE, teaching is good. Students work co-operatively and purposefully and, although lessons are mainly recreational, engage keenly in practices designed to improve technique and tactical awareness. Teachers encourage positive attitudes and active participation.
239. Schemes of work in AS drama and PE and in A level PE are of high quality. A refreshingly wide array of curricular opportunities is available to all students including yoga, ice-skating, trampolining and judo as well as the expected range of invasion and racquet games. This range, carefully planned and exploiting on and off-site accommodation, encourages active participation by sixth form students. Opportunities for students to contribute to the curriculum in years 7 to 11 are limited. Although students have officiated at soccer matches, for example, their growing expertise could be used to assist teachers in dance and PE clubs. This not only provides assistance to staff but also offers an opportunity to assess performance and suggest remedial action.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

240. The school is phasing out courses which operated until recently. Media Studies is a new subject for the sixth form and was introduced in September 2002. The newly-appointed subject leader also joined the school at that time. No lessons were available for observation during the period that the subject inspector was in school but the subject leader was interviewed, documents were scrutinised and a group of students was interviewed and their work examined.

Media Studies

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management in the subject
- The qualifications, experience and subject knowledge of the subject leader
- The clear strategic plan for the development of the subject
- The standard of written work which is above average for this early stage of the course
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement

- Current practical equipment is inadequate to support some of the units of work for later in the course
- The size of the group, which is too large for a practical subject
- The quality of information produced for Year 11 students, prior to their choices of sixth form study
- The repetition which occurs at the beginning of the course for students who have already taken GCSE media studies.

241. On the evidence of the limited amount of work available, standards in Media Studies are good. Written coursework shows that students have a clear knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of the subject and the quality of their work is above average for this early stage of the course. The work is well presented and shows evidence of thorough personal research. In discussion, Year 12 students are able to use subject terminology with confidence and have a clear understanding of the structure and demands of the course. They are enthusiastic about the subject and appreciative of the quality of the teaching that they receive. They would have appreciated fuller details of the course when they were in Year 11.
242. Students taking the course have a range of experience in media education. All have taken a unit in The Moving Image as part of GCSE English. Some have taken a two-year course in GCSE Media Studies and for them there is some repetition of work on media concepts at the beginning of the AS course.

243. The subject leader is well-qualified and experienced in the subject and the leadership and management are good. She is enthusiastic and has a clear vision for developing the subject and for enhancing visual literacy in general. There is a clearly-structured development plan and schemes of work are being produced. Many are already in place. There are clear systems for monitoring and assessment and there is effective liaison between the two teachers delivering the subject. The syllabus has been chosen for its practical bias and is in line with the school's bid to become a Visual Arts College.
244. The course is already popular and has attracted a large number of students, equally divided between male and female. There are nearly 30 students in the group, which is too large for a practical subject. The current level of resources is inadequate for a group of this size. The audio/visual equipment is insufficient to deliver some of the later units of work and some elements of the course depend on the teachers bringing in their own equipment, such as a DVD player. There are no digital cameras. This is a new course that will add much to the sixth form curriculum but it needs proper funding to achieve its potential.

HUMANITIES

245. Both Geography and history courses were reviewed in the sixth form, at AS and A2 levels. Geography is reported on fully below. Geography has a good retention rate in the school from Year 11 and there is currently provision for one AS group in Year 12 and two A2 groups in Year 13. Geography staff also contribute to the teaching of the AVCE Leisure and Tourism course.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The improving A2 level examination results
- The very high standard of coursework
- Good teaching and positive student attitudes.

Area for improvement

- The injection of pace and challenge into some lessons.

246. In 2001 the A2 level results were below the national average but showed an improvement over the previous two years. Provisional results for 2002 show a very significant further improvement, particularly at grades A-B, to which the quality of coursework makes a major contribution.
247. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form, in courses that place a strong emphasis on the acquisition of fieldwork and analytical skills. They have good knowledge of advanced technical vocabulary and of the processes that interact to determine the physical and economic landscapes, as in the area of Portland and Chesil Beach. They have a good understanding of complex indicators of human and economic development. High achieving students are able to apply new concepts, such as the demographic transition model, to a range of selected case studies. Their coursework shows an ability to test hypotheses through a range of statistical techniques, as well as critically to evaluate their own investigative techniques.
248. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and plan well. Students show a positive attitude and cooperate well with each other and with staff. They are prepared very thoroughly in the examination techniques required by Curriculum 2000, and appreciate the personal guidance and support they receive. An injection of pace into some lessons would allow more respond in discussion and to challenge each other's views.
249. The subject is very well led and there is good staff teamwork, led by an advanced skills teacher

who is a very good role model for both his colleagues and his students. There is good staff teamwork to support sixth form study and a strong commitment to raising standards. Challenging departmental targets have been set.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

250. There are 73 students taking English at GCE AS and Advanced level. A further 7 students are taking post 16 English at GCSE. The department has added the English language course to its AS and A2 level offer. All of these courses were seen. In Modern Foreign Languages, to cope with small numbers, the school has initiated a distance learning programme in German, linked to a local specialist language college. Although in the very early stages, and experiencing some difficulties with the new technologies required, this is a most promising development. AS and A2 classes in French in the sixth form were sampled, and standards were good. Pupils who took French 'A' level in 2001 achieved as well in the subject as they did in their other subjects taken. There were no entries in German in 2001.

English

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

Strengths

- In the most recent A level (A2) examinations, almost all students achieved grades A or B.
- Students' achievement is very good. The courses accept large numbers of students with a range of GCSE results and they all make good progress.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and great enthusiasm for their subject; this is very well focused on the learning needs of the students.
- Students learn very well. They are articulate in discussion, they read widely and they write with conviction, showing very good individual response to texts studied.
- The courses are very well structured and organised.

Areas for improvement

- Students on the English language course need to develop the vocabulary and structures needed to express their understanding of the subject.

251. Standards achieved in GCE AS and Advanced level have fluctuated somewhat over the last three years, as have the numbers taking the course. However, there is regularly a hundred per cent pass rate at grades A to E, and in the most recent results almost all students achieved passes at the two highest grades. In the most recent examinations at AS level, nearly three quarters of the students achieved one of the top three grades, with two fifths reaching the two highest grades.

252. Work seen during the inspection shows that the good standards reached recently are being maintained. The level of discussion in Year 13 is impressive. All students participate with enthusiasm. They are articulate in expressing ideas and exploring concepts, arguing their views vigorously and supporting the points they make with skilful reference to the text. In a lesson considering the character and motivation of Iago in Shakespeare's 'Othello' students' comments were well grounded in the play, but they were also able to speculate more generally on psychological reasons for envy. Their writing is similarly personal and convincing and shows good knowledge of a range of literature. Their work shows very good progress through the AS course; by Year 13 essays are better structured with sharper analysis and greater ease of expression.

253. Teaching and learning on the AS and the A level courses are very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and they bring to their work a quality of enthusiasm that is caught by

the students. They are extremely well organised. The folders of students in Year 13 show how carefully the course is planned, to provide not only detailed work on the specific texts being studied but also guidance in a wide range of reading that puts them into context. Lessons too are very well planned with a good balance of whole class and group discussion and a stimulating range of activities that extend into the students' own study time. Teachers are very clear in the way they enable students to work appropriately and with purpose. In Year 13 there are constant reminders of examination assessment grade criteria and this helps students to explore and express ideas appropriately. In the Year 12 literature lesson seen, students were already learning how to examine their Shakespeare play in a wider context. Classes are large, particularly in Year 12, and care is taken to ensure that all individuals take a full part in discussion. The AS English language course has proved to be an attractive option, with a higher proportion of boys than that in the English literature group. A lesson exploring use of satire as political comment, currently and in the work of Swift, was stimulating and roused considerable interest among the students. The examples they suggested from television and film showed good understanding of the concepts, but as yet they are not competent in the language needed to express their views. Expectations are high but realistic: comments on written work show very good awareness of individual strengths and needs. The teaching of the small GCSE is also very good, again with high expectations of achievement and well-focused support for the students, most of whom lack confidence in their own ability.

254. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good. Most members of the department are relatively inexperienced and those teaching the AS and A level courses do so in partnership with, and under the close guidance of, the head of department. Thus they gain experience and have the stimulus of working at an advanced level. There are regular review meetings and student progress is monitored carefully so that there is agreement on standards. The course is very well structured and there is a good range of resources, including a well-stocked library of associated texts for wider reading, available in the department area.