

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST WILFRID'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL**

Oakwood, Crawley

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126095

Headteacher: Mr Bernard Smith

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th March 2003

Inspection number: 249799

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Scott
Date of previous inspection:	24 th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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14756	Mr J Lovell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
4908	Mr I Farquhar	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	Science	
2408	Miss J Arnold	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology	
12118	Mr A Paver	Team inspector	Geography	
31772	Mr A Kelly	Team inspector	History	
14522	Mr I Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
1995	Dr K Seager	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?
4791	Mr M Hinckley	Team inspector	Music	
4647	Mrs J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education	
21837	Miss C Peet	Team inspector	Drama	
20324	Professor V Morris	Team inspector	Business education Economics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Wilfrid's Catholic Comprehensive School is a voluntary aided secondary school catering for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. With 873 pupils on roll, 113 of whom are in the sixth form, the school is about the same size as other secondary schools. Numbers have increased over the past few years and there are more boys than girls. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, and in most years the attainment of the boys is higher than that of the girls. As a Catholic school, it takes pupils from a wide area and from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which provides a balanced mix within the school. In addition to pupils from Catholic families, who make up the majority of the school's intake, about a quarter of the pupils are from other religious backgrounds, including Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu and Anglican faiths. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, but according to the school the correct figure may be higher than this as many families choose not to claim. About one in six pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, mainly Indian, Pakistani, Black-Caribbean and Black-African. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than in most schools, but only a small number receive additional support in learning English. There are two pupils from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, but a higher proportion than average (3.8 per cent) has a statement. The range of special needs includes specific and moderate learning difficulties, speech, communication and behavioural difficulties, and physical difficulties. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Wilfrid's Catholic School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils overall. It has a number of strong features. It is a caring and inclusive school that welcomes pupils from a variety of different faiths, abilities and backgrounds, providing them with good personal support. Standards overall are in line with the national averages and are above average in some subjects. Pupils' attitudes to the school are positive and the good relationships between pupils and with their teachers, together with the overall good quality of the teaching, enable the majority to learn well. The school is led and managed well on a day-to-day basis but there are weaknesses in planning for the future and taking effective action to secure improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, art, history and drama are above average and pupils' achieve well in these subjects.
- The good quality of the teaching in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form enables pupils to learn well.
- Pupils' attitudes to the school are positive, as are the relationships between pupils and with their teachers.
- Pupils respond well to the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The pastoral and personal support provided for pupils is good, and the school is successful in including all pupils, irrespective of their faith, background or ability.

What could be improved

- Strategic leadership and the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and taking effective action to secure improvement are not strong enough.
- Aspects of the curriculum need further improvement, and art and design and design and technology in Years 7 – 9 do not meet statutory requirements.
- Assessment information, including data, is not used consistently or rigorously enough to track pupils' academic progress or to inform planning for the next stage of learning.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in many subjects to

support teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its last inspection in February 1997. Standards have improved and, other than in 2002 when the GCSE examination results were broadly average, the school's results have been above and occasionally well above the national averages. The quality of teaching has remained broadly similar. Good progress has been made in tightening the organisation of the school day and in improving punctuality to lessons. The school has reduced excessive class sizes satisfactorily, although some of the higher attaining groups remain rather large. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the skills of teachers in dealing with challenging behaviour, but with the number of staff changes over the past two years, further training and support are required to ensure consistency of approach. The quality and format of reports have been reviewed but they do not give parents sufficient information about the progress their child is making. Monitoring processes have been introduced but they are not undertaken systematically or with sufficient rigour. The school is planning to reintroduce a GNVQ vocational course in business in the sixth form next year. There has been a modest improvement in A-level performance but the results remain below the national averages.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	B	C	E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

Key

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

Overall standards in the school are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but there are variations across the subjects. Most pupils are achieving as expected and in some subjects are achieving well. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with the national averages in English and science and above average in mathematics. Pupils did not do as well as pupils in similar schools but they achieved as expected when account is taken of their earlier attainment. This picture is broadly reflected in pupils' current work at the end of Year 9. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, history and drama, lower than they should be in design and technology and French and average in the remaining subjects. Over the past five years, the school's GCSE results have generally been above and occasionally well above the national average but declined in 2002 when they were average. The trend in the school's results is below the national trend. Pupils did not do as well as expected or as well as pupils in similar schools. The best results in 2002 were in English, mathematics, art and design, geography, history and music. The English results were particularly high. The weakest subjects were business studies, modern foreign languages, economics, physical education and religious education. In pupils' current work, standards are above average in English, art and design and history by the end of Year 11 and average in all the remaining subjects other than modern foreign languages where they are below average. The school did not meet its targets, which were very challenging, in 2002. The A-level results are improving but remain below average. The strongest subjects in 2002 were chemistry, biology, art and design and English language. The weakest subjects were business studies, economics, physical education and psychology. Students' current work shows that standards are improving and are at least in line with the average in all subjects and better than this in a few.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the very large majority of students are good. They respond well to challenging work and are very appreciative of the support provided by their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the large majority of pupils is satisfactory and often better than this. They understand the difference between right and wrong. However, a small number of pupils fail to behave in an appropriate manner and sometimes affect the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils act responsibly and are willing to take the initiative. They relate well to one another and to their teachers.
Attendance	The attendance and unauthorised absence rates are broadly in line with the averages for secondary schools nationally.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good overall and better in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form than in Years 7 - 9. A minority of the younger pupils do not behave as well as they might in some lessons and prevent others from learning. Nearly all of the teaching is at least satisfactory and about two-thirds of it is good and sometimes very good. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory, all in lessons in Year 9. The teaching in English, art and design, history, ICT, physical education, business studies and economics is mostly good and it is particularly good in music and drama. In other subjects, including mathematics and science, it is satisfactory, as is the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Most teachers use their subject expertise well to plan appropriate, and in many instances challenging, activities to interest, motivate and meet the needs of the pupils. As a result, most pupils learn well, with little difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Pupils in the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress. The grouping arrangements enable higher attaining pupils to make satisfactory and often good progress. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress in lessons and good progress when they receive individual support. Most pupils have developed good habits of working but some of their learning is too directed by the teachers and allows insufficient opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for managing and organising their work. Teachers prepare pupils well for the National Curriculum tests and public examinations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall but has some weaknesses and does not fully meet statutory requirements. Pupils study a broad range of subjects but the time allocated to some subjects is lower than average.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed and pupils receive appropriate support to enable them to make satisfactory progress, although not all teachers plan adequately for their needs. Where they receive more specific support, pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school's provision for the small numbers of pupils in the early stages of learning English and the support they receive are satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its curriculum, Catholic ethos, inclusive approach and the concern staff have for pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare and safety are satisfactory. Pupils receive good personal support and guidance, and systems for assessing their attainment are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring their academic progress are not robust enough.

The arrangements for citizenship and personal, social and vocational education are not as effective as they might be and the curriculum for design and technology and art and design does not meet statutory requirements in Years 7 - 9. Some whole-school initiatives such as literacy, numeracy, the Key Stage 3 strategy and ICT are not implemented consistently. Although there is a good range of AS and A-level courses, the sixth form provision does not meet the needs of some students well enough. The range of extra-curricular and other enrichment activities is satisfactory. The school is a secure and safe place for pupils to learn but arrangements for first aid are unsatisfactory. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior staff support pupils and teachers very well. They fulfil their commitment to provide a Catholic and inclusive education for their pupils of many circumstances and faiths. There is insufficient rigour in strategic thinking and planning and taking the necessary action when monitoring reveals weaknesses.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their contribution to the strategic management of the school are satisfactory. The governing body meets most of its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's sound programme for monitoring teaching, learning and subject management has been disrupted and rendered less effective by a recent unusually large staff turnover and the time needed for recruiting staff.
The strategic use of	The school uses its resources appropriately to meet its priorities,

resources	although these are not costed in the planning stage.
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There are sufficient staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The accommodation is generally satisfactory and some, such as the science laboratories, is very good. However, a minority of lessons are taught in non-specialist accommodation and some areas such as the hall, gymnasium and the dining hall appear uncared for. Resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory but there are insufficient computers to ensure that ICT can be used regularly and effectively to support subject teaching and learning. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

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's high expectations and the good progress their children make. • The way the school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any problems or concerns. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a wider range of activities outside lessons. • Better consistency in the arrangements for setting homework. • More information about the progress their children are making. • Closer working relationships between the school and parents. • Pupils' standards of behaviour.

Inspectors generally agree with the points that please parents most. Inspectors judge that, whilst the information provided to parents and the accessibility of teachers are satisfactory overall, the quality of reporting progress could be improved. The arrangements for homework are satisfactory. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory overall, with good provision for revision support in Years 10 and 11, but a narrow range of activities in Years 7 - 9. The poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils sometimes affects the learning of others.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

ST WILFRID'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form in this average sized mixed Catholic comprehensive school has 113 students on roll. There are fewer students this year than in the previous four years. In 2002, around 50 per cent of students continued into the sixth form at the end of Year 11 and a small number joined from other schools. A significant minority of students come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, but none is in the early stage of learning English. There are no students with special educational needs in the sixth form. The school provides a reasonably broad range of subjects at AS and A-level, a small number of which are provided in cooperation with other local schools. Most students follow AS and A-level courses. The school also provides two AS courses, law and film studies, through a video link with a commercial provider. Eighteen students follow a range of GCSE courses in Year 12. The school makes no provision for vocational courses at present, but has plans to introduce an Intermediate GNVQ business course in the next academic year. About three-quarters of students continue into higher education at the end of Year 13 and a further 10 per cent delay their entry to have a 'gap' year.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education for the majority of its pupils, particularly for students following AS and A-level courses who wish to continue into higher education. For a minority, mainly the lower attaining students, the curricular provision does not adequately meet their needs. The A-level results have been below and sometimes well below average over the past five years, but standards in the AS and A-level courses are improving and are now broadly average. Standards are well above average in art and design and in French, and above average in English, biology, physics, geography, and drama and theatre studies. In most subjects, students are making satisfactory progress and sometimes better than this and achieving as expected. The teaching in many subjects is good and occasionally very good. The sixth form is generally cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in English, biology, geography and drama, and are well above average in art and design.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and relationships between students and with their teachers are very good.
- The overall good quality of the teaching prepares students well for public examinations.
- There are good systems for monitoring and supporting students' academic and personal development.

What could be improved

- Teaching and learning approaches do not help students to develop their skills of learning independently enough.
- The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all of the students, particularly the lower attainers.
- The work of the sixth form is not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunity to use ICT to support subject learning.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards in the A-level course are broadly in line with course expectations. Students are making satisfactory progress and achieving as expected. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.
Biology	Good. Students achieve well at A-level due to their very good attitudes and the good teaching they receive. The teacher is well qualified and enthusiastic and gives the students good support and guidance.
Design and technology	Good. In 2001, the A-level results were broadly in line with the national average, but there was an absence of the higher grades. In 2002, there were no students on the A-level course. The good teaching enables students to make good progress and achieve well.
Business studies	Good. Standards are in line with course expectations and show some improvement over the results of the A-level examinations which have been well below average. Students are making good progress through the good teaching they now receive.
Economics	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with course expectations and are better than the A-level examination results in the past, which have been well below average. Students are achieving well when account is taken of their earlier attainment. The teaching is good and lessons are well planned.
Art	Good. Standards have been consistently above average in AS and A-level examinations. The consistently good and often very good teaching enables students to achieve well.
Theatre studies	Very good. The A-level results in 2001 were average and were similar in 2002. Students are now achieving well as a result of very good teaching from teachers who have strong subject knowledge and high expectations.
Geography	Good. Standards in the A-level examinations have been above average for the last three years. Students are making good progress and are achieving well as a result of the good quality of the teaching.
English	Good. Standards are high in A-level English literature and above average in English language. The teaching is good. Lessons are varied and interesting, enabling students to share ideas and develop an independent viewpoint.

In other subjects, a small number of lessons were sampled. The teaching is good in physics, French, physical education and psychology, and is satisfactory in chemistry, ICT and history. Standards seen in these lessons are well above average in French, above average in physics, and average in chemistry, ICT, history, physical education and psychology. Students are achieving as expected, in line with their earlier attainment.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good support and guidance from staff, which helps their academic and personal development. There is a good sense of community in the sixth form. The assessment of their attainment is thorough, although the procedures for monitoring their academic progress, as with the main school, are not as well developed.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form, which are satisfactory overall, have a number of strengths but also have some weaknesses. The guidance and support students receive to prepare them for entry to higher education are good. The sixth form runs well on a day-to-day basis but the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and teaching and learning are insufficiently developed. The curriculum does not meet the needs of all of the students as well as it might and longer-term planning is not robust enough. All students have equal access to the opportunities that the school provides.

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 readily accessible if they require help or have difficulties with their work. The help they receive to assist them settle in to the sixth form. They receive good information, which is clear and helpful, and constructive advice about the courses they should follow in the sixth form. They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of out-of-school activities and enrichment opportunities available to them. Receiving better advice about their future options. Having their work assessed more thoroughly and receiving more information about the progress they are making. A wider range of courses and opportunities to meet their talents and aspirations.

A small minority of students completed the questionnaire provided before the inspection. Most students are positive about the sixth form. The students interviewed by inspectors during the inspection were very positive and contradicted some of the less positive views expressed in the questionnaire. Students are unanimous in their very positive views of the accessibility of teachers and the support which they provide. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by students. The school provides a range of valuable opportunities to enrich the curriculum but the range of extra-curricular activities is narrower than in many schools. Students wishing to continue their studies in higher education receive good advice. Those students following a one-year course in the sixth form are not so well provided for and the range of courses available to them does not meet their needs and aspirations sufficiently. Inspectors agree that the arrangements for checking and informing students about their progress are not as effective as they might be.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards in the school are broadly average overall. The majority of pupils are achieving as expected when account is taken of their earlier attainment on entry to the school. Based on their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6 and in the standardised tests they undertake early in Year 7, pupils' attainment when they transfer to the school in Year 7 is broadly average. Pupils' number skills are generally higher than their verbal and non-verbal skills, and the attainment of the boys on entry in most years is higher than that of the girls. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 - 9 and most attain standards that are in line with, and occasionally above, national expectations by the age of 14, although there are considerable variations across the different subjects.

2. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the school's results were in line with the national average overall and in English and science. They were above average in mathematics. The results are much lower than those found in similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), and although they are slightly better in mathematics, they are well below average in English and science and for all three subjects together. Boys did better in the Year 9 tests than the girls when compared with their respective national figures. When account is taken of their attainment on entry to the school, pupils are achieving as expected overall, doing particularly well in mathematics and less well in English.

3. The assessments undertaken by teachers in the foundation subjects at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very variable, indicating that standards in art and design, design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education were above national expectations and below expectations in history. Inspection evidence does not support some of these judgements and inspectors find that teachers are not applying the level descriptions accurately enough and do not moderate their assessments sufficiently. Teachers have been too generous in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages and physical education. In history, the assessments were too harsh. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the teachers' assessments in music as few pupils continue with the subject in Year 10.

4. The GCSE examination results in 2002 showed a marked decline compared with the results in previous years. They were in line with the national averages overall and at five or more grades A*-C, but were below average at five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G. When the 2002 results are compared with similar schools, the school's performance was well below average overall and at five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G. A similar picture pertains when the school's performance is compared with other schools that have similar National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9: the results were well below average overall and very low at five or more grades A*-C. This indicates that pupils did not do as well as might have been expected based on their earlier performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9. The boys' results overall were better than those for the girls and a much higher proportion of boys attained one or more grades A*-G and five or more grades A*-G than the girls. The boys' performance was also better than the national figure for boys, but the girls' results were below the national figure for girls.

5. Over the past five years, the school's GCSE results have generally been above the national averages, reaching a high point in 2000 when they were well above average. However, the trend in the school's results since 1998 has been below the national trend. The school accounts for the decline in the school's results in 2002 to a higher number of pupils than usual in the year group, particularly girls, with behavioural or family difficulties and poor attendance. Senior staff specifically mentored around 10 of these pupils who were considered to be underachieving. In addition, the appointment of 10 new teachers at the beginning of the academic year led to an unsettled period in the school.

6. The GCSE results in 2002 were strongest in English language and literature, when they were significantly above the national averages at grades A*-C and also for the proportion of pupils attaining the

highest grades of A* and A. Just over half the girls and more than a third of the boys gained the two highest grades. As a higher proportion of pupils than the national average was entered for the literature examination, the school's results are impressive. The results were also above average in art and design, geography, history, mathematics and music. The weakest subjects were French, physical education and religious education, which were below the national average, and business studies, German and economics, which were significantly below the national average. In the remaining subjects, the results were broadly average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* or A were below the national averages in all subjects other than art and design where they were average and in English where they were significantly above average. In 2002, the school did not meet its targets, which were challenging, of 62 per cent for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C or 45 for the average points score. The targets for 2003 are slightly lower and the school considers that it is on course to achieve them. The evidence from the inspection suggests that these targets are more realistic and that pupils are on track to achieve them.

7. For the most part, the work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirms the picture provided by the test and examination results in 2002. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, pupils' attainment overall is in line with the standard expected nationally, although there are variations between the subjects and between the two key stages. Standards are above national expectations in English, mathematics, history and drama by the end of Year 9 and in English, art and design and history by the end of Year 11. In the remaining subjects, standards are in line with expectations throughout the school, other than in design and technology in Years 7 - 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 7 - 11, which are below the standard expected nationally. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress overall and achieving as expected. They make good progress in subjects where standards are above average. In these subjects, pupils benefit from the teachers' high expectations, thorough planning, and the detailed marking and assessment of pupils' work. As a result, they achieve well. Some of these characteristics are missing in the teaching of subjects where standards are in line with or below average. Standards in design and technology and modern foreign languages are adversely affected by low expectations, and a lack of challenge and pace in some of the work. In design and technology, work is directed too much by teachers and there are weaknesses in the organisation and content of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not make as much progress in these subjects as they might, although overall they are achieving as expected when account is taken of their earlier attainment.

8. Most pupils from different minority ethnic heritages do equally well, making the same progress as their peers. The small numbers of pupils in the early stages of learning English are making satisfactory progress, as are the higher attaining pupils and those who have been identified as gifted or talented. Although the school has identified a number of pupils as being gifted and talented, not enough is being done across the school as a whole or within most subjects to widen their opportunities and provide them with specific challenges.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to that of other pupils. In lessons where teachers match tasks to the range of abilities, this group of pupils makes good progress. In a physical education lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils with special educational needs were provided with an appropriate task to help them understand the differences between different forms of exercise. In a Year 7 French lesson, pupils made good gains in developing their vocabulary and understanding through the use of games. Their listening and oral skills improved although their spelling had weaknesses. Pupils with weaknesses in reading benefit from working in small groups. Such opportunities help them to improve their recognition of letter sounds so that their reading gains in fluency.

10. Standards in speaking are above average in drama, art and geography. Pupils listen with good concentration in music, art, drama and modern foreign language lessons. When pupils read aloud, standards are average on the whole, although they are occasionally below average, reflecting the small number of opportunities provided for pupils to develop this skill. Written work is in line with the average in most subjects and in a few it is above average.

11. Standards of numeracy across subjects are broadly average. In mathematics, pupils recognise important number patterns, make sensible estimates and undertake routine calculations without a calculator. There are opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills in some subjects, for example

scale and proportion in art and design and the use of a wide range of mathematical skills in geography and science. Elsewhere, there are insufficient planned opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum. The impact of the school's policy in developing pupils' numeracy skills is not sufficiently robust.

Sixth form

12. Standards in the sixth form are broadly average. In 2001, the school's performance in the A-level examinations was below the national average overall, although there were considerable variations across the subjects. The most successful subject was chemistry, with results that were very high in relation to the national averages, especially at the highest grades of A and B. The results were very strong in biology, with all students gaining grades A or B, although the small numbers entered for the examinations makes it inappropriate to compare the results with the national figures. In art and design and English language, the results were well above the national averages, at both grades A-E and at grades A and B. They were above average in physics and geography, and in line with the national averages in English literature, mathematics and theatre arts. The weakest subjects were business studies, economics and physical education and psychology, with results that were well below average, and history and religious education, where the results were below average. In several subjects, including design and technology, French and music, the numbers of students entered were too small to make meaningful comparisons with the national figures, but all students gained grades A-E. The performance of the female students was better than that of the male students in most subjects and for all subjects together.

13. In 2002, the A-level examination results were broadly similar to those in 2001 but, as yet, there are no national figures against which the school's performance can be compared. All students gained grades A-E in art and design, biology, chemistry, English, French, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, physics, drama and theatre arts, religious education and psychology, although the numbers entered for some of these subjects were very small. A good proportion of students gained the highest grades of A or B in art and design, French, geography, psychology, biology and English. There was a considerable improvement in the students' performance in physical education over the previous year. As in 2001, female students did far better than the male students, especially in gaining the highest grades. Across the subjects, most students are achieving as expected when account is taken of their earlier performance in the GCSE examinations, although some higher attaining and lower attaining students underachieved in some subjects in 2002.

14. The school's performance in the AS level examinations in 2002 also shows a mixed picture. The strongest performances were in art and design and physics, and the weakest performances were in business studies, geography, German, physical education, economics and psychology.

15. Standards of students' current work are broadly in line with course expectations and better than this in a few subjects. For example, standards are well above average in art and design and French, and above average in English, biology, physics, geography and theatre arts. In other subjects, standards are in line with course requirements. In those subjects where standards are above or well above average, students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment, and in the case of art and design and theatre studies, are achieving very well. These judgements indicate that standards in the sixth form are improving when compared with the school's A-level performances in 2001 and 2002.

16. Students' communication skills are broadly satisfactory, enabling the majority to cope with the demands of their courses. Most students are able to take notes and organise their work appropriately. Their skills in using mathematics to support learning in other subjects are adequate, but insufficient attention is paid to the systematic development of their numeracy skills, either through individual subjects or through a specific key skills course. Students are able to make appropriate use of ICT but there are insufficient numbers of computers and students have difficulty in gaining access to them.

17. There are no students in the sixth form with special educational needs. Eighteen students, some of whom are lower attaining students or who have not done well in their GCSE examinations in Year 11, are following a number of GCSE courses in Year 12. These include GCSE courses in English and mathematics for students who wish to try to improve their previous grades, human physiology, travel

and tourism, and either a health and child care course or a short course in citizenship. All students also follow a Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) course to develop their ICT skills. The success rate in terms of gaining grades A*-C is limited, although in the past a small number of students have gained additional grades of C or above which has enabled them to continue with A-level courses and gain entry into higher education. For the majority of students, however, the provision of these GCSE courses does not meet their needs sufficiently well and many students underachieve and fail to increase their grades significantly. The school does not provide any vocational courses in the sixth form, although there are plans to introduce an Intermediate GNVQ course in business in the coming academic year.

18. The school has had to work hard this year to retain its students between the end of Year 11 and entry into the sixth form because of the numerous work opportunities available in the area. Most students stay on to complete their courses, more so in the AS and A-level courses than in the Year 12 GCSE courses. In 2002, just under three-quarters of the students went into higher education at the end of Year 13, a picture that has been consistent for the last three years. A further 10 per cent delay their entry into higher education to have a 'gap' year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their work are positive, similar to the position found at the time of the last inspection. Parents consider that their children enjoy school. In the most effective lessons, pupils respond well to challenging work and are willing to show initiative. Pupils are motivated, interested and responsive in those lessons where teaching is of a good or better standard and tasks are appropriately challenging. For example, in a Year 11 business studies lesson, where the teaching was excellent, pupils collaborated very well and produced good presentations on discrimination, having studied a number of reported cases. Pupils usually work well in pairs and in groups, sharing ideas and developing their understanding of the subject. However, on occasions when the management of pupils and organisation is ineffective and the activity fails to engage pupils, their attitudes and behaviour can be unsatisfactory. An example was the Ash Wednesday Liturgy, when a significant minority of pupils behaved inappropriately and disrupted the occasion, adversely affecting the reverence and significance of the occasion for other pupils and displaying a lack of respect for other participants and their beliefs, feelings and values.

20. Pupils in Years 7 - 9 make satisfactory progress in developing their skills in working independently, generally sustaining interest and taking responsibility for managing their own learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make greater progress and are able to take greater responsibility than the younger pupils when opportunities are provided. Their attitudes and behaviour are generally better than those found amongst the younger pupils.

21. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. The large majority of pupils behave appropriately in lessons, and generally have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. At breaks and lunchtimes, behaviour is generally good, but is not helped by the poor quality of the accommodation used for dining. The Youth Wing and the extensive grounds provide good social areas and the former is very well used by pupils in Years 9 - 11. Some pupils make use of the library and computer facilities and do so sensibly. The significant majority of pupils are courteous and trustworthy and show respect for the school and other pupils' property. They respond well to visitors and willingly engage in conversation. They move around the school in an orderly fashion. However, a small minority of pupils fail to behave in an appropriate manner, both in lessons and around the school.

22. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. Most pupils relate very positively to their form tutors and teachers, and feel that they can readily turn to them, or to the headteacher, for assistance or support. There are a few instances when pupils' relationships are poor and, on such occasions, they can be aggressive towards each other and inconsiderate in their actions. The school has a system of internal exclusions and withdrawal from lessons. However, there were 91 fixed period and four permanent exclusions in the last academic year. These exclusions involved 57 different pupils. The reasons for the exclusions were appropriate and the correct procedures were followed. There is a predominance of white boys amongst those excluded, which reflects the ethnic

make-up of the school. The numbers of exclusions and the pupils involved show a significant increase on those reported at the time of the last inspection.

23. The majority of pupils respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility. For example, younger pupils undertake a duty rota of greeting visitors and helping with administrative tasks during the day. This supports their personal development, confidence and self-esteem. Pupils show initiative and maturity when carrying out duties and when representing the school. The personal, social and vocational education course provides good opportunities for pupils to discuss issues and to make presentations to the rest of the class. The majority of pupils respond positively to the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

24. Overall levels of attendance at 91.9 per cent in 2001/2002, the last year for which there are comparative figures, are broadly in line with the national average. In the same year, the rate of unauthorised absence at 0.7 per cent was also close to the national average. There has been a small improvement in attendance levels since the last inspection but, generally, attendance has remained at a similar level in recent years. The significant majority of pupils are punctual at the start of sessions and most move between lessons in an orderly manner with a sense of purpose.

Sixth form

25. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and to school. They appreciate the opportunities they are given and are unanimous in their view that teachers are accessible and provide them with very good support. Students work well together and want to learn. Students are good at taking responsibility for their own learning and many engage in independent research as a means of extending their knowledge and understanding. They are developing their learning skills satisfactorily and in some instances well, for example in art and design and theatre studies. Students set a good example for younger pupils and make a good contribution to the life and work of the school. This benefits their learning and personal development as well as those of the younger pupils.

26. The good and often very good relationships between students themselves and with staff benefit their collaborative work and mutual support. In lessons, they feel secure and are willing to share their thoughts, which enable them to consider different perspectives and develop their knowledge and understanding by building on each other's ideas. This assists their learning, as, for example, when Year 13 students discussed different forms of relationships. Around the school, and in lessons, students value each other's feelings, values and beliefs, and reflect well on the impact of their actions on others and on some serious moral, social and ethical issues. Students also enjoy good relationships with the rest of the school. Behaviour is generally very good. Students are courteous and trustworthy, and show respect for property.

27. Formal and informal discussions with students indicate that, in general, they have positive views of the school. Students who completed the questionnaire prior to the inspection expressed mixed views but, overall, stated that they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. Students are particularly positive about the help and support which they receive from their teachers. They feel they are treated as young adults and valued as responsible members of the school community. They respond well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities provided. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and broadly in line with that found in the main school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. The quality of teaching in the school as a whole is good, marginally better than at the time of the last inspection. Nearly all of the teaching is at least satisfactory and in around two-thirds of lessons it is good and sometimes very good. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, all concentrated in lessons with pupils in Year 9. The teaching overall is satisfactory in Years 7 - 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, where there is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching.

29. As a result of the good teaching, most pupils learn well. Boys and girls learn equally well, although they have slightly different starting points. The quality of learning is satisfactory in Years 7 - 9

and good in Years 10 - 13, but learning across the school overall is not as effective as the teaching because the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils in Years 7 - 11 (mainly the lower attaining pupils) are unsatisfactory and affect the learning of others in the class. A small number of pupils have difficulty in concentrating, behave immaturely and often lack motivation and self-discipline, for example calling out at inappropriate times. Whilst most teachers have a repertoire of appropriate strategies to manage this disruptive behaviour, a minority find difficulty in dealing with it effectively and ensuring that these pupils, who are more often boys, remain focused on their work. As a consequence, pupils do not learn well enough in some lessons. In some instances, these pupils are removed from the lesson in accordance with the school's agreed approaches to discipline.

30. In all subjects, the teaching is almost always satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good, although in a number of subjects there are variations between the key stages. In Years 7 - 9, the teaching of English, ICT, physical education and drama is good overall, and in music, it is very good. Teaching is satisfactory in the remaining subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is more often good in English, art and design, geography, history, ICT and physical education, and it is very good in music and drama. In the remaining subjects, the teaching is satisfactory. In some subjects, there are examples of very good teaching: for example, in art and design, design and technology, geography, music and physical education in Years 7 - 9, and in English, drama, music and physical education in Years 10 and 11. There was an example of excellent teaching in a business studies lesson in Year 11.

31. Most teachers' subject knowledge is good and in a few subjects very good, which enables them to plan a range of appropriate and in some instances challenging activities to interest and motivate the pupils, enabling them to learn well. This was seen to good effect in a Year 11 English lesson on descriptive writing where the teacher clearly explained and exemplified the conventions of descriptive writing, making effective use of a prepared prompt sheet on how to develop a controlling idea. This lesson was good preparation for the pupils' forthcoming GCSE examination. In another well planned art and design lesson in Year 10, the teacher's expertise and background knowledge helped pupils to grasp the key features of the processes and styles involved in lino/reduction printing linked to the lesson's focus on portrait studies, enabling pupils to become more adventurous in their work and to make effective progress. In design and technology, there are weaknesses in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study, particularly in the areas of designing, planning and evaluating products, which means that statutory requirements are not met in the subject in Years 7 - 9.

32. Where learning is most successful, teachers plan well and ensure that pupils are very clear about the focus and intentions of the lesson and what they are expected to achieve by the end. In their introductions to lessons, teachers build effectively on what pupils have covered in previous work, and through sharply focused questions and clear explanations, check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking well. Such strategies engage pupils' attention and interest effectively. Most teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, although this is more evident in lessons with pupils in Years 10 and 11 than with pupils in Years 7 - 9. Not enough is demanded of pupils in design and technology as teachers plan too much of the work for them. This limits the opportunities pupils have to think and learn for themselves. The majority of teachers, however, manage their classes well and motivate and engage them productively in the purposes of the lesson.

33. Time is used well in the majority of lessons, and most lessons begin punctually. Resources are used effectively to support learning and in many lessons teachers use a good range of resources, such as overhead transparencies, video and other visual material to enliven lessons and make the work more interesting. For the most part, teachers use an appropriate range of teaching and learning approaches to ensure that pupils remain interested in and focused on their work. At times, teachers direct and control the work too much, allowing insufficient scope for pupils to contribute or to learn to take more responsibility for managing and organising their work. Teachers prepare pupils well for National Curriculum tests and public examinations.

34. Most teachers give good praise and encouragement to pupils to help them learn and think more deeply. Teachers' marking and day-to-day assessment of pupils' learning are satisfactory in Years 7 - 9 and mostly good in Years 10 - 11. They reinforce pupils' efforts and success. Not all teachers relate marking and assessment enough to the National Curriculum level descriptions, so that pupils have an

unclear understanding of how their work is being judged or what they need to do to progress to the next level. This also affects teachers' planning as they do not use this information enough to plan the next stage of learning. This is particularly so in art and design in Years 7 - 9. Homework is appropriately set and marked in most instances and is used to support class work and pupils' learning. There is no evidence to support the concerns of some parents that the provision for homework is inadequate, inconsistent or too much.

35. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, although there is evidence of effective practice in English, science, music, physical education and drama through group discussions, written work, and the use of key words and frameworks to help with writing. In other subjects, literacy is less well established and is not included as an explicit focus in lessons or included in the planning. The teaching of numeracy, although satisfactory overall, is weaker than the teaching of literacy as strategies for developing pupils' numeracy skills have not been integrated sufficiently into schemes of work and teachers' planning. Aspects of numeracy are covered well in science and geography. Other than in the discrete ICT lessons and in geography and music, the teaching of ICT and its use to support subject teaching is unsatisfactory. This is caused in the main by difficulties in gaining access to the ICT rooms, out of date equipment as in drama, and not being identified clearly in schemes of work and teachers' planning. As a result, a number of subjects have difficulty in fully meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study.

36. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory throughout and they make appropriate progress in line with their peers. Most of these pupils are generally fluent in English and are able to participate fully in lessons. The small numbers of pupils who are not yet fluent in English receive additional support in some lessons, which enables them to make good progress and to contribute to lessons. Without this support, their progress is satisfactory. The two pupils from Traveller families make satisfactory progress, albeit from a low baseline. The higher attaining pupils make satisfactory and often good progress overall, and are helped by the grouping arrangements in many subjects, which set pupils by their levels of attainment. Although the school has a policy for gifted and talented pupils, specific support or more difficult or extension work for pupils identified on the school's register are not evident in the planning undertaken by individual teachers in most subjects. Consequently, they make no more than satisfactory progress.

37. Pupils with special educational needs learn as well as other pupils when account is taken of their learning targets. The quality of support assistance is good, and is used well by most teachers. In a Year 7 English lesson on the story of Beowulf, the support assistant sensibly circulated to provide guidance to those who needed reminding of the descriptive detail of the poem. Pupils respond well to reassurance from support assistants, as, for example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, when the assistant confirmed that their diagrams were accurate. A visiting pupil from a special school took an active part in physical education and design and technology lessons because of sensitive support from a support assistant, teachers and pupils in Year 8. Learning is only satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs when insufficient thought is given to planning. Three pupils in a Year 8 music lesson made little effort because the examples of Baroque music were not well chosen. In a Year 8 English lesson, a pupil with poor reading did not receive help with key words, such as *alliteration*, when studying the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Pupils learn well when they attend individual and small group lessons given by learning support teachers. When they are withdrawn for more individual support, pupils in Years 10 and 11 make progress in the learning of basic skills, which helps them in all their subjects. 'Challenge plus' life skills lessons also make a valuable contribution to the learning of selected pupils.

Sixth form

38. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall. In three-quarters of lessons, the teaching is at least good and in a fifth, it is very good. Out of the 58 lessons seen, no teaching was less than satisfactory. The teaching is very good in theatre studies and is good in English, biology, art and design, design and technology, geography, business studies and economics. It is satisfactory in mathematics. In other subjects where the work was sampled, examples of good teaching occur in chemistry, physics, history, French, physical education, law and psychology. The teaching is

occasionally very good in French and physical education. It is satisfactory in ICT. The good quality of the teaching is a strong contributory factor to the improving standards in the sixth form.

39. Relationships between students and their teachers are positive and purposeful, which leads to a relaxed and cooperative atmosphere. Students receive good support and guidance from their teachers, which they appreciate. This was commented upon favourably both in the responses to the sixth form questionnaire and in the large number of discussions inspectors had with students. At times, though, the teaching approaches and the support and guidance provided by teachers means that students become too reliant on their teachers and do not develop their skills and confidence to learn and work independently. This is one of the weaker features of otherwise good teaching and is an important area for development for students on AS and A-level courses who plan to enter higher education. In mathematics, for example, students are content to take notes and do not contribute enough to discussion.

40. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally strong, and is used well to prepare pupils for the demands of AS and A-level examinations. This feature is particularly strong in English and business studies, as is the effective use of examination criteria in art and design to help students evaluate and improve their work. In other subjects, sharp questioning causes pupils to think hard but not all teachers capitalise sufficiently on their responses to get students to really question and challenge their perceptions and beliefs and sustain difficult viewpoints orally. However, in the majority of lessons, students work productively and respond well to the good teaching. As a result, most students make good gains in their learning.

41. Most students maintain good levels of concentration in lessons and work conscientiously, both on their own and in groups. They make satisfactory progress in developing their learning skills and good work habits. Their coursework is organised appropriately and in the main is well presented, although not to such a good standard in mathematics. In some instances, for example the lower attaining students in science, notes are incomplete which may make it difficult for them when they need to revise. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are inconsistently taught, or planned for, within the various subjects. There are examples of satisfactory teaching and use of communication skills in business and economics, and good development in English, geography, art and design and theatre studies. The use and application of number is good in geography. The development of students' skills in ICT through subject teaching is variable and overall is unsatisfactory. There is good use in art and design, and satisfactory use in business, but in other subjects the development and application of ICT skills is mostly unplanned and insufficient.

42. Teachers' marking and assessment of students' work is generally good, and is especially so in English, art and design, geography and business studies. In most subjects, work is carefully marked, gives students a clear view of standards, and advice and guidance on what they need to do to improve. In mathematics, there is little sign of regular marking in students' books. There is also little evidence in some subjects of students being actively encouraged to assess their own work and to identify for themselves what they need to do to make it better. An exception to this is in the art and design course.

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

43. The quality and range of the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall. It has several strengths but there are important areas of weakness. Senior managers have not maintained a secure oversight of the quality of curriculum provision overall, nor have they systematically evaluated the impact of the many subject and cross-curricular initiatives to determine the overall coherence and relevance of the curriculum on offer to the pupils and students. This is made more difficult because the curriculum policy is insufficiently clear about the philosophy that underpins the whole curriculum. The curriculum is revised annually so initiatives, such as the implementation of citizenship, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the use of ICT to support subject teaching and learning, are not always thought through as effectively as they might be in terms of their long-term benefit or their impact on other subjects.

44. In Years 7 - 9, the breadth and range of the curriculum is enhanced by the extension of the subjects of the National Curriculum to include separate provision for drama and the study of two modern foreign languages. The provision of a discrete science course in Year 7 helps to improve pupils' thinking skills and the additional time given to physical education in Year 7 is placing an emphasis on the importance of physical activity. However, these additional and potentially valuable elements are putting extra pressure on a curriculum which is already extended by the large allocation of time, as a Catholic school, to religious education. The governing body's curriculum committee has not properly thought through the impact of all the different strands. For example, the time given to design and technology is below the nationally recommended minimum. This, combined with poor use of the available time, has limited the range of activities: the control element and use of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are not taught. This means that the design and technology curriculum does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in most other subjects, except for the lack of planned three-dimensional work in art, which limits pupils' knowledge and understanding of an important aspect of craft and design.

45. The curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory in that it is wide-ranging and varied. A good number of courses are offered at GCSE, with the majority of pupils studying as many as 10 subjects. Positive features of the curriculum include the study of both language and literature courses in English for all pupils and additional courses in business education, drama, economics, law and psychology. Another strength is the flexibility of the curriculum available to lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. For example, some pupils are allowed to take fewer subjects at GCSE. Some of the pupils have additional support for fewer subjects. Others follow the 'Challenge plus' course, which is an ICT vocational course, and a Certificate of Achievement course is available in geography, science and food technology. Other vocational courses linked to a local college are also available to all pupils although the number following them is small at present.

46. Nevertheless, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has some weaknesses which adversely affect the opportunity for pupils to study in depth in some areas and put limitations on relevance for pupils in others. The overall curriculum time allocated to Key Stage 4 is below the nationally recommended time of 25 hours. This exacerbates the difficulties of planning for in-depth, relevant curriculum coverage. For example, curriculum time for physical education in Year 11 is insufficient to allow the study of two areas in depth. Aspects of PSVE are not covered sufficiently in the single period allocated now that citizenship has been introduced, and time is used ineffectively in design and technology. The Key Stage 4 curriculum also reflects a lack of coherence from Key Stage 3. This is best exemplified by the situation in modern foreign languages as there are currently no dual linguists in Year 10, although both languages are offered. This represents a poor outcome of the investment of time in Years 7 - 9. The school recognises that there are weaknesses in the present arrangements for the curriculum and is in the process of reviewing the provision in order to make changes for the next academic year.

47. Overall, strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory, although not all teachers make explicit reference to the development of pupils' literacy skills in their planning. The school's approach to developing the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing across all subjects in the curriculum has been in place for two years. Nearly all classrooms have displays of key words, definitions and examples of pupils' written work. Teachers in science and music emphasise subject vocabulary during lessons. All subjects have clear policies on marking pupils' work for spelling and grammatical correctness. Good opportunities are given for pupils to speak and listen in class or group discussions, particularly in drama and religious education. Pupils encounter a range of reading material across the subjects. There are few opportunities for reading aloud outside English, however. In geography, good use is made of writing frameworks, which help pupils to structure their work. Pupils in Years 7 - 11 are not often required to write in an extended way except in English, history and geography.

48. The school's strategies for developing pupils' numeracy skills are broadly satisfactory but not as secure as those for developing their literacy skills. The mathematics department has a written policy statement on numeracy across the curriculum, together with an action plan for its implementation. This proposes that each department integrates or highlights opportunities for numeracy in their programmes of study. The implementation of the policy is not evident in departmental documentation, and few

subjects, other than geography and science, have clear and systematic approaches to the development of numeracy across the curriculum.

49. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Provision made by the learning support department is good. Identification of needs is carefully done. Teachers have copies of individual education plans with appropriate targets and suggested strategies. Identified pupils receive good teaching from support teachers to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The department has recently produced a helpful handbook for teachers that outlines its work, suggests teaching approaches for pupils with special educational needs, and how certain conditions limit learning. Courses in Years 10 and 11 provide well for those pupils with special educational needs who need to devote more time to a narrower range of GCSE subjects, or who need time to develop important social skills for their present and adult life. Provision for pupils with special educational needs across the curriculum is uneven. English, physical education, modern foreign languages and science plan well for their needs. They provide appropriately matched tasks, writing frameworks and worksheets written in accessible language. Learning support assistants work effectively in a number of lessons. However, in many subjects, teachers do not plan work sufficiently to match pupils' special educational needs to enable them to work independently and make better progress.

50. The school's provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory overall. This is mainly because managers have not thought through the impact of running the new curriculum for citizenship within an already full personal, social and vocational education (PSVE) period. The school clearly states that all pupils will follow a course in PSVE, which includes citizenship. Pupils are timetabled once a week for this aspect, an improvement since the last inspection. Aspects of the programme are also covered in religious education. However, the implementation of citizenship has usurped the time devoted to aspects of health and drugs education and has left little time for study skills. This has put pressure for the programme to be covered in tutor time. In theory, the tutorial periods each morning are supposed to provide additional curriculum time for PSVE but in practice, they do not. In tutor groups, the implementation and teaching of PSVE is variable and inconsistent due to a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of the programme and specific training to support tutors. The scrutiny of pupils' PSVE books also reveals that the content is also variable and inconsistent, and the amount of written work is limited. Appropriate structures are in place for health education to be taught in physical education and food technology, and also for sex education within religious education and science.

51. Across the school, the range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. The school offers a number of activities and the curriculum is suitably enriched. A particular strength is the programme of visits that takes place as part of the school's Liturgical programme. There are numerous trips and visits on a regular basis that support the curriculum and pupils' wider development. Pupils are able to attend a number of lunchtime and after school clubs, including a range of sporting and recreational activities, French club and drama, ICT and homework club in the library. The library is also available after school for study support. Provision is best in Key Stage 4 where revision and study sessions are offered in most GCSE subjects and teachers give up a significant amount of time to lead these. These opportunities are valued by pupils who appreciate the extra time and support it allows them. As a result, the range of activities available for pupils in Years 7 - 9 is limited, except in physical education, where provision is good. It is also good in ICT and modern foreign languages, although the take up of activities is variable and does not involve large numbers. An art club meets regularly each week. However, unusually, there are no opportunities for pursuing music, for example, through band, choir or other ensemble activities. However, the development plan drawn up by the new head of department includes proposals to develop such activities in the future. Parents rightly express concerns about the limited range of activities available after school and also justifiably feel that they are not informed about what is on offer. Enrichment activities are extensive, with an annual activities week planned in the summer term for the whole school. Visits abroad to Germany and France are also planned to develop language skills and pupils' awareness of other cultures. During the inspection week, the number of pupils attending sporting activities was low. Extra-curricular provision is not monitored by the school so the full range and availability of what is on offer is not known in detail: levels of take up are not registered and its overall effectiveness is not evaluated.

52. The programme of careers education and guidance is satisfactory. It starts in Year 7 and forms a significant part of the PSVE programme until Year 11. For example, in Year 8, *The Real Game* is a simulation exercise, covering part of the citizenship programme and has received very positive feedback from the pupils. The library has computer facilities and appropriate careers' software. These are well used by pupils to seek out careers' options and to help them form a career plan. The programme is supplemented by visits from outside speakers, lunchtime clinics, careers evenings and individual careers' interviews with trained careers' advisers. Also, a small number of subjects offer insights through work-related activities. A strength of the careers' programme in Year 10 is the work experience placement. This is a structured opportunity for pupils to sample working life by undertaking a job that is relevant to them. The school has effective links with local colleges and a small number of local businesses. These are developing well and provide satisfactory experiences for the pupils.

53. Sound links exist with the community which is used as a learning resource and for opportunities for work and personal development. These benefit pupils' learning and provide opportunities to enrich the curriculum. The school also runs a valuable course for parents called 'Keeping up with Children', which helps to develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Local organisations are supportive of the school and links with partner institutions have been successfully developed since the time of the last report and support the transfer of pupils. These include primary schools, and post-16 and teacher training institutions, including the Open University. Links with the local Catholic community and priests support the Catholic ethos of the school and Catholic pupils are helped by contributions to the school's activity fund made by their own parish. The adjacent St Wilfrid's Youth Wing provides good facilities for pupils to socialise and to receive individual counselling and support. Pupils are involved in fundraising for charities such as Cafod and local homeless persons.

54. By means of its curriculum and other aspects of its work, the school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through its Catholic ethos, which is articulated through its Mission statement and aims, the school places a strong emphasis on the spiritual growth and the pastoral care of its pupils. The development of each individual is central to the school's mission, as is its commitment to making the school an inclusive society in which pupils of different backgrounds, abilities and faiths are able to work together positively and benefit from the opportunities it provides. In these respects, the school is successful. Parents believe that the school promotes a positive sense of belonging and encourages its pupils to work hard. As part of its provision and commitment, the school has appointed an Inclusions coordinator, although at present this role is mainly focused on addressing behavioural issues. A long-established and successful governing body committee, which includes governors, parents, teachers and the Chaplain, has a specific focus on spiritual and community issues.

55. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It is strongly supported by the programme of assemblies, which meets the legal requirements of an act of collective worship, and the opportunities provided in most, but not all, tutor sessions to participate in and reflect on a range of spiritual, moral and cultural issues, for example the impact of war on Iraq and its people. These occasions help to develop a climate in which pupils can explore a range of values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way they can have an impact on people's lives. The school's Liturgical programme, including residential visits, retreats, the pilgrimage to Lourdes and a tri-annual Mission makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Occasionally, however, the school's intentions are not always implemented successfully, as in the Ash Wednesday Liturgy, which failed to reinforce the school's ethos and values or support pupils' personal development effectively enough. The school's caring and supportive approach, in which relationships between pupils and staff are very positive, enable pupils to accommodate differences, respect the beliefs and contribution of others and to be respected. Staff provide very good role models for their pupils to emulate. Although not included as part of the inspection, religious education, with its emphasis on learning *from* as well as *about* religious education, provides a range of opportunities to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. There is evidence of planning in some subjects for promoting pupils' spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and happens more by chance in some areas rather than as planned provision. In their study of literature in English, pupils are able to explore issues such as human isolation in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and the nature of good and evil and the divine right of kings in *Macbeth*. In most other subjects, however, opportunities are missed to enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development.

56. Good provision is made for pupils' moral development. Assemblies, religious education and the general life of the school reinforce Gospel values and Christian principles. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong, and a clear moral code permeates the school. Not all pupils conform to the school's expectations in terms of acceptable behaviour. Through its practice, the school promotes racial, religious and other forms of equality and tolerance, and expectations are high in this regard. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. For example, the morality of war is explored in depth in English. Issues relating to genetics and cloning are discussed in science. World citizenship is a strong feature of lessons in geography in Years 7 – 9. The morality of issues such as *Kristallnacht* is covered in history. Strong moral codes and the importance of fair play and sporting behaviour are emphasised in physical education. Themes about prejudice are explored in drama, and public welfare and social benefits are included in economics. In addition, many topics are covered through the PSVE programme and through the citizenship schemes of work, although no lessons in these areas were seen during the inspection. All these opportunities enable most pupils to develop good moral attitudes, values and behaviours.

57. The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. In lessons, pupils have many opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups, which aid their confidence and self-esteem. Relationships are generally strong. Pupils have opportunities to exercise responsibility and leadership, although these are not as extensive as in many other schools. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and in the main they respond well. Extra-curricular provision enables pupils to participate in team games and other recreational activities and clubs, but the range is not particularly wide. Residential and theatre visits, trips abroad and the school's annual activities week help to develop pupils' social skills and awareness well.

58. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good and is promoted in a number of subjects. For example, in English, pupils study poetry from different lands and cultures, consider a range of texts to reflect on cultural issues and undertake a variety of theatre visits. In art, the study of artists and craftspeople extends their cultural knowledge and appreciation, as does the good range of trips and visits that are organised, including trips abroad, for example to Florence. In geography, programmes of work cover a range of different countries and are supported by practical and field work. Pupils' multi-cultural awareness is enhanced in history through the study of slavery in the British Empire. Work in modern foreign languages raises their awareness of important festivals in Germany and France and an excursion to Germany includes a visit to a former concentration camp. In music, pupils experience a range of musical styles and traditions, and in physical education they gain a greater understanding of cultural differences through exploring different styles of dance. The reality of the makeup of the school's community is one of its strengths in developing pupils' cultural awareness.

Sixth form

59. The quality and range of the curriculum provided for students in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The main reason for this is a lack of strategic thinking about the overall relevance of the current curriculum and how it meets the very different needs and aspirations of the students. For example, no vocational courses are currently on offer, although the school has run GNVQ in the past and is about to reintroduce a GNVQ intermediate course in business in September 2003. This situation conflicts with the aims stated in the sixth form curriculum policy, which seek to provide a curriculum that is broader than a completely academic one. The school is working with another local school to provide students with the opportunity of studying a second vocational area next year. Nevertheless, the range of courses will remain narrow. The school's approach to the teaching of key skills is also unsatisfactory. The sixth form policy indicates that key skills are taught in Year 12 but, in practice, not all students receive this provision and it is limited to ICT, with little done to promote and extend students' communication skills or application of number, either within a discrete course or through other subjects.

60. Nevertheless, the curriculum does have strengths. Statutory requirements for religious education and a daily act of collective worship are met. Students are able to choose English language or English literature: some follow both courses and are able to gain from a richness and depth of study which helps them to reach standards that are well above average in their AS and A-level examinations. The quality of what is on offer in drama, business studies and French is also good, and in art, students attain above average standards because the good quality provision is enhanced by the creative use of

ICT. An innovative video link course has just been introduced to enable students in Year 12 to follow courses in law and film studies. Although the course is only in its infancy, it is already providing a positive incentive for students to study independently and take more responsibility for their work. This is a good development.

61. There are some valuable opportunities provided for curriculum enrichment, particularly as part of the school's liturgical programme such as the pilgrimage to Lourdes and the opportunities for the sixth form to organise social activities. In art, students have open access to the resources in the art rooms and generally, sixth formers have freedom of access to ICT facilities when not in use by classes in the main school but in practice this is limited because they are not readily accessible. However, the provision overall is not as wide as is normally found in similar schools.

62. All students in Year 12 have the opportunity for a careers interview, although not all take it. There is a careful programme of preparation for students planning to go into higher education and the school has produced a helpful booklet giving them guidance about UCAS applications. The careers education and guidance given to students who are following the GCSE courses is not as well established. Students in Year 12 are offered an opportunity to participate in a week of work experience with companies in Germany.

63. Links with other schools and local colleges are less well developed than those usually found in secondary schools. Some arrangements are in place to meet the needs of students who wish to follow courses that the school does not offer but who still want to remain at St Wilfrid's. These arrangements are formalised with a common timetable, but are a small-scale initiative which the school plans to extend over time.

64. As with the main school, provision for developing students' personal development, including cultivating their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good. The school's Catholic ethos is evident throughout the work of the sixth form and students respond well to the expectation that they will be good role models for younger pupils. Students, many of whom are not Catholics, are fully involved in all of the corporate activities of the school and contribute to the well-being of the school. The school makes good provision for their spiritual development. Students participate in residential visits, which include a retreat for those in Year 13. Students raise money to send doctors and nurses with sick and disabled people on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Many students accompany them on this journey and they spoke very positively and with great feeling of the impact of this event on their personal development. In one sixth form assembly, students listened sensitively and attentively as a Muslim student explained how fasting strengthened his faith. This gave them the opportunity to reflect very carefully on some deep spiritual and moral issues, as well as integrating students well at the start of the day.

65. The curriculum in the sixth form is enriched by a programme of lectures, which are held each week and to which all students are expected to attend. Topics include a range of spiritual, moral and social issues and involve a number of external visitors and speakers. In addition, students participate in a variety of other activities such as community service, raising funds and collecting clothes to support the homeless, sponsored walks and other fund-raising events. Within the school, many students volunteer to help pupils with special educational needs with a structured reading scheme and to act as a mentor, through the 'Study-Buddy' scheme, to younger pupils who have had difficulty in settling in to the school. All of these opportunities make a considerable contribution to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their development as confident, articulate and thoughtful young adults. There is a strong sense of community in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

66. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. This overall judgement is broadly in line with that made at the time of the last inspection, although arrangements for the provision of first aid are now unsatisfactory. However, pupils who are unwell or need medical attention are appropriately cared for. Pupils are well known by the staff and the good quality of the relationships is a strength. There are high expectations of appropriate standards of behaviour of pupils and these are clearly conveyed and reinforced. The behaviour policy and the use of rewards and sanctions are well understood by pupils and applied by staff throughout the school. The effectiveness of this policy,

combined with the good relationships and response of the significant majority of pupils, has a positive effect on pupils' learning and their achievements. Whilst bullying or other oppressive behaviour is not a significant problem, the school is rigorous in resolving problems and pupils feel confident that they can take any concerns to staff. Procedures to record, monitor and promote attendance are good although the reliance on the heads of year to contact parents in the event of unexplained absences places a considerable burden on them. This often means that contact is not made until late in the day. The school is currently reviewing these arrangements.

67. Child protection is appropriately organised and the designated teacher for child protection and one other member of staff have received full training. All heads of year are invited to attend workshops to increase their knowledge of current practice. All other staff receive regular reminders of practice to be followed and this subject is included in the induction arrangements of new staff. The coordinator is readily identified by staff. However, some teachers bypass the co-ordinator and take concerns to their head of year, which is unsatisfactory. Good liaison arrangements exist with outside agencies and education specialists to provide support on a wide range of issues are good.

68. The school successfully promotes safe practice in lessons: in science, for example, pupils have a good understanding of safety rules and procedures. A new health and safety policy was approved in November of last year but is not yet embedded into practice and scheduled meetings have not yet started. The management of health and safety is satisfactory overall but there are some shortcomings in that risk assessments are not always formally completed and recorded. Departments use generic risk assessments but in some cases, such as science, these have not been reviewed recently to ensure that they apply to current practice. Evacuation procedures are practised and reviewed regularly. Equipment is tested in accordance with requirements and regular visual checks ensure that defective items are taken out of use until repaired.

69. Arrangements for first aid are unsatisfactory. Senior staff are not aware of who holds a current first aid certificate and no central record is kept of staff with first aid qualifications. The person responsible for first aid is not on duty out of normal school hours. Therefore, the school does not know whether there is any first aid cover for those participating in activities after school, especially as no member of the physical education staff has a current first aid certificate. The first aid certificates of a number of staff have expired recently. The school has an appropriate medical room.

70. Effective procedures are in place for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development and the school justifiably prides itself on providing a caring and secure environment for its pupils. The strength of the system lies in the extent to which pupils are known individually, which in turn reflects the commitment of the staff involved at all levels. One head of year in Key Stage 3 described how she is 'constantly talking to pupils'. A notable feature of the pastoral system is the way in which average as well as higher and lower attaining pupils are targeted for support, for example by developing strategies for increasing the academic ambition of girls in Years 10 and 11. Disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 are particularly well served by the Inclusion Unit, which organises a range of work-related or voluntary social activities, as well as providing an appropriate environment for disaffected pupils doing entry level GCSE courses. The availability of this facility is a crucial factor in freeing main school pastoral staff from excessive behaviour management issues. This enables them to be more proactive in raising the ambitions of mainstream pupils. For example, they organise support for average attaining pupils, and allow higher attaining GCSE pupils to participate in 'taster' A-level lessons or attend a residential event addressed by successful former students and university tutors.

71. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment. An effective school policy exists based on the use of effort and attainment grades. This is generally applied consistently across subject departments and both key stages. In the best practice, for example in English, history and business studies, teachers' marking gives clear and detailed guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of particular pieces of work and on what pupils need to do to progress. This is made possible by the increasing use in most subjects in Years 7 – 9 of National Curriculum level-based assessments for more important pieces of work. The disadvantage of this development is that it effectively creates a dual system of assessment, with the potential to confuse pupils wishing to know how well they are doing. Only a minority of departments make sufficient use of performance data on pupils to inform curriculum planning.

72. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory overall. This is mainly because of a failure to resolve problems caused by combining school-based and national measures of assessing pupils' attainment. The advantage of the use of the school's effort and attainment grades for marking, monitoring and reporting is that the system is well known to teachers, pupils and parents. The disadvantage is that the information it provides about pupils' progress over time does not relate sufficiently to external measures in Years 7 - 9 and, therefore, can be misleading regarding pupils' actual standards. Where tracking procedures are operated by individual departments for their own use, they can produce data that is both useful and reliable, but not all departments do this well. Despite these weaknesses, the school is good at identifying 'borderline' pupils in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Last year, the school initiated an effective system in which teachers volunteered to monitor the progress of each higher attaining pupil in Year 11.

73. There are good procedures for assessing the progress made in spelling and reading by pupils with special educational needs. Learning support assistants record significant progress in lessons. The progress of pupils with a statement of special educational need is formally reviewed annually. Parents and pupils have important involvement in these meetings, and their views are recorded. Pupils' individual education plans are reviewed at least annually and targets adjusted to take account of the progress made. No formal monitoring of pupils' performance in the national tests or GCSE examinations is yet undertaken.

Sixth form

Assessment

74. The assessment of students' attainment in the sixth form is thorough. Written work is extensively annotated and students' progress carefully monitored. A particular strength of the pastoral provision is the support and guidance given to students throughout their stay in the sixth form. In Year 12, the process begins with a negotiated 'induction' review, at which students and tutors jointly analyse each student's current position and discuss expected progress using predictions based on GCSE performance. Two further review meetings follow the initial review; one an extensive discussion involving parents. This process is repeated in Year 13. The strengths of the system, as in the main school, are the extent to which students are known by staff and the care taken in supporting students' personal and academic progress. The weakness is that students' performance continues to be measured by reference to generalised effort and attainment grades, even though results from trial and AS examinations are available, which would give a more precise measure of progress in what students know, understand and are able to do.

Advice, support and guidance

75. Judgements about the provision for students' care and health and safety reflect those for the whole school. Students receive good support on personal issues from the head and deputy head of sixth form as well as from their tutors. They also receive good support when settling into the sixth form. Those planning to enter higher education receive good advice and guidance about entry requirements and procedures, but a minority feel that they do not receive sufficient advice about what they should do when they leave school. This is particularly so for those students in Year 12 following the GCSE courses.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and broadly similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. Only a small minority of parents attended a meeting with inspectors prior to the inspection and about a quarter of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. Overall, these parents expressed satisfactory views about the school. Nearly all feel that their sons and daughters are making good progress and that the school has high expectations. Parents believe that pupils enjoy school and that it helps them to become mature and responsible. A minority of parents express concerns about the amount of homework provided, the information that they receive about pupils'

progress, the closeness of the partnership between the school and parents, and the range of activities provided outside lessons. Inspection evidence generally supports the positive views of parents. It differs in that findings show that pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is better than in Years 7 - 9, and the expectations of some teachers could be higher. Inspectors find that the information provided to parents is satisfactory overall but that the reporting of progress could be improved. The use of homework to support learning is mainly satisfactory. The provision for extra-curricular activities across the school as a whole is satisfactory overall and it is better for the older pupils than the younger pupils. The revision sessions in Years 10 and 11 are good. In Years 7 – 9, the provision is unsatisfactory.

77. The quality of reporting to parents was identified as a key issue at the time of the last inspection and insufficient progress has been made in resolving this issue. Parents receive one full report and interim grade reports. The full reports vary in quality. Not all subjects provide sufficient information about pupils' progress or identify clear targets to help parents understand what their child needs to do to move to the next stage of learning. Other information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school has endeavoured to improve its quality. This has not been entirely successful. It introduced a newsletter in a new format in December, with the intention of producing one every two to three weeks, but no second edition had been published at the time of the inspection. This newsletter is very good and well presented, and its regular production could make a substantial contribution to involving parents in the wider life of the school. Parents are involved well in resolving problems with pupils, and staff are readily accessible to discuss any concerns.

78. Parents are generally supportive of pupils' learning at school and at home. Although they support fundraising activities such as quiz nights and a folk music evening organised by the St Wilfrid's Association, a substantial number do not make a voluntary contribution to the school's activity fund. The support of parents is appreciated by the school and benefits pupils' learning.

79. Parents' views of the sixth form reflect those expressed by parents of pupils in the main school. From discussions with sixth form students, it is clear that they value the support and encouragement of their teachers. Parents and students are provided with satisfactory information about the life and work of the school and about students' progress. This information, combined with regular academic monitoring and individual reviews, provides students with a good understanding of what they need to do to raise individual performance and improve their grades.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior staff support pupils and teachers very well. They are readily accessible to them and to parents. They fulfil their commitment to provide a Catholic and inclusive education for their pupils, whose backgrounds reflect different circumstances and faiths. The overall effectiveness of both leadership and management is diminished by the failure of senior managers to be sufficiently rigorous in strategic thinking and planning, setting clear timescales, and taking the necessary action when monitoring reveals weaknesses.

81. The interested and well-informed governing body keeps a watchful eye on financial decisions. It fulfils satisfactorily the role of a critical friend. Governors ensure that the large majority of statutory requirements are met, but there are some breaches in art and design and design and technology. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but are less effective in holding the school to account and in contributing to its strategic management.

82. The headteacher is highly respected in the school and is consultative. Returns of parental questionnaires show that he has the confidence of the large majority of parents. His recent self-evaluation report identifies several of the stronger and weaker features of the school, and often what needs to be done. Planning for how it should be done, however, is insufficiently precise.

83. The headteacher and the senior team work well together to care for and support pupils. For example, in addition to significant teaching commitments, senior managers interview each Year 11 class before and after the trial examinations, and mentor about 90 disaffected or gifted pupils. They are also considerate of teachers' individual circumstances. Teachers' duties are clearly set out in the staff handbook.

84. The current two-year school improvement plan has relevant priorities, named coordinators and deadlines, although the timescales are not sharp enough. The lack of financial information, tight timescales, success criteria and monitoring responsibilities, however, make it difficult for governors and senior managers to monitor and evaluate progress effectively. The plan's recent review shows areas of progress and underachievements, some because of time pressures and high staff turnover. Although the review indicates the action needed, in some cases no specific deadlines are stated.

85. Clear arrangements for the line management of departments are in place and complemented in some subjects by advice and monitoring by local authority advisers. Each deputy headteacher monitors standards, teaching and subject management through termly meetings with individual heads of department. Meetings are followed by agreed written reports with targets set for the department. A yearly sampling and critical review of departmental marking highlights good features and areas for improvement. Heads of department are responsible for following up concerns related to these initiatives and the monitoring of individual subject teachers. The timescale over which they monitor these activities is too infrequent to ensure that swift action can be taken to address areas of weakness. In the last two academic years, the school has suffered an atypically high staff turnover and the need to replace heads of department and experienced teachers on extended leave. Recruitment has required many hours of senior managers' time, with a consequent delay in monitoring. A further hindrance to the monitoring programmes of both line managers and heads of department has been the significant number of subjects under temporary leadership. The headteacher, however, monitored the classroom teaching of 30 individual teachers last year as part of performance management.

86. The quality of departmental management is inconsistent. Good examples in departments such as art, English, history and special educational needs contrast with unsatisfactory management in design and technology, citizenship and the provision for ICT across the whole school. Some new heads of department have made a good start and have already brought about improvement, for example in business, drama and music. Day-to-day running of departments is generally smooth. Although heads of department analyse their examination results, and discuss them with their line managers, there is little use of available data to identify patterns of achievement, for example by minority ethnic background or by gender, to help focus where attention is needed. Nor do heads of department systematically identify subject areas and skills which need more attention and amend schemes of work accordingly.

87. Pastoral management by heads of year is good. They know their pupils well, have good relationships with them and are effective in monitoring behaviour. Their responsibility to monitor registers and telephone parents on the first day of unexplained absence enhances their contact with parents but is time consuming.

88. The learning support department is led and managed well. Weekly meetings of all relevant staff provide a regular opportunity to exchange information and agreement of common approaches to pupils' needs. The department has introduced some good initiatives. These include the special needs handbook, link teachers in departments and good individual education plans for pupils. These have not yet had a wide enough impact, however, and lesson planning does not yet meet pupils' special educational needs consistently.

89. The people-centred, caring, management style contributes significantly to the harmonious relationships, smooth running and the ethos of the school. However, it reduces the time available for critical and strategic thinking. Curriculum management and planning are not rigorous enough. Some of the implications of major decisions are not always considered in sufficient detail or monitored carefully enough. Examples include the introduction of citizenship and its impact on the PSVE programme, and the implementation of whole-school initiatives such as literacy, numeracy, the Key Stage 3 strategy and ICT. Consequently, important curriculum initiatives are not implemented consistently across the school. Time constraints sometimes inhibit good intentions, such as the frequency with which parental letters and other information to parents are distributed.

90. Funding from specific grants are used appropriately for their designated purposes. The LEA audit states that the school has good financial systems and accurate procedures in accounting for all funds. The budget is reviewed and managed very prudently, with marginal surpluses. Day-to-day

financial management is good and detailed information is readily to hand. Systems are unobtrusive, efficient and respond to need. In applying the principles of best value to spending decisions, the school is developing more rigorous self-evaluation procedures. The governors are appropriately involved in the school improvement plan projects. They monitor expenditure satisfactorily. Although the school improvement plan is not costed at the planning stage, its outcomes generally match the objectives identified in the plan.

91. Staffing in the main school is satisfactory. Although there has been a recent increase in staff turnover and a number of teachers away on maternity leave, suitable staff have been appointed to replace them. The school will be fully staffed with permanent staff at the beginning of the next term. New and newly-qualified staff receive good support. The school has close links with teacher training providers and this gives staff opportunities to work with new teachers and to share and develop their own thinking about teaching and learning. In addition, teachers who have trained at the school often apply for posts and this gives the school a basic pool from which to choose. The headteacher is concerned that generally he has few applicants for posts and puts this down to the high cost of housing.

92. Provision for the professional development of teaching staff is good. Teachers are encouraged to attend in-service training and national funding is used effectively to meet the needs that have been identified in teachers' professional development portfolios. Teachers record what they have learned and its potential impact on improving teaching and learning. The weakness is that what they subsequently do is not evaluated fully to find whether it has led to any improvement. Whole-school training is planned by senior managers and delivered as part of the five training days, as well as in twilight sessions. These cover major initiatives like the national numeracy and literacy strategies and the new Key Stage 3 developments. These are further developed at department and individual teacher level. Heads of department and other managers are given the responsibility to ensure that their staff are given and use their training effectively but line management arrangements are not robust enough to ensure that all the training improves practice as consistently as it should.

93. The school is moving towards approval as an Investor in People, which has provision for the development of all staff, including the non-teaching staff. This is being sensitively managed. All non-teaching staff can volunteer for an interview with a manager, which will allow them access to development opportunities. These members of staff give good support to the work of the school.

94. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is good. The headteacher is generous in the time that he allocates for supporting teachers who are seeking to attain the higher teaching scales. The induction of staff new to the school and the effectiveness of provision for training new teachers are good. New teachers speak very highly of the quality of the support they receive and the effectiveness of their training.

95. Overall, the accommodation remains broadly satisfactory for teaching the curriculum, with some strengths and some weaknesses which affect learning. This judgement is similar to that made at the time of the last report. The comments regarding variable cleanliness throughout the school, the lack of care in some areas and the unpleasant teaching and learning environment of the hall and gymnasium are as applicable now as they were in 1997. The appearance of the dining hall does not provide an appropriate environment to promote pupils' social development. Since the last inspection, some works have been completed to improve, for example, the science laboratories and these now offer very good facilities. However, some rooms, such as that used for business studies, are too small for large groups and the modern foreign languages accommodation, which is dispersed, affects the ability to share resources effectively.

96. The extensive grounds are attractive and some areas offer good opportunities for quiet reflection and socialising. The playing fields, however, become waterlogged in wet weather. Pupils from Year 9 upwards are able to use the neighbouring youth centre building at break and lunchtime and this offers good facilities for mixing with their peers and what the youth tutor refers to as 'stress-busting'.

97. Learning resources are adequate. The majority of subjects have access to ICT for individual and small numbers of pupils. There are insufficient ICT facilities in art, especially for sixth form A-level work. Music has good learning resources, but lacks sufficient access to computers for GCSE work. The ratio

of computers to pupils is below average. Therefore, opportunities for whole-class lessons where pupils can use their ICT skills in subjects are restricted, as priority is given to the use of computer rooms for discrete ICT lessons. Subjects have sufficient access to other electronic equipment such as televisions, videocassette recorders and overhead projectors. In English and modern languages each department has one room equipped with an electronic whiteboard, but the facility is currently underused. The library is a pleasant space with a small number of computers. Most departments have small collections of subject reference and textbooks, but English has a good range of critical material. Other subjects are often supplemented by collections based in department rooms.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

98. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. There are strengths in the quality of support and guidance given to students, especially for their personal development, and in the monitoring of their progress and academic achievements. Students, particularly those wishing to continue their studies in higher education, speak highly of the quality of the support they receive. There are corresponding weaknesses in the longer-term vision and development of the sixth form and in ensuring that sixth form provision fully meets the needs and aspirations of all of the students. Monitoring and evaluation of the overall work of the sixth form are insufficiently developed.

99. Specific priorities related to the sixth form are included in the whole-school improvement plan. Priorities include the development and implementation of strategies to improve the average points score, to re-introduce vocational courses, to improve the performance of students aiming for Level 2 qualifications, and to increase the numbers transferring from Year 11 into the sixth form. Some of the actions to be taken to address these priorities, which are all relevant to the school's stage of development, are not sufficiently clear or explicit and have no clear timescales for action. This will make it difficult for senior staff and the governing body to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions they have taken.

Resources

100. The school spends more on its sixth form than it receives in income. Staffing in the sixth form is good. There are enough suitably qualified staff to teach the subjects offered and to provide the academic, personal and pastoral support needed. Staff training is good which helps teachers understand the examination requirements and focus their teaching accordingly.

101. Accommodation for the sixth form is broadly satisfactory. It benefits from having smaller teaching groups in subjects such as business studies. The sixth form common room and space specifically provided for the use of the sixth form are satisfactory and students are satisfied with their accommodation.

102. Resources of books are sufficient to support the curriculum. There are not enough computers to support learning and teaching in a number of subjects and the lack of CAD/CAM facilities in design and technology restricts the curriculum for sixth form students. The small numbers of computers in the library are popular with sixth form students undertaking assignments that require the use of the Internet for research.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. The school should:

- (1) improve the quality of strategic leadership and management across the school, by:
 - sharpening the school's planning for change through the improvement plan;
 - ensuring that senior managers have sufficient time to undertake strategic thinking and planning;

- implementing more robust systems and lines of accountability to ensure greater consistency across the school and within departments;
- monitoring and evaluating more rigorously the school's progress in meeting its intentions and priorities and taking more effective action to secure improvements.

[Paras: 80-82; 84-86; 89; 92; 132;137; 143; 166]

(2) improve the quality of the curriculum, by:

- extending the length of the teaching time to meet recommendations;
- developing a clearer rationale for the curriculum throughout the school to inform and underpin future developments;
- ensuring that statutory requirements are met in art and design and design and technology;
- reviewing the arrangements for citizenship and personal, social and vocational education;
- increasing the range of vocational courses to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils;
- ensuring greater consistency in the way that all departments support whole-school initiatives, such as literacy, numeracy, the Key Stage 3 strategy, and ICT.

[Paras: 31; 35; 43; 44; 46; 50; 59; 81; 114; 127; 131; 134; 137; 139; 218]

(3) improve the systems for tracking and supporting pupils' academic progress, by:

- establishing a more robust whole-school system for monitoring pupils' progress against their targets;
- using assessment, including performance data, more effectively to set sharper targets for pupils;
- using the outcomes of assessment more effectively to inform curricular planning;
- providing appropriate training to ensure that teachers apply the National Curriculum level descriptions more accurately, especially in Years 7 – 9;
- improving the quality of reporting pupils' attainment and progress to parents.

[Paras: 3; 34; 71; 72; 74; 76; 86; 123; 131; 141; 151; 153; 172; 183]

- (4) make more effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning in many subjects, by:
- increasing the number of computers when funding is available and ensuring greater access to them;
 - identifying more explicitly the contribution that individual subjects can make to developing pupils' ICT skills;
 - ensuring that the application of these skills is included more frequently in teachers' planning;
 - improving the arrangements for managing and monitoring the contribution made by subject departments to developing pupils' ICT skills.

[Paras: 35; 89; 97; 104; 123; 124; 131; 144; 160; 164-166; 174; 195]

Sixth form

- (1) Extend the range of teaching and learning approaches to help students develop their skills of working independently.
- [Paras: 39; 202; 208]*
- (2) Broaden the curriculum by introducing an appropriate range of vocational courses to meet the needs and aspirations of a significant minority of students more effectively.
- [Paras: 17; 59; 63; 203]*
- (3) Monitor and evaluate the work of the sixth form more rigorously and systematically.
- [Paras: 98; 99]*
- (4) Extend the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, by:
- ensuring that students have adequate access to computers, both in and out of lessons;
 - including the use of ICT more frequently in teachers' planning.

[Paras: 41; 61; 102; 202; 208; 211; 214; 222; 246]

Other issues which should be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan:

- improving the behaviour of a small minority of pupils;
[Paras: 19; 21; 22; 29; 106; 121; 122; 150; 156]
- improving the provision for pupils who are identified as gifted and talented.
[Paras: 8; 36; 127; 138; 145; 148; 168; 171]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	117
	Sixth form	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	1	11	61	40	4	0	0
Percentage	1	9	52	34	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	12	31	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	53	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	760	113
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	98	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	55

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	52

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	80	75	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	63	58
	Girls	51	52	44
	Total	100	115	102
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (75)	74 (70)	66 (63)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (28)	51 (42)	26 (30)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	65	62
	Girls	41	52	51
	Total	89	117	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (69)	76 (60)	73 (65)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (33)	42 (37)	35 (33)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	72	61	133

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	31	65	70
	Girls	27	51	51
	Total	58	116	121
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (56)	87 (94)	91 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.0
	National	39.8

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	28	22	50
	Average point score per candidate	173.6 (11.3)	250.0 (14.1)	207.2 (12.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (17.7)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	28	22	50	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	173.6 (11.3)	250.0 (14.1)	207.2 (12.6)	n/a (n/a)	n/a (n/a)	n/a (n/a)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (17.7)	* (17.5)	* (9.8)	* (11.4)	* (10.6)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
642	86	4
31	0	0
43	1	0
10	2	0
7	1	0
12	1	0
11	0	0
22	0	0
13	0	0
2	0	0
16	0	0
1	0	0
9	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
51	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.24
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	281

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.2
Key Stage 4	23.0

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2612410
Total expenditure	2557823
Expenditure per pupil	2937
Balance brought forward from previous year	37428
Balance carried forward to next year	54587

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	873
Number of questionnaires returned	219

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	8	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	53	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	56	9	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	50	18	7	1
The teaching is good.	31	56	8	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	57	14	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	44	7	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	37	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	54	16	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	34	53	7	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	58	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	42	21	8	14

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are high and good progress is achieved during Years 7 to 11.
- Teaching is good and relationships with pupils are positive.
- The programme of study includes a rich diet of literature from different ages and cultures.
- Teachers have high expectations and prepare pupils very well for tests and examinations.
- The subject is led and managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of access to computer rooms prevents pupils from enhancing their work with ICT.
- The poor behaviour of a small number of boys affects the quality of learning in a few lessons.
- The timetabling of lessons for some classes is unsatisfactory.

104. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2001 and in line with the national figure in 2002. The results in 2002 were well below average when compared with similar schools. In the latest tests, the boys' performance was above average and the girls' performance below. The same pupils were above average in the mathematics test and average in the science test. Over time, standards have consistently been in line with the national average. Pupils' work seen during the inspection is average on entry in Year 7 but above average in Year 9, indicating that they are making good progress. This improvement in overall standards is due to the teachers' effective adoption of the best features of the National Literacy Strategy. Most pupils are articulate in spoken English, although they make few extended statements. The higher attaining pupils perform entertaining and polished speeches, for example in defence of Lady Macbeth. Pupils listen well to the teacher and increasingly well to each other as they reach Year 9. Standards of reading aloud are above average, with many pupils giving fluent and expressive renditions of their own writing and the books they study. They write mature and confident commentaries on their reading, and make good use of detail from the text, for example when writing an extension chapter to *Northern Lights*. Most of their written work is literature-based, but they show above average ability to write for different purposes and audiences. The overall quality of handwriting and presentation is good. Although many pupils are competent in word-processing, the lack of access to computer rooms means that they make less use of ICT to enhance their work than expected. Pupils with special educational needs study the same range of literature as other pupils and they make clear and candid comments on their reading, describing characters and situations briefly but accurately.

105. In 2001, standards in the GCSE examinations in English language were well above average and in English literature they were above average for both boys and girls. This is particularly praiseworthy as the department's inclusive policy ensures that more than the national proportion of pupils takes both subjects. In 2002, the results in English were above the national average and in literature they were well above, showing that good progress had been made from Year 9. Pupils performed better in the two English examinations than in their other subjects. Girls gained significantly more of the higher grades than boys in both subjects, although boys' standards have improved over time. Current standards are above average overall, and in literature they are well above average. Most pupils are confident and fluent speakers in a variety of situations, including pair and group discussions. They concentrate and listen well to the teacher and to each other. The majority write well structured essays, showing close knowledge and perceptive understanding of the books they study. They show above average appreciation of the social and historical context in which Shakespeare and other authors were writing. Many write knowledgeable and sometimes provocative analyses of films such as *Of Mice and Men* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Their personal narratives are often highly readable, and most are able to suit their style to the purpose. Pupils with special needs are provided with appropriate tasks and writing frameworks to enable them to make good progress. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are fully

included and involved in class and group discussions and they often achieve high standards in their written responses to literature.

106. The overall quality of teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and in nearly a third of lessons it was very good. The teachers' lively and enthusiastic approach holds the class's interest, and their skilful and patient questioning draws out answers from a wide range of pupils. The trusting relationship they have established encourages pupils to take risks and develop their thinking without fear of reproach or ridicule. Most teachers make effective use of audio-visual aids to enliven the lesson and to give clear demonstrations of the writer's use of language. Their teaching of basic skills through a good variety of learning activities is generally very skilful. Occasionally, overhead transparencies have too much text on them to be clearly read from the back of the class. Older pupils are given very focused preparation for tests and examinations, enabling them to approach them with confidence. They are given plenty of opportunities to learn from each other and to refine their thinking through discussion and enquiry. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils as individuals, and they skilfully manage the learning of those with special educational needs, often working well in partnership with support staff. High expectations lead to high attainment. Marking is regular, detailed and helpful. The most talented pupils are given suggestions as to how they could improve even on very high standards of attainment. Homework is used well to reinforce the classroom learning. In a small number of lessons, pupils were given rather too much or too little to do for them to make the good progress that characterises most English lessons. In one lesson, the learning did not reflect the quality of teaching because a small number of boys noisily demanded the teacher's attention. In other lessons, the commendable willingness of the boys to contribute ideas led the girls to withdraw from the discussion. Overall, however, English is a challenging and enjoyable experience for pupils.

107. The programme of study is broad and balanced, based on a rich diet of literature from different ages and supplemented with non-fiction texts and film studies. Pupils are frequently given opportunities to reflect on serious personal, social and moral issues and to consider the viewpoints of people from other lands and cultures. Consequently, English makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For some classes in Years 7, 10 and 11 the timetabling of English is unsatisfactory, with two out of the three lessons occurring on the same day. The quality of learning was lower in the second lesson of the day. Pupils' response to their lessons is generally good, however. They arrive punctually and ready to work, and their behaviour in the classroom is good. Most pupils concentrate well and show willingness to take part in class discussions. They are keen to succeed and they are pleased when they do well. Relationships are positive and cordial in nearly all classes.

108. Improvement since the last inspection has been good from an initially strong position. High standards have been maintained and in English literature they have been further improved. The good quality of teaching has been maintained in spite of recent staff changes and new syllabus requirements. Grouping in Year 7 has been reorganised to give more challenge to higher attaining pupils.

109. The department is well led and managed. Teachers are given a clear sense of direction by a recently revised scheme of work that takes full account of the good practice recommended by the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and changes in the GCSE syllabuses. Current practice is frequently reviewed and the department is refining its assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 to enable individual progress to be tracked more accurately. The teachers' shared commitment is well demonstrated by their taking on additional classes to ensure that pupils receive specialist teaching during a long-term absence. Although monitoring of teaching and learning is not as regular as it was before this absence, results are thoroughly reviewed and action taken to improve when necessary.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers prepare their lessons well.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is good.
- Pupils are prepared well for their GCSE examinations and National Curriculum tests.

Areas for improvement

- Computer technology is not used enough to support learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils do not discuss their work sufficiently in lessons.

110. Pupils' attainment on entry into Year 7 is above national expectations in mathematics. Boys do better than the girls and this difference in attainment has been the picture in recent years. The difference continues throughout Key Stage 3 and is reflected in the national test results at the end of Year 9 in 2002: the boys' results were above the national average, the girls' results were below. Boys perform better in mathematics than in English and science, whilst the girls' performance is broadly comparable. Overall, the results in 2002 were above the national average and well above the average when compared with pupils' attainment on entry to the school. However, they were lower than those found in similar schools.

111. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally. The large majority of pupils undertake mental and written calculations with assurance; they handle data with confidence, have a good grasp of basic algebra and use calculators sensibly. The large majority are confident with spreadsheets and most use them appropriately, for example, to analyse data obtained from investigations into weather patterns. One Year 8 class used the computer effectively to help with an investigation into the speed of reaction of left and right hands. Most pupils make satisfactory progress during the first three years and achieve as expected. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and their achievement frequently matches that of other pupils. Those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, whilst the good progress of higher attaining pupils is reflected in their ability to solve quadratic equations and use very large and very small numbers with understanding.

112. In the GCSE examinations, the difference in attainment between boys and girls continues: at grades A*-C, the boys' results in 2002 were above their respective national figure and the girls' results were below. Boys' results showed an improvement on the previous year, but those of the girls were slightly lower. Both sets of results were below those for English and about the same as science. Overall, the results in 2002 were close to the national average for all maintained schools and were close to the average for similar schools.

113. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. During Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to improve their algebraic skills and by the end of Year 11 most can generalise findings arising from investigations. However, only a minority use computers to any significant extent. Again, progress is satisfactory: pupils with English as an additional language do as well as their peers and some do better; pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Higher attaining pupils progress to work on more demanding data-handling: for example, using moving averages, scatter graphs and applying statistical techniques to coursework. Overall, pupils are achieving as expected, and in line with their earlier attainment.

114. Standards of numeracy within mathematics are broadly average, with most pupils able to make routine calculations without a calculator. Most can make sensible estimates of the results of calculations and most can use a calculator accurately. Skills in mental arithmetic are broadly average and the majority of pupils are confident in recognising important number patterns. The department has a written policy statement on numeracy across the curriculum, together with an action plan for its implementation. The school's intention is that each department integrates or highlights opportunities for

numeracy in their programmes of study. Although pupils use numbers effectively in geography and science, the impact of the numeracy policy in other subjects has not been sufficiently significant.

115. Teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. The teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory. They have good relations with the pupils and generally manage their classes well. As a result, pupils usually work well and do their best to improve. Lessons are carefully planned, with some teachers making good use of technology at Key Stage 3 to make the subject more interesting. In both key stages, pupils are well-prepared for national tests and examinations. Pupils are regularly reminded of the importance of developing the vocabulary of mathematics and some classrooms reflect how mathematics has arisen from other cultures. Regular testing, backed by good record keeping, gives useful information to staff which they use to set targets and to inform pupils about progress. In many lessons, however, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to discuss their work to any depth: questioning techniques are too narrowly focused to explore misunderstandings; and not enough time is given to thinking through strategies or alternative approaches to solving problems. Also, the world of work and the usefulness of mathematics in other subjects are under-represented.

116. The department is soundly led. Teaching guidelines are clearly set out and teachers' work is monitored. This monitoring, backed by suggestions for improvement, has had a positive impact on improving some teaching practice. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes. A project to improve numeracy has been introduced and there has been an increase in the use of computers to help with teaching and learning, although this is insufficient in Years 10 and 11. A modular GCSE course has recently been introduced in an attempt to improve the performance of the girls.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The higher attaining pupils, who have good attitudes to the subject, make good progress and achieve well.
- The staff are well qualified.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons.
- Accommodation for the subject is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used enough to support whole-class teaching.
- Marking written work more rigorously and expecting higher standards of work from pupils.
- Sharing the good practice seen in some lessons to improve the attitudes of some of the lower attaining pupils.
- Making better use of assessment data to identify progress and achievement and set challenging targets for all pupils.

117. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the results were in line with the national average. They were, however, below those of similar schools and also below the average for pupils with similar test results at the end of Year 6. When their below average attainment on entry to Year 7 is considered, these results indicate that pupils were achieving as expected. The boys performed better than the girls but this reflects the difference in their attainment when they join the school. The results in science were similar to the pupils' results in English but not as high as those in mathematics. Over the last five years, the results have shown an upward trend in line with the national picture.

118. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the standard expected nationally. They are achieving as expected in relation to their earlier attainment at the start of Year 7. Standards of work of the lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 remain below the expected levels; for example, they are only able to recall the basic parts of plants and their role in pollination. In contrast, the higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are producing standards of work that are above the expected levels. For example, they can explain in detail the changes occurring when water changes state on the basis of particle behaviour and

energy requirements. In addition, they use this knowledge to draw conclusions from carefully undertaken practical work.

119. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 take either the double or single award GCSE examinations in science. In 2002, they all attained at least a pass grade. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was close to the national averages. The results in the GCSE examinations show that pupils are achieving as expected. There was a difference between the attainment of boys and girls that matched that seen at the end of Year 9. The trend in GCSE results has been close to the national average over the past six years. A small proportion of the year group follow a certificate of achievement course in science that has been included into the curriculum to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils.

120. Standards of work of pupils currently in Year 11 are wide but overall are at the expected levels. Pupils are achieving as expected in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 10. Lower attaining pupils explain the process of weathering of rocks and perform simple experiments in a safe and enthusiastic manner. Higher attaining pupils recall and discuss detailed aspects of the nature of chemical bonding in water and ammonia. These higher attaining pupils have complete notes and, overall, a good standard of presentation. However, a significant number of pupils have poor writing skills and their notes do not provide a good source for revision. The attainment data held by the department indicates that boys are attaining higher levels and grades than girls in Years 7 to 11.

121. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are variable but satisfactory overall. The higher attaining pupils have the best attitudes to the subject whilst the attitudes of the lower attaining pupils are not as good and are sometimes unsatisfactory. Where there is a very constructive working atmosphere, as a result of cooperation between teachers and pupils, pupils show good attitudes and contribute to lessons well. This was especially true with the higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils of all levels of attainment work in an enthusiastic and safe manner when carrying out practical work and enjoy this aspect of the subject.

122. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In lessons, there are many examples of good teaching and no instances of unsatisfactory teaching. The review of pupils' books indicates that teaching, over time, is of a similar standard and is responsible for pupils' satisfactory achievement. The best teaching ensures a good pace, effective classroom control and suitable activities to achieve both the planned learning intentions of the lesson and to meet the needs of the pupils. One very effective lesson in Year 11, based on the concept of pressure and area, was taught with clarity and with many relevant links to everyday situations. With this approach, the teacher was able to engage the pupils, ensuring that they made good progress. The quality of teaching and subsequent learning by the pupils are often dependent on the effort and attitudes of the pupils. In general, the higher attaining pupils have better attitudes in class, enabling teachers to concentrate on the teaching and learning. The attitudes of the lower attaining pupils to their learning are not as good. With these pupils, teachers have to focus more on maintaining interest and concentration, which slows the rate of the learning. Some teachers are able to motivate the lower attaining pupils more successfully and fully engage them in the work. Not enough is done to identify these successful strategies or to share the good practice across the department. Homework, when set, is an integral part of lesson planning and is used as an effective means of reinforcing learning. Teachers mark books and tests in detail, adding comments that give praise, when appropriate, or identify weaknesses and give advice about how these might be tackled. However, a few teachers allow some pupils to produce work that is not their best. There is also some lack of rigour in following up missing or incomplete work.

123. Teachers record the results of marking but do not yet use them very effectively to set individual targets and monitor pupils' progress. They keep pupils informed about their effort and attainment on a very regular basis. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in science and make satisfactory progress overall. The department is able to organise the group sizes, in most years, so that the lower attaining pupils are in smaller classes. Teachers are aware of the needs of these pupils through the use of the individual education plans and, together with effective learning support assistants, provide support through suitable activities and resources. The small numbers of pupils learning English as an additional language are well supported by additional specialist teachers and make satisfactory progress. The introduction of a certificate of achievement course in science is designed to support lower-attaining pupils further and allow those for whom a double or single award GCSE examination

course is not suitable to receive accreditation for the work they have done. Higher attaining pupils are well challenged by the teaching they get and make good progress. The teaching in science provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills, through both written work and class discussions. The department has responded well to the school's literacy policy. The use of ICT for whole class lessons is insufficient. Although teachers are confident in the use of computers to enhance their teaching, they are unable to get sufficient access to a class set of computers on a regular basis. The department has enough sensors that can be linked to a computer to monitor and record such information as temperature or light intensity. The stock of books in the library is satisfactory and there is a good range of books available within the department.

124. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The current head of department has maintained the focus of the department on identified and agreed priorities, and has worked closely with the team of teachers to introduce some new initiatives, based on the school and departmental development plans. These include departmental monitoring of teaching and learning, which is undertaken well, to help support teachers. The team of support staff are very efficient, very well organised and ensure the equipment and resources are readily available for lessons. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards and the quality of teaching have been maintained and the attainment of the higher attaining pupils increased. However, some issues like the use of computers have not been tackled effectively enough. The accommodation for science is very good, with each of the well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers having their own laboratory in close proximity to one another.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards by the age of 16.
- The good teaching in Years 10 and 11 helps pupils to make good progress.
- The planned use of artists' work increases pupils' knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of art.
- The depth and detail of pupils' research and preparation for their art work contributes to the high standards they achieve.
- The vast majority of pupils display very positive attitudes.
- The enthusiasm, commitment and subject expertise of the teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Developing a strategic plan for art.
- Monitoring and evaluating teaching more systematically.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensions, particularly at Key Stage 3.

125. By the age of 14, the attainment of the substantial majority of pupils is in line with the standard expected nationally. Within this, a few pupils in each class are below the expected levels but there are also a few naturally talented pupils who consistently produce work that is above average. Girls generally attain higher standards than boys. This picture mirrors the teachers' assessment of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002, when a higher proportion than average were judged to have reached the expected levels or exceeded them, with many more girls reaching the higher levels than boys. The standards of those pupils, currently in Year 10, confirm the school's positive assessment.

126. For those pupils who opt for art in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average. The last inspection reported that standards in the GCSE examinations were below average. Standards have improved considerably since then, with the results over the past three years being above average. The improvement is mainly due to the greater emphasis teachers place on the depth and detail of pupils' research and preparation for their final pieces. In 2002, the GCSE examination results were above the national average and better than their results in some other subjects. However, the difference between girls' and boys' results remained in favour of the girls by a considerable margin.

127. At the age of 11, pupils arrive in the school with average levels of attainment in art. They make much good progress in the skills and techniques covered but as they do not have sufficient opportunity to develop work in three dimensions or to use ICT, their achievement by the end of Year 9 is only satisfactory overall. During their time in the school, they improve their drawing and painting skills dramatically and are exposed to the work of a wide range of artists and craftspeople, which enables them to learn about different styles and characteristics and to increase their general knowledge and understanding of art. A real strength is the way they are encouraged to work in depth with attention to details of techniques and to practise them over a period of time. In these areas, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. In relative terms, however, the higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should because they do the same work as their peers at the same pace.

128. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They draw with increasing control and finesse. They capture good likenesses in their work on self-portraits and work with conviction when practising printing skills in Year 10. By Year 11, pupils have learned to develop their ideas in a range of media and experiment with *impasto* techniques. A particular strength is the opportunity they are given to work on a large scale as well as to produce more detailed studies. Despite the differences in examination outcomes, both boys and girls make good progress in the lessons. Pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds and pupils with special educational needs also achieve well.

129. The quality of teaching overall is good and has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, so pupils learn appropriately and make satisfactory progress. It is consistently good in Key Stage 4, where effective and imaginative teaching brings coherence and meaning to pupils' experience by facilitating learning in depth. There are many strengths in both key stages but there are some important weaknesses in Key Stage 3.

130. Teachers' preparation and organisation of the resources and the rooms are excellent. This means that complicated practical activities are undertaken sensibly and efficiently and effective learning takes place. Teachers give good explanations and demonstrations so pupils are quite clear about what they have to do and learn. The teachers' enthusiasm for art transfers to pupils and raises their self-esteem. The way teachers move pupils on and pace the work increases pupils' work rate. For example, in the Year 9 lessons, pupils were learning about aspects of futurism by drawing their own version of a figure coming down stairs based on a painting by Marcel Duchamps. The task was to make several drawings of the figure in different positions, one on top of the next to create the feeling of downward movement and then to emphasise the geometric shapes so produced. The teacher gave the pupils short time limits to draw each figure as one of them posed. This prevented them spending too much time on detail, helped them achieve the overall effect and pushed them on to consider the abstraction of the shapes. In the GCSE classes, the teacher's knowledge of the assessment criteria is used effectively to help pupils improve their work.

131. Where teaching is weaker in some Key Stage 3 classes, the flow of the lesson is interrupted by the constant need to maintain discipline. This means that time is lost and progress is not as great as it should be. The lack of planning for work in three dimensions and for greater use of ICT means that pupils are not able to make progress in these areas. Also, the use of National Curriculum levels of attainment is not being planned into lessons so pupils do not understand how their work is to be judged or how they can improve to reach the next level. Teachers do not use the levels to plan subsequent work.

132. This is a very well managed department. Staff work as a team and the day-to-day organisation and preparation of resources are outstanding. The head of department's enthusiastic leadership is satisfactory overall. She knows most of the strengths and the weaknesses of the department. She has brought about considerable improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve it further. There are some weaknesses, however, which have prevented more progress. The lack of a strategic plan for art means that the department has not addressed the need to introduce three-dimensional work in Years 7 - 9 and has not prioritised longer-term developments, for example in ICT, so that improvements can be brought in incrementally. Existing weaknesses in teaching and planning have not been identified. This is because there has been insufficient attention given to monitoring and

evaluation to iron out inconsistencies, to improve discipline and to ensure the curriculum meets the National Curriculum requirements in full.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The modules of work in Years 7 – 9 help to support the teaching of citizenship.
- The coordinator's awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the current arrangements for teaching citizenship.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the leadership and management of the subject.
- Planning more explicitly the contribution that other subjects make to the teaching of citizenship.
- Ensuring greater consistency of approach in the teaching of citizenship across the year groups.
- Providing more explicit opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of participation and responsible action.

133. For the most part, the school has made satisfactory progress in implementing the statutory requirement to teach citizenship to all pupils in Years 7 - 11. Not all the elements are fully in place and there is some inconsistency of approach in the way that citizenship is being taught and the topics that are being covered. The school has modified some of its initial arrangements in the light of its experience in the first term. No specific teaching of citizenship occurred during the inspection and therefore it is not possible to make clear judgements about standards, teaching or learning. However, evidence was collected from an analysis of the work in pupils' books in Years 7 - 10 and in discussions with pupils from all year groups.

134. Citizenship is taught by form tutors as a discrete element within the time allocated to personal, social and vocational education (PSVE). In the school, aspects of citizenship have formed part of the PSVE programme for a number of years and the programme has now been extended in line with national guidance. However, this has been at the expense of the PSVE programme, which is unsatisfactory. This situation is recognised by senior staff, who are reviewing the current arrangements. A small amount of citizenship is covered in geography in Year 7. Although issues relating to citizenship are raised in other subjects, in most instances they are incidental and not taught in a planned way.

135. Work in pupils' books shows that they have covered a number of topics relating to citizenship. For example, pupils in Year 9 have discussed issues relating to democracy, the electoral system and the criminal and justice system. They have considered arguments for and against participating in such systems. Younger pupils have covered topics relating to being an active citizen and the likely rights and responsibilities. Some of the work is too superficial, such as the drawing of a ballot box without any written context or supporting material. Across tutor groups in the same year, there are considerable variations in the content being covered and in the amount of written work that is required. The quality of presentation in books is very variable, indicating that teachers' expectations are inconsistent. Although a few tutors mark pupils' books regularly, not all do so. As a result, the incorrect spelling of some key words is not highlighted and unfinished work is not checked or commented upon. In some instances, there is a lack of clarity and distinction between some of the work covered in citizenship lessons and work that falls more naturally into PSVE or into religious education.

136. The units of work for Years 7 - 9 give helpful guidance to tutors on the content to be covered and also the specific objectives that should be taught explicitly within each unit. Some of these objectives relate to developing pupils' skills of enquiry and communication, which are an important part of the citizenship programme. However, there is insufficient guidance to staff on the most appropriate teaching and learning approaches they could employ to ensure that pupils develop these skills systematically. At present, there is insufficient focus on the pupils' active and practical involvement in aspects of citizenship. This applies particularly to the opportunities provided for all pupils to establish and take part responsibly in school and community-based activities, an important strand in the programme for citizenship. For example, the School Forum does not play a significant part in developing pupils' skills and many pupils consider that they have little opportunity to contribute to decision-making and to the

formulation of policy within the school. Strategies for the involvement of pupils in wider community activities are less well developed, as are the development of units of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

137. Leadership and management of citizenship present a mixed picture, with some areas of strength and other areas of weakness. Overall, they are unsatisfactory, as the coordinator, who is a senior member of staff with many other responsibilities and a high teaching commitment, has insufficient time to manage and monitor its implementation effectively. Strengths include the development of helpful units of work to support the teaching of citizenship in Years 7 - 9, a clear commitment to providing an appropriate curriculum to support the development of citizenship, and a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the current arrangements. Against these positive features, the programme is insufficiently developed in Years 10 and 11; individual subjects have not planned in enough detail the contribution that they will make to the citizenship programme; pupils have insufficient opportunity to become actively involved in citizenship issues; and the monitoring and evaluation arrangements are not robust enough to ensure that the provision for all pupils is coherent and consistent. The procedures for assessing pupils' skills, progress and achievements in citizenship are in the early stages of development. The arrangements for teaching citizenship and its relationship with the PSVE programme are under review.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The range of practical experiences of using different materials and production processes.
- The choice of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, including graphical products, food technology and resistant materials.
- The generally good quality of relationships between teachers and their pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards, particularly in Year 7 - 9.
- Developing schemes of work in Years 7 - 11 to meet National Curriculum requirements, especially at Key Stage 3, and to challenge all pupils, particularly the higher attaining pupils.
- Improving continuity in the programme and progression in pupils' learning to raise standards.
- Making greater use of ICT, particularly in computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and for researching information.

138. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 suggest that standards at that time were above the national expectation. However, an analysis of pupils' work, and their achievements in lessons and in their previous work, shows that teachers are too generous in their application of the National Curriculum level descriptions. Standards overall are below the national expectation. Pupils do insufficient design work to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, so that their design skills are poorly developed. In addition, their limited graphics skills do not allow them to express their ideas freely and effectively. Too much of their work is directed by their teachers and they are given insufficient opportunity to produce work that shows their own thoughts and ideas. At the end of each project, there is little real difference in what each pupil has achieved. The higher attaining pupils are not given the opportunity to develop their capabilities as they should. The lower attaining pupils complete the practical tasks, but their design and written work shows evidence of little progress.

139. Every pupil has experience of food technology and resistant materials, including wood, metal and plastic, and some understanding of simple mechanisms, control and structures. However, the level of work is not high enough to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In addition, pupils do not use and apply principles of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) as required. The experience of using computers to gather research information from the Internet, presenting the results of their research using spreadsheets with charts and graphs, producing appropriate design ideas, or calculating the content of food using a database, for example, is lacking. Pupils' skills in making artefacts are sound but mostly they follow the instructions of their teacher rather than apply their knowledge and skills to their own design solutions. The amount of time allocated to the subject in

Years 7 to 9 is below that found in most other schools. Pupils lose about half a year in teaching time through the key stage. Consequently, the school does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 - 9 and pupils' progress is slower than expected.

140. In 2001, the GCSE examination results were in line with the national average and they were broadly similar in 2002. The proportion of pupils taking the GCSE examinations in these years was comparatively small, about half the figure found nationally. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to follow a full GCSE examination course either in graphical products, resistant materials or food technology. However, only a small number do so, a consequence of weaknesses in the school's provision. There are two main reasons why pupils do not choose to do a GCSE course: the course in Years 7 - 9 does not prepare them adequately for the standards expected at GCSE; and the option system has too many other subjects that draw pupils away from choosing the subject. The school has plans to review the current arrangements. Standards of pupils' current work are in line with national expectations, broadly similar to the GCSE results in 2002.

141. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is mainly good because teachers have good practical skills and demonstrate these well. Teachers have established good relationships with pupils and set high standards of practical work. Pupils watch their teachers demonstrate with great interest because of their practical expertise. However, the teaching programmes are insufficiently planned to include all the required elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Pupils are not involved enough in designing complete products and planning their production, which is a considerable weakness. Pupils' skills of evaluation are underdeveloped. When questioned, for instance, few pupils were able to demonstrate the level of reflective self-criticism seen in most schools. In Years 7 - 9, few overarching principles are established and as pupils move from teacher to teacher three times in each year, they have not established a framework for their designing and making. They do not choose which practical skills to use because the teacher plans all the work for them. In Years 10 and 11, teachers continue to develop the practical skills well, but design skills are underdeveloped and pupils have a lot to catch up. This became evident during a scrutiny of pupils' food technology projects, which showed that they were behind schedule. Some groups contain many lower attaining pupils. Homework is not used well enough to support learning overall. The arrangements for recording pupils' design and technology capability are satisfactory, but the basis for working out their levels takes no account of the significant areas of the programmes of study pupils do not cover. No practical work in food technology was seen as the member of staff was absent.

142. Although many pupils like design and technology, too much of their work is unchallenging. They co-operate satisfactorily with each other and their teacher so that everyone makes progress in undertaking tasks. Their motivation is generally high. Pupils are taught relevant procedures, wearing protective clothing as appropriate. For some pupils, the high point of their Year 8 programme was the combined design and technology and modern languages visit to Paris. They completed workbooks on their trip and reminisced with the inspectors on what they had seen and learnt with patent enjoyment.

143. Leadership and management of design and technology are unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in departmental planning and in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of departmental practice. No health and safety audits are undertaken. The roles and responsibilities of post holders in the department are not clearly established, which makes it difficult to produce a unified approach that enables detailed plans for the National Curriculum to be implemented consistently.

144. The technician provides effective support through providing an organised environment and keeping stocks of materials to the correct level. There is a good supply of materials for practical work. The five technology rooms, covering different materials and processes, are all of good quality. Two are multi-material workshops and are well equipped for processing wood, metal and plastics. Facilities for graphical products are generally good. There are weaknesses in the numbers of computers available for design and technology and facilities for CAD/CAM are very limited. Only three of the six computers were working at the time of the inspection and few pupils use this equipment regularly. The food technology room is small. It has only nine cookers, which limits access to cooking in lessons. It lacks computers for supporting design and evaluation work, or for using databases for to analyse the nutritional values of food products.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11: the teachers' very good knowledge of the requirements of the examination syllabus contributes to the good progress pupils make in their GCSE course.
- The department makes a good contribution to world citizenship.
- The department knows what it has to do to improve and is in a strong position to do so.

Areas for improvement

- Providing more challenging work for the higher attaining pupils.
- Continuing to seek ways to improve the performance of girls.
- Eradicating unsatisfactory teaching by ensuring teachers provide tasks that engage all pupils and increase their active involvement in lessons.

145. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with little geographical knowledge of Britain or of the world. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show that pupils' attainment was in line with the national average. From their work in lessons and in their books, pupils' attainment is in line with the average by the end of Year 9, confirming the picture shown by the teachers' assessments in 2002. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 and 8 and their progress accelerates in Year 9. Average and below average attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Some pupils with special educational needs and the small number learning English as an additional language make good progress towards their targets, especially where they are supported by classroom assistants. The higher attaining pupils do not make sufficient progress over time and these pupils say that some tasks are too easy for them.

146. The GCSE examination results at grades A*-C in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average, but lower than the results in 2001 when they were above average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A was below average compared with the national average, indicating that the higher attaining pupils did not do as well as they might. Boys attained well above their respective national figures at GCSE but did less well in geography than in many of their other subjects. The girls' results were below the national average for girls and their performance in geography was significantly worse than in some of their other subjects. Geography is popular with girls but few of the higher attaining pupils are attracted to the course. Pupils taking the certificate of achievement course performed well in 2002.

147. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally, reflecting the GCSE examination results in 2002. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in lessons, although there is clear evidence in exercise books of good progress over time from both boys and girls. Teachers' expertise in knowing and meeting the requirements of the examination syllabus contributes to the progress that pupils make. Pupils' study of what makes trade fair provoked thought and extended writing, contributing well to their knowledge of world citizenship.

148. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall: they are satisfactory in Years 7 - 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There is a small element of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 9, because of the use of inappropriate materials and teaching approaches. This is a result of the inexperience of some of the teachers, who are receiving good support to manage teaching and learning better. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and enthusiasm to prepare interesting materials, which allow pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and basic skills satisfactorily in most lessons. Pupils write extensively in a variety of forms: for example, about volcanoes and earthquakes, Japan and world population problems. Teachers provide writing frameworks to help pupils shape their answers and to organise their writing. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' writing improves quickly as they gain in confidence and maturity. Teachers do not give pupils enough practice in reading out aloud. They enable them to work in pairs to discuss ideas and the best lessons have a quiet buzz of shared conversation. Pupils use and practise a wide range of mathematical skills well in almost every geography lesson. There is evidence of the

regular use of ICT to support teaching and learning. Subject skills, such as the use of atlases, scale, direction and the conventional signs of the Ordnance Survey, are taught effectively. Teachers also make use of lively model making to extend pupils' understanding of the structure of the earth and how contours work. A good programme of practical activities and fieldwork in Years 7 - 9 supports course work at GCSE. Thinking skills are practised, for example, in the analysis of some excellent photographs of developed and developing countries and in the matching of terms and definitions of river basins and the water cycle. However, the subsequent prolonged copying and colouring does not engage the minds of the higher attaining pupils or challenge them sufficiently. As a result, they do not gain sufficient open-ended access to the highest levels of the National Curriculum through the use of geographical investigations. Teachers are aware of this and in the more effective lessons, the higher attaining pupils are beginning to be stretched further.

149. Teachers are successfully involving pupils directly and actively in their own learning. The schemes of work for Year 7 have been rewritten and those for Years 8 and 9 are being revised. Starter tasks engage pupils' attention immediately, providing a good launching platform for learning. Good resource packs, for example on economic development, provide strong frameworks for learning which help teachers' management of lessons. Suitable work is provided regularly for pupils with special educational needs.

150. Teachers' expectations of work and behaviour are mostly good and these are largely realised as pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good: pupils want to do well. Relationships are generally very good. However, some pupils do not concentrate on their work sufficiently. This is partly to do with the need for teachers to provide tasks that engage all pupils, partly to do with improving some teachers' skills in managing lively pupils, and partly to do with inappropriate behaviour from a small minority of pupils. The beginning of some lessons is affected by the time it takes to establish a positive working atmosphere, which is sometimes prolonged and takes pupils' focus away from learning. The department is resource-rich and teachers make good use of a wide range of materials. Although little use of strong visual stimuli was seen during the inspection, regular use is made of video material, for example on the shrinkage of the Aral Sea, which focuses on unsustainable development.

151. Thorough, supportive marking shows pupils how to improve. The marking of GCSE work is stronger than it is for the work of pupils in Years 7 - 9. The marking system does not relate to national criteria nor does it assess pupils' progress. Target setting is now in place and is more effective on the GCSE course than in Years 7 - 9. Procedures for assessment are good, particularly at GCSE where examination results are carefully analysed: the outcomes of assessment are used well to inform planning.

152. The management of the department is effective: there is a determination to improve. Departmental performance is intelligently monitored and the head of department has clear, accurate targets for improvement. Teachers are already working to raise standards and changes have been made to the coursework requirements at GCSE to try to improve the performance of girls. The department makes a good contribution to world citizenship, although planning for this needs further development. There is a good video library. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the teaching of basic subject skills, including numeracy and ICT, has improved substantially. The department is in a strong position to improve further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and leadership ensure an appropriate balance in the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment is valid and reliable, ensuring an accurate measurement of pupils' attainment in Years 7 - 9.
- The above average standards in work in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Developing a wider range of teaching strategies to involve pupils more actively in learning.
- Increasing the pace and challenge of teaching, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

153. In 2002, the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 showed that standards were below the national average. This represents a downward trend from 2001, when standards were assessed as being above average. Inspectors judge that the marking of the work of the 2002 cohort was too harsh and it has now been appropriately adjusted. However, this does not compensate for the low proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 or above, which indicates that the most capable pupils in Key Stage 3 are not doing as well as they should. This pattern is continued in Years 10 and 11. In the GCSE examination in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was above the national average, but a much smaller proportion than average gained the higher grades of A* or A. In 2002, there was a significant disparity between the proportion of boys and girls achieving grades A*-C, with the performance of the girls being well above the average figures for girls and the boys' performance being significantly below the boys' national figure. However, the difference is more apparent than real, as the same number of boys over-achieved as under-achieved based on their earlier attainment, with the majority achieving their predicted grade. The lower attaining pupils achieved very well in gaining entry level qualifications.

154. By the end of Year 9, standards of pupils' current work are above the national expectation, indicating an improvement since the teachers' assessments in 2002. Standards are higher in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7, where the pace of learning is slower and teachers' expectations too low. For example, most pupils in Year 7 are able to identify different parts of a castle but do not use this knowledge to consider why castles were designed in particular ways. Pupils in Year 8 make rapid progress in interpreting sources of evidence and make extended inferences from portraits of Elizabeth I, drawing upon their contextual knowledge. They also produce well-structured extended accounts of the importance of Islam to the Middle Ages. By Year 9, pupils evaluate primary source material dealing with living and working conditions during the industrial revolution and produce extended causal narratives that explain the short- and longer-term consequences of the period of empire.

155. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is also above the national expectation. More capable pupils in Year 10 produce highly analytical accounts of the American economic boom of the 1920s, in which they show an initial understanding of the notion of sufficiency in historical explanations. They also distinguish between the impact of the boom on different sections of society. However, pupils studying the causes of the collapse of the League of Nations lack a method for analysing the relative importance of different causal factors. Pupils in Year 11 are able to cross-reference information from a collection of sources dealing with *Kristallnacht* and evaluate it for reliability and usefulness as evidence to test a statement arguing that the events of that night were spontaneous in origin.

156. Pupils make at least satisfactory and occasionally good progress in Years 7 - 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. No significant differences were observed in the achievements of boys and girls. However, when the pace of learning slackens, the attitudes of some boys to learning in Year 7 is noticeably worse than that of girls and the effects of this are evident in the amount and quality of work they produce. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 7 - 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are aware of their individual education plans, make some use of materials better suited to their needs and mark their work in a very sympathetic and helpful way. However, their progress is hampered by whole-class teaching that is too reliant on the joint reading of a text book and which does not recognise individual learning needs enough. Pupils with behavioural difficulties, working on entry level qualifications, make very good progress in the Inclusion Unit, due to unusually enlightened teaching and specialist support from the head of history. At the same time, these pupils develop an awareness of citizenship through sponsored activities in the community. Pupils from different ethnic heritages are absorbed naturally into the learning process and make good progress at all levels. The process of absorption is assisted by deliberate curriculum planning to include topics that are consistent with the development of multi-cultural understanding, for example, the achievements of Islam in Year 8, Empire and Slavery in Year 9 and the Civil Rights Movement in Year 10. There is a strong sense of inclusion in the work of the department as a whole.

157. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 - 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Good teaching is characterised by pace, variety of approaches and the proactive use of assessment. In the best practice, progress is visible across a lesson. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils made good progress in interpreting and evaluating portraits of Elizabeth I as evidence of her use of propaganda, and in a Year 11 lesson pupils worked through a structured investigation using evidence about *Kristallnacht*. Less effective teaching is characterised by a lack of pace and challenge in the tasks given to pupils and low expectations by the teacher. Teachers tackle moral, cultural and social issues head on, for example in lessons dealing with the morality of slavery in Year 9, or with arguments for and against interventionist approaches to social welfare in Year 13. Coverage and development of key skills is no more than satisfactory. They limit the development of literacy to the posting of key words and some use of writing frameworks rather than developing high quality discursive writing amongst the most capable pupils. Teachers' assessment practice, on the other hand, is very good. Well-targeted assessment tasks, mark schemes that are levelled against grade or level descriptions, diagnostic marking and techniques for monitoring pupils' progress against target grades are all in place and are having a positive impact on improving standards.

158. The history department is well managed and the head of department provides strong subject leadership. Satisfactory progress is being made towards meeting targets within the departmental improvement plan, for example the strategies devised to raise the attainment of boys in the GCSE course. The leadership style is inclusive and collaborative. The two main teachers work well as a team and non-specialist colleagues are kept well informed. Planning is thorough and the teaching programme is supported by a good range of resources. However, the programme of classroom observations that contribute to departmental self-review has so far failed to widen in all cases the range of teaching strategies employed or to ensure pace and challenge in pupils' learning in all lessons. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Considerable improvement has occurred in the methods and use of assessment, but limitations persist in the range and variety of teaching approaches.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards of pupils' work have improved over the last few years.
- The quality of teaching is good: clear lesson planning and well structured teaching ensure a clear focus on learning.
- The staffing and organisation of the discrete ICT provision are much improved.
- The introduction of a wider range of courses and qualifications for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the management and monitoring of ICT across the curriculum.
- Increasing the number of computers, including access to ICT, to support subject teaching and learning.
- Developing more robust systems for assessing pupils' skills and achievements in ICT across subjects.
- Improving the resources for control technology.

159. The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory overall. The satisfactory provision found in the discrete subject courses is outweighed by the unsatisfactory arrangements for the use of and access to ICT to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level for their age has improved over the past three years and indicate that standards in 2002 were above the national average. The trend of improvement is supported by the evidence in pupils' work. However, current standards are in line with, rather than above, the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9, and are not as high as the teachers' assessments in 2002 would suggest. In recent years, qualifications for pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been focused on attaining competency certificates but the change made in 2002 to allow some pupils to study a vocational GCSE course in ICT is providing a more appropriate challenge for them. In lessons where these new qualifications are being taught, the standard of pupils' work is in line with the standard

expected nationally. In 2002, all pupils took a certificate of competence, including pupils with special educational needs, and pass rates were above average. The range of qualifications to meet the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment is still developing but the vocational GCSE qualifications route provides a more relevant course for many pupils.

160. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a variety of ICT experiences. Although curriculum time is less than expected, most pupils make satisfactory progress over the three years in Years 7 - 9. The attainment of pupils in Year 9 is in line with expectations, with a significant minority attaining higher standards than this in the discrete courses. This is also particularly evident in Year 7, where the learning is more successful. By the end of Year 9, pupils use word processing and publishing packages to enter and edit text, manipulating words and pictures satisfactorily. They enter data onto spreadsheets competently and many generate graphs which for some pupils relates to their work in mathematics and science. Although developing, pupils' Internet skills are mainly average. The majority use the Internet to research topics, using the search engines to find and download information. Some pupils have very limited experiences of the breadth of ICT work in aspects such as measurement and control, which affects their levels of attainment.

161. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is broadly in line with expectations. These pupils have not had the opportunity to develop their skills in a rigorous and systematic way. Pupils in each year group have had very different experiences of using and applying ICT in school, which has had an effect on the continuity of their learning and their achievements. In some cases, they have not developed some basic ICT skills or the confidence to apply ICT routines. Pupils communicate, retrieve and analyse information appropriately. Some pupils are able to investigate relationships and patterns but few have the technical confidence to apply real-world applications to solving problems. Most pupils have not developed the skills of learning independently expected of pupils of this age. Pupils have good access to the computers in the ICT rooms and to the library provision at lunchtimes and after school. The ICT staff work hard to provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and the performance level of those that make use of this additional time is improving.

162. In the discrete lessons, the quality of teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is good although the learning is satisfactory. This anomaly is accounted for by the differences in experience and knowledge of many of the pupils. The most effective teaching mixes brief whole-class demonstrations with extended periods of individual work. Teachers use a strong starter activity and well-timed assessment at the end of the lesson to check that the objectives have been taught and learnt. Teachers are good at explaining tasks and making effective use of their subject expertise to promote better learning of knowledge and skills. The use of technology facilities, such as the large VDU and Power Point presentations, allow all pupils to be more involved in their learning and enhance whole-class teaching and the teacher's coaching role to small groups. These lessons flow smoothly from one task to the next. Where support staff are available, they provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs. As a result of the good teaching, pupils acquire new information quickly and have plenty of time to practise their skills. In one lesson, a pupil quickly applied formatting skills learnt in Word to the text in a Power Point presentation. In another lesson, a pupil was able to create and work on a Publisher page directly from the teacher's tightly focused demonstration.

163. The attitudes of the majority of pupils to their learning are good: they are interested in learning about new technological skills and the designing of modern ICT products. However, they display more sustained levels of concentration and persevere more with ideas and solutions where they have been involved with generating the objectives for the work. The majority of pupils behave appropriately, and a significant number show positive relationships and co-operation when sharing equipment, working together well when required. Most of the pupils show respect for adults but only a few show personal initiative and responsibility. Many are quite passive in their learning habits, requiring more personal development through more challenging activities and opportunities to learn independently.

164. The subject is soundly led overall. The management of the discrete subject courses is good, but the management of ICT across the school is underdeveloped. Arrangements for the discrete subject courses are satisfactory and are developing well. Since the last inspection, the school has invested in staffing, new computers, software, training, curriculum developments and technical staff. The ratio of

computers to pupils at 1:6 is not quite as good as the national average of 1:5 and includes a number of old machines. However, this equipment is maintained well by the technician.

165. The curriculum for Years 7 - 9 meets the needs of each year group and has become more firmly based on the QCA scheme of work for Key Stage 3 and the ICT Strategy. This includes the introduction of the Internet and ensures that the range of software applications is used effectively to enhance learning within the ICT courses. The development of the curriculum principles in the ICT strategy and scheme of work is an aim of the department for all programmes of work. However, the emphasis on the provision of discrete ICT courses to give all pupils an entitlement curriculum has made it more difficult for other departments to gain access to the ICT facilities. Several departments have booked the ICT rooms with moderate success, but the logistics suggest that it is not possible for all subjects to meet their National Curriculum requirements to the full.

166. The management of the whole-school model for ICT is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring and regular assessment of the ICT work covered within subjects. Although some effective use of ICT occurs in English, mathematics, art and design, geography and music, the management of the contribution and potential of these subjects to the school's adopted model of the ICT curriculum is insecure. In aspects of control, the subject best placed to support these developments, design and technology, has little computer technology equipment for all pupils to use. However, most departments include ICT in their curriculum planning and are keen to develop the ICT aspects of their subject further. To assist that development, the head of ICT has established a forum, consisting of members of staff, which shares information and discusses the issues. Nevertheless, the provision remains unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- All pupils gained a pass grade in the GCSE examinations in French and German in 2002.
- Many lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Teachers give pupils good individual support.
- Resources are good.
- A good programme of visits to France and Germany enriches pupils' experiences.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in French and German are not high enough.
- Pupils rely too heavily on written prompts when speaking and writing.
- Teachers' marking is not rigorous enough.
- The use of ICT is insufficiently integrated into learning.

167. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* -C in the GCSE examinations in 2002 was below the national average in French and significantly below average in German. Few pupils gained high grades. However, all pupils entered for the examinations attained a pass grade, which is better than the national picture. A higher proportion of girls than boys attained grades A*-C in French, but the proportions were fairly even in German. Over a quarter of the pupils gained the two lowest grades; more girls were in this category in German and more boys in French. In both languages, pupils attained significantly less well than in their other subjects. These results are poorer than those at the time of the last inspection report.

168. By Year 9, overall standards are a little below average in French and broadly average in German. Most pupils in the top sets and those of average attainment work at an average level, but few attain the highest standards. Pupils of all levels of attainment are hesitant speakers. For both spoken and written work, they rely heavily on written prompts and few can sustain short conversations or write extensively from memory, and so do not reach the higher levels. In classes where the foreign language is used extensively, pupils' understanding of spoken language is good, but many struggle to understand recorded language without written prompts. Listening skills are below average when pupils hear too much English. Pupils read aloud very little and read only short pieces to abstract information.

169. By Year 11, standards in French and German are below average and reflect the examination results. Few pupils achieve very high standards, but lower attaining pupils achieve high standards for them, the result of the teachers' expectation of work and behaviour. Major pieces of written work of the highest attainers in both languages are of an appropriate length and have some good structures and a range of tenses. Much work has many grammatical errors, for example of basic agreement between subject and verb, and in some cases, the writing does not flow well. In upper and middle sets, pupils communicate what they wish to say quite well, but stick closely to rehearsed language and use few adventurous constructions or vocabulary. In an upper Year 10 German set, however, high expectations resulted in above average oral work, with many accurate agreements and past tenses.

170. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in acquiring vocabulary, accuracy and language structures. Progress is linked to the quality of the teaching and to the pace of lessons. In some middle sets, attainment in individual lessons is in line with, or higher than, in top sets. Many lower attainers, and pupils with special educational needs, achieve well; they understand and use a good range of vocabulary in simple sentences. Most pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others in their set, but the very small numbers of pupils from traveller families make little progress because of their poor concentration and attendance.

171. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teaching is good in about a third of lessons and a small amount is unsatisfactory. Teachers are good or competent linguists especially in their main language. Lessons are thoughtfully planned to cover the language skills. Where teaching is good, the pace is brisk, the foreign language is used extensively and new learning consolidated well. Errors are carefully corrected. Expectations of both behaviour and learning are high. Praise, rewards and good relationships motivate pupils to participate. Pupils particularly enjoy competitions and games. Less satisfactory features of some teaching are low expectations, especially of the higher attainers, too much use of English, and slow pace so that pupils do not reach their potential. Where lessons are too directed or dominated by the teacher, pupils have too few opportunities to speak. Occasionally, class control is unsatisfactory; in consequence, poor behaviour and attitudes of a number of pupils hinders the learning of all the class. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are mostly satisfactory and often good, however. Most pupils are attentive, but often, even when teaching is good, many, especially the girls, are passive in class and reluctant speakers.

172. Most work is frequently and carefully marked, although comments to help pupils improve are not provided consistently. In addition, class notes and work are often left uncorrected, with the danger that pupils learn incorrect versions. Some written work is graded too generously. The use of letter grades for effort in Years 10 and 11 is not always clear, as the letters do not represent the grade of the work. Several target grades in Years 10 and 11 do not seem realistic when viewed alongside current work. Teachers regularly record marks, but their mark books are not efficient diagnostic tools as the language skills are not separated, preventing performance across skills and the frequency of practising each skill being monitored. Similarly, the failure of teachers to record spontaneous oral responses made by pupils hinders detection of the reluctant speakers.

173. Pupils start with either French or German and in Years 8 and 9 almost all learn both languages, so that the time for each is below average. Beyond Year 9, no pupils choose to continue with two languages and several take no foreign language; a poor return on the time invested to promote two languages. Pupils read too few extended pieces. A good range of trips and visits and language clubs enriches the curriculum. Topics and discussions in lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development.

174. Management and leadership are satisfactory overall: the head of department has been on extended leave and teaching, standards and marking have not been monitored recently. Provision is similar to that at the time of the last report. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and resources are good. Commercial workbooks are well used for extension work and revision. Very little use is made of ICT, despite good equipment in one languages room. Staff would benefit from a period of technician support and training to improve their confidence in using it. Display is good.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and enables most pupils, including some with special educational needs, to make good progress during lessons.
- Pupils have good attitudes to music and their response in lessons contributes to their good progress.
- The new head of department is making significant improvements that are already raising standards in some aspects of the music curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the range of opportunities for music-making outside the formal curriculum.
- Updating schemes of work and associated assessment procedures in Years 7 - 9 to reflect statutory requirements.

175. Standards in music are broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, showing little change from the time of the last inspection. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed a decline from the previous two years which were in line with the national figures. The attainment of boys was lower than that of the girls but the gap is similar to that found nationally. The assessments also show attainment in music to be well below that of most other foundation subjects. There is insufficient evidence to judge whether these assessments were accurate. Pupils' current work in Years 7 - 9 is broadly in line with nationally expected levels and there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or pupils with English as an additional language. However, many younger pupils demonstrate a better than expected knowledge and understanding of musical styles and features. Staff changes last year are likely to have contributed to the apparent dip in results but the very good teaching pupils are receiving at present has enabled many to make rapid progress.

176. The school's GCSE examination results in 2002 were slightly above the national average at grades A*-C, but the small size of the group means that this is not a statistically significant difference. Over the past three years, the GCSE results have risen year by year from below the national average to their present position. Pupils' work in Year 11 confirms that standards are broadly in line with national expectations.

177. Throughout both key stages, most pupils are making good progress in lessons and are achieving as expected. Turbulence in staffing the subject over the past six months has resulted in insufficient pupils' work being available to form reliable judgements about singing and composing in Years 7 - 9, and stylistic studies in Years 10 and 11. However, in Years 7 - 9, most pupils show an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of musical styles and features. For example, they use the right musical vocabulary when describing musical features in contrasting pieces from the Baroque era or *The Carnival of the Animals*, and are able to discriminate between different instrumental sounds. Higher attaining pupils give fairly detailed and accurate accounts that go beyond the basic requirements. Standards of performance in using keyboards are broadly average. Some pupils with special educational needs achieve more highly in this activity than might be expected.

178. At Key Stage 4, pupils following the GCSE course are able to compose music using a variety of instruments, including piano, guitar, computers and voice. Examples of computer compositions include several designed to accompany an imaginary science fiction film sequence, and all were at a standard covering the higher grades at GCSE. They convey the expressive atmosphere intended and use a carefully selected variety of sounds and musical fragments. The most advanced example was an extended and multi-layered composition that created a real sense of suspense. The few performances sampled, either in lessons or recorded, were confident, accurate and expressive and, again, falling within the higher grade range at GCSE.

179. The teaching throughout is very good and learning is good. The new music teacher, who is also head of department, has established a good working relationship with the pupils in only a few weeks and is working at improving further the quality of pupils' learning. In Years 7 - 9, she uses her good knowledge, both of the subject and of how pupils learn, to present well-planned lessons in a motivating and carefully organised way, using her own materials that have been adapted for the range of attainment in her classes. This enables the pupils to understand clearly what they are expected to learn and helps the majority to focus well on the tasks set. The teacher uses a wide range of teaching methods that are very effective in getting most pupils to answer questions enthusiastically, learn new information and apply it purposefully to listening and performing tasks. These include prompt starts to lessons, reviews of pupils' understanding at the beginning and end of lessons and at points in between, good pace, quick-fire questioning, well-sequenced explanations and good musical demonstrations that communicate high expectations to the class.

180. The best lessons also include a variety of activities that take account of pupils' attention spans. For example, a Year 8 lesson, based on the topic of Baroque music, involved a question and answer session to assess previously learned information about the dates, composers and features of the period. This was followed by guided listening to focus the pupils on the key features of Pachelbel's *Canon* that they were then set to learn to play on keyboards. As this piece of music starts simply and becomes progressively more difficult, all pupils were able to consolidate their performing skills, including some pupils with special educational needs, who made very good progress. However, not all lessons include this variety of activities. Where it does not, this occasionally leads to some restlessness. This is well-controlled by the teacher through effective behaviour management strategies, such as positive feedback to pupils and the use of humour. The teacher puts good emphasis on direct teaching and feedback to pupils in relation to musical knowledge and listening skills. The development of keyboard performance skills, however, is given insufficient attention to enable the majority of the pupils to achieve above national expectations in this aspect.

181. The teaching is similarly effective at Key Stage 4. In the Year 11 lesson observed, the teacher's in-depth assessment of the pupils' work and capabilities enabled her to help them to work in a well-organised way and to give them well-targeted advice as they developed their performances, compositions and self-evaluations of their work. At this level, the subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills, and they are confident in the operation of the sophisticated composition software being used. Overall, teaching also makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy, cultural and social development. The one instrumental lesson observed was well taught. The teacher made efficient use of the time available and enabled the pupil to make satisfactory progress.

182. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new head of music has made a very good start in improving musical provision. In a very short space of time, she has made a thorough and accurate evaluation of provision and put in place a clearly-articulated action plan that is already raising pupils' achievements in some aspects of their learning. The direction in which the subject is intended to develop is clear and there are appropriate priorities and targets. The plan acknowledges the need to increase the range of opportunities for music-making outside the formal curriculum, which was an issue raised in the last inspection. This development is planned to begin after the teacher has achieved the immediate priority of providing extra support out of school hours for the Year 11 GCSE group, whose work has suffered because of staffing changes in the department. The plan also includes the updating of schemes of work and associated assessment procedures to reflect the most recent statutory requirements at Key Stage 3, which was also raised in the last inspection report. The current outline documentation, however, shows that the National Curriculum requirements for Key Stage 3 are being met.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers have high expectations and as a result, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and participation are very good.
- Leadership and management are good, with effective monitoring, evaluation and development of the subject.
- The department caters well for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the balance of activities in Years 7 - 9 and ensuring equal access to the same curriculum for boys and girls.
- Ensuring pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to study two areas of activity in depth, including vocational qualifications.
- Improving the assessment procedures at the beginning of Year 7 and teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.

183. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the standard expected nationally. These standards do not reflect accurately the level descriptions or the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2002, which showed that standards were well above average. Teachers are applying the National Curriculum level descriptions too generously. By the end of Year 11, standards are also in line with national expectations. In 2002, the GCSE examination results at grades A*- C were below the national average. The boys' results were above their respective national figures, whilst the girls' results were well below.

184. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and make good progress as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education programme and make good progress. The department ensures that teaching and resources are carefully adapted to cater for particular needs. By the end of Year 9, pupils become more expert in their skills and techniques and how to apply them in dance, games, gymnastics, and health and fitness. In dance, pupils successfully apply the knowledge and skills they have been taught to improvising dance sequences. In a Year 9 dance lesson, girls used video footage and percussion to choreograph a rhythmical group dance with an appropriate awareness of style. In games, pupils perform a range of skills with increasing control and coordination and in team play, demonstrate their knowledge of rules and positional play. Pupils create and perform sequences on the floor and apparatus in gymnastics, but their movements lack fluency and the range of movement vocabulary is limited. Pupils have a sound knowledge of health and fitness and understand the importance of preparing for and recovering from exercise, along with the benefits of taking part in regular exercise.

185. By the end of Year 11, pupils perform skills and techniques with increasing accuracy in a variety of activities. In games, pupils in the core and GCSE examination groups perform a range of sending and receiving skills with consistency and control, and are able to analyse and comment on aspects of performance and suggest ways to improve. The higher attaining pupils anticipate moves and respond effectively to changing circumstances within the game, demonstrating a good understanding of games play.

186. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some very good teaching occurring in dance and volleyball. The specialist teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching a range of activities and are good role models in promoting an active healthy lifestyle. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised effectively, and supported by a range of learning resources. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods well to meet the needs of all pupils.

187. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They respond well to the high expectations demanded of them and as a result, behaviour and levels of participation are very good. They develop

good social and cooperative skills in partner and group work. In competitive play in hockey, they demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour.

188. Leadership and management are good. Day-to-day procedures are very effective. The department works well together as a team and staff are consistent in their approach in ensuring that all pupils have a positive and enjoyable experience. Staff give generously of their time to extra-curricular provision and out-of-school hours learning. The departmental schemes and units of work clearly show how pupils are expected to progress in the acquisition of skills. Literacy and ICT are firmly embedded in the planning process. Development planning identifies appropriate targets for improvement. The procedures for monitoring teaching are good.

189. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and pupils benefit from a range of activities. However, in Years 7 - 9, a significant amount of time is allocated to games, which affects the balance of the programme. Boys do not have access to the dance programme of study. Pupils benefit from health related exercise which enriches the curriculum. In Year 10 and 11, pupils are not able to study two areas of activity in depth as the time allocated to physical education is lower than average. The GCSE course is popular but there are no opportunities to study accredited vocational qualifications. Access to the hall is inconsistent and markings are poor. Storage is inadequate and the playing fields are poorly drained. The provision for extra-curricular sport is good and there are good procedures in place to support the gifted and talented pupils, making positive links with the local community and region.

190. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in improving teaching and learning as a result of well-planned professional development, monitoring the effectiveness of the subject and the use of ICT to observe and analyse performance. Standards in netball have improved and pupils with special educational needs are catered for well. However, the cleanliness of the indoor facilities continues to be unsatisfactory.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Good teaching promotes good learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the learning is very good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils produce an environment conducive to learning.
- The department is moving forward rapidly as a result of very good management.

Areas for improvement

- ICT equipment is outdated and insufficient to support the curriculum.

191. Standards by the end of Year 9 are better than average and pupils achieve well. Pupils have been disadvantaged by weaknesses in the provision in the past. Since September 2002, with the appointment of a new head of department, the situation has changed considerably. Pupils have developed the concentration and discipline necessary for successful drama. They are able to improve, by evaluation, both their own performance and that of their peers, demonstrate vocal variety and its application to script, analyse movement and show an awareness of audience. Pupils of all levels of attainment do well in drama so it is unfortunate that individual students are occasionally withdrawn from lessons for specific work with a learning support assistant.

192. The results of the GCSE examinations in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average. No pupil gained the highest grade of A*. The results for the four years 1999 to 2002 show a gradual rise to 2001 and then a steep drop in 2002, but they have always been above or close to the national average. Standards by the end of Year 11, where drama is a GCSE option subject, are in line with national expectations but the speed and quality of the learning means that pupils are achieving very well. In their written work, pupils of different levels of attainment are able to reflect on an activity and make objective, constructive criticism. Pupils writing in role produce some evocative prose. The work that followed a theatre visit to see a production of *Road* has resulted in an outpouring of creative effort. Pupils in Year 11 effectively showed their ability to develop a technique and then apply it to performance.

In a Year 10 lesson, which included eight pupils with special educational needs, pupils worked with confidence and made good progress in their practical work. However, one pupil, who speaks English as an additional language, experiences difficulty with her written work because specialist support is not available.

193. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 - 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In the lessons observed they were never less than good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and are an important factor in promoting learning. Pupils arrive for lessons on time, ready and eager to learn. They leave with a sense of achievement. There is an atmosphere of shared enjoyment and mutual respect. Lessons are well planned, with clear and achievable outcomes. Teachers use a three-part structure that takes account of the wide range of abilities and needs. Lessons move at a good pace, include a variety of activities and give opportunities for individual, pair and large group work. Pupils concentrate well and productive use is made of every minute. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and they demonstrate very good drama skills and knowledge. Pupils in a Year 7 class raised their own efforts and level of achievement after they had watched their teacher perform. In Years 7 - 9, there are a number of potentially difficult pupils but they work hard in response to praise and encouragement. An effective discipline system, known and understood by pupils, ensures that the flow of lessons is not interrupted by poor behaviour and so learning is not disturbed.

194. The speed of learning is very good in Year 11 and is indicative of very good teaching. This is noticeable in both written and practical work where there is evidence of teacher and pupils working hard, and succeeding, to redress the shortfall of earlier learning. Marking is used to support and extend pupils, making them focus, gain confidence and take account of their own learning. A pupil in Year 11 writes, 'The best part was probably thought tracking because it showed that we were actually capable of using explorative strategies'.

195. The department recognises the important part it can play in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is evidence of this in curriculum planning, opportunities for theatre visits, and the ethos of the department that highlights pupils' achievements by attractive wall displays and fosters cooperation and positive relationships. Lack of access to appropriate up-to-date ICT equipment within the department means that pupils are restricted in their opportunity to experiment with the use of new technology and denied ready access to Internet research.

196. A new head of department has been in post since September 2002. The speed with which the department is moving forward and its rapidly increasing effectiveness are indicative of very good leadership and management. Excellent professional working relationships have been established with both pupils and other department staff. Vision, forward planning, overhaul of the curriculum and the ability to prioritise are all in evidence. A method of assessing, monitoring pupils' progress and target setting is gradually fitting into place. A system of rewards and sanctions has been successfully introduced to address inherited problems of the poor motivation and disruptive behaviour of some pupils. Homework has been given status in Years 10 and 11. Disaffected pupils, particularly in Year 11, have been turned into hardworking students. In just six months, the department has been set on the path to success.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

These point scores use the old system

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	100.0	*	50.0	*	3.60	*
Biology	17	88.2	*	35.3	*	3.00	*
Business studies	16	50.0	*	0.0	*	0.94	*
Chemistry	8	75.0	*	37.5	*	2.60	*
Design and technology	7	100.0	*	28.6	*	3.00	*
Economics	13	46.2	*	0.0	*	0.53	*
English language	35	80.0	*	20.0	*	2.18	*
French	1	100.0	*	100.0	*	4.33	*
Geography	9	77.8	*	11.1	*	2.18	*
German	3	66.7	*	0.0	*	1.33	*
History	20	95.0	*	15.0	*	2.33	*
ICT/computing	26	100.0	*	15.4	*	2.52	*
Mathematics	11	63.6	*	45.4	*	2.36	*
Physical education/sports science	19	68.4	*	0.0	*	1.05	*
Physics	8	87.5	*	62.5	*	3.56	*
Psychology	17	70.6	*	11.8	*	1.65	*
Religious education	4	100.0	*	0.0	*	2.20	*
Theatre studies	6	100.0	*	16.67	*	2.83	*

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

These point scores use the old system

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100.0	*	75.0	*	7.50	*
Biology	10	100.0	*	40.0	*	6.73	*
Business studies	8	62.5	*	0.0	*	1.25	*
Chemistry	4	100.0	*	25.0	*	5.00	*
English language/literature	37	100.0	*	40.5	*	6.27	*
Economics	4	50.0	*	0.0	*	1.00	*
French	6	100.0	*	50.0	*	7.00	*
Geography	4	100.0	*	50.0	*	7.00	*
History	6	100.0	*	0.0	*	3.33	*
ICT/computing	10	80.0	*	0.0	*	3.20	*
Mathematics	1	100.0	*	0.0	*	5.00	*
Physical education/sports science	6	100.0	*	30.0	*	4.33	*
Physics	3	100.0	*	0.0	*	4.00	*
Drama and theatre studies	10	100.0	*	30.0	*	6.40	*
Psychology	6	100.0	*	50.0	*	5.00	*
Religious education	3	100.0	*	0.0	*	4.67	*
Spanish	1	100.0	*	0.0	*	4.00	*
Other modern foreign languages	1	100.0	*	100.0	*	9.00	*

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

197. The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology at AS and A-level. Some lessons in chemistry and physics were also sampled. In the chemistry lessons, the teaching was satisfactory overall and occasionally good. The attitudes of the students are very good and their attainment, although wide-ranging, is close to course requirements. In the physics lessons, the teaching is good. The relationship between the teacher and students is very good which results in a cooperative working atmosphere. Students' attainment is varied but overall standards are above course expectations.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Lessons are well-prepared.
- Students are given good preparation for their AS and A-level examinations.
- The teaching encourages students to work hard.

Areas for improvement

- More attention should be paid to note-taking, presentation of work and marking.
- Increasing the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Improving the provision for some students in Year 12.

198. The number of students opting for A-level mathematics has varied considerably from year to year, but numbers have generally been low. Comparison of examination results with national data is, therefore, inappropriate. Broadly, however, results have been in line with the national averages, with students' eventual attainment as expected based on their grades at GCSE. In 2002, the AS level examination results were above the national average, with students achieving good grades in all three sections of the examination. The work of this group, now in Year 13, indicates that they should do well in their A-level examination. Standards by the end of Year 13 are in line with course expectations. Most of the current Year 12 students have done well in pre-examination tests this year and are on course to attain above average grades across the three course components.

199. The A-level group is making satisfactory progress. Students are confident with calculus and can integrate the range of functions needed for the examination; their routine algebra skills are also good enough to aid progress. They understand how the binomial theorem can be used to generate algorithms for approximations. Written work shows extensive coverage of both pure mathematics and mechanics, but some of its presentation is untidy and does not help revision. Some of the work shows little sign of regular marking.

200. Students following the AS course are also making satisfactory progress. They have a good grasp of Newton's Laws of Motion and are able to apply them to problems involving connected particles. In statistics, they understand variance and expected values and have attempted associated problems with some success. Again, their algebraic skills support the work.

201. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in the A-level mathematics courses. Good levels of numeracy provide effective support for statistical work in geography. Science and business studies also apply number, but, as lower down the school, the policy on numeracy in other subjects is not having a significant impact.

202. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are carefully prepared and teachers explain the work in detail. Although some questioning promotes discussion, some of which is lively, in a typical lesson, the students are content to take notes and ask questions individually during the book work exercises. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Teachers know the

students well and guide them carefully through the work: as a result, students know what they need to do to improve.

203. The GCSE examination repeat course in mathematics, taken by a small number of students in Year 12, is not well-matched to the needs of the majority of these students. Few students succeed in improving their grades to any extent and there is little opportunity to extend their knowledge or understanding beyond the needs of the examination.

204. Overall, the management of the subject at A-level is satisfactory: courses are matched to students' needs and teachers are given clear guidance on course requirements. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The AS courses have been introduced, and there is increased use of ICT, although it remains insufficient.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes to their work and the relationships between students and staff are very good.
- The teaching in biology is good: the teacher is well qualified and has very good subject knowledge.
- The course is well planned to cover the requirements of the examination syllabus.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the range of teaching approaches, especially those involving the use of computers and enabling students to work more independently.
- Providing further support to students who are finding the subject difficult.

205. In 2001, the A-level results were, with a small number of students, well above the national average. The results in 2002 were lower but with many more students taking the subject. Results show a variable trend over the past six years since the last inspection. The department has data that clearly demonstrates that many of the students reached their target grades in 2002. There is no significant difference between the attainment of male and female students. Overall, students, especially in Year 13, achieve better than expected when account is taken of their earlier GCSE results. However, a small number of students do not reach their predicted grades and these students need further support.

206. In Year 12, standards of students' work are wide ranging but overall are close to course expectations. These students show a good understanding of the structure of the genetic material in cells and how this replicates in cell division. In Year 13, students' work is above the standards expected. These pupils are able to discuss in detail the components in cells and the way in which the structure of different specialised cells is linked to their function. The written notes of most students are complete, accurate and well presented. These notes should form a very good revision base for use in examination preparation. However, some students' notes lack sufficient detail and as a result will be of less use in revision. Overall, the attitudes of students to the subject are very good.

207. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and resourced but include a limited variety of teaching styles. Students show a lively interest in lessons and are actively involved in the planned activities. The teacher is skilled in asking constructive questions and the students answer these with confidence and enter into detailed discussions about all aspects of the work. The attainment of all students in tests and past questions is assessed well by the department. Assessments and homework are marked in detail, and the teacher provides many constructive comments that help the students to improve. The department is aware of the need to enhance the assessment of students' progress and to give further support where students are falling below their predicted or potential grades. There are very good relationships between the teacher and students as well as between the students themselves. The atmosphere within the classroom is relaxed and cooperative, with the teacher showing enthusiasm for the subject. In discussions, students greatly appreciate the support and guidance given by the teacher and the fact that the teacher is prepared to help and assist. Students in Year 12 have found the

transition from GCSE relatively easy due to the guidance they receive from their teachers. The Year 13 students found the five-day residential ecology course valuable as well as enjoyable.

208. Leadership and management of the department are good. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The head of department is experienced, has good subject knowledge and is fully aware of the examination requirements. Teaching takes place in very good surroundings. The department has adequate resources and is well supported by efficient support staff. The department is aware of the need to review the range of teaching styles. It is seeking to support learning by extending the use of relevant computer software within lessons and to further students' opportunities for independent learning.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

209. The focus was on AS and A-level design and technology (product design).

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- The teaching is enthusiastic and lessons are well prepared.
- The relationships between teachers and their pupils are good.
- The quality of supervision and technical support that students get when developing their coursework is good.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not get sufficient access to high level ICT equipment, including computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM).

210. Since the last inspection, the school has offered a range of subjects in design and technology with variable results. It has now decided to consolidate its provision on A-level design and technology (product design), and for the last few years has been developing the course. In 2001, of the four students entered for the A-level examination, the entire group passed and one student gained a grade B. These results were similar to the national averages, although the small numbers makes direct comparison with the national figure inappropriate. No students were entered for the A-level examination in 2002, but all the students in Year 12 who sat the AS examination gained a pass grade, a few attaining the highest grades of A or B. National comparators are not yet available, but these students did well particularly as the department takes in students of all levels of attainment, many of them with only grade C at GCSE and, in some instances, with no previous experience at all.

211. In lessons, students achieve well: their design work steadily improves as the course progresses, often from a low base. Standards are in line with course requirements. The supervision and help that students get from the range of teachers who teach on the course improves their designing and practical skills. However, there are only restricted opportunities to experience computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), a requirement of the course, which limits their understanding. Students are thoughtful in their work and spend time in working through their ideas before committing themselves to making. This sometimes leaves them running behind schedule.

212. The teaching is good. Well-prepared lessons, with lots of change of pace and direction, encourage students to contribute. Answers to questions are often brief, though, and the teacher has to work hard to draw out the range of answers from the whole group before presenting them with his own solutions as model answers. Teaching is often related to every-day activities and products so that students can relate theory in a way that gives them speedy access to understanding. Relationships are good, and this allows students to accept and give criticism without rancour. Teachers are very experienced and skilled in their discipline.

213. Learning is good in lessons. The thoughtful approaches by teachers, together with their supportive attitudes, allow students to express their ideas effectively. The lower attaining students feel well supported and give of their best so that they, too, make good progress. Students are engaged on individual design tasks and when needing help they ask their teacher and engage in effective dialogue. Students are proud of their work. They have good ideas, but take a long while to work through the problems, before coming up with a final design. They work diligently. Coursework is completed to a good standard and students recognise that this is their strength. They are well prepared for the examination but find timed questions more difficult to answer well. This course allows all the students to work on tasks within their capability, and as they improve the work can be extended to stretch them further.

214. The environment in which pupils learn is good and the surroundings in the designing and making areas support the design process well. Practical resources are good, but those for CAD/CAM are insufficient to allow students to have regular access to resources at an appropriate level. Leadership and management of the course are good and recent developments in planning show that further good progress is possible. Additional resources and training are necessary to enable these plans to be realised for CAD/CAM. Since the last inspection, there has been a good improvement in making more effective provision for the subject and in the sound range and quality of work that students produce. The design and technology course offers students the opportunity to study a subject that matches their capabilities and enables them to achieve well.

BUSINESS

215. The focus was on business studies and economics at AS and A-level.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Extending the use of local business links and visits.
- Reducing the use of work sheets in lessons.

216. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average and few students gained the highest grades of A or B. These results are lower than the grades achieved by students in other subjects in the school. The results in 2002 were broadly similar to those of the previous year, although no student attained a grade A or B, but there are no national figures against which they can be compared. The AS examination results in 2001 were below the national average and remain low in 2002, when no student achieved the highest grades of A and B and a half failed to gain a pass grade. Inspection evidence shows that standards are improving as a result of changes in the leadership of the subject.

217. Standards in Year 13 are in line with course expectations. Student show good subject knowledge and a strong capacity to deploy this knowledge to undertake independent investigation and case study analysis. This was particularly well exemplified in a Year 13 lesson where students had to write an independent report for ACAS, evaluating a trade union claim for increased pay and a shorter working week, and the company's counter offer. Using a range of company accounting data, passenger usage information, economic evidence and relative income data, students had to produce a summary report outlining their main arguments. This was a timed exercise. Students were highly focused and produced very good reports within the allocated time scale. These showed excellent interpretation of the data and evidence from the differing perspectives of the trade union and company, and produced well-balanced arguments. Students were able to identify and explore, in depth, key factors relevant to the

ACAS decision and to articulate and present their points succinctly and effectively. Students demonstrated very good skills in analysis, interpretation, application and synthesis; some were somewhat less confident about evaluation, but others produced excellent reports. This generated a lively discussion in which students deployed a range of arguments to sustain their conclusions. In Year 12, students understand the motivation theories of Taylor, Maslow and others: they apply these theories to a range of workplace situations and assess the strengths and weaknesses of each theory. Students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.

218. The quality of teaching is at least good and in some cases very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an excellent understanding of course requirements. Lessons are planned very well. The use of time and resources is excellent and has a very positive impact on learning. The level of questioning, subject content, the teachers' high expectations and pace of lessons tests students' understanding to the full. An outstanding strength in teaching has been the focus and concentration on examination techniques and preparation. It is this recent shift in the lesson focus that is having the greatest impact on raising standards and targeted learning. The marking of homework is excellent: it is thorough, specific and gives clear guidance for learning. However, teachers tend to rely too much on worksheets, which reduces students' opportunities for extended learning. Provision for ICT and literacy is satisfactory.

219. Management of the subject is very good. The newly-appointed head of department provides a very clear sense of direction and purpose, and key priorities have been identified for the development of the department. These priorities and goals are well defined in the departmental improvement plan, which includes a clear strategy for their implementation. The schemes of work in business studies are good. At present, the school lacks a vocational route for students beyond the age of 16, but this is to be rectified by the introduction of a vocational pathway in the next academic year. This will enhance students' opportunities and choice. Resources for teaching the subject are adequate but there is a lack of reference and journal material readily accessible to students in the main school library. Accommodation is cramped and barely adequate. Links with the local economy, including the business world, are not yet fully exploited. There have been changes in the provision of courses in recent years, but taking these changes into account there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Economics

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students have good attitudes to their work and are well motivated.
- Students learn effectively and achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Specifying teaching and learning activities more clearly in the scheme of work.
- Identifying the opportunities to use and develop ICT, literacy and numeracy skills more clearly in lesson planning.
- Extending the use of value-added indicators to assist target setting.

220. The A-level results in 2001 were very low in relation to the national average, and no student gained the highest grades of A or B. In 2002, there was a marginal improvement in the results, although only half the students gained a pass grade and none attained the highest grades. The results were generally lower than the school's performance in other A-level examinations. In the AS examinations in 2001, although all students passed, only low D or E grades were achieved. In 2002, fewer than a half gained a pass grade in the AS examinations. Inspection evidence shows that standards are improving as a result of changes in the leadership of the subject.

221. The current performance of students in Year 13 show that standards are in line with course expectations and that they are making good progress in relation to their earlier attainment. There is

sound understanding of the reasons for market failures and the theoretical analysis of marginality with its application to social costs and benefits, problems in the environment and pollution. Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of micro-economic analysis. They are able to use their analytic skills well in solving price determination problems, demonstrating the capacity to think through the sequence of economic changes that occur in response to change, using shifts in demand and supply. Students also have a good understanding of macro-economic policy analysis based on aggregate demand and supply. The majority can explain the impact of changes in fiscal and monetary policy on price levels.

222. The teaching is mostly good. Lessons are well planned and taught. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Their level of questioning causes students to think hard, as they often present them with a variety of case studies to test their understanding. Lessons are well structured and teaching has a positive impact on learning, enabling students to build on their skills and knowledge of economics. Students work hard, have positive attitudes to learning and are well motivated. They are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Students have limited use of first-hand experience from links with the local community. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed in the curriculum, but are not specifically referred to in lesson planning.

223. Leadership in economics is good: the subject is well managed jointly with business studies. The curriculum is well developed and schemes of work are in place, although they do not specify teaching and learning approaches clearly enough. Value-added indicators are being developed to target learning more specifically. Resources are well developed, although reference materials in the library are limited and have not been updated.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

224. A small number of lessons were sampled in ICT. These included AS and A-level examination courses, CLAIT and provision for key skills in ICT. Standards are broadly in line with course requirements for each course. The teaching is satisfactory. Students are making satisfactory progress and achieving as expected.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

225. A small number of lessons were sampled in the AS and A-level course in physical education. Standards are in line with course expectations. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and as a result, students are highly motivated, have very good attitudes to their work and make good progress.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

226. The school makes no provision for courses in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

227. The focus was on AS and A-level art and design and theatre studies. Students are also able to study law and film studies through a video link with a commercial provider. Although in their infancy, the courses are developing well.

Art

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

Strengths

- Standards of students' drawing, painting and presentation are high.
- The way students are motivated to pursue their own ideas in depth and detail and develop a personal style.
- The consistently good and often very good teaching encourages the creative use of ICT and provides many opportunities for students to work collaboratively.

- The teachers' knowledge and constructive use of the examination assessment criteria help students improve their work.
- Teachers' positive relationships with students enable robust evaluation and honest criticism.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient planning for higher levels of discussion and debate to extend students' thinking further.

228. By the end of Years 12 and 13, students attain above average standards in their AS and A-level course work. Over the last three years, the results for students taking both AS and A-level art have been consistently above average. In 2000, seven students took A-level of whom five achieved grade A or B and the remainder a grade C. Results were also above average in 2001 and, for smaller numbers, in 2002 when three out of the four students achieved an A or B grade. Results at AS level have also been successful with a 100 per cent pass rate. Most students have stayed on after AS level to complete a full A-level qualification. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards at this level were below average.

229. The main reason for the improvement in standards is the enhanced use of ICT software, digital technology and the moving image. These techniques, combined with an insistence by teachers of a closer study of the work of a wide range of artists and in-depth, detailed and comprehensive preparatory work, have led to impressive portfolios of work. This promises well for the current group of students.

230. In lessons, students achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment. Boys and girls do equally well. Their work shows greater individuality and imagination than their previous GCSE pieces and they are beginning to explore their own emotions and beliefs through their chosen topics. For example, one Bangladeshi girl in Year 12 chose to explore the polarity between the traditional image of a Bangladeshi woman and the modern sexy image of a 21st century business woman. Her exploration included examining costume, fashion statements, jewellery and decoration. Her sketchbook shows the development of her drawing and painting skills through the study of different artists, with much detailed and painstaking work of high quality. For one Year 12 boy, his work helps him articulate his thinking about life and death. Another explores his perspective on fear through manipulating filmed images of himself using an ICT program.

231. The work of Year 13 students shows greater mastery of painting and drawing than those in Year 12. They make effective use of ICT and have a growing understanding of how to learn from the work of the artists they study. They are beginning to express their ideas coherently, making detailed annotations in their sketchbooks and working confidently in both small and large scale. Students are less confident in discussion and debate, however, because teachers do not probe and challenge their thinking sufficiently.

232. Teaching is consistently good in both years and often displays very good features. A particular strength is the detailed knowledge that teachers have of the students' work. This helps them to prepare thoroughly for the different demands of the students' choice of study. Thus, they are in a position to provide appropriate and knowledgeable individual support. The tutorial style of teaching means that students become more self-sufficient, and able to determine the course and direction of their work with increasing confidence. Another strength is the way in which teachers use the examination assessment criteria to help students evaluate and improve their work. The good relationships that exist between students and the teachers mean that evaluations are robust and honestly critical. Group discussions are a regular part of the teaching approach, but teachers do not always capitalise on the opportunity to get students to really question their perceptions and beliefs and to justify and sustain difficult viewpoints orally. Nevertheless, lessons are punctuated by moments of fun and enjoyment, properly balanced by periods when students are engrossed in their individual work.

233. This is a very well led and managed department. The sixth form programme is very well planned. Time, space and materials are made accessible to students who have free access to the department and particularly to its resources for ICT. Special arrangements for two students, whose timetables did not fit comfortably with that of the rest of their group, work very well. The two teachers have recently undertaken training in some new ICT programs, which they are now using successfully

with students. This is giving students access to new and exciting possibilities to broaden and extend their ideas. The two teachers provide excellent role models for the students.

Theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning, enabling students to make rapid progress in a short time.
- The depth of teachers' subject knowledge and practical expertise enables students to aspire to the highest grades.
- Excellent relationships promote mutual respect and enhance learning.

Areas for improvement

- The ICT equipment is outdated and insufficient to support students' learning.

234. The proportion of students gaining grades A-E in the A-level examinations in 2001 was in line with the national average, although the relatively low numbers entered makes comparisons with the national figures unreliable. The school's results for 2002 show a similar pattern. There were no A grades in either year. The results in 2000 were above average, with three-quarters of students gaining the highest grades of A or B.

235. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average in both practical and written work. Weaknesses in the teaching of the subject in the last academic year disadvantaged students. The situation has changed with the arrival of a new head of department in September 2002. Students in Year 13 spoke about how demoralised they had become by the end of last year, but how positive they feel now. Of the six students who completed the AS course in 2002, three are continuing to complete their A-level course. There are six students in Year 12, of whom two are male. Students have worked very hard since September and the speed and quality of their learning indicate that they are achieving very well. In a Year 12 lesson students demonstrated the self-discipline, involvement, dedication and total commitment needed for success in drama. They displayed the ability to take on a completely new technique and incorporate it naturally into performance in the space of 60 minutes. They were articulate in discussion about character building and perceptive in their analysis of performance.

236. Students in Year 13 were seen in a range of practical lessons. Their attitudes are never less than excellent and this transfers itself into very good achievement. These potentially high attaining students are working very hard, and with success, to redress a deficit of knowledge. This was particularly noticeable in a double lesson in which they explored vocal technique. They progressed from accurate, but relatively flat, delivery to vocalisation that breathed life into the characters they were playing. In other lessons they display above average ability to switch emotions, employ effective body language, explore character, consider dramatic style, reflect on a director's viewpoint and use appropriate theatrical terms.

237. It is in the written work that the rapid advances in learning are most obvious. Theatre reviews show Year 12 students making a confident start on critical appraisal, considering voice projection, dramatic effects, lighting, space and the use of music. Other work includes set design, performance analysis and rehearsal techniques. The work of Year 13 students is impressive. It shows a tremendous leap in achievement. There is very little written work to show from their previous year of study, but from September 2002 they write with increasing confidence and knowledge about theatre and performance. Advances in learning and achievement are particularly noticeable in the assessed work for Unit 4 of the examination course, completed in January 2002. All three students achieved full marks for at least one element of the unit. High attaining students produce work equivalent to grade A standard in which they demonstrate a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the social, cultural and historical concepts of drama, develop ideas in a range of imaginative ways and reflect on effective communication in performance. This represents an overall improvement of at least one grade on their AS course results, where no A grades were attained.

238. Teaching and learning are very good. The remarkable progress seen in the students' written work shows that some excellent teaching and learning has taken place. Teachers display academic

authority and depth of knowledge along with high quality performance skills. These qualities were used very effectively in one Year 13 lesson exploring vocal techniques and in another Year 13 lesson exploring and articulating the themes in *The Beggar's Opera*. Teachers' expectations of students are high. They probe deeply, make students think for themselves, but also allow them space for individual exploration and independent learning. Relationships are excellent. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect that is conducive to effective learning. Teachers are calm and encouraging but there is an underlying sense of urgency: productive use is made of every minute of the lesson. Lessons are tightly planned. Aims are shared with students at the start and reflected on at the end so that learning can be measured and reinforced. Students in Year 13 were so involved in the work they were doing on text in performance that they returned after school to continue with it.

239. The very good teaching and learning and the improvement in standards are a direct result of very good departmental management and leadership. Since September 2002, the whole ethos and organisation has been transformed. A culture in which students are expected and encouraged to achieve their potential has been established. Target setting is gradually settling into place. Students know the targets for which they are aiming: constructive marking and reference to examination criteria support and encourage their progress. Students benefit from being taught in a purpose built drama studio, but there is no ready access to appropriate and up-to-date ICT equipment to support learning.

HUMANITIES

240. The focus was on AS and A-level courses in geography. A small number of lessons in history and philosophy were sampled. In the three lessons seen in history, standards are in line with course expectations. Students show good subject knowledge, although they do not always deploy it well in supporting written arguments. The teaching is satisfactory and students achieve as expected. In the two lessons seen in psychology, standards are in line with course expectations. The teaching is good, enabling students to make good progress and achieve well.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve well in lessons.
- Teaching is good and is occasionally very good.
- Students are enthusiastic about their subject and value the teaching they receive.

Areas for improvement

- Developing a wider base of case studies to improve students' knowledge of geography.
- Extending the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

241. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average. The A-level results were above the national averages in 2000 and 2001 and were broadly similar in 2002. In 2001, the results in geography were better than most other subjects in the school. Numbers fell in 2002, and are too small to make safe statistical comparisons with the national figures but all students gained grades A-E and a half gained the highest grades of A or B. Male and female students achieved as well as each other. Students' current work in lessons in the A-level course is above average but the standard of their coursework is well above course expectations. There is an interesting variety of well-constructed studies related, for example, to the choice of site for a supermarket and Sussex coastal environments. The department makes a good contribution to the development of key skills in literacy and a very positive contribution to the use of word processing and desk-top publishing for presentation. There is a strong requirement, which is well met, to use higher-level statistical methods in the collection, recording and analysis of data.

242. In 2001, the AS level examination results were close to the average. They declined substantially in 2002 but there are no national figures against which they can be compared. By the end

of Year 12, students' attainment is in line with course expectations and accurate assessment on a regular basis shows that students are working well towards their target grades.

243. Numbers are small but students who choose to study geography are committed and enthusiastic. All four A-level students in 2002 followed geography-related courses in higher education and some will do so in 2003. Students say they are well advised about the choice of courses in school and in higher education. They enjoy the residential course work in Swanage, which enriches their geographical experience. They value their teachers with whom they share very good relationships. These positive features form a secure foundation for good teaching and learning.

244. Students on the A-level courses are achieving well and sometimes very well. They are making good progress towards their target grades. Their progress accelerates in Year 13 as students adjust to the requirements of sixth form learning and mature in their skills. Students' thinking skills are better than their factual knowledge and they perform better on the examination paper requiring them to make decisions than on that which requires factual knowledge. Teachers are working to produce a number of flexible case studies that can be used in a variety of geographical contexts to improve students' knowledge and understanding.

245. The teaching is good and is occasionally very good. Teaching is shared in Years 12 and 13 by the three subject teachers so that their enthusiasm, knowledge and skills provide a good blend. Characteristically, there is a fast learning dialogue in which effective questioning develops pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example in work on the changing landscape of west Cumbria. In one lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge of the requirements of the examination syllabus led to some very good learning. Students analysed their own examination answers and applied to them a rigorous framework of requirements derived from a detailed examination of the question itself. This part of teaching is strong.

246. Leadership and management are good. Assessment is consistently used well to measure progress and to inform planning. Students know and understand their grades in relation to their targets and what they have to do to raise their performance. Resources are good. A good range of texts is kept in the department but the stock in the school library is limited. Students have insufficient access to ICT to support their learning.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

247. The focus was on English language and English literature at AS and A-level. Two lessons in A-level French were also sampled. Standards are well above average in speaking, listening and reading as each student has a French parent. Writing is above average in fluency, although there are basic grammatical and spelling errors. The teaching is good and occasionally very good. Students make good progress and achieve well.

English

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

Strengths

- Standards are high, particularly in A-level English Literature.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Lessons are enjoyable and interactive, enabling students to become increasingly independent learners.
- The quality of marking is very good, showing students clearly how they can improve.
- Detailed advice and guidance about examination requirements enable students to approach them with confidence.

Areas for improvement

- No major issues were identified.

248. In the A-level examinations in 2001, the results were in line with the national average in English language and well above average in English literature. In 2002, all students gained a pass grade, with a good proportion attaining the highest grades of A or B. Over time there has been a steady improvement in both subjects. The numbers of students following a course in English have varied from year to year but the subject has remained a popular option. Retention has been satisfactory from Year 12 to 13 in both subjects except for English language in 2002, when half the students dropped the subject at the end of Year 12. In the AS examinations in 2001, standards were broadly average in English language but were above average in English literature.

249. Students' current work shows that overall standards are above average in Years 12 and 13. In view of the department's open entry policy, progress during the sixth form is good, as the overall profile at the start of the course is average. In language, students are able to trace language change through a series of texts from different periods, making perceptive and detailed annotations. Individual investigations include a well structured and original study of changes in popular song lyrics from the 1960s to the present day that made good use of ICT to give it a professional finish. In literature, the higher attaining students write well organised, confident and wide-ranging essays, capably handling comparisons between works such as *The Time Machine* and *Brave New World*. Other students do not make close enough reference to the texts to support their arguments and judgements. Good use is made of pair and group research, during which the students listen to each other with respect and make good progress in understanding challenging and unfamiliar texts such as Christopher Logue's *War Music*. They are able to relate their current studies to their previous reading, for example a range of literature generated by the Great War.

250. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which gives the students confidence in them. Relationships between teachers and students and also between students themselves are very good, showing mutual respect and high motivation. Students are given very focused preparation for coursework and examinations, thoroughly acquainting themselves with the criteria and expectations. They receive detailed and helpful advice from their teachers when each piece of work is marked, and they have a clear picture of their current working level and what they have to do to improve it. Lessons are enjoyable because many opportunities are given for interaction with others through research and discussion. In this climate, they become increasingly independent learners. Students value English for this and also because they see it as a useful subject for their present and future lives. They have a high regard for their teachers and recognise that the study of English is contributing well to their personal development. During the inspection, the level of attendance in the English Language lessons was low, but this was exceptional.

251. Leadership and management are both good. Teachers work closely together to plan the programme of study. Their regular assessments of individual students enable them to track individual progress effectively. The department is well resourced with texts and audio-visual materials, and the library provides a good range of wider background reading. Most students make good use of the Internet to build up their understanding of the historical and social context of the books they study.