

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GRYPHON SCHOOL

Sherborne, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113890

Headteacher: Mr Chris Shepperd

Reporting inspector: Mr David H Roberts
7582

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th February 2003

Inspection number: 249800

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nigel Rees
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd – 7 th February 1997

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9588	A West	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	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?
13155	J Dixon	Post-16 Co-ordinator	Modern foreign languages (11-16)	
10160	R Bagguley	Team inspector	Science (11-16)	
12857	R Bailey	Team inspector	English (11-16) Drama (post-16)	
1819	R Crowther	Team inspector	Psychology (post-16)	
4372	R Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education (11-16)	
23324	S Greenland	Team inspector	Geography (11-16 and post-16)	
31693	T Hanafin	Team inspector	Art (11-16 and post-16)	
4359	W Hola	Team inspector	Mathematics (post-16)	
31772	A Kelly	Team inspector	History (11-16 and post-16)	
21825	E Kelly	Team inspector	Design and technology (11-16)	
13122	S Matthews	Team inspector	Citizenship (11-16) Business Education and Leisure Studies (post-16)	
2447	F Mikdadi	Team inspector	English (post-16)	
12630	D Naylor	Team inspector	Mathematics (11-16)	
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music (11-16)	
17651	M Piper	Team inspector	Chemistry (post-16)	
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (post-16)	
1038	S Richardson	Team inspector	French (post 16)	
28002	S Taylor	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs and the Dyslexia Base	
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education (11-16) Health Studies (post-16)	
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	ICT (11-16)	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Gryphon School is a mixed comprehensive Church of England Voluntary Controlled school with a sixth form, successfully formed from the amalgamation of three schools in 1992 which moved to purpose-built accommodation in 1994. It serves the town of Sherborne and surrounding rural areas in west Dorset and east Somerset. More than half the pupils travel on school bus services. The school is larger than average, having 1315 pupil on roll, 254 of whom are in the sixth form which, in itself, is also larger than average. Forty per cent of sixth formers join from other schools in Year 12. The balance between boys and girls varies from year to year, but is broadly even, although there are currently more boys than girls in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (4.8 per cent overall and 1.3 per cent in the sixth form) is below the national average (well below in the sixth form). For a very small proportion of pupils (1.1 per cent) English is not the mother tongue. There are just three pupils who are at the stage of still acquiring the language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) (20.7 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of SEN is above the national average since it includes the 17 pupils who attend the school's special unit for dyslexic pupils. The attainment levels of pupils as they enter the school in Year 7 are in line with the national average. The school has achieved both Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark Silver status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Gryphon is a popular, successful and enthusiastically inclusive school where the standards attained by pupils in public tests and examinations show that overall they make better than average progress during their time at the school. The pupils display positive attitudes to school, they behave well and they develop well as responsible young people. The teaching which the school provides is good overall (although with some weaknesses in the younger year groups) and this ensures that pupils are interested in their work and learn well. There is an appropriate curriculum and a very good range of extra curricular activity. While there are several examples of effective leadership and management, at all levels, there is not enough coherence to ensure consistent practice or a sharp enough focus on raising standards further. The school was last inspected six years ago. Improvement since then has been satisfactory and the school's overall effectiveness remains good. Given the good progress made by pupils and students and the relatively low cost per pupil of running the school, it can be said to be providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall, it provides good teaching, best in the sixth form and in Years 10-11.
- It develops positive attitudes, good relationships, and responsible behaviour in the pupils and is successful in its role in developing them as individuals, helping to ensure that they make good progress in their work.
- It provides a good quality curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- It provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- It employs good quality staff and ensures that the high quality accommodation is well maintained to support pupils' learning.
- The dyslexia unit, the pupil guidance centre and the learning support assistants provide good additional support to identified pupils.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in those classes (mainly in Years 7 to 9) where there are weaknesses, particularly in the management of pupils' behaviour, in the support for pupils with SEN and/or in the teaching of literacy skills.
- The clarity and communication of the vision for the development of the school over the next five years, supported by longer-term targets for continuous improvement in the standards that pupils and students achieve.
- The consistency of the practice of monitoring and improving teaching and standards.
- The frequency with which parents receive information on the progress their children are making and the information they receive about homework.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. The areas for improvement identified at that time have all been addressed and most remain in the consciousness of the school as it moves into its next five year development phase. While there remain some weaknesses in the relationship between whole school plans and individual team plans, this is being fully addressed in the current work on the plan for the next five years. There is a systematic programme for monitoring of teaching quality within the performance management arrangements but the impact of monitoring is inconsistent across the school. The efforts to improve boys' attainments have largely been successful. While improvements have been made both to assessment and reporting arrangements, the need for further development is acknowledged by the school and is planned as part of the introduction of a new information management system.

Once the necessary clarity of vision, clear expectations and consistent practice are in place, the school will have the capacity to move forward into its next phase of development, given the skills, experience and commitment of staff and governors.

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	B	E
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	A	N/A	

Key

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

N/A = not available. The term 'similar schools' refers to schools nationally which have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals. The text below makes comparison with similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment.

In general, the school's results in public tests and examinations at all ages are good. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Students entered for A and AS level examinations have performed considerably better than the national average for the three years to 2001, the last year for which national comparative data are available. Girls' performance was very high compared with the national average, and that of boys was above average, in 2001. In vocational subjects, performance was above the national average overall, but with boys' performance below the average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades was above the national average, with particular strengths in English literature, science, art, business studies, drama and history. The trend of improvement at this level has been broadly in line with the national trend. Compared with other schools nationally with similar test performance at age 14, GCSE results at The Gryphon were above average. The targets set for 2003 and 2004 are appropriately challenging. In 2002, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 were above the national average for all schools in English and science, and were close to the national average in mathematics. When compared to results in schools where pupils had reached similar standards before entering at age 11, the results are well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. The targets set for 2003 and 2004 do not anticipate improvements over the 2002 results except in mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are proud of their school and its ethos, and are tolerant of one another. The majority work hard and accept challenges. They are confident, polite, mature and responsible.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority behave well in lessons, assemblies and around the school. The few instances of bullying are well handled. In the few lessons where there is poor behaviour, this relates to weaknesses in the teaching.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils and staff enjoy good relationships. They are keen to respond to the opportunities offered by the school for taking initiative and exercising responsibility. Sixth formers act as mentors for younger pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Only in Year 11 does the level fall below 92 per cent. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average. There is some lateness at the start of the day, due largely to late-running school buses.

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.

The quality of teaching in English and science is consistently good for all age groups. Mathematics teaching is good in Years 10-11 and satisfactory in Years 7-9. There are particular strengths in teachers' good subject knowledge, their lesson planning, their high expectations as to what pupils will achieve, their choice of methods and their management of pupils' behaviour, although the latter is a weakness in a number of lessons in Years 7-9. There is scope for improvement in some subjects in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, in the use of assessment to help pupils make better progress and in the effectiveness of homework. The needs of pupils of all ability levels are taken into account in most lessons but there is sometimes the need for better strategies for challenging the most able pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. The arrangements for studying a second foreign language in Year 9 are unsatisfactory. The requirements for pupils to develop their ICT capability are not met in some subjects. The approach to literacy and numeracy is not sufficiently systematic.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils' additional needs are well catered for, ensuring they can access the full curriculum except for the withdrawal of some children from modern foreign languages lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very small number of pupils in this category are well catered for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory but would benefit from better planning; the school provides good opportunities for cultural development and for the experience of a range of cultures; provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory through a number of planned activities; provision for their social development is good .
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall, with many strengths in the school's safe environment and caring positive ethos, where staff know the needs of the pupils well. However, monitoring of attendance and punctuality is unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are satisfactory overall.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. Day-to-day arrangements are effective and efficient. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. There are inconsistencies in the way some managers carry out their agreed responsibilities. There are weaknesses in the school's current development plan, including the vision for the school's future, but the school is now working to produce an effective plan for the next five years.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. They are developing as effective 'critical friends' to the school and carry out their duties in a supportive, business-like manner. They are broadly aware of the school's main strengths and areas for development, but need more information about the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is ample data in the school which is analysed well but the analyses are not used consistently well to secure improvement in quality of provision or in the standards that pupils attain.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. There is good financial management and generally efficient and effective use of the resources available. There are no costings in the current school development plan, such that the funding of developments is unclear.

The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is **good**. Accommodation is of a **very good** quality although with a number of specific shortcomings, affecting drama teaching in particular. The quality and quantity of learning resources are **good** overall, although with variations between subjects.

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 high expectations which the school has for their children's achievement.• The progress their children are making.• The way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.• The approachability of the staff.• The quality of the teaching.• The support given to pupils with special educational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The way the school keeps parents informed about the progress their children are making.• The organisation of the annual opportunity for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers.• The information the school gives parents about homework and the amount of homework given.

Broadly, the inspection team agrees with parents about the school's strengths but highlights the need for teaching in Years 7 to 9 to be of the same good quality as that for older pupils. The team agrees with the areas for improvement which parents have identified.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

THE GRYPHON SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form at The Gryphon School is larger than average. It currently has 254 students on roll compared with the national average of 166. There are more male than female students (134 compared with 120). The present intake consists of 60 per cent of students who have come up through the school and stayed on (a very small number is lost to other providers), and 40 per cent who have joined the school from elsewhere.

Numbers on roll in the sixth form have risen since the last inspection. There are more students in Year 12 than in Year 13 (147 compared with 107). In recent years around 13 per cent of the students have left the school at the end of Year 12 after completing the AS level examinations.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The Gryphon School has a very effective sixth form which gives good value for money. It offers a broad range of traditional advanced level courses as well as a growing number of vocational courses for its students, whose attainment has remained consistently well above the national average over the past four years.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Attainment is well above the national average.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very positive.

What could be improved

- Overall strategic leadership of the sixth form.
- Adherence to statutory curriculum requirements in relation to religious education.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality.

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. Teaching is overall satisfactory. Results have declined in recent years, but students' progress is in line with course requirements.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are above average. Students have very good attitudes and work hard. There is a culture of success and achievement in the department, which is very well led.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business Studies	Good. Students achieve well because teaching is good and they have very good attitudes to their work. The management of the department is good.
Information technology	Good. All students follow a course in Year 12 to develop their capability. Standards are above average because teaching is good and the department well led.
Leisure and recreation Travel and tourism	Provision for these courses is satisfactory after some staffing difficulties last year. Students' attainment is improving and assignment work is very good. The courses are now well managed.
Health and social care	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and most students are well motivated, promoting high standards. Assessment is used very effectively to check progress.
Art and design	Very good. Teaching is consistently very good and attainment in examinations is well above average. Leadership and management of the subject are good.
Theatre studies	Very good. Teaching is of a high standard and the students achieve well above average results at advanced level. The subject is well managed but accommodation is unsatisfactory.
History	Good. Teaching and learning are good, leading to rising standards. There is insufficient challenge for the ablest students.
Geography	Good. A level results in 2001 were well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. The subject is well managed.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Attainment in examinations has recently fallen below its previous levels, but is now improving. Support from the school will enable the trend to continue.
English	Very good. Examination results are well above average and students make good progress. Management of the course is very good.
French	Good. Attainment in examinations is above average and the teaching has some good features. Management of the subject is good.

During the inspection, work was sampled in other sciences and modern foreign languages. These courses are also well led in the main and students make good progress relative to their prior attainment.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students are well guided and supported through the comprehensive personal, social and health education programme and through the help and guidance which their teachers give in a number of different ways.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Each year group is well led by committed year heads and their deputies, but overall longer-term planning of sixth form development is not clearly focused. Management is good: the year heads and the senior staff who provide the link to overall school management collaborate well.

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">• The good range of courses on offer.• The good information about courses.• The good teaching.• The help and encouragement from teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about their progress.• Information and guidance about the world of work.

Inspection findings bear out the views of the students about the range of the curriculum available and the quality and commitment of the teaching staff. Procedures for informing students about their progress are good, although the school needs to take students' perceptions into account in its planning. Conversations with students during the inspection tend to corroborate their view that information and guidance about the world of work is not as complete or as thorough as that provided for students who intend to continue to higher education. Students interviewed were reasonably confident that the school takes their views into account.

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. In general, the school's results are good and its pupils make good progress during their time at the school.
2. In 2002, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 were above the national comparison with those in all schools in English and science. They were close to the national average in mathematics. When compared to the results in schools where pupils had reached similar standards before entering the school at age 11, the results are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. This indicates that pupils are making good progress and are achieving well. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher levels (6 and above) was well above the national average in English, above average in science and close to the average in mathematics. Results in these tests have been consistently above the national average over the last three years, but more so for girls than boys. Boys' results in mathematics have been only marginally above the national average.
3. The work of this age group seen during the inspection was of a good standard, particularly in science, art, history and music, and was at least of an average standard in other subjects. Any unsatisfactory levels of attainment were concentrated in Year 8 classes.
4. The school's targets for results in the 2002 tests were met in English and science but not in mathematics. The targets the school has set for 2003 and 2004 do not anticipate any improvement over 2002 results, except in mathematics. The school is on track to meet these targets and results would then be well above average in all three subjects for schools whose pupils had similar prior attainment.
5. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades was above the national average. There were particular strengths in English literature, science, art, business studies, drama and history. Only in information and communications technology (ICT) were results significantly below the national average and they are now lower than at the time of the last inspection. Despite a dip in results in the previous year, the trend of improvement, based on the average point score per pupil, over recent years has been broadly in line with the national trend. Results for both boys and girls were well above average on this measure. Compared with results in schools with similar test performance at age 14, GCSE results were above average.
6. The work of this age group seen during the inspection was of a good standard particularly in science, art, geography, history and music, and was at least of an average standard in most other subjects. Only in some aspects of design and technology were standards observed to be below national expectations.
7. The school's target for the proportion of pupils who would achieve the higher grades in five or more subjects in 2002 was met. The targets set for 2003 and 2004 are appropriately challenging and, if met, results would be well above schools where pupils had similar prior attainment.
8. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress overall. They make good progress in withdrawal groups and in lessons due to the very good quality learning support staff. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress. Their opportunities to progress are inhibited by the small amount of specific planning for them in lessons.
9. Standards of literacy are broadly satisfactory but literacy is inconsistently taught across the school. A literacy strategy has been agreed but not fully implemented. Not all departments have incorporated these literacy objectives into schemes of work: some subject areas do not display

and teach the correct use of key subject vocabulary, and not all subjects have engaged pupils in research work in which non fiction skills, including effective Internet search techniques, are actively taught.

10. There has been whole school training on numeracy and most departments have completed an audit of their scheme of work. Pupils can apply their numeracy skills appropriately in other subjects. In technology, for example all pupils cope well with the required measuring and calculating. In history Year 7 pupils have correctly worked out ratios. Pupils in Years 10/11 can apply their numeracy skills effectively in their science studies. A systematic programme for enhancing pupils' numeracy skills is being incorporated into the developing scheme of work but as yet is not in place.

Sixth form

11. Students entered for A and AS level examinations have performed considerably better than the national average over the three years to 2001, the last year for which national comparative data are available. The average points score per student was four points higher than in maintained schools nationwide in 2001. Girls' performance was very high compared with that of other providers of post-16 courses and the attainment of boys was above average. Overall, students' attainment in public examinations in 2001 was well above average.
12. In vocational courses, students' performance has improved steadily over the years, and in 2001 was above the national average overall. However, whereas girls' attainment was well above average in 2001, boys' attainment was almost four points per candidate below the national average.
13. In 2001, the attainment of students in art and design, biology, chemistry, communication studies, geography, German, history and general studies was well above average compared with that in other schools, and in a majority of these subjects there was a high proportion of students achieving A and B grades. In French, social studies and sports studies the performance of students was above average. It was in line with the average in English, mathematics and physics.
14. In the advanced level vocational qualifications in 2001, attainment in health and social care, with five candidates, and in leisure and tourism, with a single candidate, was well above average, with points scores over six points above the average. Business studies students achieved average performance compared with the national average.
15. In almost all subjects in the A level examination the proportion of girls attaining the higher grades (A and B) was substantially higher than that of boys. Girls out-performed boys also in vocational subjects. In 2002, however, the disparity between the performance of boys and girls was not as marked. Girls still out-performed the boys – contrary to the nation-wide picture – but only by a small margin at the higher grades. Subject by subject, the proportion of higher grades in the majority of subjects fell in 2002, and in some subjects (chemistry, biology, history, religious studies) there were markedly fewer higher grades. In physics and art, however, the number of higher grades rose in 2002, those in art being almost twice the national average compared with the 2001 figures.
16. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were seen to be high in English, theatre studies and in art and design. They are good in languages, geography, chemistry and in the vocational subjects. In English, there was a higher proportion of examination passes in 2002, although the proportion of higher grades was lower than in previous years. Results fell this year in geography after being well above average in 2001; the department has analysed the reasons for this and made the appropriate changes to raise standards again. In psychology results were slightly above average in 2001 but there was a marked drop in performance in 2002. This was due in the main to expectations not being high enough, although the work seen during the inspection showed signs of improvement.
17. Students make good progress in art and design, in geography and in the vocational subjects. In

chemistry, where most students achieved high grades in the GCSE examination, progress is at least satisfactory, and the high levels of attainment are sustained. In mathematics, students' progress is at least satisfactory, although recent results at the end of Year 12 have been below average. Students with special educational needs make good progress in chemistry and history.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. All pupils' attitudes towards their school are good. The pupils are proud of their school, they are tolerant of one another and willingly uphold the inclusive ethos and rules of the school. The majority of pupils seen in lessons engage in their work, work hard, accept challenges willingly, concentrate and have positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils work in an atmosphere that is free from oppressive behaviour. No evidence of sexism or racism was seen during the inspection. Pupils are confident, polite, respectful and good humoured and, for the most part, mature and responsible young adults.
19. During the inspection, the quality of behaviour in lessons was often related to the quality of teaching. The majority of pupils behave well, listen attentively, follow instructions and settle quickly to the tasks given. The great majority are eager to be involved, to contribute and to learn, although there is reluctance amongst some pupils to fully engage in physical education lessons. Pupils mostly concentrate and work hard, independently and in differing group situations. For example in all the music lessons seen during the inspection, pupils consistently co-operated and worked very well, supporting one another.
20. Pupils with special educational needs show very good attitudes during individual tuition sessions.
21. Parents and pupils expressed to inspectors, before and during the inspection, their concerns about unsatisfactory behaviour interfering with pupils' learning, most especially for pupils aged between 13 and 15. In lessons for that age group during the inspection, when the management of pupils, or the challenge or content of a lesson was of a lower standard, this did result in immature behaviour or a lack of co-operation with the class teacher. This in turn interfered with pupils' learning. The school is aware of these issues and senior managers are monitoring the situation. Strategies to improve the situation are being included in the school's new development plan.
22. The majority of pupils are consistently successful in a variety of group structures, behaving and listening very well and valuing each other's work. They accept that others have differing opinions and value one another's contributions. Pupils with special educational needs show good and often very good attitudes towards work in class, when taught individually and when working with their peers. Excellent attitudes were seen in a withdrawal teaching session in the special needs base.
23. The great majority of pupils are well behaved in assemblies and when they move around the school. They understand the impact of their behaviour on others. In the playground areas at break-time and at lunch-time behaviour is very good. They form orderly queues and wait their turn. The limited size of the communal areas and the dining area places a premium on patience and tolerance. When using public transport and when mixing with the general public, their behaviour is also very good. There have been three permanent exclusions during the past year and 21 fixed period exclusions; these numbers are similar to those reported at the last inspection.
24. The great majority of pupils are aware of right and wrong and comply with school and class rules. If any disruption or any bullying does arise, pupils and parents confirm that members of staff handle the affair very well and limit any effects. The majority of pupils follow the excellent role models, provided by all members of staff, by being polite and courteous. The pupils handled resources such as musical instruments, subject materials, computer equipment and books appropriately.
25. Personal development and relationships within the school are good. Pupils and staff enjoy good relationships and the majority confirm that they are happy to talk to members of staff if they have a problem. Pupils accept, very well, fellow pupils who may come from different backgrounds or who may have a range of abilities or difficulties. Pupils from all year groups are members of year councils and some are elected to represent their year in the school council. They are involved in collections for a range of charities and willingly take up roles and responsibilities assigned to

them. Opportunities for them to take initiative and personal responsibility are available and pupils have taken on tasks to organise a year ball, the production of a yearbook for Year 11 and to fund-raise for a variety of charities. They are given opportunities for independent learning and research in a variety of subjects.

26. The school supports pupils well in providing opportunities for them to acquire life skills, obtain careers advice and have work experience. The school provides personal development opportunities for all and this is evident with the very good work done in the pupil guidance centre, the special education needs department, the Dyslexia unit and through the alternative curriculum opportunities provided for pupils.
27. Attendance in the school is satisfactory. For the period 2001 to 2002 attendance for the school was recorded as 92.1 per cent, which was in line with the national average for secondary schools. For the same period, unauthorised absence was better than the national average. The only group where attendance fell below 92 per cent was Year 11. Education off-site and visits, medical reasons and additional holidays were the most significant reasons for pupils' absences in this and all other year groups.
28. Lateness for morning registration is due, in the majority of cases, to the frequently late running buses arriving at the school from a wide rural area. This is a perennial source of anxiety and concern for the school, as it causes many pupils to regularly arrive late for registration, assemblies and tutor periods. Otherwise, the registration of pupils at the start of morning sessions is handled efficiently and the majority of registration and tutorial periods are used productively.
29. The school's arrangements for recording attendance, categorising absences and for amending the registers do not always fully comply with the legal requirements and therefore are not fully effective in promoting good attendance.

Sixth form

30. In the majority of subjects, students are mature and have very positive attitudes towards school and their work. They work hard, make good contributions to class discussions and debates and are intent on success. In some teaching groups in Year 12 in psychology and in some groups which are too large and have a wide spread of prior attainment, student attitudes are not as good. Students make a very positive contribution to the corporate life of the school. Overall, there is good evidence from lessons and from interviews with students that they are happy with what the school provides.
31. Students have very good attitudes towards the school, they have pride in the school and its achievements, they enjoy coming to school and positively contribute to their learning and to the running of the school. Students are mature and delightful members of the school community, enjoying very positive relationships with each other, younger pupils and members of the staff. They comply with the school rules, they support staff, fellow students and pupils by accepting the responsibilities given to them and by using their initiative. There have been no students permanently excluded over the past year. Although attendance is satisfactory and students are satisfactory timekeepers, their attitudes towards registration and timekeeping are allowed to be too relaxed.
32. Their personal skills are developed in school through the tutorial arrangements and students confirm that they benefit from and enjoy very good relationships with their tutors. They also confirmed during the inspection that they benefit from the strong and effective management team in the sixth form, who are very supportive and always approachable.
33. Students are involved in the running of the school through involvement in the school council, acting as prefects and by being involved in a range of support arrangements for younger pupils in the school. Sixth formers act as mentors for younger pupils. They engage in team building exercises and work on developing life skills.

34. Students' opinion is that the school gives them opportunities and advice that enables them to follow their chosen career and that the information they are given about subjects and courses is clear and of good quality. They are positive about the advice given to them on what they should do in the sixth form, information on their progress, assessment or the careers advice they have received. For those anticipating moving into the world of work rather than higher education, students also confirm that the advice they receive is very good. They also confirm that the school listens to students, that they enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

35. Taken overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good, although there are some weaknesses in the teaching of the younger pupils, particularly those in Year 8. Teaching is good in the sixth form and in Years 10-11. All but one lesson observed in Years 10/11 were judged to be at least satisfactory, nearly three quarters were good or better and over a third very good or excellent. In Years 7-9, about one in ten lessons were unsatisfactory (although none was poor) with lower proportions good and very good than for the older age groups. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is frequently related to the inexperience of the teacher or their lack of subject knowledge when they are teaching outside their specialism.
36. Strengths are the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their subject (particularly in science, art, history, geography, music and religious education); the good quality planning of lessons around clear objectives which pupils understand (particularly in music where it is very good, English, science, modern foreign languages and art); the high expectations as to what pupils will achieve (particularly in science and music); the choice of teaching methods, (particularly strong in music and also good in English, science, art, modern foreign languages and religious education); the management of pupils' behaviour (particularly effective in science and music and also good in English, modern foreign languages and religious education). Each of the features was observed to have a positive impact on learning.
37. Well planned lessons, particularly those seen frequently in English and science with 'starter' activities designed to reinforce pupils' skills and 'plenary' sessions at the end to reinforce the learning, motivated children very effectively and promoted good attitudes and behaviour. Good quality questioning of pupils, for instance in mathematics and art, was seen to develop pupils' understanding very successfully.
38. The aspects of teaching where there is most scope for improvement in a number of subjects are in the teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy, in the use of assessment to help pupils make better progress and in the effectiveness of the use of homework, particularly in maths and design and technology. However, in some subjects (history and music in particular), there is good use of assessment to advance pupils' learning.
39. In order to improve standards of literacy it will be necessary to fully implement the agreed strategy across the school. There are currently elements of good practice, for example the emphasis on key words in science, and on speaking and listening skills in art and music. However, in other subjects the teaching of literacy is not developed and is not included in schemes of work or lesson plans.
40. In some lessons, the intended learning outcomes are not made clear to pupils. This was the case in some mathematics, science, art, geography and religious education lessons for instance. This leads to lower motivation and, at worst, poor behaviour.
41. The needs of pupils of all ability levels are taken into account in most lessons, but there is sometimes evidence of a need for more appropriate strategies for challenging the most able pupils in English and geography for instance.
42. In most lessons teachers are aware of individual pupils' special educational needs, as detailed on their individual educational plans, but do not use these to plan adapted teaching strategies, tasks and resources for them. Individual educational plans and other information provided are of good

quality and readily accessible. Additionally, the learning support staff are very willing to provide advice and support to teachers on request. However, in many cases the wealth of information offered is not used by subject teachers to plan and there is insufficient planning between subject teachers and learning support assistants. This reduces the effectiveness of support in many cases. Instead teachers place heavy reliance on learning support assistants to meet the pupils' needs in lessons. Learning support assistants provide very good links between the subject lessons and the learning support tutors so that areas of difficulty can be addressed in individual teaching sessions.

43. The teaching of pupils in withdrawal groups is good, with a significant proportion which is very good. The lessons include strategies and resources suggested by outside agencies, frequent changes of activities providing opportunities to consolidate learning, very good teacher expertise and very good rapport between pupils and their tutors.
44. Pupils who are more able are identified by subject departments, although the criteria for identifying pupils who are gifted and talented are not prescribed clearly. In most subjects there is a need for a range of strategies to challenge the most able more effectively, although pupils are well provided with extension work in music.

Sixth form

45. Teaching here is good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and their lesson planning is very effective in the majority of cases. Very good relationships between teachers and their students contribute well to the learning experiences which the school provides. In a number of subjects the quality of teaching seen was very good: in English, theatre studies, art and design, geography and in most lessons in business and chemistry. Teaching in information technology is consistently good, and in a majority of lessons in French, geography and health and social care the teaching is also good. In mathematics the teaching is generally satisfactory and some teaching is good.
46. In business education a major strength of the teaching is that all staff have first-hand experience of the business world, although there are insufficient links with local business and commerce. Teacher experience and expertise is a major factor in chemistry, where there is a high culture of success in the subject to which students respond well. Individual support for students is a key feature of teaching in art and design, with skilful use of questioning of students about their work. Issues are treated with great sensitivity in health and social care, and this makes a good contribution to students' perceptions and to the standards which they achieve. In vocational subjects generally, and in a range of other subjects, students become good independent learners, and research widely and with discrimination.
47. There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in lessons in modern foreign languages and in psychology, but in English there is good and consistent use of computers. Teaching in chemistry remains for the most part extremely didactic.
48. Students with special educational needs in the sixth form have good teaching in lessons and access to the very skilled support of teachers and learning support assistants, which enables them to make very good progress. The students quickly develop as independent learners and so they decide on the levels of support they need with the advice of the learning support staff. They do, however, have continual access to support and mentoring to help them with their written work and to provide support for any difficulties they may be experiencing. The students very much appreciate the levels of support given.
49. More able students in the sixth form are identified by their subject teachers with reference to broad criteria. There is some teaching which provides more challenging learning opportunities for individual students, but generally this is not built into the course structure. A few extra activities are offered, including university visits and drama productions.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO

PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

50. Overall the breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory. The school provides a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of its pupils. However, although there is provision for teaching a second modern foreign language in Year 8, provision for this in Year 9 is made outside the curriculum in the pupils' lunch hour. In Years 7 to 9, in addition to the National Curriculum subjects, pupils receive weekly lessons in personal, social and health education. Discrete lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) are also provided.
51. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make choices about the addition of optional subjects to the list of core subjects. They have the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages at GCSE level. There is a strong inclusive ethos which provides options to cater for pupils of all abilities and, through the allocation of learning support assistants, to ensure support is available in class to allow pupils to follow the options of their choice. A successful system of supported study allows some pupils to follow one fewer option choice and receive support for study in that time. There is a wide range of subjects offered within the option choices, including academic subjects, vocational GCSE courses, for example in business education, engineering and health and social care, and practical subjects such as the MOVRUS (motor vehicle and road user study) course. All pupils follow a personal, social and health education course and religious education.
52. The statutory curriculum is not fully taught in that requirements for ICT are not fully met in Years 7-9. The taught course in discrete ICT covers the requirements for content, but pupils are not provided with the opportunity to use and develop ICT capabilities in their other subjects. There is a need to monitor the use of ICT across all subjects of the curriculum to ensure that requirements are met. While Year 11 pupils do not all have guaranteed access to ICT, this has been addressed effectively in Year 10 with a compulsory short course leading to GCSE. There are some extra activities available for more able pupils such as full course ICT, Latin lessons and an art workshop.
53. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum. They are taught in groups with their peers with some withdrawal for teaching focused on their specific targets. Withdrawal sessions are carefully planned to link with work done in lessons and so ensure continuity of learning. All pupils are able to benefit from the curriculum provided by the school, although some pupils are withdrawn from a foreign language. Opportunities for extra teaching are offered to pupils at lunchtime and at the beginning and end of the school day to reduce the amount of time they are withdrawn from lessons.
54. The school's strategies for the development of teaching literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. Staff have been provided with the appropriate training but the quality of implementation is too varied. As many pupils are already numerate, the need to develop these skills is not regarded as a priority in many curriculum areas. There is a need to monitor effectiveness of the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects of the curriculum to ensure that the strategy is being delivered according to school policy so that standards are improved.
55. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7,8 and 9, where it is taught by form tutors, and good in Years 10 and 11 where it is taught by a specialist team. Requirements are met for health and sex education and raising awareness about drugs. Topics are dealt with at appropriate stages and include study skills and coping with difficult situations, including bullying. Responsibility toward others is fostered. Good use is made in these lessons of visitors to the school. Some teachers take their duties in teaching PSHE seriously, others less so. The programme suffers because of this. There is no system of monitoring the quality of the teaching of this programme.
56. The number of after-school buses travelling to a wide range of destinations makes the fully accessible provision of extra-curricular activities difficult. Nevertheless, much is on offer. Drama and the performing arts are well represented. Out-of-school music is very evident and theatre and concert visits enlarge pupils' horizons. Dance and games clubs cater for many pupils and public speaking and debating are encouraged. There are many visits to galleries and museums locally

and in the capital. During the lunchtime there are clubs provided for pupils. These include academic clubs such as the ones observed in Year 10 designed to cater for pupils who wish to extend from short to full course in GCSE ICT and the Year 9 languages club which allows continued study of a second language for pupils who wish to study two languages in Year 10 and 11. There are also subject clubs that are run at this time to allow pupils to catch up on any work, as well as clubs designed to increase pupils' interest in subjects.

57. Overall, provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although the school has no formal policy or programme. Nevertheless these aspects are strongly linked to the personal, social and health education provision and that for citizenship. They are well supported in a number of other subjects and areas of school life and there are many good features.
58. The overall provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but would benefit from a better range of planned opportunities for pupils to reflect, empathise and develop insight into the wonders of mankind and the development of knowledge across the curriculum. In art, however, pupils have the chance to marvel at the complex structures of nature and in English they examine religious and social symbolism in poetry. The music of Bali and Java requires pupils to remove their shoes as a mark of respect when they improvise gamelan performances and in religious education pupils reflect on different sets of values and beliefs to inform their own perspective of life. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the experiences of others, for instance Holocaust victims in one assembly for Years 10 to 13.
59. The school provides good opportunities for cultural activities. There have been exchange visits with students from South Africa and there are links with Ghana through the geography department. There is emphasis on music from countries such as India and the study of other cultures in geography. In religious education there are ample opportunities to explore equality and harmony amongst different races and cultures through participating in visits to temples, mosques and other centres of worship in different cities. Regular recitals, musicals and concerts augment the tours abroad by musicians from the school and the school choir has taken part in the Last Night of the Proms at the Albert Hall in London.
60. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Pupils have many opportunities to learn right from wrong, for example through a very strong moral dimension in their RE lessons, and through the examination of moral issues as part of the curriculum in most subjects. The school Code of Conduct, based on the principle of respect for self, others and the community, is made clear to pupils. The Sherborne Community Family Partnership has taken a lead in organising drugs education evenings which support decision-making about right and wrong. Pupils of all ages take part in charity fundraising which involves thinking about others and doing something to help.
61. Provision for social development is good. Pupils have a taste of democracy in action through the School Council. They develop social skills through group and pair work in lessons. Journeys and visits in a number of subjects such as history, geography and modern languages teach them how to get on with one another in unknown situations. The link with a school in Ghana through the geography department has resulted in a correspondence between pupils in both schools. Physical education makes a particularly strong contribution with its emphasis on the rules of games and the importance of teamwork, and through a problem-solving programme focusing on communication skills.
62. The school works hard at tailoring the curriculum to benefit those pupils who may be at particular risk, or have special educational needs. The quality and range of this provision are good. The school aims to broaden pupils' experiences and engage them in school and makes efforts to boost their self-esteem and feelings of self worth. To ensure that pupils continue to attend and succeed, the school works very effectively with outside agencies, local colleges and the local authority. The school makes full use of pupils' individual educational plans and pupils' statements in arranging their provision. As well as special educational needs provision, the pupil guidance centre and the dyslexia centre, the school has established mentoring groups to help support pupils in Years 7 to 9.

63. In addition to the school's inclusive arrangements to deal with any pupil's difficulties with relationships, curriculum or other school issues, pupils may be referred to an in-school counsellor or the Connexions advisor may be able to provide advice and support. Pupils are able to join activities at lunchtime, including visits to the local youth club on three days a week. A "drop in centre" is being installed in the school's resource centre and this has been planned by pupils, organised by pupils and will be available for pupils aged 11 to 16. Parents and pupils confirm that issues are generally handled well by the school and that the school will involve parents if necessary.
64. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. The school is working very hard at seeking sponsorship and funding for its capital bid to establish a business resource centre and become a business and enterprise specialist school. The school has already obtained strong support from parents, local and regional employers and the wider community.
65. The school has many contacts with outside agencies who provide help in introducing students and pupils into the world of work, in pastoral initiatives and in maintaining the caring ethos of the school. The Church supports the school through the local clergy. Local employers and businesses support by enabling 200 pupils from Year 10 for two weeks and over 130 students from Year 12 for one week to benefit from work experience. In addition a number of pupils in Years 10-11 attend extended work experience placements. Local companies have supported the Business Enterprise and Neighbourhood Engineers schemes and pupils are given training in developing their interview skills.
66. The school uses many facilities, local and further afield and the services of many visitors to enrich the curriculum and provide careers information for pupils and students. Links are strong and productive with health and social services, police, careers providers, local sports clubs and a wide range of sporting organisations working with the leisure centre staff. Links with the youth centre are strong, including joint fund-raising, attendance of the leader at school assemblies, sports trips and events and the South African exchange.
67. The school does outreach work with local schools in physical education and in relation to pupils with special educational needs. The catchment area for the school is wide and the strength of the links with the feeder schools is a considerable achievement. Pupils and parents agree that the pupils' transition to the school is handled very well. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and those children involved in the Dyslexia unit are very positive about their transfers between schools.

Sixth form

68. The school provides a broad range of learning experiences for its students, both in the traditional academic curriculum and in vocational subjects. Provision for general studies is good, with a significant proportion of students taking the AS examination and a further proportion continuing to the higher level. The course makes a good contribution to students' development of key skills. There is a well-balanced and comprehensive course in personal, social and health education which covers good advice and guidance for students' ongoing education as well as encouraging students to look at wider issues in UK and on the world scene. The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to students' competence with computer technology: all students in Year 12 follow a course in ICT. The post-16 curriculum does not, however, satisfy statutory requirements relating to the provision of religious education for all.
69. Whereas access to the curriculum and equality of opportunity are good, there are relative weaknesses in the lack of intermediate level courses in vocational subjects, which limits the accessibility to such courses for some students. The school provides a good range of enrichment activities for students: in many subjects there are trips, study visits, fieldwork and excursions related to the work, and groups from the school travel to a variety of world destinations for interest and recreational purposes. There is a good games programme, and students have a good choice of activities on games afternoon. Others help in the local community. Drama makes a very important contribution to the life of the school: post-16 students are heavily involved in the school

drama production and run a drama club for Year 9 pupils. All Year 12 students undertake a period of work experience.

70. There is no overall strategy for the delivery of spiritual, moral, social and cultural enrichment in the sixth form. However, there are examples of exchange visits abroad and of students taking part in educational visits, community projects, charitable fundraising and extra-curricular activities.
71. The curriculum makes a very good contribution to the personal development of students, through discussions of bias and ethics in psychology, a wide range of social topics in modern foreign languages, ethical discussions and social awareness in the humanities and the sciences, cultural diversity in English and a range of social and ethical aspects in the vocational areas of the curriculum.
72. Sixth form pupils play a part in the majority of the activities outlined above. They have a link with the Millennium Volunteers and many of them undertake voluntary work independently, for example, spending afternoons regularly in a local primary school and working in the local Children's Hospice. There is a strong and growing involvement with the "Fair Trade" group promoting fair trade with developing countries. Sixth formers take a lead in organising charity events in the school. Some Year 12 students were amongst those who travelled to South Africa on the school exchange visit. At a tutorial meeting during the inspection a group of students proposed sponsoring a child in Ghana.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

73. The provision for the care of pupils in the school is generally good, although with some significant shortcomings. All members of staff show concern for the wellbeing of pupils, the quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and members of staff know pupils and their medical and personal needs well. The school is supported very well by health professionals and by members of other agencies.
74. The school identifies and deals well with hazards found on the site and health and safety checks and inspections are regularly undertaken. A health and safety policy, approved by the governors, complies fully with the policies of the local education authority. However, certain aspects of the school's administrative arrangements for health and safety do not fully comply with their own policy or statutory requirements. Risk assessments have been made of aspects of whole school activities and hazards. However, these have not been recorded, as required by the local authority and legislation. The school is very good at identifying and dealing with hazards and concerns on a day-to-day basis, but unfortunately has not committed details of the assessments or actions taken or proposed to paper, nor communicated them to the staff involved. Good quality written risk assessments have been made by members of subject departments, apart from the art department. Assessments of all school trips are made, complying with local authority guidelines.
75. Several members of staff are trained to administer first aid and the school's procedures for the care and treatment of pupils are very good. Appropriate records are kept regarding the care and medical needs of pupils. Thorough precautions are in place for dealing with emergencies arising from pupils' medical conditions and for dealing with accidents and injuries. The school nurse and other health professionals support the school's welfare provision very well. The school's arrangements for child protection are good. The policy and procedures follow the guidelines of the local committee for the protection of children. The person responsible for child protection co-ordinates very well with the external agencies involved in this sensitive aspect of the school's work. Other members of staff are regularly trained to ensure they understand the school's arrangements and procedures, which link into the school's referral system, based on the completion of 'concern' forms. However, there is no explicit mention in the staff handbook of child protection arrangements and policy, or any mention of policies for the restraint of pupils or arrangements for pupils in care.
76. Based on an encyclopaedic knowledge of the pupils, the school is very well able to monitor any pupils that members of staff are concerned about. This applies especially to those pupils cared for

by the authorities as well as to those children whose welfare is causing concern. In line with local authority guidance, appropriate record checks are undertaken on new staff and helpers.

77. The school's ethos, the consistent use of positive behaviour strategies and good monitoring by the majority of the staff support the good behaviour seen in the school. In lessons where behaviour of pupils has not been as good, teachers do not always consistently apply the school's policies, manage pupils well, or provide challenging or interesting work. The school has good procedures in place for encouraging good behaviour, with staff able to use a range of appropriate rewards or sanctions. Assemblies, class activities and tutorial time are also used to reinforce the benefits of good behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to be responsible and to take initiative. The school has a range of rewards that includes stickers, certificates, merits and commendations, which are used to praise and encourage pupils of differing ages.
78. Good use is made of the pupils' school diaries. These documents are central to pupils' life in school. They include instructions for them, a code of conduct, rules on appearance and uniform requirements, timetables and a copy of the home-school agreement. These books are endorsed when pupils are praised, with stickers. However, they are not used to record misdemeanours or lateness. They are checked by tutors at tutorial time to ensure homework is completed and that parents and carers are monitoring and checking homework. Parents are able to use them to communicate with staff.
79. The school is good at monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour by the use of concern forms that connect the faculties and pastoral teams. Year tutors, heads of year and their deputies have good systems to follow up pupils causing concern. Parents and carers confirm that their children feel safe in the school. However, some concerns have been expressed by pupils and parents about inappropriate behaviour interfering with pupils' learning and the school is monitoring this. Parents also confirm that there are few incidents of bullying or racism and that the school deals with any issues speedily and sensitively.
80. Those pupils with special educational needs which warrant statements have these reviewed at least annually and are up-to-date. The provision indicated on statements is in place. However, most pupils receive in excess of this due to effective sharing of time and additional tuition sessions provided before school, at lunch time and after the end of the school day.
81. Learning support staff know their pupils very well and are sensitive to any difficulties they may be experiencing in the classroom. There are very good systems in place for monitoring pupils' progress and providing information to staff. There is an effective interface between pastoral and special educational needs staff which facilitates information exchange and a consistent approach to pupils with both learning and behavioural difficulties. There is very good liaison with external agencies, who provide therapies and programmes of activities for specific pupils which are carried out by school staff. Entry assessment data is used very well to identify pupils with special educational needs and to plan for them. The very high level of skilled support in lessons enables efficient identification of pupils' needs after they have entered the school.
82. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is unsatisfactory for pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form. In the past, the school experienced significant difficulties with computer analysis of attendance records. A data system for attendance has yet to be initiated and, in the meantime, the school is reliant upon manual registers to analyse attendance. These registers are not always completed in a manner that complies fully with legal requirements. Tutors and heads of year analyse pupils' records and follow up individual pupil attendance concerns. However, the lack of computer resources does not allow for a speedy analysis of attendance histories for individuals or for groups of pupils. The educational welfare officer provides the school with good support and is in school twice a week. She has to maintain her own handwritten records to facilitate her analysis of pupils' attendance records. She is supporting the school well in its endeavours to maintain and improve attendance levels and is at present monitoring the performance of 23 pupils at school and is preparing to refer one family to court. Details of students' attendances are noted on their progress review sheets and overall school attendance performances are included in the governors' annual report to parents.

83. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. There is a whole-school policy for assessment which identifies principles that should underpin good practice in marking but leaves implementation to the discretion of individual departments. This results in a number of methods being used and there is a degree of inconsistency in marking practice both between and within departments. For example, some departments mark in levels, others in grades; some teachers provide detailed feedback, others a simple grade. This is unhelpful for pupils wishing to compare their performance in different subject areas. In the better practice in Years 7-9, for example in English, art, science, modern foreign languages and history, pupils' work is marked using the National Curriculum levels and teacher comments are both precise and helpful. In these subject areas, pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Good practice at GCSE level and in the sixth form is characterised by generally more detailed teacher comments and by standardisation of marking within a department. Occasionally, for example in history, analysis of pupils' performance is used to inform and modify the teaching of particular modules of work.
84. Each department reports on the progress of individual pupils in each teaching group in terms of whether the pupil is performing at a level below, in line with or in advance of his/her target grade. This information is collated, and then aligned with prior attainment data, so that staff can conduct annual reviews with pupils and parents, at which pupils' progress in respect of target grades is discussed. However, arrangements for sharing data of this kind with the pupils themselves throughout the year vary in both extent and quality from one department to another.
85. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. The teachers and support staff have good knowledge of pupils' needs and work hard to improve pupils' personal development. The monitoring and support of pupils with special needs are good.
86. Careers education for pupils is good. In Year 10, all pupils undertake two weeks of work experience. The majority find the provision enjoyable and successful. The school invites many visitors to support careers education, including local employers, the armed services, and representatives from further and higher education. The school organises visits to colleges, universities and to a careers fair. The school's external careers advice provider has only recently commenced providing the school with the agreed level of support and there have been staffing problems with careers guidance at the school. There is a good range of careers resources available in the resource centre.
87. Pupils join in a range of events in the school that contribute to their personal development, including attending events aimed at raising funds and publicising charities, visits and extra-curricular activities. There are opportunities for pupils to develop independence and to use their initiative, most notably through membership of the school council and by taking up duties in the sixth form as prefects. There are also opportunities made to undertake research or take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are involved in the development of a new drop-in centre with the contracted careers and support provider. They will be trained to provide manpower and mentoring skills to enable them to run the centre. Students are involved in the steering committee of the projected enterprise and resource centre.

Sixth form

88. The school's provision for the educational and personal support of sixth form students has all the features found in the main school and is good. Students are supported through the tutorial system, and their tutors provide group and one-to-one contact and advice for both years in the sixth form. Students greatly appreciate both the effort put into this by teachers and the high quality of advice that they provide. All members of staff know their students and their needs very well and are able to tailor the help they provide accordingly.
89. Effective procedures are in place in the sixth form both for assessing pupils' attainment and for monitoring their academic progress. In most subject areas, students' written work is thoroughly marked, with detailed comments about strengths and weaknesses and advice on how to improve.

These assessments, together with GCSE attainment grades, feed into comprehensive student progress records, which enable teachers to track student progress against target grades. There is also evidence of student self-assessment in some subjects. In art, discussions with students about their progress take place on a weekly basis; however, no written comments are included on the students' work.

90. The school has good procedures for identifying students who are under-achieving and falling behind, and for taking steps to ensure that targets are met. Overall, the school diagnoses students' learning needs well and provides well for them. In some subjects, assessment data is used well to plan teaching and the curriculum, although this is less the case in a number of others.
91. When interviewed, students felt that they had a good knowledge of how they were doing and that teachers gave them good advice as to how they might improve their work, giving freely of their time to help and support where necessary. Students feel that the regular reviews of their work which take place help to keep them on target.
92. Teachers give good support and guidance to students when it is needed. There is a clear view from students that teachers work hard on their behalf and are always willing to give extra help when they are in difficulties. Effective use is made in some subjects of the Internet and the internal computer network, which teachers use to disseminate advice, research information and guidance when required. The mathematics department holds surgeries for students who require help and support, or who are falling behind in their work.
93. All the students spoken to greatly appreciate the advice, support and guidance provided by the staff on personal and academic matters. The school is very sensitive to all the needs of groups of students from a range of diverse backgrounds and abilities. As in the rest of the school, students are well cared for, their welfare is assured and their working environment is safe.
94. Attendance monitoring is unsatisfactory, although registers are taken at the start of sessions, in tutorial periods and lessons. Absences identified then are followed up, but there is a lack of any meaningful analysis of overall students' timekeeping by group. As in the main school, there is no whole school management system. Students sign in when entering or leaving school at any other times at the school office.
95. Careers guidance for the post-16 students is good. Students embarking on courses of higher or further education and those electing to enter the world of work are provided with good information and they are satisfied with the advice they have received. This includes the support they received on the completion of their university application forms and advice on qualifications needed to enter the world of work. As with Years 10-11, there are visitors to the school to talk on careers and students have access to a range of careers resources. The school provides work experience for students if it is required in Year 12 for one week. Interview technique training is provided for all students. The school also accesses personnel from the world of work in the provision of careers advice.
96. The comprehensive personal, social and health education programme provides well for students' personal development and gives help and advice on a wide range of issues which students have to face as they move from school to higher education and the world of work.
97. Students with special educational needs have good access to the very skilled learning support assistants, which enables them to make very good progress. They quickly develop as independent learners and so they decide on the levels of support they need with the advice of the learning support staff. They do, however, have continual access to support and mentoring to help them with their written work and to provide support for any difficulties which they may be experiencing. The students themselves very much appreciate the levels of support given.

98. More able students in the sixth form are identified by their subject teachers with reference to broad criteria. There is some teaching which provides more challenging learning opportunities for individual students, but generally this is not built as a planned element into the course structure.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

99. Parents' views of the school are generally good. The school has established good links with parents and provides satisfactory information for them. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good, as is their contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home.
100. At the inspector's meeting with parents, attended by some 40 parents, parents were positive about the school and their questionnaire responses indicated that they felt comfortable about approaching the school to ask questions or to deal with a problem. However, only 59 per cent of the 150 returns agreed that the school works closely with them.
101. The school confirms that parents support school events well and that there is a high take up at curriculum meetings and other school events. A high proportion of parents attended the welcome meetings for pupils starting at school and the annual progress meetings. There is an enthusiastic attendance at fund raising events, performances and concerts held throughout the year.
102. In their questionnaires, a significant minority of parents indicated that they did not feel well informed about the curriculum and the progress their children are making. The yearly pupil progress reports are very detailed and are written well. These reports include the curriculum covered in each subject, what the children have done in each subject and targets that will enable pupils to improve. Pupils are able to add comments, as are parents. These reports are good but the inspectors agree with parents that one meeting and one progress report per year is unsatisfactory.
103. An important and successful element of the school's communication system is the provision of a school diary to each pupil. The intention is that these should be inspected and signed by parents to confirm that homework has been completed and can be used to communicate with the school. They are used to record awards made to pupils but not to record any concerns the school might have.
104. Parents have supported the school well through fund raising, are involved with the newly formed family and community partnership and have contributed to the enterprise and resource centre. Parental involvement is limited by the school's wide catchment area. Parents are involved in the life of the school as governors, employees and by helping with extra-curricular activities. For the parents of children with special educational needs, the school's work with them is very good.
105. Parents feel that the transition from primary school is handled very well and that pupils settle quickly into their new school. The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report are detailed and well presented and are very good sources of information and satisfy all the legal requirements.
106. For pupils with special educational needs, there is a good communication between parents and the learning support staff. Most parents of pupils with statements attend their annual review meetings.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

107. The management of the school by the headteacher and key staff ensures that, on a day-to-day basis, it operates efficiently and effectively, supported by helpful routines and communication systems. There are clear line-management arrangements in place, with effective delegation. Management is effectively supported by the range of ancillary staff employed by the school. The school's arrangements for performance management of staff are well organised. Many heads of subject department, especially history, music and religious education, provide good models of

leadership and management of their teams, as do heads of year in relation to their teams of tutors. However, not all elements of management are sufficiently well linked together to ensure a sharp enough focus across the school on raising standards further or on ensuring improvements in teaching and learning where these are needed. There is a lack of systematic, rigorous monitoring across the school although pockets of very good practice have emerged. The potential for performance management to make a significant contribution to this has not been adequately developed. The priorities of the current school development plan are not sharply enough focused on improving standards and quality.

108. There is, as yet, a lack of clarity about the vision for the school's next five year phase of development, including about the role which the school's bid for specialist school status will play. There is no reference to precise targets for improved pupil performance in the current development plan, although these have been set for the next two years. The school's current work on drawing up an improvement plan for the coming five years is providing an excellent opportunity to tie together a clear vision for the school, targets for improved pupil performance over this period and strategies to achieve that vision and those targets. The work of senior managers in bringing these features together has started well and there has been good consultation with teaching staff. This now needs to involve governors more directly.
109. The school has an enthusiastic and highly visible commitment to valuing every pupil and responding to the needs of individual pupils. These values result in healthy, productive relationships and a very well cared-for school environment of which pupils are proud and which supports effective learning well.
110. The expectations on heads of subject departments are made clear in their job descriptions and most carry out their responsibilities well. There are weaknesses, however, in some departments for instance in the monitoring of the quality of marking and of homework and of the agreed literacy strategy. The procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are informal and ad hoc. There is very good practice in some subjects, including an effective system of peer-observation in English which leads to healthy professional discussion about teaching quality. In some other subjects, there is little or no activity of this type beyond the annual observation of each teacher as part of their performance management. This latter procedure is not generating adequate discussion about sharing best practice or teaching quality generally.
111. Governors fulfil their statutory duties in the main, but have not been adequately involved in the setting of statutory pupil performance targets. The governors need to receive more information about key aspects of the school's development, and its strengths and weaknesses, from the headteacher's termly reports. The revised committee structure is working well and has provided systematic opportunities for reviewing the school's progress. However, governors do not have all the information necessary for them to be fully effective. For instance, the Curriculum and Achievement Committee does not have information on attendance or targets and the Finance and Buildings Committee is not aware of the arrangements to fund agreed development items.
112. There is a good analysis of the data on pupils' attainment in public tests and examinations although this has not led to systematic planning for improvement where a need for this is identified. Job descriptions provide no indication of heads of subjects' responsibilities for analysing pupil performance data or for setting targets for improvement. This remains a weakness in a number of subjects. Targets for improved pupil performance are established on the basis of a careful analysis of the starting point and current performance of each pupil. Each subject department is engaged in the process of identifying targets for individual pupils. There is a mixed practice in terms of sharing the targets with pupils.
113. The school has adopted a cyclical review model ("maintain/improve/change") which is aimed at evaluating practice in all subject areas and other aspects of the school. As yet, the outcomes of this process have not always had the impact expected and have not been followed up adequately within the school's development planning.
114. The priorities in the current development plan, now coming to the end of its five-year life, are

generally appropriate, based as they were on a clear analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses at the start of the period. While there has been systematic monitoring to check that the planned actions have taken place, evaluation of their impact has been less thorough. Priorities for the new five-year plan have emerged from a recent audit by staff of current strengths and weaknesses. The senior management team is working hard to ensure that the strategies that emerge make a strong contribution to the school's mission statement of 'being a centre for excellence in the heart of the community'.

115. There is insufficient information in the current school development plan about the costs of implementing the actions identified. This unsatisfactory practice is being rectified in the drawing up of the action plans for the coming year, where costs are being identified at an early stage. This will enable governors to better play their role in helping to prioritise developments.
116. Technology is used well in the school's finance and administration systems, and the school is moving to a new management information system which will integrate a number of currently disparate features. Administration is effective and supportive. Financial systems are effective and unobtrusive in their support of the needs of budget holders. The last Auditors' Report was received in autumn 2000 and a plan was drawn up at that time to take account of the auditors' recommendations. Governors state that the actions identified then have been carried out.
117. Overall, there is a range of effective leadership and management practices at work in the school but insufficient integration of these practices. This leads to continuing inconsistencies, for example in the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and in the use of assessment data, and has meant that improvement, where it has been needed, has not always been rapid enough.
118. The learning support department is very well led by a skilled and experienced special educational needs co-ordinator, who has developed a team of tutors and learning support assistants who work as a very close, enthusiastic and supportive team. The learning support assistant and tutors are highly skilled through continual access to training from a variety of professionals and they disseminate their knowledge to all staff through very good documentation and advice. Accommodation, staffing and resources for special educational needs provision are very good.
119. Arrangements for the support and professional development of both newly qualified teachers and students undertaking initial teacher training are good and valued by participants, as are the induction arrangements for all new members of staff. The procedures are clear and cover a wide range of induction needs. Most newly qualified teachers are well supported at departmental level. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are in place but, whilst attention is paid to the needs of individual teachers, the link to whole school priorities is unsatisfactory. The number and quality of technical support staff is good and the team of learning support assistants provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs. The secretarial and clerical staff provides an efficient and welcoming school office. They contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the school.
120. The school's strategy for performance management is satisfactory but there is inconsistent implementation. It is firmly based on a line management model. However, there is a need for individual performance targets to be more closely linked with the targets set out in the school's development plan. Furthermore, it is not currently linked to the staff development procedures.
121. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the school's curriculum is good. The school has an appropriate number of teachers with a good range of experience. There are a number of unqualified teachers, all of whom are well supported at departmental level. However, more needs to be done at whole school level if the school is to fulfil its aim of being a training institution for teachers. There are a few teachers working outside their subject specialism and this sometimes has a negative impact on quality.
122. Purpose built in 1994, the school buildings have been well cared for and maintained and they provide a good learning environment. Display is generally well used and the buildings remain free

from litter and damage. In subject provision there are significant shortcomings in only drama and music. In music, rooms are too small for group sizes and there are too few practice rooms. In drama, pupils are very short of space and must practice in unsuitable places such as stairwells. The provision is very good in many subject areas. It is good in physical education, where there are dual use arrangements with the Leisure Centre which shares the site. The facilities are modern and playing field provision is good, although there is no gymnasium and there are limitations to the pupils' use of the facilities beyond the school day. The open areas between buildings are well landscaped with seating and provide attractive social areas for pupils in dry weather.

123. Overall the quality and quantity of learning resources are good. There are variations across different departments but in none of them is there significant weakness. In the case of textbooks, for example, there are clear differences between geography and history. In geography there are insufficient texts, atlases and Ordnance Survey maps in the main school and limited access to ICT equipment threatens the department's ability to meet National Curriculum requirements. In history there is a reported improvement in the availability of textbooks since the last inspection – resources are now good. The resources for learning available for pupils with special educational needs are very good and this strength undoubtedly has a significant impact on the progress made by almost all of them. The well-stocked school library is another strength, with a ratio of books to pupils that is just better than the national average. The books are in good condition. There is a separate reading room and there are two further work areas that are equipped with computers. All these are well used and much in demand in lessons and at lunchtime. The number of computers available for pupils to use is a little higher than in similar sized schools.

Sixth form

124. Leadership of the individual year groups is good, and the fact that each head of year carries through the two years with the cohort enables that leadership to be effective. Each year group is well supported by a member of the school's senior management team who each have distinctive roles in the leadership process. With the heads of year they act as a steering group to consult with others and to plan the development of the post-16 provision which the school makes. However, due to the lack of an overall leadership post for the sixth form, on occasions structural changes to curriculum and practice are made without adequate consultation with all interested parties.
125. There is a development plan for the sixth form which reflects the school's priorities and the short- and medium-term development of the curriculum and provision for the care and welfare of students. However, the lack of a single senior person who can take a synoptic view means that medium- and long-term developments are not as sharply focused as they might be.
126. Post-16 affairs are well-managed; the heads of years and their assistants, along with the management representative, work well as a team to ensure that the needs of students are well catered for. Procedures for monitoring students' progress are good, with twice-yearly student reviews which can if appropriate set in motion a range of actions to promote improvement of attendance, attitude or academic performance. Students appreciate the way in which the school monitors their progress and the mature way in which they are treated. Arrangements for registering students' attendance, however, are not as thorough as they should be.
127. Individual departmental leadership for post-16 courses is very good in a number of subjects and good in most others. There have been some management problems which remain to an extent unresolved in psychology, where the subject suffers from not being part of a wider group of subjects, and from the lack of appropriate guidance and support from the senior management team. In art and design, where there is a temporary situation, there are some weaknesses in the procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching.
128. Accommodation for sixth form courses is good overall. It is excellent in science and very good in art and design, French and history. In theatre studies the accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of private study space for students and the most efficient use is not made of the three teaching spaces adjacent to the sixth form common room, which are often used for main

school lessons while sixth form lessons take place elsewhere.

129. In the majority of subjects post-16 there is a good match of well-qualified teachers to the demands of the curriculum. Staff development is well-managed, particularly in art and design, where there is good in-house training. In business education, the department arranges team teaching situations to support new teachers.
130. Resources in most cases are good but, in a number of subject areas, the lack of adequate ICT resources has a negative impact on standards and the quality of learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to secure the further development of the school in its determination to secure excellence in all that it does, the headteacher and senior staff should:

- (i) improve the quality of teaching where weaknesses are identified in this report and through the school's own monitoring, particularly in relation to:
- weaknesses in the management of pupils' behaviour;
 - class teachers' planning for pupils with special educational needs and those deemed to be gifted and talented; and
 - the teaching of literacy skills in accordance with the school's agreed strategy.

(see paragraphs 38-42, 54, 110, 149, 150, 161, 168, 178, 187, 188)

- (ii) maximise the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan for the next five years by:
- ensuring that it is accompanied by a very clear statement of the leadership's vision for the school over that period;
 - including targets for continuously improved pupil performance, aimed at reaching excellent levels by the end of the period; and
 - ensuring that the clear majority of planned actions are aimed at raising the achievement of pupils.

(see paragraphs 107, 108, 111, 113, 114, 120)

- (iii) secure fully effective and consistent practice throughout the school:
- in the monitoring, evaluation and development of the quality of teaching; and
 - in the use of pupil performance data analyses to set appropriately challenging targets for each pupil

taking account of the examples of very good practice already to be found in the school.

(see paragraphs 110, 112, 117, 120, 153, 154, 161, 174, 181, 191, 202, 226, 233)

- (iv) improve the frequency with which parents receive information about their children's progress and the quality of information they receive about homework.

(see paragraphs 102, 151, 179)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the overall strategic leadership by ensuring that there is clearer and more specific planning around longer-term development.

(see paragraphs 124, 125)

- (2) Improve procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality by ensuring that both students and staff arrive on time for the formal registration period.

(see paragraphs 82, 94, 126)

THE DYSLEXIA BASE

Overall the provision offered by the base is very good, because of the high level of inclusion, the very skilled support it offers, the highly trained staff and the excellent team working. The base has places for 20 pupils, but at present there are 17 on roll, who all have statements of special educational needs for severe dyslexia. They are supported by a team of well trained tutors and learning support assistants who work very closely with the learning support department.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	174
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		82

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7-11							
Number	6	37	63	46	11	0	0
Percentage	4	23	39	28	7	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	19	28	10	0	0	0
Percentage	2	33	48	17	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	1315	254
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55	3

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	52	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	159	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	54

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	113	115	228

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	77	85
	Girls	103	85	92
	Total	183	162	177
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (68)	71 (74)	78 (77)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (33)	47 (51)	42 (43)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	83	61
	Girls	87	88	76
	Total	151	171	137
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (80)	77 (76)	60 (79)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (38)	39 (53)	15 (42)
	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	111	90	201

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	64	108	111
	Girls	59	89	89
	Total	123	197	200
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (53)	98 (96)	100 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.4 (41.6)
	National	39.8

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

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

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

Year 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	46	54	100
	Average point score per candidate	16.4 (17.7)	26.7 (20.9)	22.0 (19.9)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		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	43	51	94	4	8	12
	Average point score per candidate	17.0	25.6	21.7	6.0	17.2	13.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		81.0

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
1,294	21	4
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
12	0	0
1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70.89
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	41
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1,056

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	83.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	23.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3,711,813
Total expenditure	3,543,455
Expenditure per pupil	2,668
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,722
Balance carried forward to next year	171,080

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	38.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,315
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	52	12	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	61	4	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	61	13	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	7	59	23	10	0
The teaching is good.	17	66	7	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	44	26	10	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	34	54	9	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	36	56	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	17	42	30	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	22	53	8	4	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	66	5	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	50	6	4	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are good.
- Teaching is good throughout the department.
- The literacy strategy has been well implemented in Years 7 to 9.
- Staff in the department work closely together to support pupils' learning
- Media studies is a strength of the department.
- Subject leadership and management of the head of department are good.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies for challenging the most able pupils in Years 7-9.
- Ensuring consistency between teachers in marking work.

131. Pupils in Year 9 achieve standards which are above average compared to those for pupils of a similar age nationally and this has been a consistent trend over a three year period. However, standards for the most able pupils are less good than national results. Standards in GCSE English at the end of Year 11 are above average for English language and well above average for English literature. However, for both subjects the proportion of the highest grades is only similar to the national average.
132. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is good. The average and above average pupils have well developed writing skills and can write for a range of audiences and purposes. There is a wide variety of work: for instance, detailed descriptive writing from Year 7 pupils on their autobiographies, reflective diary writing from Year 8 based on 'the Machine Gunner' and Year 9 critical analysis of characters from 'Twelfth Night'. Pupils with special needs are well supported and make good progress in developing language skills. The English department administrative assistant also provides valuable support for pupils who have fallen behind in aspects of language work such as spelling or sentence structure. Speaking and listening skills are well developed for all pupils, as evidenced in a detailed discussion by Year 9 pupils on what Olivia and Viola think about the other characters in 'Twelfth Night'. Pupils are confident in expressing their views. By the end of Year 9 achievement in reading is good. Pupils read and respond to a variety of texts including poetry, Shakespeare and novels. In addition to reading for pleasure pupils use the library well for research purposes and are effectively introduced into its use. However, there is an inconsistency between teaching groups in the achievements of the most able pupils. In one Year 8 lesson with effective pupil grouping, the most able were challenged to extend and develop their thinking. In the majority of lessons, however, there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
133. The achievement of average and above average pupils in Year 10 and 11 is good. For instance, they responded well to a poem about racial discrimination and understood how the images and words convey the bitter anger of the writer. There was very good achievement in speaking and listening skills in a media studies lesson where pupils discussed an army campaign aimed at young men. Following this, pupils' own ideas for targeting a young female audience were imaginative and well developed. There is good quality writing in the production of teenage magazines, with well selected images that will appeal to this age group. There is a good range of writing from all pupils showing an appreciation of how to write for different purposes and audiences. For instance, pupils produced well developed analyses of war poetry, extended writing on loneliness from 'Of Mice and Men' and thoughtful personal writing on 'My Life'. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. For instance in a discussion of two different versions of the film 'Titanic' they were able to identify the key techniques by which the directors created tension. Pupils grew in confidence and articulated well the different effects of the black and white

film and the more recent version. There was also good progress from below average pupils in an appreciation of 'Great Expectations'. The abridged version was used alongside the video so that pupils gained confidence in expressing how the atmosphere on the moor with Pip and the convict was conveyed.

134. Teaching is good overall and consistently so across the department. Strengths are the varied activities within lessons so that pupils are fully engaged throughout. Lessons start well with lively word games so that pupils' language skills are constantly reinforced; the use of plenary sessions at the end of lessons is also good and reinforces learning. There were lively approaches to teaching literature through group and class discussions, for instance, in a lesson where pupils in groups identified the personality traits of characters from 'The Machine Gunners' and then found evidence to back this up. Teachers' planning is good with clear objectives reinforced throughout lessons. The support from learning support assistants is good and pupils make good progress. The English department administrative assistant provides very good support for those pupils who have fallen behind in aspects of their learning such as spelling and sentence construction. Teachers' expectations from pupils are generally good although the more able pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 in mixed ability sets are sometimes insufficiently challenged and coast along in lessons. A strength of the department is that the good teaching fosters good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour.
135. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in monitoring and planning the curriculum. There are now detailed short, medium and long term plans which ensure optimum continuity and progression. The successful implementation of the national literacy strategy has also ensured progress since the last inspection in providing more varied and imaginative teaching styles.
136. The progress of all pupils is regularly assessed and is closely linked to National Curriculum levels so that pupils and teachers know how well they are doing. There is a departmental policy for marking but inconsistency in the way it is applied. The head of department provides enthusiastic and positive leadership for work in English and staff within the department work closely together. The English department plan identifies clear priorities for the future and the subject is now well poised for further improvement.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Good standards in GCSE results.
- A high profile subject, attracting increasing pupil numbers for GCSE drama.
- The curriculum is well planned through the clear schemes of work.
- The involvement of sixth form theatre studies students in main school drama.
- The many extra-curricular activities.
- The contribution of drama to raising pupils' confidence and their speaking and listening skills.
- The enthusiastic leadership of the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching accommodation for drama.

137. Pupils achieve above average exam results, with 86 per cent gaining A to C grades and 100 per cent A to G grades in 2002. Pupils also gain a very high proportion of the highest GCSE grades, with an above average number entered for the exam.
138. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 pupils have acquired a sound range of techniques to enable them to perform and improvise. For instance in a Year 9 lesson they responded to the moods of music with appropriate facial gestures and body movements. All pupils gain in confidence with speaking and listening skills. Achievement in Years 10 to 11 is good. Pupils increase their knowledge of dramatic techniques, take their performances seriously and

perform with confidence.

139. Teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11, with good subject knowledge, for instance, of the conventions of performance in Alan Ayckburn's work. There is good pupil management and in particular the encouragement of independence by getting pupils to think for themselves. However, teaching and learning are seriously hampered for the large classes in Years 7 to 9 by the cramped teaching space. Here learning has to be either static or pupils have to go unsupervised into surrounding rooms and corridors. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4.
140. Extra curricular drama provision is very good for all pupils with, for instance, a current production of 'Les Miserables' with contributions from many pupils and collaboration with school subjects such as music, design and technology and English. There are drama clubs in each year group and valuable contributions from sixth form students who run the Year 9 drama club and play a key part in productions.
141. Drama is a vibrant subject in the school, well led and managed by the head of department. There are clear priorities for development. The major weakness is the unsatisfactory accommodation.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10-11.
- The good relationships between the majority of the teachers and the pupils.
- The priorities for developing mathematics in the school.
- Subject leadership and management of the new head of department.

Areas for improvement

- Disseminating the very good practice of some of the teachers to others in the department.
- Using assessment data to set targets for pupils in order to raise their achievements.
- The further development of the schemes of work.
- The further development of ICT within the department.

142. In national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2002, the standard reached by pupils in the school was well above national standards reached in all schools but well below the results achieved in similar schools. Over the last three years the average points score in national tests in Year 9 has been above the national average points score and, although the trend is upwards, the results in 2002 were below those achieved in the previous year. Pupils' results at level 5 and above in mathematics are below those in science and English. Although girls achieve better results than boys, the number of girls achieving level 6+ in maths is significantly below what girls achieve in English. The difference between girls' and boys' results narrowed between 2001 and 2002.
143. The number of pupils in Year 11 who achieved grades A* - C in GCSE results in 2002 was above the national average. However, approximately half the number of pupils achieved A* or A grades in mathematics as was achieved in English and science. When compared to other subjects, the pupils' performance in mathematics at GCSE was below that of several other subjects. Between 1999 and 2002, results as measured by the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C were variable; there was an increase between 2001 and 2002 but a decrease between 2000 and 2001. Overall the trend is slightly upwards. Results in GCSE, when compared using average points scores are below those achieved in science and in English. All pupils are entered for the GCSE mathematics examination.
144. In mathematics pupils' attainment on entry is just above the national averages. In a Year 7 class the more able pupils had a secure understanding of units of measure and can add and subtract

mixed units of measure and capacity. Less able pupils had an understanding of the order of operations: for example, they recognised that the sum inside a bracket has to be worked out first.

145. In lessons pupils are working in line with or just above national expectations. The majority of pupils in Year 9 understand how to change numbers into standard form and then use this form to multiply and divide large and small numbers. Lower ability pupils in Year 9 can explain multiples and factors of a number and are able to work them out for numbers up to 100. More able pupils in Year 11 can confidently solve complicated algebraic equations and some pupils in a middle ability class understood the difference between quadratic and linear sequences.
146. The pupils respond well to good teaching by working on task and with interest, they ask questions to help their understanding and they have respect for their teachers. On a number of occasions teachers asked pupils to complete a task but then proceeded to give the method and answer without allowing pupils enough time to work it out for themselves.
147. The pupils do not always have a clear idea of how they are doing and what they need to be able to do to improve and this affects their progress. For example the marked work does not often provide formative feedback, such as corrected answers, to help pupils improve. More attention needs to be given to giving formative feedback to pupils.
148. Pupils with special educational needs learn appropriately. They get good, thoughtful teaching and this ensures that they make steady progress in appropriate small learning steps. The learning support team provides specific support to particular pupils in a number of classes. Their role in supporting learning would be enhanced if all teachers provided the learning support staff with the specific expected learning outcomes for the lessons in which they are working.
149. Teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and better than in Key Stage 3. Where teaching is very good or excellent, the teaching is organised and it is planned well with learning objectives that focus on learning and which are communicated to the pupils. In these classes there are high expectations and there is interactive teaching in which the teacher stimulates interest by questioning the pupils to develop their understanding. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teachers do not engage the pupils in their learning, the pace is at best moderate and the pupils become bored and sometimes disruptive. In a few lessons planning is minimal and in these lessons there is a tendency for the teacher to rely on the textbook. There is a clear link between teaching in which the teacher has moderate expectations and disruptive behaviour. Some of the presented work accepted for marking indicates that a few teachers have only moderate expectations of the pupils' written work.
150. In general, the subject knowledge of all teachers is good and in most lessons pupils are managed well. A number of teachers use extension materials to stretch the more able. Teachers give appropriate individual support to those pupils requiring help. However, there are some classes that contain more than thirty pupils and this makes the rooms very cramped. In Year 8 the number of teaching groups gives the department little flexibility to move pupils between sets. Since a number of teachers do not plan sufficiently for the range of ability within the class, the impact on progress of more able and less able pupils in these large classes is particularly acute. For example in a middle ability set in Year 8 working on enlargements, only half the pupils had a secure prior understanding of the focus of the learning.
151. Some of the homework set is appropriate to support the learning. However, the setting of homework is irregular. The pupils' exercise books do not clearly indicate what has been done at home when pupils have to work independently. Although excellent practice was seen, in general the three-part lesson has not been fully adopted by all members of the department. The use of a mental starters as a warm up to lessons in Key Stage 3 has not been consistently adopted and most teachers do not routinely use the final minutes of the lesson to review learning. Some teachers do not systematically clarify and share learning outcomes with the pupils.
152. The taught programme covers all strands of mathematics, including investigation work. In Year 7 for example, pupils were investigating sequences and the more able were able to recognise the pattern of numbers in the Fibonacci sequence. In a group of lower achieving pupils in Year 11 who

were completing their GCSE coursework investigation, several of the pupils were able to deduce the quadratic sequence emerging from their results. The use of ICT within the department is underdeveloped. This is due to the lack of and up-to-date scheme of work that incorporates ICT to support mathematics learning. Some teachers use ICT confidently, for example in one class, pupils in Year 9 were being taught how to investigate the area of rectangles using the formula applications of a spreadsheet. Other teachers in the department are insecure about using ICT. The Head of Department has enabled teachers to teach in pairs using the set of school laptops in order to develop ICT teaching skills. In one classroom key mathematics vocabulary is incorporated into well presented displays.

153. Assessment in the department is being developed and the new head of department has particularly focused on compiling appropriate data to ensure that levels of achievement can be compared accurately against national expectations. Regular module tests, which are assessed against national expectations, have been introduced. The head of department is working as quickly as he can towards target setting to ensure that all pupils understand what they have achieved and what they must do to improve their achievement against national expectations. However at the present time assessment information is not sufficient to enable teaching staff to evaluate the planned curriculum.
154. The new head of department has made an impressive start. He has drawn up an appropriate list of priorities, with raising pupils' achievement in Years 7-11 as the highest. He has made good progress with his strategies for achieving this objective by focusing on assessment, target setting and a detailed scheme of work. Now this work is in development, he can focus on other areas such as the sixth form, which, in his first few months as head of department, he has had to delegate to others. Some monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place and the initial work has focused on particular year groups causing concern. A regular programme of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning now needs to be implemented to ensure that the department becomes a unit that uses its strengths to develop those areas that require further attention.
155. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Most of the teachers in the mathematics department have started working at the school since the last inspection. There are now specific plans to raise achievement and the difference of attainment between boys and girls is less marked. However marking, homework and presentation remain issues and there are a few teachers who still rely too heavily on the textbook.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently above average.
- Teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects.
- Good planning ensures that pupils make good progress in their lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and promote very good, caring relationships, with the result that pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The quality of assessment data and of its analysis to monitor pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Sharing of learning objectives with pupils.
- Challenging all pupils in the class through questioning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning to improve standards and to ensure that all school and department policies are being followed consistently.
- Sharing of assessment data with pupils and setting regular targets for them to achieve.

156. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are above average when compared with those in all schools. When compared with prior attainment in similar schools, results are well above average but well below average when the percentage of pupils eligible to

- take free school meals is taken into account. The proportions of pupils achieving higher levels 6 and above and 7 and above are above average for all schools. The GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 in 2002 for double science are above average when compared with those in all schools. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades is significantly above average, with 100 per cent of pupils gaining A*-G grades. Both girls' and boys' results are above the national average. Comparisons with similar schools broadly indicate that the results are higher than those achieved at the end of Year 9. Results at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE examinations have improved year on year, in line with and above the national average. They are consistently higher than the results achieved in English and mathematics by the same pupils in the school.
157. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the national expectation. They enter Year 7 with average standards in science but all make good progress and achieve well by the age of 14. They are on course to attain similar results in the national tests to those attained in previous years. Pupils are developing their ideas and understanding well and apply their previously acquired knowledge to new situations competently. In a Year 9 lesson all pupils, including those with special educational needs, labelled the parts of the respiratory system and were able to complete sentences relating to the purpose of respiration. Higher attaining pupils could match the process of respiration to the direction of motion of the diaphragm and of the rib cage. They were confident when writing answers to questions relating current work to GCSE studies. All pupils are keeping very good records of their work. They respond well to being challenged and employ a very good level of literacy and numeracy skills to support their achievements in science.
158. Standards are above average at both key stages and are broadly the same for each of the separate science units of study. By the age of 16 pupils have developed good independent learning skills and they work safely. Higher attaining pupils work quickly, accurately and ask searching questions, as in a Year 11 lesson about radiation when pupils promoted discussion about levels of background radiation and about the dangers of radiation leakage as experienced at Chernobyl and in Cumbria. In this lesson middle attaining pupils were passively taking notes, but when challenged they could talk about the properties of alpha, beta and gamma radiation and about the structure of the Geiger-Muller tube. In all lessons pupils with special educational needs make good progress especially when supported. However, they experience some difficulties with spelling and with number. Science teachers and learning support assistants do not plan lessons together to meet the special learning needs of identified pupils.
159. Pupils' attitudes to work are consistently very good at both key stages and make a considerable contribution to the standards they attain. They are very well behaved and well focused in lessons, and take care of the laboratories and equipment. They have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers and support each other well. Most work hard, take a pride in their work and enjoy their science lessons.
160. Teaching and learning at both key stages are good overall and in a significant minority of lessons are very good. Lessons are very well planned, start promptly and proceed at a good pace. The aim of the lesson is most often achieved. All teachers are very well qualified and enthusiastic about their subjects. They work effectively in teams, sharing their knowledge and experiences of effective practice. They know their pupils well, have high expectations of them and give them good support. As a result, pupils acquire knowledge and skills quickly and learn well. The most effective teaching observed was when clear learning objectives were shared with the pupils, where key words were emphasized and practised throughout, where pupils experienced a variety of learning experiences and when a strong plenary session occurred, as in a Year 7 lesson where middle attaining pupils were beginning to study habitats. A very enjoyable starter session focused the pupils and got them practising key words and concepts, the learning activities developed pupils' prior knowledge and understanding and time prompts secured an excellent pace of learning. In the plenary session pupils' answers to some very good questions demonstrated clearly that excellent progress had been made in achieving the learning objectives. Pupils enjoyed this lesson and were keen to take part throughout. The national strategy for science is developing well and some teachers are using its approaches to teaching effectively in Years 10 and 11. In other lessons learning objectives were not shared with pupils and their progress was not monitored in the absence of a plenary session. Questioning of pupils, whilst effective in testing recall of knowledge, does not involve the whole class and does not challenge pupils to form hypotheses. Teachers mark work regularly. Pupils find

corrections and comments useful to understand how well they are doing but they are not given specific short-term targets to achieve.

161. Subject leadership and department management are satisfactory. Science staff work hard and there is a shared commitment to improvement of the subject and a capacity to succeed. There is evidence in assessment data that the department adds very good value to pupils' science education when compared with all other schools. The curriculum is very well organised, with a very good match of teachers' qualifications and strengths to the units of study they teach. The adequacy and level of learning resources are good and the accommodation is very good. Challenging targets set for the department in terms of pupils' results are so far met. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are very good. However, whilst monitoring of the progress pupils are making is very good, assessment data is not shared with the pupils and targets are not set for them to achieve. The department does not have a clear vision for educational direction: monitoring of teaching and learning does not happen; the curriculum is not audited to identify teaching opportunities to develop whole school initiatives like literacy and numeracy strategies, ICT, citizenship and pupils' personal development; and there is a lack of rigour in making sure that priorities are achieved on time.

162. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Assessment procedures and the analysis of assessment data are greatly improved.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Standards achieved by pupils at all levels are very high.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is good overall, there are inconsistencies in the department.
- Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped and National Curriculum requirements are not met in this area.
- Only the simplest of print techniques are used despite the subject having the equipment for more sophisticated techniques.

163. In the teacher assessments for 2002 at the end of Year 9, standards for both boys and girls were judged to be well above average. The difference in attainments between boys and girls remained close to the national average. In the GCSE examinations for 2002, all pupils who completed the course gained grades A*-C, which is very high. However, many more girls gained the top two grades than the boys, reflecting the national pattern. Pupils performed better than would be expected in art and design than in other subjects. Between 1999 and 2002 there has been a strongly rising trend in the standards achieved, which has been especially marked in boys' results.

164. The standard of pupils' work on entering the school is at the expected level, on the basis of work seen. For example, Year 7 pupils are able to mix and apply paint with control and understand the basics of colour theory. Pupils' achievement is good, including those pupils with special educational needs, so that by the end of Year 9 they are well above national expectations. Overall, girls achieve higher standards than boys. Higher attainers use mixed media well, combining coloured papers, fabric and simple printed images, to generate original designs. They make well-presented studies of the work of artists and make written evaluations of their own work. Girls' work reveals a greater attention to the presentation of their work. Lower attaining pupils complete less work, especially written elements and attain lower standards technically. Overall, drawing skills are particularly well developed, with pupils able to record competently from observation and to make studies, sketches and designs.

165. The standard of Year 11 work seen during inspection confirms that standards are well above

national expectations and pupils' achievement is very good, including those with special educational needs. Higher attaining pupils use a range of two and three-dimensional media very well. Very lively sketchbook work includes strong studies from observation, interesting development work and experiments with materials. The pupils also write detailed and well-considered evaluations of their work. Their work is closely related to their studies of the work of other artists, for example Georgia O'Keeffe. Lower attaining pupils complete each element of the course, using pencil and colour media competently. Materials such as papier mache are used well to make, for example, large relief panels of organic forms. All pupils make extended studies around broad themes following a well-structured course. However, throughout the work seen, only the simplest of printmaking techniques has been used. Whilst these have been used effectively, the department is well equipped to teach more sophisticated processes, such as screen-printing

166. Standards of literacy are good in written evaluations, annotated drawings and notes about the life and work of artists. Standards of numeracy are sufficient for pupils in all year groups to use scale and proportion when drawing a face or changing or altering the scale of their work. Standards in the use of ICT are below expectations because pupils do not generally have the opportunity to develop their work using ICT and in this regard National Curriculum requirements are not being met in Years 7 – 9.
167. The subject makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils and although this is recognised in a formal policy, opportunities are not identified in schemes of work. Its spiritual contribution is limited.
168. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Of lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, three quarters were good or better and half of these were very good. All Year 10 and 11 lessons seen were very good. Two lessons seen were unsatisfactory. A strength of the teaching is the quality of individual support teachers give to all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Work is well structured and appropriate to pupils' development and previous learning. Teachers use discussion and questioning to help pupils clarify their thinking and they offer good technical advice to enable pupils to realise their intentions. Lessons have clearly stated learning objectives, sometimes displayed, so that pupils understand what is expected of them. Lessons are well resourced and teachers use demonstrations and good examples of pupils' work so that pupils acquire new skills or understanding of materials. Appropriate homework is set regularly that contributes to the development of pupils' work in class. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Older pupils show initiative, organising their own work and materials and using lunchtimes to do extra work. The productive working environment relies on the good relationships between pupils and teachers. Behaviour is good. In lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, lesson objectives were unclear, some tasks were undemanding and proper control of the class was not established. As a result, a significant number of pupils did not make sufficient progress.
169. Overall, subject leadership and management of the department are good. In its documentation there is a clear educational direction and a focus on the raising of standards. The aims of the subject support broadly those of the school. Management of resources is good, including a commitment to the recycling of materials and the use of recycled materials, such as card waste from a local company in 3D work. The subject is taught in very attractive, spacious, light and well-equipped studios, although the scale of 3D work is restricted by limited storage space. ICT is not yet making a significant contribution to the administration of the subject and the formal monitoring of the work of the department, including lesson observations, is underdeveloped.

170. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Students in Year 9 understand what it means to be a good citizen.
- All students in Year 10 take the subject at GCSE.
- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been planned and resourced well. Management is good.

Areas for improvement

- Further training to ensure that all teachers feel confident in teaching the subject.
- Assessment procedures.
- Monitoring to ensure that the subject is taught appropriately in all lessons.

171. Standards are satisfactory. Pupils in Year 9 have average levels of knowledge about becoming informed citizens and they are developing good skills of enquiry and communication. They are achieving well. Most are enthusiastic and take real interest in the citizenship related aspects of lessons. In Year 10 GCSE lessons pupils are given opportunities for research and reporting back and therefore they are developing good communication skills.
172. Pupils questioned are very clear about our ethical responsibilities : for example in safeguarding the environment and in caring for those who are disadvantaged perhaps by homelessness. Year 9 students are able to discuss a range of issues in a mature way and higher attaining students showed an impressive level of knowledge about current affairs such as a possible conflict in the Middle East. By Year 9, pupils are clear about parliament because they are taught in history about people, such as the Chartists, who campaigned to extend the franchise. In Year 11 pupils have the opportunity to consider issues such as racism and justice when they discuss texts such as 'To Kill a Mocking Bird'. Their school provides very clear messages and models for them concerning their rights and duties in the wider world. It contributes to a range of charities and local community projects. Links with South Africa are well established.
173. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and teaching is good in Year 10 GCSE classes. Planning shows that aspects of citizenship should be taught in all subjects but coverage is also planned as part of specific PSHE lessons and citizenship GCSE. There is a clear focus on developing literacy skills, particularly through discussion. In the majority of lessons observed planning was effective. However in some PSHE lessons teachers were inadequately prepared and resources did not match the learning needs of pupils. In a very effective Year 10 lesson pupils used their skills to conduct a survey of potential hazards in the school building and grounds. In some activities the school uses available local expertise very well: for example the police liaison team, representatives of charities and organizations such as Amnesty International. A visiting speaker in a Year 7 and 8 assembly on the theme of forgiveness used a range of examples including the Holocaust, to help pupils understand about human rights issues but also to appreciate the need for tolerance of the weaknesses of others. It is clear that many teachers have good knowledge, manage pupils well and encourage lively debates, although others are less confident and would benefit from extra support.
174. The citizenship curriculum is being effectively developed throughout the school and it meets statutory requirements. Leadership of the subject is very good and there is a clear vision of the way forward. Management is good and the well-planned citizenship programme is making valuable contribution to raising standards in all aspects of school life. However, plans are not yet fully in place for assessment and reporting procedures in Years 7 to 9 and there is a need for careful monitoring of teaching and learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The good relationships teachers have with pupils create a supportive environment for learning.
- Pupils have good recall of knowledge.
- Teaching motivates pupils so that they are enthusiastic learners.

Areas for improvement

- The strategies for raising standards at both key stages especially Key Stage 4.
- Enhancement of the assessment programme to ensure it is common and monitored across all areas of the department.
- Support and training of unqualified staff.

175. In 2002, as reflected in recent teacher assessments, standards of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 were consistent with national expectations overall. Girls usually do better than boys but not significantly so. The improvement over the past three years is below the national trend. Currently pupils in Years 7 and 9 are attaining below national expectations, as a result of pupils' progression from Years 7 to 8 being slow. Pupils enter the school with standards which are, overall, below average. Their achievement, by the end of Year 9, is good overall. Their design skills are well developed. Pupils clearly build upon the knowledge, skills and understanding gained through Years 7, 8 and 9. Practical skills are generally good and pupils use tools, utensils and a wide range of materials and equipment with a growing confidence and competence. In Year 8, practical skills are varied; the majority of pupils handle small tools and machinery competently but a small number struggled in the correct use of utensils in a food lesson.
176. Results at GCSE are in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G and slightly below at grades A*-C. There were differences in performance between the separate design and technology subjects, with catering well below the national average. Results in resistant materials in 2002 indicated a significant upward trend. However, pupils generally gained results in line with their previous performance. Pupils currently in Year 11 are achieving satisfactorily and attaining standards in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 are attaining below the national expectations in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils following the Year 10 child development and textiles courses are achieving in line with national expectations and show a high level of interest.
177. Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of support and cope well alongside their peers. They make satisfactory progress overall and many make good progress in the practical aspects of the subject.
178. The quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with a good proportion of good teaching but also an occasional unsatisfactory lesson. The good lessons were well planned and organised, with clear learning objectives. Resources used were chosen well to suit the tasks set and ensured pupils had access to the materials they needed to make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 food lesson making soup, each pupil had access to a cooker and either a food processor or blender. They were encouraged to work at their own pace, following their own time plans. All pupils completed the work, demonstrating good basic skills in vegetable preparation and use of equipment. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 experience a good range of materials including wood, metal, plastics, fabric and food technology. Teaching in the good lessons motivated and enthused the pupils, with a positive impact on their learning. There was good recap of previous work, supported by effective question and answer techniques which aided the reinforcement of their knowledge. In some lessons there were weaknesses in planning so that some pupils were not challenged to the same extent as in good lessons and consequently worked at a slower pace. This was particularly evident in resistant materials and textiles. The oral responses given by all pupils to questions posed by the teacher indicated clearly that pupils have good factual recall. Pupils are keen to learn. However, those in Years 7, 8 and 9 have little understanding of how well they are doing in technology. All work is marked but does not always give pupils enough detail about how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Health and safety issues are well taught within the department. The less satisfactory lessons were taught by unqualified staff with little support.
179. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are taught well and expectations are reasonably high. However, the majority of written course work is of a poor quality and very few of the folders are marked constructively. Lessons are well structured and offer pupils every opportunity to enhance their knowledge and grades at GCSE. For example, in a Year 11 systems and control lesson, pupils

worked independently, demonstrating good basic skills in writing a programme with sub systems, evaluation and ICT presentation. Homework is not given consistently and pupils do not have enough opportunity to reflect on what they are achieving.

180. Pupils taking the GNVQ engineering course are working to a satisfactory standard overall. Practical work is usually of good quality, as seen in a metal toolmaker's cramp, which was particularly well done. Pupils understood the processes experienced such as knurling and the use of the centre lathe and could discuss their work confidently.
181. Assessment, recording and reporting arrangements are insufficiently consistent across the department to give all pupils the help they need to understand how well they are doing or to improve their work. The lack of comprehensive departmental assessment records hinders teachers' planning because assessment information is not used sufficiently to influence the next stages of pupils' learning. Currently, only basic teacher assessment is carried out in Years 8 and 9, whereas in Year 7 a more sophisticated system has been introduced. Facilities are adequate for control technology, computer-aided design and manufacture, which have a positive impact on pupils' work, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are required to apply a range of ICT skills to their GCSE coursework.
182. Subject leadership and department management are satisfactory overall. However, current statutory requirements are not met as some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow a course in design and technology although all pupils are given the option to follow a course. Some pupils have not been able to follow their first choice course and this is having an adverse impact on their motivation. The head of department and departmental staff are committed to improving the standards in their respective areas but progress is slow overall.
183. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, with the department moving forward positively and building on past experience in some areas, but other areas remain static. Overall, attainment is similar to that found at the last inspection but the quality of teaching has not been maintained consistently across all areas. New schemes of work have been introduced but they require more flair and vigour. There are too few opportunities provided for collaborative and large-scale work. There is now good technician support. In the main, accommodation is good and adequately meets current needs. The addition of further computer-aided design and manufacture has enhanced the subject greatly, especially in Years 10 –13.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Above-average GCSE results.
- Fieldwork provision.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching and learning styles.
- Behaviour management of some pupils.
- Marking of pupils' work.
- Full development of the use of ICT for teaching and learning.

184. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average for grades A* to C. Boys' results were better than girls' but there is no consistent pattern of differences between boys and girls. These results are lower than the well-above average results of previous years but still represent a high standard. Pupils entered for geography in 2002 achieved similar results as they did in other subjects.
185. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 which represents satisfactory achievement from average attainment on entry. The best Year 9 pupils have produced some good

quality written accounts and explanations about volcanoes and earthquakes showing a high standard of literacy. The work of higher attaining pupils shows interest and care; that of lower-attaining pupils shows just the opposite with some poor presentation and disorganised books. From Year 7 onwards pupils are competent in mapwork and the higher attainers have a good understanding of such topics as the classifications of industry and the problems of living in rural areas. Work shows a good development of skills and knowledge through Years 7 and 8, but this progression is not so marked in Year 9 because pupils' attitudes are less positive.

186. Year 11 standards are above average overall which represents good achievement from the end of Year 9. The highest attaining pupils have produced extensive written analyses about such topics as employment structures and fair trade, illustrated by good maps and diagrams. Lessons that are generally interesting, with varied resources, lead to pupil attitudes that are almost always positive. Year 10 pupils were learning about glacial landscapes, locating typical features on an Ordnance Survey map, and the higher attaining pupils could support their conclusions by quoting evidence from the maps. Lower attaining pupils could arrive at observational but not analytical answers to the questions.
187. In most year groups the progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with that of their classmates because they are well supported both by teachers and classroom assistants and by their classmates in groupwork situations. In some lessons their lack of attention led to incomplete understanding which slowed their progress. Gifted and talented pupils were not individually identified but they progressed well where they were challenged by thought-provoking exercises and additional work. No pupils were identified as being in the early stages of learning English.
188. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons in Years 8 and 9 the planning was weak and took no account of the differing needs of pupils of a wide range of ability so that some pupils did not learn as well as they should. Learning objectives were not always shared with pupils at the start of the lesson so that they did not always know what was expected of them and whether they had learned effectively. In the weakest lessons, poor behaviour by a significant number of pupils made it difficult for the rest of the class to listen and make progress. In other lessons, particularly in Year 7, pupils worked well and with enthusiasm and learned well as a result. In Years 10 and 11 pupils were engaged by a good pace of work and interesting, well-planned resources that provided them with a range of challenges. This resulted in more positive attitudes than were seen in Years 8 and 9, and a better standard of learning. Opportunities to read, speak and write were built into most lessons and made the most of. Pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient for them to deal with graphs and calculation involved in scale and distance. Contributions to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are written into the schemes of work but these are not generally emphasised in lessons.
189. Pupils' work is well assessed by coursework at regular intervals and in some lessons progress is assessed by questioning. Books are not always marked up to date and, when they are, marking is not consistently supportive. Pupils sometimes have the opportunity to assess their own work in class so that they know how well they are doing.
190. Although ICT exercises are built into the schemes of work, regular access to facilities for class use is limited and therefore there is not yet enough use of ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning.
191. Subject leadership and department management are satisfactory. The level of resourcing is satisfactory, although there is some shortage of maps and textbooks. Schemes of work are supported by a good fieldwork programme. Teaching and learning styles are monitored but they remain inconsistent because there has not yet been enough time and attention given to staff development in this area. This is at present the main focus of the departmental development plan. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with the standards reported at that time maintained in all areas. There is good capacity to develop the provision of geography still further through structured monitoring of teaching styles aimed at ensuring that best practice is

evenly shared across the department.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Overall quality of teaching.
- The use of assessment to advance pupil progress.
- The management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Completion of revised scheme of work in unified format.
- Application of ICT to the study of history.
- Methods of induction for non-specialist staff.

192. Results from teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 show that the proportion of pupils achieving national curriculum Level 5 or better is well above the national average. The same can be said of the proportion of pupils achieving Grades A*-C at GCSE in 2002. Girls performed much better than boys. There has been remarkable improvement over this three-year period.
193. Standards achieved in work seen by pupils in Years 7-9 are good overall and very good amongst abler pupils in Year 9. By the end of Year 9, less able pupils and those with SEN also make good progress, ably assisted by well-organised Learning Support Assistants. These pupils can use evidence from sources to produce well-structured, imaginative accounts of the hardships of a slave voyage and distinguish between the motives of various groups associated with the Chartist Movement. They can combine evidence to investigate working conditions for children in 19th century mines and factories, but find it difficult to evaluate the sources they use. A minority of pupils in one Year 7 class are insufficiently challenged and have a poor attitude to their work. Abler pupils can assess both the reliability and utility of the source material and produce causal explanations, for example of threats to public health in Victorian cities, in which differing importance is attached to various causal factors. The high quality of extended, discursive writing is a notable feature of the written work of Year 9 pupils. Their ability to reconstruct historical situations as seen through contemporary eyes is a remarkable feature of pupils' work and can be traced to the progressive development of literacy-related skills in Years 7 and 8. Gifted and talented pupils identified by the department have experienced a successful two-day course based around the theme of "Pirates of the Golden Age" in which they experienced a range of activities designed to develop more advanced thinking skills.
194. Standards in Years 10/11 are very good. Interestingly, differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls in the GCSE results for 2002 were not evident in the standards of work seen in current lessons. By the end of Year 11, pupils can compile a list of causal factors contributing to the US economic boom of the early 1920s. They go beyond work produced in Year 9 by being able to make links between causal factors, so transforming a list into a web of related causes. They can also assess the relative importance of different causal factors but tend to base judgements on assertion rather than on analysis. Pupils display very good subject knowledge, which they deploy to provide a context within which to interpret and evaluate source material, such as examples of American advertising from this period. Year 11 pupils apply the similar qualities of analysis to their investigation of the consequences of the Korean War, differentiating in terms of both 'major players' and the time scale involved. They then use this analysis to answer the bigger question: "What did the Korean War achieve?" It is possible, therefore, to discern a clear progression in both knowledge and understanding over the course of a lesson.
195. It is clear from both the scheme of work and various curriculum audits that provision is made for the development of key skills. Literacy skills are well implemented and evident in the range, length and quality of pupils' written work. There are explicit references to numeracy in taught lessons and many opportunities for developing understanding of citizenship through the history curriculum; however, these are generally less well integrated into the culture of teaching than is

the development of literacy. It is acknowledged that ICT is the least well developed of the key skills.

196. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in just under a quarter of lessons observed. The key factor in this success is the teachers' own knowledge and understanding of the subject. This means that teachers are not afraid of treating topics in depth and going 'beyond the text book'. This in turn makes the subject interesting and increases the motivation of learners. More important, it enables teachers to ask the kinds of questions that promote real historical understanding and gives pupils the necessary contextual knowledge with which to respond at a serious level. A notable feature in most classes is the amount of progress made by pupils in particular lessons. Teaching can also be innovative, surprising and risk-taking – but always rigorous in its outcomes. Teachers listen to pupils and succeed in conveying the impression that pupils' responses actually matter. Effective teaching of this kind is supported by well-informed methods of assessing pupils' work. Teacher marking is accurate, detailed and helpful to pupils in improving their work and to teachers in monitoring pupils' progress. Teaching by non-specialist staff, although generally satisfactory, is less effective than that delivered by history specialists.
197. The subject is very well managed. The management style of the head of department is inclusive and collaborative, reflective and evaluative – qualities that produce a strong sense of teamwork. There is a clear vision and procedures are in place for further raising standards. For example, there are clear links in development planning between department and whole-school initiatives; there are well-established procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for the sharing of good practice. As a result of intelligent management, this department has moved a considerable way in a relatively short time.
198. Since the last inspection, standards have improved dramatically – particularly at GCSE level. The general quality of teaching has improved, along with methods of assessing pupil attainment. There has been relatively little progress, however, in the use of ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject.
- Contribution to lessons from the learning support staff.
- Accommodation.
- Level of resourcing.

Areas for improvement

- Deployment of resources.
- Consistency of teaching.

199. Standards of attainment indicated in teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. The proportion of pupils who are assessed as attaining level 5 has remained static over the last three years, but the number attaining level 6 has risen. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys, but the differences are no greater than they are nationally. Although the pupils' attainment on entry to the school is in line with national expectations, scrutiny of work reveals that early in Year 7, pupils are working at below expected levels of attainment in ICT. They learn the skills associated with new hardware and software as they combine text and images from different sources. They rapidly learn to use ICT to improve and present this information to specified audiences and for specified purposes. By Year 9 pupils have made progress and are able to develop and refine their work to improve its quality. They were also seen to evaluate their work by applying test data to databases they have constructed. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good.
200. Results in GCSE Information Studies in 2002 were poor, with less than one in ten of a small group of 44 pupils passing the examination at grade C or above. Standards had fallen since the last inspection when they were reported as being in line with expectations. Evidence from the

inspection shows a different picture. Pupils in Year 11 are following a course leading to GCSE Information Technology. This has proved to be a much more popular course; numbers studying the subject are double those of last year's cohort and predicted grades show expected attainment much closer to national expectations. Pupils were seen working to complete coursework and were applying tests to spreadsheet, database and spreadsheet projects. Further changes have been made and in Year 10, all pupils follow a course leading to short course GCSE. Pupils in Year 10 were undertaking practice coursework assignments that involved research, design implementation and evaluation of the posters they were producing.

201. Teaching is good overall. Some is very good and some is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and provide clear explanation of the tasks and of their expectations to their pupils. Teaching is enhanced by the relationships between teachers and special educational needs tutors and learning support assistants. They work together well to provide help for pupils who need more individual attention in order to complete the tasks set. Teachers and support staff share knowledge and information and work together so well that it is only when there is no additional support in lessons that they are noticed by their absence and pupils struggle with written instructions and make excessive demands on the teacher, as was seen in one Year 8 lesson where there were seven pupils described as having special educational needs, but no learning support was available. This lack of support had an impact on the amount of progress made during the lesson, when compared to similar lessons where such help was available. Where teaching is only satisfactory, there is overlong exposition by the teacher together with an inexperienced use of software. This leads to pupil inactivity and de-motivation. Where teaching is very good, the teacher's exposition is concise and the pupils are quickly on task. The best teaching is supported by good assessment practice. Pupils are given positive written feedback and helpful advice on how to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11 they are given criteria for assessment to help guide their work, but these are task criteria, not GCSE grade descriptors. National Curriculum level descriptors are not shared with the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, either as assessment criteria or as lesson objectives.
202. The subject is well led. The head of department, with the support of her senior manager, has made changes to the Year 11 examination course to increase the popularity of the subject and improve standards. Further changes have been made and in Year 10 all pupils now study the short course GCSE. This ensures that in future all pupils will have their entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11. There is some ICT taught in subjects, but this is not co-ordinated centrally and it does not inform teacher assessment in Year 9. There is no formal monitoring of lessons by the head of department.
203. Overall, the teachers' qualifications and experience provide a reasonable match to the demands of the subject. The school has experienced problems in recruiting suitably qualified teachers. Enthusiastic teachers from the technology and mathematics departments cover gaps in the timetable in Year 7. Informal daily contact is used effectively to disseminate good practice among the somewhat disparate team. Accommodation for the teaching of the subject is good and the school provides enough computers to meet targets for the pupil:computer ratio for next year. However the deployment of computers does not always meet the demands made by class size and pupils have the inconvenience of sharing equipment.
204. Since the last inspection, results in the GCSE examination have fallen drastically. However the evidence from this inspection shows that remedial action has been taken to redress this. There have been improvements in the resources for teaching ICT and in some of the teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching in languages is good.
- Accommodation is very good.

- Attainment in French at GCSE level is well above average.
- Girls' attainment in all languages is above average.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
- Arrangements for pupils to study two foreign languages in Year 9 are unsatisfactory.
- Expectations of pupils are not always high enough.

205. Teacher assessments in modern languages for 14 year-olds show that there is a marked difference between the performance of boys and girls. Whereas boys' performance is well below the average for maintained schools, that of girls is slightly above average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, both boys' and girls' attainment was well above the national average, but the performance of girls was well above that of boys. In German, the attainment was well below the national average, but girls' performance was above average. Overall, GCSE results were similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection: above average in French and below average in German.
206. Relative to their other subjects, the difference in pupils' performance was less marked in French than in the country as a whole, whilst in German pupils did significantly worse than the national picture relative to their other subjects. Compared with the national picture, boys did better in French than in other schools and significantly worse in German, whereas girls attained above average results in both languages.
207. By age 14, most pupils have made the progress which could be expected relative to their prior attainment. Higher attainers make at least satisfactory progress: they can manipulate tenses and are beginning to speak at greater length, and are developing confidence in their knowledge of language. Lower attainers try hard and can respond to a range of questions using language which could be understood by sympathetic native speakers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress to age 14 and are well supported by learning support assistants.
208. By Year 11, the ablest pupils continue to make good progress; they can talk with fluency about issues concerning pollution and the environment, and understand quite complicated statements spoken at normal speed by a native speaker. Most lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are developing sound listening skills and can give simple opinions about the same range of issues when prompted by teachers' questions. Some lower attainers, however, do not make satisfactory progress and in some cases cannot recall the simplest everyday words. Attitudes towards the learning of foreign languages are generally good or very good, except in a small minority of cases where disillusionment has set in and with it a reluctance to make any effort to learn. Behaviour is almost always good in modern languages lessons.
209. The progress which pupils make throughout is related to the quality of the teaching, most of which is good, and some very good. Where teachers have high expectations of their pupils, attitudes are extremely positive and attainment is high. A Year 10 group in German achieved high standards of extended speaking because the teacher challenged them to develop what they had to say beyond the basic statement, and a Year 9 group in French was speaking with accuracy and at considerable length because the teacher had devised a very effective strategy to promote good habits of language rehearsal.
210. In some cases, however, there is a tendency for teachers to cut short the highly important language rehearsal part of their lessons and to set the pupils listening, writing or pairwork tasks to do before the language content has been fully practised in interaction with the teacher. Here pupils are not able to develop sufficient confidence in their language work to make as much progress as they should, because the basic language content has not been sufficiently taught and pupils are made to embark on passive activities rather than building language through interaction with the teacher. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are in these instances not high enough.

211. Assessment in modern languages is at least satisfactory, and in some instances it is good. Pupils are made aware of the level they have reached and set themselves targets for how they are to improve and move to the next level. However, these procedures are not common across all three languages, and there is a clear need for the whole department to share a common assessment policy. Marking of pupils' books, notwithstanding checks made periodically by the senior members of the department, varies from teacher to teacher and needs overall to be more helpful to pupils.
212. The curriculum provided for modern foreign languages, although in most respects broad and presenting good learning opportunities, is unsatisfactory in Year 9, where pupils wishing to study two languages are required to study the second in lunch-hour sessions taught by volunteer staff. The attractions of other lunchtime activities cause pupils to abandon their wish to continue their study of their second language, and the basic curriculum is impoverished by comparison with what most similar schools have to offer. Insufficient use is made of computers to support learning in modern languages as required by the National Curriculum.
213. The modern languages department makes an interesting contribution to the provision for the most able pupils in the school by running a GCSE class in Latin in evening and lunchtime sessions. It is attended by pupils from Years 10 and 11, and by three members of the teaching staff.
214. Leadership is good; the head of department is ably supported by the heads of individual languages and there is a good team spirit throughout the department. The quality of teaching is monitored, and expertise is shared through discussion and through lesson observations. There is a development plan which reflects both school and departmental priorities, but which is not sufficiently detailed to show precisely how the planned developments are to be achieved. The departmental scheme of work is detailed in terms of content, and whilst French and German have helpful handbooks to guide staff and make clear what is expected, the Spanish version has not as yet been produced. Overall, whilst relationships are good and there is good collaboration in the department, each language exists autonomously and there is room for considerably more shared practice and procedures. Resources are good, although ICT resources are inadequate and computer and television equipment which is provided in each room is under-used. The department has en-suite accommodation in attractive rooms which contribute well to pupils' learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge encourages students to learn.
- Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11.
- There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular music making.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient computers for pupils doing GCSE music.
- The music rooms are cramped and there is a shortage of practice rooms.

215. The 2002 teacher assessments show that pupils at the end of Year 9 are achieving in line with the national expectations but inspection evidence shows that standards are higher than this. The standards in GCSE show all pupils passing the examination with well above average grades. Although results dipped a little in 2001, trends over the last three years have been above average. Girls appear to be achieving better than boys in Years 7 to 9 but there is no significant difference in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress. They play instruments and sing to a high standard in the many extra-curricular musical activities. Because of the inclusiveness of the subject, students with special educational needs make good progress and gain GCSE grades. The department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

216. Work seen during this inspection shows that pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 9. All abilities make progress and achieve well compared with their prior learning. General musical knowledge is improving because of the lively teaching but the accommodation restricts group work. Higher attaining pupils understand musical terminology and use technical language well. Lower attaining pupils struggle for the right words to describe dynamics. Singing needs more practice and regular use in lessons. Overall the attainment in Years 10 and 11 is well above average and pupils make very good progress. Many higher attaining and talented pupils compose with flare and imagination and reach a high standard of performance. Lower attaining pupils need more teacher help to finish assignments.
217. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9 because lessons are well planned to meet pupils' needs. In Year 7 pupils answer questions on musical elements and work out gamelan progressions by counting carefully as a group. Year 8 pupils work on Indian rhythm cycles with improvisations played confidently by higher attaining pupils. Very good teaching enables Year 9 pupils to improvise in the aeolian mode over their major and minor chord patterns. All abilities including pupils with special needs are well-motivated, concentrate hard and show pride in their work.
218. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall in Years 10 and 11 due to the high expectations of teachers and a willingness to succeed by pupils of all abilities. Pupils' attitudes are very good and occasional bouts of negative behaviour are soon checked so that learning is not disrupted. Because of very good teaching, Year 10 pupils understand the characteristics of baroque dance forms and use this knowledge to develop their compositions. More capable pupils record their compositions on computer and choose related keys whilst less capable pupils need more teacher support with rhythm and phrase structure to get their compositions started. Because of excellent teaching, Year 11 pupils build up a wide background of musical knowledge and use the computer, keyboard or their own instrument to develop ideas for their integrated studies unit. Pupils know their coursework deadlines and the majority effectively plan their work pattern over time. Recorded examples of the work of pupils in Year 11 demonstrate good style and shape being developed in compositions and performances. The range of tasks is very comprehensive and caters for all abilities.
219. There is excellent leadership and management of the subject by an enthusiastic head of music who has encouraged positive attitudes to music. Most pupils are creatively involved in lessons and over 160 learn to play instruments. There is a strong team of instrumental teachers who enable pupils to reach very high standards of performance. All policy documents are in place and the new schemes of work have proved effective. Assessment is very good and pupils can work out their levels and grades from the charts for each module of work. Facilities for ICT are no longer adequate for the large number of students in Years 10 and 11 doing music. The accommodation is cramped and there is a shortage of practice rooms to cope with the instrumental teaching and pupils' group work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall teaching is good and consequently so is learning.
- Most pupils display a positive attitude to the subject.
- Achievement in GCSE courses over the last three years is good.
- Specialist accommodation and the resources for learning are good.

Areas for improvement

- Extend current assessment procedures to provide a sharper link between lesson objectives and National Curriculum descriptors.

220. GCSE results for the year 2002 were above the national average, with 64 per cent of pupils gaining

higher grades. When judged against attainment at the start of the course this represents good achievement and clear value added. Over the last three years pupils have achieved well in the subject and in 2000 and 2001, results for A*-C grades were well above the national average.

221. Attainment on entry to the school is average in the core subjects although in physical education it is judged to be below average. There is little or no objective test evidence available at the beginning of Year 7. By the age of 14 the standards of attainment are average and in some activities some pupils are above average: for example in basketball where individual ball skills and the understanding of the game are clearly well developed. This has a clear link to the overall levels of physical fitness of these pupils. They are faster, stronger and more well co-ordinated than others in the group. The teacher assessments for this age in 2002 indicate well above average standards of attainment but these judgements are generous.
222. By the age of 16 standards are average for the year group. In the work seen, and mainly based on a limited number of Year 10 observations, there is a broad range of ability in activities some of which are new. For example in kickboxing the majority of pupils have already begun to establish an accurate and enthusiastic response to the precise disciplines required. They enjoy their work and are making good progress. Most pupils make good progress in PE, including those with special educational needs. They gain confidence through success in physical activity which in turn encourages them to tackle more challenging tasks.
223. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Most teachers have well developed knowledge and understanding of most activities. This enables them to devise, explain and manage activities that are designed to challenge for improvement. The pupils know clearly what to do in order to improve, and then, through sharp feedback, have a clear understanding of what improvement has been made: for example in Year 10 girls' netball, where the practices set by the teacher ensured that almost all developed increased skills in changing from defence to attack and also a keener understanding of how to achieve it. This is not a feature of all lessons. All lessons are well planned and the pupils are well managed. In some activities where pupils are required to work on their own, most work with responsibility, although there are some situations where there is a loss of impetus in their learning that then needs to be rebuilt by the teacher.
224. Within the department there are generally good relationships. The approach of most pupils to the subject is positive. They listen and watch keenly and respond eagerly to their teachers. Participation levels are much improved and the standards of personal kit are good and indicate good support for the subject from home.
225. The department is well managed. The programme of activities is very well documented and this ensures its smooth running on a daily basis. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met and this extends to current assessment procedures. However the link between lesson objectives and National Curriculum descriptors is not always clear. Pupils are not sufficiently well informed about their progress in this subject across the five year groups. The criteria for success are not well known to them beyond end of activity or yearly reporting where emphasis is on enthusiasm for the subject and general judgements on skills and techniques. The specialist shared accommodation and very good learning resources underpin a good extra-curricular programme. The fitness suite, for example, provides a popular venue for, in particular, older pupils to further develop their Personal Exercise Plans as part of their GCSE course and make accurate measurements as to how effective the plans and programmes are. This provides an excellent model for the way in which the department as a whole could make further use of objective measurements to track some aspects of pupil progress across all years. The process would similarly provide a valid measurement of the effectiveness of teachers, learners and the programmes of study in driving up standards.
226. Since the last inspection there has been clear improvement in physical education. Overall the standard of teaching is good and there are now no serious shortcomings. The nature of the curriculum is improved. Although assessment procedures are improved there is clearly more to be done especially relating to the use of assessment as a tool to raise standards. The work of the department is well organised. There is no systematic monitoring of teaching to advise further

development in the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Pupil management is good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are very good.
- Subject leadership and department management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE short course.
- The setting of detailed targets and levels of attainment and sharing these with parents and pupils.
- The use of assessment data to guide curriculum planning.

227. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with expectations in relation to the Dorset LEA Agreed Syllabus. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, standards were well below national expectations in the GCSE short course.

228. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is consistent with expected levels. There are some good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In Year 7, through a well-directed question and answer session by the teacher, pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding of the use of parables. They are able to recognise religious and moral principles in the stories and apply them to their own lives. In Year 9, pupils develop a good understanding of human rights through a well-directed lesson on slavery in America. The teacher's variety of approaches enables pupils to form their own views, whilst respecting the different attitudes of others. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good oral discussion work were useful aids to improve speaking and listening skills. Overall, learning is good.

229. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in Year 10 is in line with national expectations and achievement is good. Pupils show a clear understanding of moral issues within a religious context. As a result of a well-planned lesson, pupils explored the use of religious artefacts in different forms of worship. They made clear links between symbols and their usage. In Year 11, attainment is currently in line with the national average in the GCSE short course, but indications show that this should improve prior to the examination. As a result of a very well structured lesson using powerful video material, pupils explored their attitudes and feelings towards forgiveness. They were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the relationship between forgiveness and justice. Their ability to analyse material in order to form judgements is developing. Overall, learning is good.

230. There are some differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Those who are gifted or talented make satisfactory progress.

231. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They behave well, are well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' behaviour makes a good contribution to their achievement and progress.

232. Teaching is good, with some very good and excellent features. It has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Planning needs to provide information about what teachers expect pupils to learn during a lesson. Lesson aims were not shared well with pupils in many cases. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work.

They use a suitable range of styles such as discussion, video material, question and answer and worksheets that match the needs of individual pupils. This enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion, and assists them to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupil behaviour well, contributing to a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class, but there are inconsistencies in its setting. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are effective in contributing to pupil achievement.

233. Assessment of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory, although improvements are being made. Helpful comments are made in exercise books. The current procedures do not provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Marking of pupils' work is variable. The department does not currently use levels of attainment or the setting of detailed targets in order for pupils to be clear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. Assessment information is not used to inform curriculum planning. This is recognised as an area for development.
234. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing pupils for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
235. Subject leadership and department management are very good. The head of department approaches the task with great enthusiasm and deep commitment to the pupils. There is excellent support from other staff. The departmental development plan addresses current issues and forms a good basis for development. The monitoring of pupils' work is good and enables the department to have a clear view of the development of its work. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education. The quality of classroom display is very high and celebrates pupils' achievement.
236. Since the time of the previous inspection, standards, the quality of teaching, curriculum planning and pupil management have all improved. There has been good improvement in the contribution religious education now makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a good impact on standards, pupil achievement and progress.

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

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	24	88	87	33	43	5.25	5.80
Biology	29	100	88	48	34	6.69	5.25
Chemistry	24	100	90	58	43	7.08	5.90
Physics	16	100	88	25	40	5.63	5.67
Design and Technology	7	100	91	29	30	5.71	5.38
Sports Studies	10	100	92	30	25	5.60	5.09
Art and design	18	100	96	56	46	7.67	6.57
Music	4	100	93	50	35	7.50	5.74
History	8	100	88	63	35	7.75	5.45
Geography	29	100	92	55	38	7.31	5.74
Religious Studies	4	100	92	50	38	6.00	5.84
Other social studies	20	90	87	40	34	6.10	5.30
General Studies	61	87	85	41	30	5.87	4.91
English	44	84	92	32	30	5.14	5.28
Communication Studies	10	100	93	60	31	7.00	5.53
French	8	88	89	63	38	6.25	5.59
German	4	100	91	100	40	9.50	5.81

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was mathematics and chemistry.

One lesson of further mathematics was sampled. Based on the sampled lesson with only a few students, examination results and scrutiny of students' work, standards in further mathematics are in line with national averages. Students are taught very well. Their skills in analysing problems and articulating clearly the possible approaches to arriving at solutions are very good.

Work was also sampled in physics, where most of the pupils in the Year 13 lesson seen were making at least satisfactory progress and reaching the standards which are to be expected at this stage in their course. However, students did not seem to be as enthusiastic as they might have been about the subject matter of their course.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students make reasonable progress and standards are in line with national averages.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and there is a positive working atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to hypothesise, predict and explain their reasoning.
- Use of attainment data to plan work and raise standards.
- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning.

237. Results in 2001 in mathematics AS-level and A-level examinations were broadly in line with national averages. Results in AS mathematics in 2002, based on the proportion of students obtaining grades A-C, were lower than those in 2001 and continue the downward trend in recent years. The proportion of A or B grades at A-level has been maintained at roughly 43 per cent in recent years and this is good. The overall pass rate for both AS and A-level in 2002 went up from 2001 having previously fallen over the last few years. The progress of students over the two years of AS and A-level study is generally satisfactory, although results were disappointing for some AS students who are now re-taking their module examinations. Progress in lessons is reasonable and students acquire the mathematical knowledge and skills expected although, except for statistics, this is not often done within a practical real-life context.

238. Students are diligent and concentrate well in lessons. In lessons where the teacher is successful in posing searching questions, students respond willingly to give their ideas but this does not happen enough. Students make good use of their learning from previous years. They generally have a good grasp of algebra. Students undertaking statistics coursework, for example, worked independently and successfully on wisely chosen projects of personal interest. Most had developed a reasonably clear idea of the hypotheses they hoped to prove or disprove and were making good use of computers in their work. In the main, however, the development of students' questioning skills is limited.

239. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and in some lessons they are good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Homework is used well. Good relationships exist between students and teachers and lessons take place in a cordial atmosphere. In the better lessons, teaching successfully draws out from students their ideas and thinking, asking them to estimate, predict or give reasons for a chosen strategy. Just occasionally teaching is barely satisfactory because students are required to operate mechanically and apply techniques or algorithms without a full understanding of the underlying concepts. The mathematics curriculum in the sixth form is sound. Students can study pure mathematics with statistics or mechanics. Some good but limited use is made of computers.

240. Leadership and management of sixth form mathematics are satisfactory overall but in need of improvement in some key areas. Day-to-day administration is good and teachers benefit from sound advice in the A-level handbook, produced by the teacher in charge of post-16 mathematics. The department has not fully explored nor understood the reasons behind the downward trend in examination results over the last few years. The way in which students' attainment is monitored is satisfactory but further work is required to evaluate systematically students' progress and to determine how this is routinely discussed with them. The departmental development plan has very little on intended improvements to post-16 mathematics because a greater emphasis has been placed on the lower years. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall, primarily because results have dropped, although some aspects of management have been improved, such as the use of performance data.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- There is a core of very experienced teachers.
- The department uses well-designed accommodation effectively.
- The students consult the teachers as subject experts.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.
- More detailed schemes of work to guide less experienced teachers.

241. At the time of the last inspection, standards were reported as good. This standard is being maintained. The GCE advanced level examination results in 2001 were well above average compared with those in other maintained secondary schools. Girls did particularly well in the examination, with seven out of ten of them achieving an A grade. Over half of the students achieved grade A or B, and all achieved a pass. These standards were maintained in 2002. Since nearly all the students have obtained an A or B grade at GCSE level, the wide spread of A level grades indicates varying degrees of progress over the two year course. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average in both Year 12 and Year 13.
242. Learning was good in the lessons seen. It was very good in a Year 12 lesson taken by an experienced teacher, where there was a very good discussion of students' ideas about how to set up and conduct an investigation. The students showed confidence in their own ability and used the teacher very effectively as a consultant. The teacher did not impose conventional solutions, but allowed the students to think through their own ideas, demonstrating very good intellectual effort. The Year 13 lessons seen were well organised for learning and understanding. In one of them, however, the students were a little passive, despite a good practical activity demonstrating the concept of colour change related to a commercial breathalyser kit. When doing the practical work, the boys were less accurate and careful than the girls.
243. Teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Five chemistry graduates share the sixth-form teaching, with two teaching groups in each year. However, since chemistry is in two option blocks, the groups in Year 12 are of seventeen and five, the smaller group taught by two less experienced teachers. Although these teachers consult their colleagues at every stage, there is a need for a more detailed scheme of work to guide them. The department has recognised this and is developing its advanced level scheme of work. Teaching in the department has many strengths: very good subject expertise; a brisk pace in most lessons and high expectations, especially from the more experienced teachers; good questioning techniques to test understanding; very good attention to detail, for instance in health and safety issues. The slight relative weaknesses include: not recognising sufficiently the range of student needs and understanding; sometimes the expectations and pace of the lessons with the less experienced teachers are too low.
244. The attitudes of the students are very good. They are attentive and proactive in using their teacher's expertise to improve their own learning and understanding. The girls, especially, keep very tidy notes and ask detailed questions related to their own understanding. Several of the students are motivated by the need to obtain high grades: for instance, for entry to medical school.
245. The subject is very well led. The experienced leader of the department shares a wealth of experience and expertise with his colleagues. There is a very good ethos of success and achievement, with considerable enthusiasm for the subject. The management of the department is good. The good accommodation and very good resources are used effectively. However, too little use was seen of ICT to support learning, especially to reinforce the learning of the students needing extra support to grasp a concept or refine a skill. The department relies heavily on the expertise of the experienced teachers, and there is a need to improve the schemes of work to

guide and assist the newer colleagues for whom there is in other respects good support and guidance.

BUSINESS

Business studies at the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) level was inspected.

Business studies

Overall, the provision for business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 13 are good and students achieve well.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is good.
- Management of the department is good and subject leadership very good.
- ICT is used very well to support learning, and resources are good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of placements and links with business for students.
- Provision of handbooks for students.
- Resources (other than computers) and accommodation.

246. Standards in the advanced GNVQ course in 2001 were good although the number completing in 2001 was too small for a statistically valid comparison with other providers of post-16 education. Of four students entered, three were awarded distinctions and all passed. In the new AVCE course in 2002 standards were also good: of 22 entries, all passed and a third were at A or B grade. There are seventeen AVCE students in the present Year 13; standards are above those seen in most other schools.

247. Most students make good progress and improve on their target grades. Students adapt well to the demands of a higher-level course, particularly as not all have taken the subject at GCSE. There are more male students than female students but there are no clear differences in attainment. The course does not usually recruit many of the highest attaining students but attitudes to the subject are very good. Most students respond very well to the vocational approach and to the challenge of working independently and therefore achieve well.

248. Teaching and learning are good. The consistent vocational approach to the subject clearly challenges the average attaining students but also supports those who encounter problems. Teachers are skilled at questioning in order to assess understanding and to encourage students to think for themselves. They have appropriate experience in business and they use this well to develop a secure vocational approach to all aspects of work. Student assignments indicate a good grasp of business theory and a clear understanding of the examination board criteria because these aspects of the course are very well taught. Students make good use of their part-time employment and a range of business related activities and visiting speakers to inform their studies, although they do not have formal placements.

249. In Year 13 students have good research skills and they have completed their assignments well. They were observed working confidently on a unit on business planning and using information from a local bank. Students in Year 12 show a secure understanding of the business environment and ways in which companies can increase their market share. Students in both year groups apply their communication, numeracy and computer skills very well. Access to computers is good and is clearly raising attainment by enabling students to become independent learners. Teachers use computer equipment very well in order to model the high quality of presentations that are the norm in the business world. However, students have to purchase their own textbooks and they do not have handbooks to support them through the course. There is no specialist accommodation and students do not have a suitable base to display their work.

250. The department is well managed. Students benefit from a well-planned programme of visiting speakers and documentation is easily accessible. Subject leadership is very good. New courses have been effectively introduced, planning is good and assessment information is well managed. The new vocational GCSE course is providing a good progression route onto the vocational course. The department gives very good support to new and unqualified teachers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

All students follow a course in information technology in Year 12, either as an examination course or as part of the key skills element of the general studies course. The full information technology course was inspected.

Information technology

Overall, provision for information technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Students make rapid progress in Year 12.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- There are good curriculum opportunities in information technology.
- There is a good match of accommodation, staffing and resources to the needs of the students.

Areas for improvement

- The balance between skills and evaluative thinking in the AS course.

251. Standards in the AS examination are above average and higher than those in other subjects in the school. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above average, with no work that is either outstanding or poor. There is only one girl in three groups taking the subject. Students are mainly from Year 12 but there are several from Years 13 and 14, whose work tends to be more complex. Students' achievement is good, as few of them have a qualification in information technology on entry to the course. Those who do not opt for the AS course all develop their capability through the key skills level 3 course that provides good opportunities for wider learning through its links with general studies.

252. All of the work seen showed that students have enough technical competence to meet the needs of the database and spreadsheet solutions to design problems arising out of their projects. Their writing to prove levels of thinking is weaker, tending to describe rather than to analyse. The highest attainers have designed complex relational databases with a range of features specific to the needs of the users. However, at least half of the students seen have chosen specifications that do not allow them to meet the highest levels. All of the solutions seen meet the users' demands, but students have not given enough evidence in their annotation to show the development of their thinking. Both in the work sample and in the classes seen, students' on-going evaluation of their work is often too superficial to allow them to reach the highest levels. In describing their plans for evaluation, over half of the students have not given enough weight to detail in the users' testing of their designs. Teachers are aware of this deficiency and are working to improve standards.

253. Good achievement arises from consistently good teaching. Teachers in the department work closely together to improve their teaching by sharing expertise and by planning courses which best suit the needs of a majority of students. They complement each other in their knowledge of the subject and teaching methods. In lessons they give clear explanations, involving students in discussion through skilled questioning to develop their thinking and learning. While students work on their projects, their teachers give them well-judged individual support that helps them to work towards their own solutions. As a result, students listen, respond seriously and work hard throughout lessons. Teachers monitor students' work rate and progress carefully to make sure that they are keeping up with the work, so that students consistently meet short-term deadlines. However, their written feedback is brief, so that students spoken to were unsure about their

strengths and weaknesses.

254. Students enjoy the course and work hard. There is a good working atmosphere in the well equipped and well maintained computer room dedicated to sixth form use. Students' learning is well supported by good access to high quality equipment. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Both Leisure and Recreation and Travel and Tourism courses are taught in the school. Both courses were inspected.

Travel and tourism / Leisure and recreation

Overall, the provision for leisure and recreation and for travel and tourism is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are good and students make very good progress.
- The vocational approach promotes very good independent learning skills.
- Student attitudes are very good.
- Good use is made of ICT to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of first-hand vocational experience in the department.
- Lack of vocational placement opportunities for students.
- Limited resources and lack of a base room to display work.
- Lack of handbooks to guide students through the course.

255. In 2001 one student was entered for GNVQ leisure and tourism and was awarded a distinction. In 2002 the first students took the new advanced vocational qualification. In travel and tourism, one of the five candidates was awarded a B grade, three obtained pass grades and one other did not obtain a grade. In leisure and recreation all eight candidates passed and two were awarded higher grades. Students achieved well in relation to their standards on entry to the course. Standards in the present Year 13 are above average, although there are only two candidates in leisure and recreation and five in travel and tourism. The standard of assignment work is particularly high, with students regularly reaching grade A standard in this aspect of their work. There is no difference between the attainment of male and female students. Most students stay for the full two-year course although some students choose to leave at the end of Year 12. Neither vocational course was taught at the time of the last inspection.

256. Students make good progress because they have very good attitudes to their work, enjoy sharing their learning with others and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. They show a high level of interest in the course content and many are planning to study aspects at a higher level or to work in the vocational area. They have clearly been given very good support and advice, although students do not have the opportunity to undertake a placement that gives them a real insight into the industry.

257. In Year 13 students respond well to teachers' questioning and they have good recall of knowledge gained from previous lessons or individual research. All are using the appropriate vocabulary with real confidence and they show an extensive knowledge of different aspects of the industry and business related aspects such as marketing. In Year 12 the majority of students can talk with confidence about health and safety issues and the identification of potential hazards, although individuals are clearly finding difficulty with some business related vocabulary and technical terminology. Students use computers with confidence for research and in the preparation of high quality course work. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the development of all key skills. Higher attaining students are working with real maturity, confidence and independence.

258. Teaching and learning are sound overall, although it is clear that staffing difficulties affected both standards and the learning experience of students last year. Year 13 travel and tourism is taught partly with leisure and recreation where there are units in common. This is good use of resources and extends the learning experience for the two leisure and recreation students. Only leisure and tourism is now taught in Year 12. The lessons observed showed that teachers have good subject knowledge, although this is not supported by experience in the vocational area. A research based activity examining a variety of visitor attractions provided a good learning opportunity for students in Year 13 because they were able to investigate a particular location in depth and share their knowledge. Students are very actively involved in their learning and they make particularly good use of computers. Only a limited number of visits takes place to extend students' experience of tourist or leisure sites but good use is made of the leisure centre on the school campus.
259. Assessment is good and students are made very aware of the examination board criteria, but they do not have handbooks to guide them through the course. The department has access to sophisticated computer based audio-visual equipment to model the high quality of presentations used in the industry but other resources are limited and students do not have a base room where work or resources can be kept.
260. Management of the department is good and new and unqualified teachers are very well supported. Students are very appreciative of the quality of help and guidance which they receive from their teachers because it has enabled them to improve their assignment grades, particularly in travel and tourism, which were disappointing at the end of last year.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was inspected as one of a number of vocational subjects in the sixth form.

Health and social care

Overall the provision for health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Most students make very good progress.
- Overall teaching is very good.
- Students have a very positive attitude towards the subject.
- The department is well managed and assessment procedures are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities for students to experience at first hand real health and care services.

261. The level of attainment of most health and social care students on entry to the sixth form is average; in some cases it is below average. In 2002 from this modest beginning most students produced good results in the double award course. Results were not quite so good in the single award but all achieved C grades or above. This represents very good achievement and clear progress made. Current Year 13 students achieved well at AS level in 2002. Work in their folders and assessments already completed support this judgement. Students whose performance at age 16 was about average are reaching 'A' grades for portfolio assignments. The standard of their work is high. Most is well presented, using clear word-processing and graphics skills, and contains sharp and detailed analysis. In Year 12 there are high standards of work in folders, showing clear progress in the grades already declared when set against grades awarded earlier in the course. The record of information gathered is much more extensive and being added to by improved analytical skills.
262. Almost all students work hard and enjoy the challenge of the studies in health and social care. They are equally energetic whilst working in pairs, groups or independently, as for example when examining a newspaper article for evidence of discriminatory practice in a case of pronounced physical impairment in a Year 12 class. Few students leave the course they have chosen and,

although numbers on the course are relatively small, its popularity is increasing.

263. The quality of teaching and, consequently, of learning is very good. The teachers' subject knowledge and teaching styles are very well developed. This ensures that students receive good guidance, information and support as the tasks they tackle challenge for improvement. There are very good relationships both amongst the students and between the students and their teachers. In this setting students work well together and feel well supported in their work. Sensitive topics are dealt with in a sensitive manner and the teaching of the subject makes a clear and significant contribution to the students' personal and social development. This is done in a planned and deliberate way and is most effective in equipping the students to solve problems and make decisions in discussion and in their extended written work. The teachers choose and share good examples of the health and social care services at work and often from their own personal experience as well as from cuttings from newspapers and video tape recordings. In this way the subject is brought to life and the work is more meaningful although there are fewer opportunities in this rural area for work placements in the care setting than might be found in a city school.
264. The department is very well organised by a capable and committed coordinator. Students now have a clear option of pursuing success in this subject, from the age of 14 through to 19, with a clear vocational bias. The arrangements for assessment are very good. The continuous nature of these is popular amongst the students and ensures that they know how well they are progressing. The comments and also the tutorial opportunities provided by the teachers provide good support and guidance on how to improve work before final assessment. The learning resources available in the department are well used but the specialist accommodation is set well away from the main school library resource. Both students and teachers are disadvantaged by this feature.
265. The subject was not included in the previous inspection but there are clear indications of how it is improving. There are already good results at the end of the main school in the GCSE examination and this is an important factor in establishing and ensuring opportunities to take advantage of the strengths in teaching and organisation and achieve at higher levels.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subjects for inspection in this area of the curriculum were art and design and theatre studies.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently very good.
- The standards achieved in examinations are high.

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped.
- There is no written evaluation of students' work.
- Only the simplest of printmaking techniques are taught.

266. In 2001, the results attained in the GCE A-level examination were very high compared with those in other schools nationally. A high proportion of students gained the highest grades (A and B), though these were chiefly girls. In the results for 2002, standards were higher still with the proportion of students gaining the top two grades being twice the 2001 national average. Although few in number, all boys gained one of the top two grades. GCE A-level results have been rising for the past three years.
267. The standards of work seen in Year 12 and in Year 13 are very good. Overall girls attain higher standards than boys. Students produce very varied work from extended studies around broad themes. They use sketchbooks well to collect images, develop ideas, experiment with techniques

and to make insightful written commentaries and evaluations of artists' work and their own. They relate their work closely to that of other artists. Standards of presentation are high and media are used imaginatively. There is strong work in observational studies and abstract developments in paint and in sculpture. These can be large and ambitious pieces. For example, a student has produced large, hollow forms, influenced by the work of Barbara Hepworth, which are soundly constructed and make substantial statements. Students tackle challenging themes such as the nature of human physicality and representations of disability in art. However, only the most basic of printmaking techniques are used. Whilst these are used effectively, the department is well equipped to teach more sophisticated processes, such as screen-printing. Students' work clearly demonstrates very good progress over the course, although students' use of ICT is not well enough developed. Students talk with confidence about the source of their ideas, how they have developed them and their intentions for how they will be realised. The standard of work seen of Year 12 students following the newly introduced photography course was very good. Following a carefully structured course, students learn the techniques of photography and darkroom work. Progress is very good and the work seen demonstrated increasingly creative control of the media.

268. The quality of teaching is very good. In the lessons observed it was never less than very good. The courses are well planned and structured to ensure that students produce a substantial body of work. Teachers support individual students very well. Regular assessments and discussions about their progress ensure students are clear about their achievements and what they must do to improve. However, no written evaluations are made and students keep no record of their valuable discussions with teachers. Students are able to plan effectively and work with increasing independence. There is suitable challenge in the work for all students, whatever their level of attainment. Students show commitment to their studies and are very positive about the quality of the course, the support of their teachers and resources made available to them. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, both technically and of the wider field of art. They are able to help students to solve technical problems and to develop their work in historical and contemporary contexts.

269. The subject is well led and managed. Through its documentation and its philosophy, a clear educational lead is provided. There is a training focus on the development of teaching skills, often delivered from within the subject staff. However, the monitoring of the work of the department, including teaching, is under-developed. The management of resources is good, including the funding of a new photography option. Year 13 students have the benefit of dedicated working spaces, available throughout the day for private study. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results have improved markedly and the subject now attracts large numbers of students.

Theatre studies

Provision for theatre studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- Well above average examination results and standards of work.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Consistently good teaching.
- Very high student motivation and independence.
- High level of involvement of sixth form students in whole-school drama activities.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for development

- Accommodation for drama.

270. Attainment is high in Year 13 and examination grades are well above the national average. Students have very good levels of knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson where students were preparing a practical theatre piece there was very good application of Artaud's theories to their own work. Students show a high awareness of self-evaluation and are well able to

select the effects which will best enhance a performance. In a Year 12 lesson students used props and lighting imaginatively and understood how to achieve non-realistic effects through voice and movement. The standard of achievement in the Year 12 final rehearsals for their devised project is good. Students' attitudes, values and personal development are excellent. They are well motivated and work very well collaboratively, modifying each other's performances and giving praise where it is due. Students work with a high degree of independence.

271. The teaching of theatre studies is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and help students to achieve independence by encouraging self-evaluation through open-ended and challenging self-evaluation. There is very good use of the application of theory to inform performance. Teachers encourage a serious, focused approach to theatre studies with a very good use of individual and group support.
272. Curricular opportunities for students are very good: there are frequent visits arranged to theatres, school productions and drama clubs. Sixth form theatre studies students ably teach Year 9 pupils in their drama club. The subject is very well led and managed by the enthusiastic and committed head of drama. There are good links with other departments such as English, music and design technology in school productions. The students themselves contribute much to the artistic life of the school and theatre studies makes a valuable contribution towards the key skills of communication and working with others. Accommodation for drama is poor: the department has to use the school hall which is also used for examinations and school dinners and the small drama studio has insufficient space for group work.

HUMANITIES

Focused subjects for inspection in the humanities area were history, geography and psychology.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Pupil attainment.
- Standards of teaching and learning.
- Quality of fieldwork opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Understanding of the requirements of the new examination syllabus.

273. Standards are above the national average. In 2001, A level results were well above the national average with boys doing better than girls. The percentage of students achieving A and B grades fell in 2002 after a change of syllabus but this has been dealt with by adopting a different syllabus and current work suggests that previous high standards can be re-established. Well over a third of the students entered gained A or B grades at AS level in 2001.
274. By the end of Year 13 students have made good progress, building on the standards achieved at GCSE level. Because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the interesting way this is conveyed, students learn very well. Year 13 students showed a growing understanding of the complex principles involved in world climate patterns. Year 12 students were learning about the way housing is managed in major cities of less developed countries, and the human factors affecting the South Dorset coastline. Students produce a high standard of notes, diagrams and particularly competent essays that show the ability to sustain argument and present conclusions. They can collect their own data and present it effectively to support geographical hypotheses, as, for example when they have been on field study trips to Exmoor and South Wales. Because of the quality of the teaching, students learn to think for themselves through constant demands that they make their own deductions from evidence, as when a Year 12 group was studying different methods of managing housing. The less successful students are not so well able to express their knowledge and ideas about the causes and effects of events but are making good progress.

275. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use students' prior knowledge as a basis for the development of new understanding about, for example, the movements of ocean currents and pressure belts. Teachers have a high level of enthusiasm and use interesting and well-prepared resources. A comparative weakness was too much teacher talk which meant that in one lesson students were limited in the time they had available to make their own enquiries. No students were seen with special educational needs but group work supported lower attaining students so that all made equal progress. Gifted and talented students are not individually identified but are progressing very well as a group.
276. The students have very positive views of the subject and the teaching they receive and feel they were well-advised when making choices at the end of Year 11. Three chose the subject for career reasons, the rest because they enjoyed it at GCSE. They find their field study trips particularly rewarding. Some have difficulties with time management and miss lessons during examination periods and when this happens they find it difficult to catch up.
277. Leadership and management are good, with a good range of resources to support learning and well managed and fruitful fieldwork trips. The subject is well established, with comparatively high numbers choosing it every year. Students' progress is effectively assessed and they are well prepared for their examinations. The previous report noted the above-average attainment and this has been maintained. Geography has the capacity to continue as a strong and successful sixth form subject.

History

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

Strengths:

- Quality of teaching.
- Range and depth of students' subject knowledge.
- Students' capacity for critical thinking.

Weakness:

- Lack of challenge for the ablest students.

278. In 2001, the proportion of students who gained A and B grades was very high compared to the national average. However, in 2002, performance dropped to a level, which was in line with national averages. Over the four years between 1998 and 2001, students have consistently performed better in history than in other A-level subjects. The overall trend over the last three years is of rising standards and this is attributable to the quality of teaching in the sixth form, which focuses on the progressive development of students' capacity for critical thinking in history.
279. Standards seen were good, with very good features in some of the work in Year 12. The distinguishing feature of the work of sixth form students is their ability to interpret and evaluate source material *in context*. This can be seen in the work of both Year 13 students assessing the importance of Lenin to the Bolshevik Revolution, and Year 12 students assessing the usefulness of a range of complex sources dealing with Poor Law of 1834. It is clear from both the oral and written responses of students that they can think critically, demonstrating analytical and evaluative skills of a high order. By this stage, students are producing extended writing of high quality.
280. The quality of teaching is good overall, with very good features in some lessons. Teaching is very well informed and confidently delivered. It is at times innovative and risk-taking and always rigorous and challenging. Lessons are very well prepared, and particularly good use is made of oblique stimulus material to 'hook' pupils' interest – for example a Russian doll containing various soviet leaders, all caricatured except for that of Lenin, which leads to a line of questioning about why this should be so. The lessons themselves are very well structured to deliver progression in students' understanding. A clear progression in students' learning can be seen in most lessons and

therefore across the two years of the A level course. The approach is student centred and consequently elicits from the students widespread engagement with the task. Questioning is challenging and teachers listen to what students have to say. This in turn motivates students to say more, read more and know more. The incidence of unsolicited questions and comments from students is remarkably high.

281. Despite this good practice, the ablest students could be further challenged. For example, teaching might focus on pushing some students to appreciate the possibility of synthesis, or conflict resolution in their essay work, or on developing amongst students a methodology for demonstrating the relative importance of causal factors to an explanation – for example by counter-factual reasoning. There is one student with special educational needs in the sixth form who, interestingly, is allowed himself to decide if and when he needs learning support. This arrangement works very well and the student makes good progress.
282. Students' ability to produce well-structured pieces of extended, discursive writing is explicitly developed in history lessons lower down the school and by Year 13 this has matured into work of impressive quality. Students speak confidently and fluently and enjoy debate. They also listen intelligently and respect each other's point of view. It is acknowledged that ICT is undeveloped beyond word processing and Internet research.
283. Provision is very well managed. Effective procedures are in place for assessing pupils attaining and monitoring their progress in respect of target grades. The most notable feature of assessment practice is the high quality of teacher marking of student essays and coursework. This is invariably detailed, accurate and diagnostic – a crucial factor in sustaining and improving standards of attainment in the sixth form. Analysis of student performance has also led to changes in the way that certain AS modules are taught.

Psychology

Overall, the provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Standards of work are improving.
- Good resources in the base room and the library.
- Clear aims for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures more closely linked to grade criteria.
- A more helpful and comprehensive scheme of work for the subject.
- Pace and rigour in some lessons.
- Attitudes of a minority of students in Year 12.

284. Psychology is a well established subject in the school. The responsibility for the subject lies with a recently-appointed teacher. There are now three groups in the subject in Year 12 and one in Year 13.
285. Attainment at advanced level, based on the latest available national figures, was above average at the higher grades (A and B) in 2001. Points scores were also above average and roughly in line with the school average. The results were similar to those of 2000. The 2002 results show a below average performance, with only a quarter of the students gaining the higher grades, but with a high overall pass rate. However, students performed less well in psychology than they did in the other subjects for which they were entered.
286. The work seen in lessons during the inspection was at least satisfactory, with good results in class tests and practice examination questions. The last set of completed coursework easily meets the necessary criteria and the best work shows clear presentation, full understanding of the

work and a perceptive analysis of the research results. Files of current work in class are generally in good order and contain a relevant mix of student notes, teacher notes and handouts.

287. Teaching and learning overall are good. Relationships between teacher and students are good, as they are within student groups. The learning environment is mainly adult and purposeful although a minority of Year 12 students have yet to acquire appropriate attitudes and skills to be successful at sixth form level. Lessons are well structured, with a variety of learning styles, supported by relevant handouts. Questions are used to ensure students develop their understanding of psychology. Although occasionally parts of lessons lacked pace and rigour, students are quickly given tasks which require them to work independently and to produce responses to issues for the rest of the class. For example, lively discussions were observed, stimulated by an examination of cultural bias in psychological research and evidence of the representation of each gender in children's magazines.
288. Higher attaining students are able to respond with perceptive discussion, questions, checking understanding and challenging the views of peers and the teacher. The vast majority show knowledge and understanding of their subject through responses to questions. A small number, while able to do this, at times fail to pay attention either to the teacher or to their peers and in the process fail to note learning points that would contribute to future learning.
289. Management of the course is satisfactory. The one teacher of the subject reports directly to an assistant headteacher. The subject is not supported through a faculty structure, although recent staff development needs have been met. A good start has been made in setting out the objectives and methods for delivery of the subject through a handbook. The systems for schemes of work and student assessment and target setting require further development to support improved standards in student attainment.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were the focus of inspection, and Spanish and German were sampled as part of the school's modern languages provision.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, with some outstanding features.
- The students' response to teaching is very good, with some outstanding features.
- Leadership of sixth form English is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make full use of open questioning strategies.
- The proportion of students gaining higher grades (A and B) in the A-level examination.

290. In 2001, the standards attained in the GCE advanced level (A2) results in English were well above the national average. Although the figure for those attaining grade A fell from 25 per cent in 2001 to 13 per cent in 2002, the overall figure of those attaining a pass grade rose from 91 per cent to 100 per cent. Girls do marginally better than boys, although this is in line with the national trend. Many more boys are now opting to study English, which is fast becoming the most popular subject in the sixth form.
291. Students' work seen during the inspection was invariably above the national average. Over the two years of the sixth form, students make at least good progress and often better, especially in their understanding of texts. Students are very good at successfully undertaking close textual analysis. They can elicit a range of meanings from a text effectively. In a good Year 12 lesson students used many texts to analyse syntax, diction, tone, content and thus deepen their

understanding of pastiche and parody through a variety of texts from *'Bridget Jones's Diary'* to Gothic and Romantic writing. Students can also speak fluently about very difficult issues. In one outstanding Year 13 lesson, students were able to engage in a high level discussion of how their reading of a text is guided by their gender, class, religion and race. They were able to expound on some fairly abstruse themes raised by Toni Morrison whilst intelligently relating her writings to Alice Walker's *'The Color Purple'*. In most of the lessons seen the students showed highly developed abilities to speak about the work of such literary giants as Angelou, Coleridge, Shakespeare, Stoker and many others.

292. Teaching is very good. Teachers have outstanding knowledge of literature as well as of language. They also have very good relationships with their students. The result is a very secure and positive learning environment which makes the students' experiences of literature very enjoyable. Students are allowed considerable autonomy to research their work and to learn independently. Teachers provide very good individual support which in turn means that students progress steadily. One student during a Year 12 lesson was having some difficulty with his textual analysis. A newly qualified teacher gave him outstanding support and helped him produce a mind map that enabled him to delve deeply into the text in a way that he was not able to do earlier. During that same lesson, every student received a short private tutorial from the teacher. Teachers' expectations are very high and students respond well. Occasionally, teachers ask questions that require short, simple answers, which inhibits some students from taking risks and giving full responses. For example, in a good lesson on Coleridge's *'Christabel'*, the students were consistently asked questions about content and Gothic text conventions. The students responded well and willingly. However, no questions were asked that would have elicited a deeper meaning of the text or allowed the students to relate it to other known texts. In another very good lesson on Poe's 'The Philosophy of Composition' there were clear parallels with Baudelaire that were not used, despite a clear connection with a student reading advanced level French and a proven connection with his *'Les Fleurs du Mal'* that the teacher knew about. Assessment is very good, with teachers giving students clear guidance on how to progress further and on how to improve their performances. Key skills necessary for the study of English literature at an advanced stage are well taught. Students are given opportunities to practise mind mapping, planning, deconstruction of texts, analysis of language, independent learning and other skills.
293. The students invariably respond well to the teachers' often exciting lessons. Occasionally, students appear a trifle compliant but nonetheless even then they give at least competent responses. Most of the time the students show a clear enjoyment of literature and are keen to learn and curious about deeper meanings. In a lesson on black American women's writings, they responded superbly with intelligent and insightful comments. On the few occasions when teachers' questions tended to be somewhat closed, students responded with less than their usual enthusiasm.
294. The leadership of sixth form English provision by the second in the English department is very good. Departmental documentation is very good. Teachers work closely together and each group of students has a pair of teachers allotted to them. This allows opportunities for excellent peer mentoring and support. The monitoring of teaching is very effective. The English department has done an effective job in analysing students' prior attainment and using the data for lesson planning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The school offers courses in French, Spanish and German to advanced level. French was the focus of the inspection, but lessons in both Spanish and German were sampled. The Year 13 Spanish lesson and the Year 12 German lesson seen showed that teaching and learning are very good, and in each case students are making good progress and attainment is above average for the stage of the course.

French

Overall, the provision for French is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in AS and A2 examinations are above average.
- Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory.
- Teaching has a number of good features.
- In all lessons, teachers use very little English.

Areas for improvement

- Large class size and a wide range of student attainment limit the progress students make in Year 12.
- Some students, particularly boys, lack confidence in speaking.

295. Results in previous years in the advanced level examination cannot be compared with national averages for French because of the relatively small numbers of students who have completed the two-year course. Candidates for this examination are almost always girls, and their performance is well above average, with most gaining high grades (A and B). In 2001, when there was a larger group of students who took advanced level examinations, results were well above average, with girls achieving high standards. The disparity in results achieved by boys and girls largely disappeared in 2002, when the small number of candidates achieved almost the same results regardless of gender. The results for the last three years, despite the small numbers of candidates, are better than those reported at the time of the last inspection, indicating steady improvement.
296. In students' work over time, as seen in their books and folders, there is clear evidence of steady progress. At the beginning of Year 12, most students were making significant errors in written work, and their knowledge of the structure of French was insecure. As they have progressed through the course, written work is improving. Speech is still hesitant, with few students speaking fluently. However, standards in speaking are in line with the expectations of the course for this stage in Year 12. Writing is good in Year 13, with examples of sustained use of accurate French and good deployment of relevant technical vocabulary. Much of the written work in Year 13 shows the care taken to learn from feedback and correct errors. In speaking, students' accents are developing well, in large part as a result of their exposure to good models of spoken French from their teachers.
297. In the French lessons seen, a minority of students extracted meaning well from a range of voices, including those of native speakers heard on tape but several students, including the boys, were unwilling to commit themselves to expressing their views in French and were lacking confidence in speaking. Their spontaneity was constrained by an insecure knowledge of grammar. However, one girl effectively introduced into discussion a complex idea on passive smoking, quoting the case of Roy Castle.
298. Teaching is at least satisfactory and has some good features. For example, the use of French as the teaching medium provides students with good examples of how fluent French ought to sound. Teachers' planning is good and provides opportunities for practice of all four language learning skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing. The pace of the teaching is constrained by the varied attainment of the large class, with the result that the lesson tends to proceed at the pace of the average. A small number of higher attaining students in Year 12 is insufficiently challenged to make progress at a faster rate.
299. Students take their group work seriously and learn from it. Many students, including all the boys, make an effort to speak in French to each other in groups of four. Their good relationships with their teacher are in part responsible for this, as students know what is required of them and endeavour to meet their teacher's expectations. They enjoy the topic, find it relevant and successfully set themselves the task of absorbing a great deal of new vocabulary, much of which is of a technical nature.
300. Homework set is relevant and helpful and is well marked. Feedback to students in writing is regular and the department's practice of conducting individual tutorials is productive in terms of increased knowledge of students' learning needs and progress. The subject is well managed and

resources are good and well used.