

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE MAPLESDEN NOAKES SCHOOL**

Great Buckland, Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118873

Headteacher: Mr D Kimber

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield  
7070

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249802

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Great Buckland Maidstone Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Whitfield
Date of previous inspection:	14 <sup>th</sup> October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7070	Mrs J Greenfield	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
14756	Mr J Lovell	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
20414	Mr P Clayton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10160	Mr R Bagguley	Team inspector	Science Biology (Sixth form)	
30695	Mrs G Dinan	Team inspector	Art and design	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
8076	Mr T Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology	
19530	Ms J Bray	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15977	Mrs M Holling	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
14573	Mr H Wareing	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4749	Mr M Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30072	Mr J Skivington	Team inspector	Music	
4647	Mrs J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education	
4372	Mr R Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	
1990	Mr G Preston	Team inspector	Business education Leisure and tourism	
22577	Lady M Hart	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Maplesden Noakes School, situated to the north of Maidstone, is about the same size as other secondary schools and caters for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. It is a popular school and has grown in size since the last inspection. It now has 965 pupils on roll, 167 of whom are in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls in the school. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. As a secondary school within a wholly selective system, it admits pupils who have not passed the selection tests for grammar school education as well as an increasing number who elect not to take these tests. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which provides a balanced mix within the school, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Only a very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black-African. The proportion of pupils having English as an additional language is lower than average and only two pupils receive additional support in learning English. Sixty pupils have special educational needs, which as a proportion of the school population is below the national average. Of these, 3.9 per cent have a statement of special educational need, which is above the national average. The school has provision for up to 14 pupils with a hearing impairment. This provision is no longer a separate unit but part of the wider Additional Educational Needs provision in the school, which is committed to an inclusive approach. The range of special needs includes specific and moderate learning difficulties, communication and behavioural difficulties, hearing impairment, physical difficulties and autism. The school received School Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002.

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

The Maplesden Noakes School is a very effective and improving school. Pupils are achieving well when account is taken of their attainment on entry to the school. The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school and established an ethos in which pupils are at the core of its work and the achievement of high standards is the expectation. Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils work hard and have very positive attitudes to their studies. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils are achieving well and standards are improving.
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership in ensuring an ethos that puts pupils and their achievements first.
- The overall good quality of the teaching and the pupils' very positive attitudes to school and to their work enable them to learn well.
- The good provision for pupils' moral and social development and the very good relationships between pupils contribute significantly to the orderly nature of the school.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by the contribution made by the local community, including business, and the quality of the careers and vocational education programme.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the quality of support they receive.
- The mentoring arrangements support pupils' academic and personal development well.

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

- The assessment of pupils' attainment against the National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9, especially in the foundation subjects, is not accurate enough.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, music and physical education.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the work of the school are not robust enough.
- The school lacks a consistent approach to the development of pupils' numeracy skills.
- Not enough is done to provide for the needs of the most capable pupils.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in October 1996, standards have improved by the end of Year 11. Teaching has also improved considerably. Good progress has been made in: monitoring classroom practice, although not consistently across the school; improving the balance of the curriculum; increasing the information available to parents on pupils' attainment; addressing health and safety issues; providing training for staff in the use of ICT. Satisfactory progress has been made in ensuring greater access to ICT, although some subjects do not use it enough to support teaching and learning; and increasing the emphasis on pupils' spiritual development, although more remains to be done. The school does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Overall, the school has made effective progress since the last inspection and has shown that it has a good capacity to improve.

## 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	C	C	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	E	*	

**Key**

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

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

The school does well for its pupils by the end of Year 11. Since the last inspection, standards have risen at a faster rate than the national trend by the age of 14 and in line with the national trend by the age of 16. Overall, pupils' current work is in line with the national expectations in nearly all subjects by the end of Year 9, and above expectations in English and French. Most pupils are achieving well. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the school's results in English, mathematics and science were in line with the national averages. When compared with similar schools, the results were above average. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 and 2002, the results were in line with the national average. When compared with similar schools, the results in 2002 were above average. The best results in 2002 were in science, media studies, French, geography and physical education. The weakest subjects were music and ICT. The results in English improved considerably in 2002 and were in line with the national average, as were those for mathematics. Pupils are achieving well in Year 10 and 11 and their attainment by the end of Year 11 is above national expectations in science, art and design, French and business studies and is in line with expectations in the remaining subjects. The A-level results are improving but have been well below average for the past few years. The strongest subjects in 2002 were English, geography and the vocational courses. The weakest subjects were mathematics, design and technology, history and sport studies. Most students do at least as well as expected and many considerably better than this when account is taken of their GCSE results.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are very positive. They are well motivated and take pride in their efforts, particularly in the way they present their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are mature in their responses and treat each other with courtesy, consideration and respect.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils show sensitivity to the needs of others, and listen carefully to each other's contributions. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are mostly respectful and harmonious. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop initiative, independence and responsibility for others.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and has been so since the last inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average.

Pupils value the support they receive from their teachers and are responding well to the demands made on them by the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is good overall and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Almost all the teaching is satisfactory, and most of it is good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teachers use their subject expertise well to plan lessons that include a variety of activities to interest and challenge the pupils. As a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teaching does not always provide the stimulus and challenge to stretch the highest attaining pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and the teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Most pupils have established good habits of working, which are helped by their ability to concentrate well and work productively. The teaching of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education, drama and leisure and tourism is mostly good: it is usually very good in art and design, modern foreign languages, religious education and business studies, and also in psychology and the child care (CACHE) courses in the sixth form. The teaching of citizenship is satisfactory. Subject teachers are inconsistent in the way that they teach the skills of literacy and numeracy.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects and the curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a hearing impairment, receive good support, both in lessons and when withdrawn for more specific support, enabling them to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small numbers of students learning English as an additional language receive satisfactory support but none is in the early stages of language fluency.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for pupils' moral and social development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual and cultural development. Not enough is done to raise their awareness of life and living in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are cared for well and support for their academic and personal progress is good. Assessment procedures are effective in the main, although variable across departments and there are weaknesses in the consistency of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.

The school is a secure place for pupils to learn. Statutory requirements are not fully met in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in a number of subjects, or in the provision of control technology and a daily act of collective worship. The new mentoring arrangements are effective. The provision for careers education and work related learning, and the contribution made by the community to pupils' learning are very good. The school's partnership with parents is good.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's very effective leadership, with the support of senior staff and governors, has successfully established an ethos in which pupils are expected to work hard and achieve well. Most middle managers lead their departments well, some doing so very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors make a positive contribution to the strategic leadership of the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil nearly all of their statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and senior managers are active in evaluating the school's performance and there is a strong commitment to further improvement. Middle managers do not monitor rigorously or consistently enough. The school uses performance data well to monitor progress.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources well to meet its priorities and every effort is made to apply the principles of best value in all spending and management decisions.

Staff are well-qualified and experienced to meet the demands of the curriculum. Accommodation is sufficient for the school's needs but there are some deficiencies in art and design, design and technology, and in the indoor facilities for physical education. Resources for learning are satisfactory, but the school does not have enough computers and textbooks in ICT. The library provision is good.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's high expectations and the good progress their children make.</li> <li>The good standards of teaching.</li> <li>The quality of leadership and management.</li> <li>The way the school helps pupils, who like school, to become more mature and responsible.</li> <li>They feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any problems or concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More information about the progress their children are making.</li> <li>Better consistency in the arrangement for setting homework.</li> <li>Closer working relationships between the school and parents.</li> <li>Provision of a wider range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Well over half of parents responded to the questionnaire sent out before the inspection. Inspectors support all of the positive views expressed by parents. They judge that the reports provided to parents are not clear enough or sufficiently consistent across subjects, which makes it difficult for parents to gain a clear view of their child's progress. Inspectors judge that the level and extent of homework are appropriate, the range of activities outside lessons is good, and that the school takes appropriate steps to work with and involve parents in the event of any concerns.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form in this average sized mixed school has 167 students on roll and has increased in size over the past few years. Around three-quarters of students stay on into the sixth form at the end of Year 11 and a small number join from other local schools. There are no students from minority ethnic heritages in the sixth form. Four students have special educational needs, three of whom have a statement. The sixth form offers a good range of A-level, AS and AVCE courses and through arrangements with other local school and Mid-Kent College, students are able to follow other courses. Three out of five students are following a two-year course leading to A-level. Just under a quarter are following vocational courses and the remainder a mix of A-level, AS and vocational courses. The school also provides a Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma and certificate course. The proportion of students continuing into higher education fluctuates from year to year and has declined from 52 per cent in 2000 to 32 per cent in 2002.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is successful and cost effective. Standards are improving, although not consistently in all subjects. They are above average in art and design and in design and technology. The A-level results have been well below average in the past but are improving. In most subjects, students are achieving well in relation to their performance in the GCSE examinations. The teaching in most subjects is good, and in several, it is very good. The sixth form provision caters well for the needs and aspirations of the students, although there are insufficient enrichment opportunities available for them.

**Strengths**

- Standards in the sixth form are improving: they are above average in art and design and design and technology, and students are achieving well in the vocational courses.
- The good quality of the teaching enables students to make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good, and senior managers are ensuring a stronger focus on raising standards.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and relationships between students and with staff are very good.

**What could be improved**

- Not enough use is made of ICT to support subject teaching and learning, especially in business studies, leisure and tourism, design and technology, history and geography.
- Enrichment opportunities, although developing, are not an integral part of the curriculum for all students.

*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	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are broadly average and they are improving. The very good teaching enables students to make good progress and achieve well.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average. Teaching is satisfactory and enables students to make appropriate progress and achieve as expected. Students like the subject and want to do well.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Design and technology is improving because of good planning and teaching. The A-level results for 2002 were below the national average, but the work of current students is above average. Students are achieving well.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> The very good teaching is further raising standards that are currently in line with the national average, and ensuring students achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment.
Leisure and tourism	<b>Good.</b> The good teaching, supported by a wide range of outside links, enables students to achieve well. Successful completion rates are high.
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average and students are achieving well. The quality of teaching is very good.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and rigorous assessment, high expectations and the enthusiasm of both teachers and students, have resulted in improving examination results. Standards are broadly average and students are achieving as expected.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The teaching is good overall and students make good progress and achieve well. Standards of work are average.
English	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good overall and students achieve well as a result. Standards are average, and in line with the A-level results in 2002.

In other subjects, work was sampled. In psychology, the teaching is very good and students are attaining average standards. In the child care (CACHE) course, the teaching is very good and students are attaining above average standards. In chemistry, sports studies, ICT, performing arts and photography, the quality of teaching is good and students are attaining average standards. In French, the teaching is very good and although standards are below average, students are making good progress and achieving well. In physics, standards are below average, although the teaching is satisfactory and students are achieving as expected.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good support and guidance from staff, which helps their academic and personal development. The mentoring arrangements are working effectively and provide information about students' progress, give guidance on targets and encourage self-review.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a strong commitment to continual development and to promoting students' academic and personal development. All students have equal access to the opportunities the school provides. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the sixth form are broadly satisfactory. Good use is made of performance data but not enough is done to monitor the quality of teaching and learning on a regular and consistent basis.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel that the choice of sixth form courses suits their talents and aspirations.</li> <li>• They receive good help and support to develop their skills of working on their own.</li> <li>• They are taught well and challenged to do their best.</li> <li>• Teachers are readily accessible if they require help or have difficulties with their work.</li> <li>• They receive good information, which is clear and helpful.</li> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having more account taken of their views and being treated as responsible young adults.</li> <li>• Receiving better advice about their future options.</li> <li>• The range of out-of-school activities and enrichment opportunities available to them.</li> <li>• Receiving more information about the progress they are making.</li> </ul>

Around two out of five students responded to the students' questionnaire. Their responses were more negative than the views they expressed in formal discussions with inspectors. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by the students. They recognise, however, that considerable changes have taken place over the past year or so in the sixth form in raising expectations and academic standards and that in the short-term, students' views may not be wholly taken into account. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory and developing. The range of enrichment activities currently provided is unsatisfactory, but the school is aware of this and has specific plans to improve this aspect of students' wider development.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school does well for its pupils by the end of Year 11. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school, based on their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6 and in the standardised tests they undertake early in Year 7, is below average. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and attain standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. The good progress continues in Years 10 and 11 so that by the end of Year 11 their attainment is also in line with the standard expected nationally. Standards by the end of both key stages have risen since the last inspection at a faster rate than the national trend. The improvements in standards result from more effective teaching, which is good overall, the pupils' positive attitudes and keenness to do well, and the climate which the headteacher and staff have established in which it is expected that pupils will work hard and succeed.
2. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the school's results overall were above average. They were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Pupils attained higher standards than predicted by the school. The test results in 2002 were not quite as high, but were in line with the national averages for all three subjects, both separately and together. The results in English at Level 5 or above were well above average and were better than those for mathematics and science. The school accounts for the slight drop in performance to a slightly weaker cohort and to lack of sufficient preparation for the tests, especially in mathematics. In the national tests over the past three years, the results of both boys and girls have been better than their respective national figures.
3. When compared with similar non-selective schools in wholly selective authorities, the school's results in 2001 were well above average overall, being well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The school's results in 2002, when compared with similar schools, were above average overall, above average in English and average in mathematics and science.
4. The assessments undertaken by teachers in the foundation subjects at the end of Year 9 in both 2001 and 2002 were very variable, indicating that standards in design and technology, history, art and design and physical education were well above average and that standards in information and communication technology (ICT) were well below average. Inspection evidence does not support these judgements and inspectors find that teachers in these subjects are not applying the level descriptions accurately enough and do not moderate their assessments sufficiently. They have been too generous in design and technology, history, art and design and physical education and too harsh in ICT.
5. From the work seen, standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national expectations in English and modern foreign languages and are in line with expectations in mathematics and science and in all the remaining subjects. Based on their performance on entry to the school, pupils are making good progress in nearly all subjects and are achieving well by the end of Year 9. In English, they are achieving very well. As a new subject, standards in citizenship are average and pupils are achieving as expected.
6. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, the school's results in 2001 were in line with the national average overall and for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C and five or more grades A\*-G. When compared with other similar schools, the results overall were average, but were above average at five or more grades A\*-C. The boys' results and the girls' results were close to their respective national figures. When the results in 2001 are compared with pupils' earlier performance in the tests at the end of Year 9, pupils did better than expected. The school maintained its standards in 2002 and the results were broadly similar to the picture in 2001. They were in line with the national average overall and at five or more grades A\*-C, and above average at five or more grades A\*-G. The school's results in 2002 were above the average for pupils in similar schools. The results are well above average at five or more grades A\*-C and above average for five or more grades A\*-G and the average points score.

Over the past five years, improvement in the school's performance has been broadly in line with the national trend.

7. There were considerable variations in the results in the different subjects in 2001. They were significantly above average in mathematics, single and double science, geography, French, media studies, physical education and business studies, and above average in art and design. They were below average in design and technology and history, and well below average in English language and literature and ICT. In 2002, the results were above the national average in French, geography, German, media studies, physical education, single and double science and in design and technology. The results were broadly average in business studies, art and design, English language and literature and mathematics: were below average in history; and were well below average in music and ICT. In English, there was a considerable improvement in the results between 2001 and 2002, but there was a slight decline in mathematics and science.
8. Pupils' current work shows that their attainment is in line with national expectations in English, mathematics, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education and religious education and is above the national expectation in science, art and design, modern foreign languages and business studies. In the majority of subjects, pupils are making good progress in Years 10 and 11 and are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. Their progress in ICT and citizenship is satisfactory and pupils are achieving as expected. In business studies, they are achieving very well.
9. There were differences between the performance of boys and girls in a number of subjects. For example, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, girls performed better than the boys in geography and in history, especially at the higher levels, but boys performed better than the girls in mathematics at the higher levels. In design and technology, the work of the girls' design work in Year 7 to 9 is better than that of the boys. In the GCSE examinations, boys attain higher standards than the girls in mathematics, but the girls perform better than the boys in English, business studies and at the higher grades in history. In pupils' current work, there is no significant difference between boys and girls other than in modern foreign languages and design and technology where girls attain higher standards than the boys.
10. Standards of literacy are average overall. Pupils' literacy skills are above average in science, history, modern foreign languages and religious education, reflecting the way that teachers in these subjects emphasise their development. In other subjects, standards of literacy are broadly average. Most pupils speak and listen well and their writing is satisfactory.
11. Standards in numeracy are average, but numeracy skills are not developed consistently across the curriculum. In mathematics, pupils' skills have improved since the last inspection because of the introduction of the three-part lesson in line with the Key Stage 3 strategy. Standards are higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Pupils' ability to perform mental calculations and recall of their times table is much stronger in Years 7 - 9. Pupils at Key Stage 4 often give up or rely much more on the calculator. Good examples of using numeracy skills occur in geography where the pupils' ability to present data in variety of ways is developed. Knowledge of how to analyse their findings using Spearman Rank correlation coefficients is good. In science, especially at Key Stage 4, algebraic skills were used well in rearranging equations to solve problems relating to density and mass, and in ICT, mental calculations were used effectively in a Year 8 class to aid a computer modelling lesson on how much money could be saved.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well and making good progress towards meeting their individual targets. This is because of the good teaching and learning support, strong management and effective systems. The school's focus on raising literacy standards in Year 7, through brief daily sessions of computer-assisted learning, is particularly successful and enables pupils to cope better with the reading and writing demands of subjects across the curriculum. Pupils who have a hearing impairment generally make good progress, but a few older pupils, in subjects that make heavy demands on the use of language, do not receive sufficient focused and specialised support to ensure satisfactory progress. The great majority of pupils with special educational needs achieve passes in GCSE exams.

13. The higher attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, although in some subjects, particularly mathematics and history, they do not receive enough extension work to challenge them sufficiently.
14. The small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress in lessons, more often because of the interaction with their peers rather than because of planned and targeted support. A few receive a limited amount of external support from the local education authority's language support service.
15. The school did not quite meet its targets, which were challenging, in 2002 but the evidence from the inspection is that standards are continuing to rise. The school's commitment to attaining high standards in all its work, the emphasis on meeting the needs of individual pupils through the mentoring arrangements, the good quality of the teaching and the pupils' very good attitudes provide a strong platform for further improvement.

## **Sixth form**

16. In 2001, the school's performance in the A-level examinations was well below the national averages but was at least average in the vocational courses. In leisure and tourism, the results were well above the national average, and in business studies, the results were in line with the average. The results in geography and physical education were below average, were well below average in art and design, design and technology, English and history, and were very low in mathematics. As the numbers taking other subjects were very small, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with the national figures. In 2001, very few students attained the highest grades of A or B.
17. In 2002, the results improved in art and design, design and technology, English and geography but were not as good in business studies, French and physical education. All students gained pass grades in English, French, media studies and in either leisure and recreation or travel and tourism. In English, geography and history, a higher proportion of students gained grades A or B than in 2001. In most subjects, students are achieving as expected when account is taken of their earlier performance in the GCSE examinations. As yet, there are no national figures for 2002 against which the school's performance can be compared.
18. Standards in the sixth form are improving overall, mainly because of changes to the entry requirements, which are now more stringent, for various courses. In addition, changes have been made to the way that courses are being organised and taught, and a mentoring scheme has been introduced, which is used well to monitor students' progress and ensure that any targets that are set are sharp and realistic. These improvements were evident during the inspection.
19. Standards of work in most subjects, including English, mathematics, geography, history, ICT, physical education, business studies and leisure and tourism are in line with course expectations. They are above course expectations in design and technology and art and design. Standards in biology and in French are below course expectations. In those subjects where standards are above average, students are making good progress and are achieving well. In biology and geography, their progress is satisfactory and students are achieving as expected, in line with the school's predictions. Students with special educational needs in the sixth form make good progress in their chosen courses of study. The higher attaining students in geography do not read widely enough or use the Internet sufficiently to aid their learning and consequently do not do as well as they might.
20. Students' communication skills are broadly satisfactory, enabling the majority to cope with the demands of their courses. Most students digest and absorb information satisfactorily and are developing their capacity to take notes and organise their work carefully. Students' ability to cope with the mathematical demands of their courses is satisfactory for the most part. They are able to make appropriate use of ICT but there are insufficient computers for them to be able to use them regularly. Not enough use is made of ICT to support their learning, especially in business studies, leisure and tourism and geography.
21. Retention rates are improving and more students are staying on to complete their courses and in some instances returning to the school from other sixth form providers to do so. The proportion of



students continuing into higher education at the end of Year 13 fluctuates from year to year and declined in the past year.

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

22. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are very positive and are a clear strength of the school. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. They are well motivated, apply themselves well to practical tasks and show a keen interest in their studies. They suggest ideas confidently and most are articulate when expressing their views. They sustain concentration for long periods, when working individually or in groups. They share ideas sensibly and listen to each other with respect. The good quality of the teaching and the school's clearly expressed expectations are very effective influences in this respect. There is a well-established work ethic, with achievable goals and rewards. This positive atmosphere enables pupils to make and sustain good and sometimes very good rates of progress. Pupils take pride in their efforts and this is reflected in the good standards of presentation in much of their written and practical work. They show sensitivity to the needs of others: for example, in a religious education lesson, pupils explored their own attitudes and values towards disability. They show respect for religious values, when reflecting on beliefs in Hinduism about issues surrounding life and death.
23. Relationships are very good. Respect between teachers and pupils is a noticeable feature across the whole school and is seen in the shared commitment to achievement. Pupils know that their teachers want them to do well and respond accordingly. Similarly, relationships between pupils are mostly very good. The school is a well-ordered community, which works well for the benefit of all. Bullying is not tolerated and on the few occasions where it does occur, it is swiftly and effectively dealt with. Pupils of different ages, abilities and background mix well together, resulting in a harmonious working atmosphere.
24. Pupils with special educational needs generally have good attitudes. They are well motivated to succeed, work hard and behave well. They demonstrate excellent relationships with the staff of the Additional Educational Needs department and are confident that they will receive support when they ask for it. During individual support sessions, they are frank in their discussions and show good understanding of their difficulties and the progress they are making. The inclusive nature of the provision helps pupils with special educational needs to form friendships within the whole of their age group. Other pupils display good attitudes to them: teasing and bullying are rare. Pupils with a hearing impairment benefit from the greater social and educational opportunities now offered to them, although occasionally, as the demands of the curriculum increase, a few become frustrated and discouraged. Pupils who have English as an additional language also have positive attitudes and play a full part in the life of the school. They are well integrated and attend regularly.
25. Behaviour is very good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils have a sound understanding of what is right and wrong and this contributes well to the orderly environment. They respond well to teachers' high expectations in terms of trust. They are courteous and most behave with maturity. In lessons, behaviour is usually good and often it is very good. Movement around the school is smooth and pupils show due regard for each other, even on congested stairways. Pupils appreciate the new restaurant and use the facility well to develop social skills during mealtimes. They clear away responsibly after themselves and take pride in the informal surroundings. The school has introduced a behaviour unit called the Blue Room. This provides time out of classes for those who misbehave or are disruptive. The number of fixed-period exclusions has been effectively reduced and is resulting in a successful return to classroom learning for all pupils. One pupil was permanently excluded last year.
26. Where opportunities are provided, pupils are able to show initiative and develop increasing responsibility for their actions and their learning. In many lessons, such as in art and design, they carry out independent research. In some lessons, they are given too little opportunity to work independently in undertaking research or, at times, are given too much help from teachers.
27. Pupils concern themselves with ideas arising from the local community. They organise sponsored walks to raise money for Leukaemia and children's cancer charities. Pupils took part in the successful Jade's Bridge project to support improved road safety for children in the locality.

28. Overall attendance is good. It has remained above the national average since the last inspection. Over the same period, the level of unauthorised absence has remained below the national average. Up to 45 pupils arrive late at the start of the day, although this is usually within the first quarter of an hour and is often due to the late arrival of public transport or traffic delays. Pupils move purposefully between lessons, which start on time. The good levels of attendance of the majority of pupils have a positive effect on their progress and achievement.

### **Sixth form**

29. Sixth form students are conscientious, committed and have very positive attitudes to their work. They quickly adjust to the more rigorous ways of working and freely embrace new ideas. The majority make valuable contributions to discussions. They cooperate well with each other and their teachers. Male and female students are equally enthusiastic about their studies.
30. Students show increasing maturity, demonstrating independence in many aspects of their learning and taking a responsible approach to their work. Coursework assignments are completed on time and care is taken in their presentation. A particular strength is the very good quality of relationships, both between teachers and students and between students themselves. Students cooperate well in lessons and during study and social times. Those who are new to the school settle in quickly. Students respect teachers and value the time and commitment of staff who show that they are genuinely interested in their welfare and academic progress.
31. Inspectors support students' views that there are insufficient opportunities provided by the school for students to develop their emergent adult role and take on more responsibility. However, they recognise that this aspect of the work in the sixth form is developing and that senior staff are aware that more needs to be done to develop the leadership roles of sixth form students. Students make a very effective contribution to the school by providing good role models for younger pupils.
32. The rate of attendance in the sixth form is below that found in the main school but is satisfactory overall. This level of attendance and the good attendance of many individual students have a positive effect on the progress they make and the standards they achieve. Students are generally punctual and lessons start on time throughout the day.

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

33. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good or better in more than three-quarters of lessons. The teaching is very good and occasionally excellent in around a third of the lessons. The close monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and other staff since the last inspection and the sharing of good practice amongst teachers have brought about much of this improvement. Other than a slightly higher proportion of very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is little difference between the teaching in the two key stages and the sixth form. The overall good quality of the teaching, which is a major factor in raising standards, enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. This is also helped by the pupils' very positive attitudes to school and their ability to concentrate well and work productively. Most pupils have established good habits of working.
34. The teaching of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, drama and physical education is good overall. In art and design, modern foreign languages, religious education and business studies, the teaching is mostly very good. The teaching of citizenship is satisfactory overall, and in a significant minority of lessons it is taught well. There is some very good teaching in most subjects, with examples of excellent teaching in art and design, history and religious education in Years 7 - 9 and in business studies in Year 11. In these lessons, pupils make rapid strides in their learning because of the teachers' high expectations and the challenge of the work. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, at less than one per cent, is very small and represents a significant reduction from the situation at the time of the last inspection when it was 14 per cent. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour effectively and their unsatisfactory response undermined the concentration of the class and resulted in their making insufficient progress.

35. A consistent strength across many departments is the subject expertise of teachers, which they use effectively to plan appropriate activities to interest and challenge pupils, enabling them to learn well. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 geography lesson in which the combination of the teacher's detailed subject knowledge, well-planned and contrasting activities, and interesting range of resources ensured the total engagement of the class and very effective learning. In another well-planned business studies lesson in Year 11, the mixture of effective presentation, discussion and well-prepared case study materials, together with the teacher's excellent skills in explaining business concepts through everyday illustrations, enabled pupils to apply their skills very well and as a result, they made very good progress.
36. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the focus of the lesson and what they are expected to achieve. They build very carefully on what pupils have learnt previously through clear explanations and sharply focused questioning to check their understanding and extend their thinking. Such strategies engage pupils' interest and attention well. In a Year 8 history lesson on the Great Fire of London, for example, most pupils were able to give reasons as to why the fire started, with several drawing impressively on their previously acquired knowledge and understanding of the context of the period under study.
37. Most teachers use a good range of teaching approaches to sustain pupils' interest and to keep them focused on their work. These approaches include clear explanations or introductions to topics by the teacher, pair and small group work as well as whole-class discussions, together with video and the use of other visual material and resources. In most lessons, teachers question their pupils well to check and clarify their understanding. At times, for example in a Year 10 history lesson and in a Year 11 geography lesson, some skilful and well-targeted open-ended questioning made considerable intellectual demands on their thinking and helped pupils to develop their ideas.
38. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory overall, although there are inconsistencies in the extent to and the way in which they are taught across the subjects. Teachers in English, as well as in history, modern foreign languages and religious education, help pupils' literacy skills through providing good opportunities for discussion and placing emphasis on key words and explaining technical terms. Elsewhere, opportunities are missed as they are not identified in teachers' planning or incorporated into schemes of work. This is also true of developing pupils' numeracy skills. Practice is generally good in mathematics, science, geography and ICT but it is insufficiently planned for in other subjects. A number of subjects, including mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, music and physical education, do not plan for or use ICT sufficiently to support subject teaching and learning as required by the programmes of study.
39. In most lessons, teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well, ensuring that they are attentive and able to learn. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are mostly good, with a high degree of mutual respect evident in the majority of lessons. This leads to good levels of motivation and a willingness by pupils to engage constructively in their work, expending intellectual and creative effort. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and pupils' responses are good overall and most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Occasionally, even though the teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, a small minority of pupils, mostly in Year 8 but occasionally in Year 10, do not respond as well as they might because the teachers' expectations are unclear. As a result, their learning and that of others is affected. Such instances, however, are comparatively few.
40. Most teachers give good praise and encouragement to pupils to help them learn and think more deeply. They assess pupils' work on a regular basis but do not always relate it sufficiently to the National Curriculum level descriptions, with the result that pupils are not always clear about the progress they are making and whether it is sufficient for them to meet their targets. The marking of students' work is generally good in most subjects, but although satisfactory, it is not extensive in mathematics. At its best, marking provides positive and constructive feedback, identifies clearly what pupils need to do to improve, and gives clear and consistent information on their attainment and progress.
41. The homework set for pupils is good overall. In mathematics, it is carefully thought out and particularly well structured to meet the needs of all pupils. Similarly, in art in Years 10 and 11, homework projects are used well to practise skills and to make detailed sketches from first-hand and secondary sources as preparation for subsequent work in lessons. Such strategies are not as

well developed in design and technology, and consequently the time available for practical work in lessons is reduced.

42. The small numbers of pupils learning English as an additional language are taught in lessons with their peers. No pupil is in the early stage of English fluency but a small number receive a limited amount of specific support each week from a support teacher. Overall, pupils learning English make satisfactory progress in lessons, more as a result of their interaction with other pupils rather than through any systematic or rigorous arrangements to identify and meet their learning needs or to monitor their progress. Teachers' planning makes insufficient reference to how the language needs of these pupils are to be met.
43. Gifted and talented pupils do not always receive the challenge and stimulus that they need to achieve the very highest levels of work. In their planning, especially in classes that include the full range of attainment, teachers do not always show how the needs of these pupils are to be met. The school lacks a clear strategy for identifying its gifted and talented pupils and for ensuring that there are appropriate structures in place to cater adequately for their particular needs. Not all subjects have identified their gifted and talented pupils or shown in their schemes of work how they will provide the additional subject support and extension work to challenge these pupils.
44. Teaching by the staff of the Additional Educational Needs department is good. They have good knowledge of the learning and emotional needs of their pupils and relationships are very warm and supportive. This helps pupils to seek help and to be confident in their approach to learning. The system of allocating each pupil with special educational needs a caseworker is useful and effective. Special needs teachers support pupils well in all subjects, assisting any pupil who needs help, not just those on the Register. This helps to promote equality of access and an inclusive ethos. Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
45. Subject teachers cooperate well with special educational needs staff. There are many examples of good practice, for example, in science and physical education, in which subject teachers prepare work that is carefully matched to the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. Teachers are all aware of pupils' personal profiles and Individual Education Plans and they are also aware, through the school's induction and in-service training programmes, of the distinctive needs of pupils with hearing impairment. However, some individual teachers are over-reliant on pupils' special needs being met through the additional support in the classroom, or are content to expect a different standard or quantity of work from them, rather than planning specifically how to give them access to the lesson. Similarly, not all teachers plan sufficiently for those pupils who are gifted and talented.
46. Teachers throughout the school observe good practice with regard to equality of opportunity and inclusion. Religious and cultural factors are considered, for example, when planning food technology lessons, and appropriate adjustments made. Very occasionally, a minor verbal slip by a teacher tends to reinforce gender stereotypes, especially in groups where girls are in a minority.

## **Sixth form**

47. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall. In three-quarters of lessons, the teaching is at least good and in more than two out of five lessons, it is very good and occasionally excellent. Out of the 47 lessons seen, no teaching was less than satisfactory. The teaching in mathematics, art and design, French, psychology, business and in the child care (CACHE) course is mostly very good and some very good teaching also occurs in English, geography, physical education and leisure and recreation. The teaching in science is satisfactory. The good quality of teaching is a major contributory factor to the improving standards in the sixth form.
48. Relationships between students and their teachers are positive and purposeful. Students have confidence in their teachers and are keen to do well. Teachers give them good levels of support and guidance to help them improve and make progress, which is recognised and valued by the students themselves. In some subjects, for example art and design, mathematics and English, this support is particularly effective and tailored at meeting students' individual needs. In most subjects, the needs of the higher attaining students, including those who are identified as gifted and talented, are met well, both through the support they receive but also by being provided with more challenging work. The teaching in geography, however, does not always ensure that the higher

attaining pupils are extended sufficiently. Teachers provide good, sensitive support to lower attaining students and to those who have special educational needs and as a result, they make good progress in line with other students. There are no students learning English as an additional language in the sixth form.

49. Lessons are well structured in the main, an outcome of good planning and the teachers' high levels of subject expertise. Most lessons include a variety of stimulating and challenging activities. They include individual, group and pair work, lively discussions, explanations and other contributions from the teachers, role play, use of audio-visual resources and research activities, as well as visits to extend and broaden their understanding, as for example in the leisure and recreation course. Not all teaching in the sixth form is as successful in using such a variety of teaching and learning approaches. For example, the lecture style of teaching predominates in history and although there are good examples of sharp questioning of the students, insufficient demands are made on them. In addition, the long theory sessions in biology result in a passive response from the students, with missed opportunities to extend and share learning: as a result, they are insufficiently challenged. In such instances, students are given insufficient opportunity to exercise initiative, independence and responsibility, which reduces the progress they make. It also leads to some lack of confidence in their ability to question, argue and debate issues important to the subject.
50. Most students maintain good levels of concentration in lessons, work conscientiously and respond well to the skilful teaching. As a result, students develop good work habits and make good progress in developing their learning skills. However, a small number of male students in leisure and recreation do not always work as productively as they might. Note taking is systematic and much of their work, including course work assignments, is organised in a well-structured way that will be helpful to them in preparing for examinations. The key skills of communication and number are taught satisfactorily overall but not consistently in all subjects. The development of students' skills in ICT through subject teaching is variable and overall is unsatisfactory. Good use of ICT is made in mathematics, biology, art and design and history but in other subjects it is not used enough to support teaching and learning. This is partly the result of difficulties in gaining access to computers but also reflects some weaknesses in planning in some subjects.
51. The marking and assessment of students' work are generally good and improving. At its best, for example in design and technology, students have a clear idea of the progress they are making towards meeting their targets and what they need to do to improve. In history, although the marking is helpful, it does not focus sufficiently on identifying specific learning goals to enable students to achieve their targets. In biology, marking does not set clear targets for students and work is not returned quickly enough for them to derive the most benefit from the comments. Students are beginning to assess their own work in some subjects but this is not a strong or consistent feature of the work in the sixth form.

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

52. The quality and range of learning opportunities throughout the main school are good. All pupils, including those with special needs, have equal access to the curriculum, with the exception of dance, which is taught only to girls in Years 7 and 8. In all years, a number of pupils are disapplied from studying French. Curriculum time of 25 hours per week is in line with that recommended for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and above that recommended for pupils in Years 7 to 9. From September 2002, the school introduced a two-module timetable, each of which runs over a six-week cycle, in order to balance the annual time allocated between certain subjects. In Years 10 and 11, for example, science and mathematics alternate between three and four periods in each module, as do the option classes. The six week blocks do not always coincide with the length of teaching units in the schemes of work and currently present difficulties for continuity of staffing and for assessment.
53. In Years 7 to 9, all National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught and the programmes of study have good breadth and balance. They are planned effectively to ensure a smooth curricular transition to Year 10. Since the last inspection, geography and history have been taught as separate subjects, with a positive impact on standards, and the shortfall in time for music has been redressed. The time allocated for religious education is in line with the Agreed Syllabus. Art and design in Year 9 has a generous time allocation overall and pupils in the highest French

sets study German this year at the expense of one of their art lessons. French and mathematics are taught in sets from Years 7 to 11, which enables the work to be targeted effectively to meet the different needs of pupils, although in mathematics it fails to extend the higher attaining pupils sufficiently. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are organised into a fast track group and two mixed ability classes within each half-year block in English, science, geography and history. As a result, the higher attaining pupils accelerate their progress in these subjects.

54. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements. The schemes of work in some but not all departments incorporate opportunities for activities related to literacy, numeracy, ICT and citizenship, and identify possibilities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Little evidence was seen in lessons of the translation of planning into practice. The emphasis on the teaching of games in physical education limits the time spent on other areas of activity. Statutory requirements are met in the discrete ICT lessons now taught in each of Years 7 to 9. Some departments, such as religious education, make good use of ICT in their teaching but many others do not use and consequently they fail to meet in full the requirements of the National Curriculum. Although all pupils follow design and technology courses, they do not do enough work in control technology.
55. The statutory curriculum is in place in Years 10 and 11 and the time allocated to individual subjects is broadly in line with the national averages. All pupils take single science, and double science is available as an option. All courses lead to GCSE examinations except for compulsory ICT, which is a key skills course. The curriculum is innovative in its development of courses to meet the needs of its pupils. The school has used its good links with the local further education college to provide jointly two vocational education courses. The newly introduced applied GCSE course in engineering is a worthwhile enhancement as is the continuing opportunity for some pupils, including those with special educational needs, to experience a range of vocational skills as part of its alternative education programme. The breadth of the curriculum is enhanced by the media studies and drama courses. Both music and art are now fully included in the options system. The business studies courses are popular and meet the school's aim to prepare pupils for work in the service industries, business and commerce. The curriculum is enriched by the citizenship and religious education programme, which will lead to short-course GCSE examinations, and by the personal and social education course and careers programme.
56. The school makes satisfactory provision for the teaching of literacy overall, but practice across subjects is inconsistent. In design and technology, although words are on display in classrooms and key words are on the board at the start of lessons, they are not referred to often enough. The department lacks a clear strategy for developing pupils' literacy skills and does not yet identify opportunities for them to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills. On the other hand, provision is good in history, modern languages and religious education. The school's literacy policy has only been in place for a year after some development work with staff over the previous two years. More work is planned for 2003 when the literacy working party will be reconstituted and suitable points for action will be taken forward. At present, however, strategies for developing literacy skills across all subjects are only satisfactory.
57. The school's strategies for the teaching of numeracy are broadly satisfactory but uncoordinated. Responsibility for leading the development of numeracy across the curriculum is unclear. The school is promoting, and teachers are aware of the need to develop, pupils' numeracy skills in the different subjects. However, this is not sufficiently embedded in departments and few refer to numeracy in their documentation and schemes of work. During the inspection, opportunities for the development of numeracy were missed in art and design, design and technology, religious education and geography.
58. A good range of enrichment activities supports the curriculum and a homework club operates each evening. Pupils in Year 7 share a residential teambuilding weekend at the beginning of the school year. The religious education department organises visits to a local temple, mosque and synagogue. In history and geography, pupils in Year 9 visit the battlefields of the First World War and a week-long visit to France is also organised. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in physical education, with clubs for both boys and girls, and a regular fixture list in the major games for all year groups. Musical activities include choirs, jazz improvisation and rock bands. Evening theatre visits are organised for all year groups.

59. The school has made a strong commitment to giving access to the whole curriculum to pupils who have special educational needs, including pupils with a hearing impairment who, in the past, spent much of their time with teachers of the deaf in the Hearing Unit classrooms. The move to an inclusive model is proving largely successful. Most support is now within the classroom and available to all pupils: radio hearing aids are routinely used, where appropriate, and enlarged learning materials are provided for pupils where impaired vision demands it. Pupils are achieving well and they are fully part of their peer group. Pupils with a hearing impairment are gaining full access to courses in which they can excel. Good links have been established with the local college to ensure appropriate support and provision for these pupils. At present, the school is not doing enough to monitor rigorously the progress and achievement of hearing impaired pupils. The school also needs to keep under regular review the range of accredited examination courses available for these pupils to ensure their appropriateness. The school is not fully accessible to pupils or staff with mobility difficulties. Pupils who need temporarily to use a wheelchair, for example, can be accommodated by allocating teaching rooms on the ground floor. However, many rooms remain inaccessible.
60. Some special needs teaching takes place by withdrawing pupils from mainstream lessons and this has some impact on the pupils' access to the curriculum. However, the brief daily sessions of computer-assisted learning fully justify the interruption to lessons because of the progress pupils make with their literacy skills, which in turn improves their access to the curriculum. Similarly, the weekly review sessions for pupils with special educational needs make a very valuable contribution to their progress and wellbeing, and are fully justified. Withdrawal sessions are managed so as to cause the least possible damage to curriculum time and pupils' work on computers is monitored and supported by special needs staff well. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs.
61. The school has recently introduced a facility, known as the Blue Room, which caters for pupils who need to be temporarily withdrawn from their classes because of behavioural difficulties. The facility offers continued supported and supervised access to subject work and potentially reduces the need for exclusions from the school.
62. Careers and work related provision is very good. Aspects of careers are incorporated in to the personal, social and health education programme in Years 7 to 9, which is delivered by a specialist team. The programme includes careful preparation for selecting GCSE course options and is supported by a parents' evening and a careers fair. Towards the end of Year 9, all pupils develop their economic and business awareness through a successful 'enterprise week' that involves pupils in mini-enterprise activities. The new citizenship and religious education (CRE) programme in Years 10 and 11 further extends relevant careers education that includes work experience at the end of Year 10. This is enriched by different activities, including a visiting drama group. The careers resources and guidance software are good. Pupils are carefully prepared for work experience and parents are fully involved in the process. The careers service provides interviews on request for all pupils needing specific support and interviews all pupils in Year 11. Pupils are informed of all possible routes after the age of 16 but, given the rising standards and stronger pupils' aspirations in recent years, information about higher education is limited. Careers education is strengthened by whole-school initiatives that encourage good work attitudes and behaviour through the Connexions initiative in Year 11 and the Gold Standard awards for positive features such as punctuality, attendance and reliability.
63. The school's very good links with the community enrich the education it provides. Local businesses support the Gold Standard awards, under which six personal goals are set for pupils in Years 10 to 13 and included in their personal Records of Achievement. A local employer sponsors the work experience award. Another company provides personnel to support teachers in assessing pupils' presentations in business studies. Pupils involved in a marketing challenge collaborate well with local companies, for example in developing the promotion of a voucher scheme.
64. There are links with a range of services, and both police and local hospitals contribute to the personal and social education programme on topics relating to drugs and sex education. The school has effective links with primary schools ensuring that information about pupils' prior attainment is available to heads of faculty in the first term of entry to the school. The records kept of pupils' work and their transition to the school's own sixth form or to other institutions are monitored and supported.

65. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for their moral and social development is good and provision for their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. The school's focus on strong and respectful relationships is at the heart of its recognition that these aspects of pupils' personal development have a real impact on their progress, attitudes and achievements. The school's inclusive approach ensures that all pupils have a sense of their own worth and helps them respect individual differences. There are several references to these aspects in the school's documentation, especially with regard to behaviour, equal opportunities and bullying. The recently developed citizenship and personal and social education programme is an important part of the school's provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. It is coordinated and taught by a team of specialists and some form tutors. At present, there is a lack of a shared policy and coordinated approach to the planning, teaching, monitoring and evaluation of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the whole school.
66. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies take place three times each week, for each year group. Assemblies rarely constitute worship and, although one assembly did provide a small opportunity for reflection, practice is inconsistent. Tutor time is not used for spiritual development. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. There is some evidence of planning in departments for spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and lacks structure. The citizenship programme contributes to this area, especially in providing opportunities for pupils to develop attitudes, explore feelings and develop insights and self-awareness. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are provided in some subjects. For example, religious education makes a very good contribution. Pupils are encouraged to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. In art and design, pupils are required to draw upon their own attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of the world in their studies of great artists. In most other subjects, however, opportunities are missed to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness.
67. The school makes good provision for pupils' moral development. Opportunities are targeted largely through the citizenship programme. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness, values and family life, equal opportunities, all provide a sound curriculum for discussion and the development of attitudes and values. Teaching styles that allow pupils to express their views, explore moral dilemmas and form judgements occur in both citizenship and religious education. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong and pupils respond well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff are very good role models for pupils. Assemblies contribute well in this area. The current theme of love and hate explores a range of spiritual and moral principles and values. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In physical education, there is a clear awareness of the importance of playing by the rules, and sporting behaviour and showing respect for officials are evident. In English, pupils are increasingly aware of making moral judgements through consideration of literary texts and poetry. Several other subjects, such as art and design, geography, history and music, all provide opportunities for pupils to develop good moral attitudes and values.
68. Provision for pupils' social development is good. The school provides significant opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The citizenship programme provides many opportunities to foster personal attitudes and independent thinking on topics such as rights and responsibilities and promoting a healthy environment. Further opportunities exist for some pupils to act as form captains and the school council provides some opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills and make important contributions to the life of the school. Work experience also provides significant opportunities for pupils to develop self-confidence and social skills. Whole-school initiatives, such as Connexions, encourage self-discipline and the Gold Standard award enables pupils to demonstrate their punctuality, reliability and attendance. Most subjects contribute effectively towards developing pupils' social awareness. For example, pupils work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in pair work, group work and general discussion.
69. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a number of opportunities to be involved in activities that extend their cultural awareness. For example, citizenship topics, such as respecting diversity, individual differences, tolerance and discrimination, make some



contribution. The wide range of well-supported trips and visits to theatres, art galleries, museums, together with visits to France, all provide opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. Some subjects make a significant contribution. For example, the study of Aboriginal art and the influences of African artists enable pupils to appreciate different cultures. Although there are aspects of religious education that make a particular contribution, especially the study of different religions and the cultures that support them, the school's curriculum provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. Departments do not do enough specific planning to ensure that they prepare pupils to live in an increasingly multi-cultural society. This was an issue identified at the time of the last inspection.

70. The one-to-one sessions of support for pupils with special educational needs promote good spiritual development, both through direct discussion and through the general level of support and care offered by special needs staff. These sessions are also used to explore issues of right and wrong, promoting very good moral development and encouraging pupils to take responsibility. The additional needs base room and the school's Green Room offer pupils who have difficulty forming social relationships more supportive settings in which to develop socially and emotionally.
71. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in opportunities for spiritual and cultural development, although the need to address the multi-cultural dimension remains. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development continues to be good.

## **Sixth form**

72. The curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory overall and improving. It has a number of positive features, including the wide range and balance of academic and vocational courses, but also has some weaknesses, for example the lack of sufficient planned opportunities to develop and widen students' horizons and personal development through an appropriate range of enrichment activities. The school is aware of these weaknesses, which are planned to be addressed in its next phase of development. Over the past eighteen months, the school has implemented a number of changes, including new management and organisational structures and tighter entry requirements for studying particular courses, as part of its thrust to raise standards further. The changes that have already been implemented are working well in the main but have not been in place long enough for their impact to be fully realised as yet.
73. The school provides a good range and balance of academic courses at AS and A-level, vocationally related courses at intermediate and advanced (AVCE) levels, as well as a certificate and diploma course in child care (CACHE). The sixth form curriculum is inclusive in that it is open to all students who are able to benefit from sixth form education and who meet the minimum entry requirements of the various types of courses on offer. It meets the individual needs, interests and aspirations of students well, a view confirmed by the students themselves, and it is responsive to local circumstances. Good links with the neighbouring girls' grammar school and the local college enable students to study a wider range of courses, such as chemistry, physics, politics and specific modules for the leisure and recreation course. Plans are in hand to strengthen these links over the coming year.
74. The school has taken effective steps to ensure that the curriculum and programmes of work are organised appropriately to meet the needs of students. For example, many course modules are taught sequentially rather than in parallel, which enables students to plan their learning more effectively. There has been a move towards organising lessons in longer blocks of time, which is enabling a broader range of teaching and learning approaches to be adopted. These developments are being implemented satisfactorily for the most part, but are still in an early phase of implementation and not all subject teachers have fully realised or grasped the possibilities that might exist within these arrangements.
75. The sixth form has previously provided opportunities for all students to acquire key skills in communication, application of number and ICT with mixed success. Currently the school makes effective provision for all Year 12 students who take key skills as an integral part of their GNVQ course. Most other students do not benefit from key skills development and this is a weakness, particularly in ICT, as students have often had an unsatisfactory provision in the main school. More positively, forty-five students are currently taking an AS course and this is proving to be a popular

and well-taught provision. An integral part of this course is the development and accreditation of the three key skills and it is hoped to extend this provision in subsequent years.

76. The careers and higher education guidance is satisfactory and is in the process of being developed further. There is a sufficient range of available materials and support, with visits and activities to promote application to institutes of higher education. However, teaching at present is largely through the limited tutorial time and out of lesson time, which diminishes its impact and effectiveness. The vocational courses, such as business and leisure, provide a good range of outside visits and visitors to broaden students' understanding. Work experience has been discontinued but is being replaced by work shadowing that better focuses on students' intended professional and other careers.
77. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many of the features highlighted in the main school report also apply to the sixth form. The school recognises the importance of these aspects of students' development and their impact on their progress, attitudes and achievement. Its main focus is on developing good and respectful relationships. The lack of a structured and consistent religious education programme in the sixth form severely limits the opportunities available for students to discuss spiritual, moral and cultural issues. Many opportunities are missed to enhance this area of students' personal development.
78. Provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall. Assemblies make some contribution, especially to raising moral and social issues. However, tutor time is not used for spiritual development. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. There is some planning in departments for students' spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and lacks structure. In some subjects such as English, mathematics, geography and art, opportunities for the spiritual development of students occur. However, in most subjects, opportunities are missed to enhance this aspect of students' personal development.
79. The school makes good provision for students' moral development. Teaching styles in English and geography allow students to express their views, explore moral dilemmas and make judgements. These subjects provide good opportunities for students to form judgements on a range of moral issues. The school has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong and students respond well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff are good role models for students.
80. Provision for students' social development is satisfactory. There are some opportunities for students to further develop their social skills and demonstrate social responsibility. Teaching styles enable students to express their views and feelings and to develop confidence in public speaking. There is no prefect system so opportunities for students to influence attitudes and behaviour in the main school are limited.
81. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. The wide range of trips and visits to theatres, art galleries, museums and trips to Paris, New York and Normandy broaden their cultural awareness and understanding. Some subjects make a significant contribution. For example, in art and design the study of artists from other cultures forms an important part of the curriculum. In English, there is good exposure to the English literary tradition. In geography, the use of two video sequences challenged pupils to explore political influences in Japan and India. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exists in this country, although there are aspects of religious education that make a considerable contribution.

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

82. The pastoral care and support of pupils continues to be a strength of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school provides a supportive community where teachers, staff, and in particular the headteacher, provide very good role models for pupils. The school provides an effective environment in which pupils can learn. Staff know pupils very well and expect high standards of them in their work and their attitudes. The school has developed a structure that is seeking to ensure that pupils' welfare, personal development and academic needs are addressed as one. Staff have a very good knowledge of pupils' personal development and a good

understanding of their academic progress. They are very effective in promoting high standards of discipline and behaviour from the majority of pupils.

83. Pupils are confident that they can approach staff with any problems and feel that they receive good support. The monitoring of pupils' personal development, attitudes and academic progress within a structured system supports staff well in fulfilling their roles. The good links between key stage managers, principal teachers, tutors, departments and the senior management team, combined with good personal and academic support and guidance, assist pupils to benefit from the opportunities offered by the school. The recently introduced mentoring arrangements are a strong feature of this support. These provide the opportunity for tutors to work with all pupils on an individual basis to address their particular needs and identify any areas, such as personal organisation, homework, relationships or learning, in which they might benefit from specific support and guidance. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and for themselves and others, both within the community of the school and the wider community. Individual targets set by staff, together with those set by pupils, are recorded and closely monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are realistic. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development is used effectively to improve standards and learning.
84. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, with significant improvements taking place since the last inspection. A comprehensive and detailed assessment policy has been reviewed and updated, giving clear guidance to all staff on managing and monitoring assessment, recording and reporting. The new mentoring arrangements, along with the recent restructuring of management roles and responsibilities, are good in supporting and enhancing pupils' academic and personal progress. Reviews of pupils' progress are now more frequent, and include the setting of agreed targets for improvement. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are clearly identified and given extra support and guidance.
85. To monitor its performance, the school makes good use of a range of data, which is accessible to each department. The use of National Curriculum levels is well established in English and science but there are inconsistencies in other subjects and in the quality of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9. The application of the National Curriculum level descriptions at the end of Year 9 in a number of foundation subjects is inaccurate and indicates a lack of understanding by staff and weak moderation procedures. The school does not monitor and moderate assessment practices within departments sufficiently to ensure data is adequately analysed and used to inform target setting; that approaches to marking are consistent; and that teachers apply the level descriptions accurately in assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. The school is in the process of developing a new management information system and working towards a new reporting system for keeping parents well informed of their child's progress.
86. Assessment procedures are good in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. These departments have good systems in place, utilise the data available and pupils know their levels. The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning is good in English, science, modern foreign languages, art and design and design and technology. However, the assessment of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory at both key stages.
87. The school offers a good standard of care to its pupils with special educational needs. Pupils have appropriate targets and all subject teachers are given full details of pupils' needs, including a pupil profile and Individual Education Plan. There are good procedures for the identification and assessment of special needs. The school endeavours to identify and intervene with all pupils who come to the school in Year 7 without adequate literacy skills. There is good tracking of the academic, social and emotional progress of pupils with special educational needs through the caseworker system and weekly reviews. Pupils are given very good feedback on their progress and attainment.
88. The register of special educational needs is efficiently maintained and the department's policies and practice are in line with recent Government advice. Annual reviews and transition plans are appropriately completed with the full participation of parents and pupils, and other professionals where needed. The school makes every effort to ensure that the provision named in each statement of special educational need is made, and carefully tracks the time each pupil is supported in each lesson. Like many other schools, the school experiences shortages in the

availability of speech and language therapy, and in one case has used additional funds to buy in appropriate advice and support.

89. Procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. They are applied consistently by staff and are well understood by pupils. The school's ethos and the high expectations of all adults working within the school are usually successful in promoting very good standards of behaviour in and around the school and during lessons. On occasions, when the pace or challenge of lessons is insufficient or where inappropriate management strategies are used, a minority of pupils show disinterest in their learning and can affect the learning of others. The recent opening of the Blue Room, which is used for 'cooling off', internal exclusions, supporting pupils on return to school after a period of exclusion and self-referral, provides a supportive and structured regime which has been successful in reinforcing expected standards of behaviour and reducing the number of exclusions. In one instance, the Blue Room enabled a pupil, who would otherwise have been permanently excluded, to continue to receive education at the school. Staff work closely with parents and pupils to ensure that if pupils are having problems in meeting the expected standards of behaviour, they receive appropriate support. Pupils value the rewards that they are able to earn and recognise that sanctions are applied fairly. The effectiveness of the strategies used, together with the close monitoring, ensure very good standards of behaviour throughout the school. The ethos of the school promotes very good personal relationships, engages pupils in their learning and provides opportunities for collaboration within the classroom and through activities. The very good standards of behaviour and relationships have a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress.
90. The school has good procedures to monitor and promote good attendance and punctuality. It is very active in seeking to raise the attendance levels of pupils who do not attend regularly. On occasions, staff fail to make entries against some pupils' names when registers are closed and there are examples in several registers of correcting fluid being used to amend the register which is a legal document. Attendance patterns are carefully analysed and linked to pupils' progress. Parents are made aware that holidays should not be taken during term time and that such holidays are not authorised. In those cases where concerns are identified, staff work with parents and outside agencies to address them.
91. Child protection arrangements are good and the school's procedures comply fully with requirements. One of the deputy headteachers is responsible for child protection and is very ably supported in this role by another senior member of staff and the school nurse. All are fully trained. In addition, all staff have received awareness training and are familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of a disclosure. There are well-established liaison arrangements with outside agencies. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities and acting in the best interests of pupils. Procedures for intervention in any instances where there is a risk of individual pupils harming themselves or others are very good and 12 staff have received appropriate training.
92. The school has a satisfactory health and safety policy and teachers promote safe practices in lessons. Arrangements for the monitoring and promotion of health and safety are identified by the school as an area that could be improved and current arrangements do not meet the very high standards identified at the time of the last inspection. Equipment and appliances are regularly tested. Departments use generic risk assessments, although full risk assessments are completed in respect of visits. A coordinator for visits is to be appointed and trained. The school is developing a portfolio of whole-school risk assessments and those specific to certain activities but these are underdeveloped. The senior member of staff with responsibility for health and safety does not have the necessary records to enable him to coordinate this area of work fully.
93. The arrangements for providing first aid are excellent. There is a full-time school nurse and an appropriate room in which pupils who are unwell can be looked after until they are either able to return to their class or are taken off-site for further care and support. Thirty-eight staff have first aid qualifications. The recording of accidents is very good. Governors receive detailed reports each term, which enable them to identify potential risks and initiate appropriate action.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

94. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The school recently reviewed and updated the assessment policy, providing clear and comprehensive guidelines to support the tutors. Much improved procedures have been introduced this year through the mentoring and progress file. The mentoring system enables tutors to support students in their studies, review and keep them informed of their progress, give guidance on targets and encourage self-review. The progress file equips students to manage their own learning and helps to increase their motivation.
95. Students are assessed using examination board criteria, and they know how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Students receive good support. Assessment is good in English, mathematics and science along with a number of other subjects. The assessment of students' skills in ICT is unsatisfactory and an area for improvement.

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

96. Overall, support and guidance for students are good. An effective induction programme and good support benefit the preparation of students for study in the sixth form. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own actions and to provide good role models for pupils in the main school. They generally respond well to these high expectations. Staff, who are readily available, provide good individual guidance which bridges learning and personal development. Students who join the school in the sixth form receive good support from tutors and their peers to ensure that they settle in quickly and benefit from the learning and other opportunities offered.
97. The provision for students' welfare is good. Arrangements for first aid are excellent; those for child protection are good and those for health and safety are satisfactory. These judgements reflect those for the main school. The school's arrangements for monitoring and promoting attendance in the sixth form are satisfactory: the school is conscious that overall levels of attendance in the sixth form are lower than those found amongst pupils in the main school. The good support provided for students supports their development and academic progress well.

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

98. The school's partnership with parents is good, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Parents are very positive about the school. The school is effective in involving them in a partnership that supports pupils' learning and personal development well. This partnership is reinforced by a home/school agreement and the sharing of pupils' successes as well as fully involving them in the event of any concerns.
99. Well over half of the parents responded to the questionnaire sent to them before the inspection. Parents are very positive about most aspects of the school's work and particularly value the school's high expectations, the good progress pupils make, the quality of teaching, the quality of leadership and management of the school and the help provided to enable pupils to become mature and responsible. A small minority would like to see improvements in the arrangements for homework, the information that they receive about their child's progress and the closeness with which the school works with parents, although a high percentage of them are comfortable in approaching the school with questions or a problem. Inspectors agree with the points that please parents most but inspection evidence does not support their concerns. Although there is some inconsistency in the quality of reports provided to parents, they are generally satisfactory.
100. Parents are given satisfactory information about pupils' progress and attainment in the annual progress report and the two interim reports that they receive each year. A high proportion of parents attend consultation evenings and alternative arrangements are made for those unable to attend. Staff are very accessible to parents. The reports are often written in a style that recognises both parents and pupils as the audience and also identify National Curriculum levels. However, the quality of targets in the reports is inconsistent and they are not always clear enough to help parents understand what their child has to do to move to the next stage of their learning. Other information about the life and work of the school is provided through specific letters.

101. The school involves parents appropriately in discussions of their child's special educational needs, and in reviews of targets, annual reviews of statement and transitional plans for pupils in, and after, Year 9. A minority of parents are not convinced that provision meets the needs of their child adequately. Their concerns are not wholly supported by inspectors, although they judge that the school needs to monitor more closely the impact of the change of approach in meeting the needs of these pupils and to continue to work closely with their parents.
102. The school also holds meetings for parents to increase their understanding of issues such as drugs awareness and tries hard to ensure a good attendance of parents at events. For example, the presentation of the annual report of governors to parents is combined with a review performed by pupils. This enables the school to attract the attendance of large numbers of parents.
103. Pupils and staff appreciate the support of parents, which makes a positive contribution to the life of the school and to the resources and facilities available to pupils. Parents are generally supportive of pupils' learning at school and at home, and their wider activities. The parents' association, run by a small but very hard working committee, provides very good support for school activities, for example, by preparing refreshments at school events and by raising money each year through organising a variety of events. This enables them to support initiatives to improve the school environment, for example, by purchasing benches, and to provide school prizes, which are valued by pupils.
104. Sixth form students are generally positive about the school. In particular, they feel that their choice of sixth form study meets their talents and aspirations and that they are well taught and challenged. They feel they are provided with good help to settle into the sixth form and to develop independent study skills. They value the advice and support given by the teachers. A significant majority of students in the sixth form would recommend it to others. A majority said that they would like to be treated as responsible adults and to be better advised about future career options. A minority of students wanted more information about their academic progress, more enrichment activities and a better response to their views. Inspectors agreed with the positive views of students, but do not support their concerns for improvement. Although they judge the quality of information provided about progress to parents as satisfactory, they consider that the regular assessment of their progress and the students' own knowledge of their learning to be good. They also consider that careers education and guidance for future courses, study or career opportunities are satisfactory.

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

105. As was the case in 1996, when the school was last inspected, the leadership and management provided by the headteacher, the executive team and the senior management team are good overall. Some senior managers make very effective contributions. The headteacher leads the school very well, providing clear strategic and educational direction, together with a strong commitment to ensuring that school improvement is focused on meeting the needs of all pupils. The senior management team places a clear emphasis on improving pupils' learning by addressing their academic and pastoral needs as an entity. Senior managers are successful in fulfilling their responsibility to promote high standards of pupils' achievement and personal development. There is a clear commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and the school's effective strategies to bring this about reflect its ethos and values.
106. The school development plan shows a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure continued improvement and provides an effective structure for identifying school priorities and setting out how these will be addressed. The plan is reviewed regularly by the executive team and the senior management team, as well as by the committees of the governing body. Significant development opportunities have been identified: next term, for example, the headteacher has plans to develop a bid and gain the necessary support to enable the school to seek specialist school status. The school has been pro-active in participating in a number of national and local initiatives, which have enhanced considerably its provision.
107. The school structure has recently been changed to provide a clearer focus for supporting pupils' academic and personal development through the appointment of key stage managers and their teams. These key stage managers, who form part of the school's senior management team, have clearly delegated areas of responsibility, although these are not yet fully reflected in their job descriptions. Responsibilities are undertaken effectively and, combined with efficient administrative

support, they help to ensure the smooth running of the school. The various teams have specific responsibilities and meet regularly to manage and review developments and policies and to consider a range of administrative issues relating to day-to-day management. The executive team and the senior management team meet fortnightly with the headteacher to review the strategic direction of the school. Managers are developing their roles within the new structures to hold departments and other middle managers to greater account for what they do and for the consistency with which they implement school policies. As yet, these arrangements are not sufficiently robust and practice is inconsistent.

108. Overall, the leadership and management of subjects are good. In the best examples, there is a clear vision of what has to be done to improve further. In these subjects, which include art and design, design and technology, geography and modern foreign languages, the monitoring of the work of the department is systematic, schemes of work are effective, and the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance are good. Appropriate procedures have been developed for monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching and learning, supported by effective planning for improvement. However, heads of department do not follow a common approach in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments and in their planning. This work, which is overseen by the deputy headteacher responsible for day-to-day organisation and timetabling, lacks sufficient consistency.
109. The management of special educational needs in the school is good. The department is strongly led and there are good systems in place for recording, sharing and using information about pupils. The new management structure has good potential for making the most effective use of resources and ensuring continued good provision. Since the last inspection, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and, in particular, for pupils with hearing impairment has changed significantly. There has been good progress towards giving pupils full access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The right balance of inclusion in ordinary classes and withdrawal for specialist support has not yet been reached for a few pupils. The school will need to monitor carefully the achievement of these pupils to fine-tune its provision. Similarly, it will need to keep under constant review whether the range of examination courses currently provided is the most appropriate for some individual pupils.
110. Governors know the school very well. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governors' committee structure is used effectively to contribute to the development and monitoring of school policies and projects, such as that which led to the development of the sixth form centre. Governors are very well informed about developments through the headteacher's reports and their regular visits to the school. They make an important contribution to determining, supporting and monitoring priorities and action in the school development plan, and are very efficient in monitoring the school's finances. The governing body is effective in fulfilling most of its responsibilities, but has not ensured that: ICT is used adequately to support teaching and learning in all subjects; provision is made for control technology; and the requirement to have a daily act of collective worship is fulfilled.
111. The school has sufficient appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum. Recent turnover of staff has affected coverage and continuity of certain subjects, for example ICT and music, but staffing is now more stable. There are some non-specialist teachers but they are supported well by heads of departments and the provision of appropriate in-service training. Special needs staff are well qualified and have a good breadth of expertise. In general, there are sufficient teaching and support staff, and the status of special needs teachers is enhanced by their teaching commitment in mainstream subjects. Learning support assistants are experienced and well qualified for their role.
112. The school's programme of professional development takes place in all subjects and covers whole-school issues provided through a carefully targeted programme including, for example, raising achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 in science, and training in ICT. Opportunities to undertake training are only approved after a careful assessment on the possible impact it will have on pupils' learning. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers and for new teachers joining the school is good. The school has a very good performance management programme, which is focused on developing teachers' professional skills through observation of lessons and the setting of individual targets in order to promote best practice. The performance of every teacher is appraised annually either by the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the Advanced Skills Teacher

who assists in developing the skills of individual teachers. Teachers' skills are enhanced through this process, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

113. Since the last inspection, the school's roll has increased by just over 100 pupils and although additional sixth form accommodation has been provided and the refurbishment of science laboratories has improved facilities, many of the limitations identified at that time remain. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory for teaching the current curriculum. Governors consider that the accommodation needs to be improved, and have a ten-year strategy for the development of buildings, which is very closely linked to raising standards.
114. The outdoor space available for physical education is very good, but the indoor accommodation is inadequate and the provision of showers is unsatisfactory. These issues affect the quality of teaching and learning as well as the teaching of some aspects of the programme of study. The use of the hall for examinations affects the indoor programme and is a particular issue in wet weather. The accommodation for art is inadequate for storing and displaying large pieces of work and the technology rooms are too small for some groups, which makes it difficult to ensure the safe management of pupils when they are undertaking some work.
115. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in modern foreign languages, art, science, physical education and in religious education. In ICT, there are insufficient computers. Many are slow machines, offering limited access and often they are out of order. In design and technology, there is insufficient software to support computer-aided design and manufacture of components. There are also insufficient textbooks in ICT. In contrast, the new library facilities and arrangements are of good quality and in many respects they are very good.
116. The Additional Educational Needs department has satisfactory resources, with good resources for the maintenance and testing of hearing aids and good resources for computer-assisted learning. It is based in satisfactory accommodation, which is well used in respect of pupils' personal and social development and the provision of individual support and guidance.
117. Day-to-day management of the school's finances is very good. Educational priorities are supported well through the school's financial planning and the budget is regularly reviewed. Best value principles are appropriately applied and the school has very effective procedures to ensure that it secures value for money when purchasing goods or services. The school makes very good use of all grants and additional funding, and links decisions on spending to educational priorities to good effect, although the rationale for allocating funding to individual departments is unclear. However, this money is spent wisely to develop curriculum areas. The school's use of new technology to support management and pupils' learning is satisfactory, but is insufficiently developed across the curriculum. The school makes good use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure, the quality of education provided and the achievement of pupils in relation to their prior attainment, the school is very effective and provides good value for money.

## **Sixth form**

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

118. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of sixth form has a clear focus on improving standards and the quality of provision, and manages it effectively on a day-to-day basis. In this task, he is supported well by the two principal teachers, who are responsible for a specific year group and for particular aspects of the work of the sixth form as a whole. They have complementary skills and as a group work together well. They are still developing their roles and responsibilities but are gaining increased confidence in implementing tighter procedures and new ways of working. Their appointments followed a review of aspects of the school's work by the headteacher, which identified the improvement of provision and standards as one of its four key priorities. These new management structures are now in their second year and are beginning to have a considerable impact on improving standards in the sixth form and the creation of an ethos in which working hard and doing well are the expectation. Most students are responding well to these expectations although a few consider that they do not have enough flexibility and freedom. Inspectors judge that the school's approach, which considers that greater flexibility and freedom have to be earned by hard work and responsible attitudes, is necessary in the short term if



standards are to rise substantially. The good quality of the teaching and learning and students' positive response to their work are testimony to the improvements that are being made in sixth form provision. In addition, retention rates, which have improved this year, are a good indicator that the changes are already having a positive impact.

119. Governors make a strong contribution in helping to shape the strategic direction of the sixth form and fulfil their responsibilities well, although they do not ensure that students participate in a daily act of collective worship. Through the work of the sixth form committee, which meets twice a year, they are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and what improvements are needed. They play an active role in assuring the quality of the sixth form and in setting clear priorities for its development and operation. There is a clear rationale for the work of the sixth form, which builds on the school's priorities for the main school. There is a clear commitment to establishing good relationships and equality of opportunity for all students.
120. Development planning is good. The sixth form development plan, which forms part of the whole-school development plan, identifies a number of relevant priorities, including widening the range of teaching and learning approaches, implementing a programme of lesson observation, improving the arrangements for tracking students' progress, mentoring and the provision of careers guidance, making better use of study time and developing an enrichment programme. Many of these priorities have been addressed over the past year as the first stage in improving the rigour of the sixth form, with some having been implemented since the beginning of this term: consequently, they are still being established and their impact has not been fully established. However, through training, most teachers are successfully widening their range of teaching approaches, ensuring a more student-centred focus to learning. Arrangements for tracking students' progress are developing well and both students and staff consider the mentoring arrangements to be effective. At present, the range of enrichment opportunities provided for students is unsatisfactory. However, the second phase of the development of the sixth form includes the implementation of an appropriate enrichment programme as an entitlement for all students. This will include additional opportunities for students to further their study, learning and personal skills, as well as providing clear careers guidance, citizenship and a personal and social education programme.
121. The monitoring of the work of the sixth form is satisfactory. Performance data are carefully analysed and used appropriately to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision and to set targets for further development. As yet, not enough is done to monitor the quality of teaching and learning on a regular and consistent basis, although there are plans for this to occur next term.
122. The sixth form is cost effective and the school uses its resources well to support the work of the sixth form. Funding is used appropriately in providing for the students, including an extension of the school day to ensure that the range of courses available meets their needs. Relationships and the day-to-day management of links with the neighbouring girls' grammar school and the local college, at which a small number of students follow courses, are effective. The principles of best value are applied appropriately to ensure that expenditure is cost effective. In terms of its range of provision, the good quality of teaching and learning and the improving standards, the sixth form provides good value for money.

## **Resources**

123. Staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach and there is a very good match of subject expertise to the courses taught. This is shown to good effect in the majority of lessons, where the teachers' very good subject knowledge is used effectively to provide a range of challenging and interesting activities to help students learn. There is still some split teaching in the sixth form. Pupils report that they do not like this arrangement.
124. Resources for learning are satisfactory. In physical education, French and science they are good. In art, they are very good. In design and technology, there are insufficient textbooks for students and no computer software to support computer-aided design and making. The new library facility makes a very good contribution to students' progress and the recently implemented arrangements for students to borrow books have been well received. Students have insufficient access to computers to support their learning in a number of subjects.

125. Accommodation for the sixth form is good. The new sixth form block, built since the last inspection, has improved the range of facilities available for students.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

126. The school should:

- (1) improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, especially in the foundation subjects, by:
- providing appropriate training to ensure that teachers have a clearer understanding of the level descriptions;
  - moderating teachers' assessments more effectively;
  - improving the consistency of reporting pupils' attainment and progress to parents;
  - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the accuracy of the teachers' assessments.

*[paragraphs: 4; 85; 149; 158; 162; 172; 183; 184; 204; 207]*

- (2) make more effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning, especially in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, music and physical education, by:
- increasing the number of computers and ensuring greater access to them;
  - identifying more explicitly the contribution that individual subjects can make to developing pupils' ICT skills;
  - ensuring that the application of these skills are included more frequently in departmental planning;
  - assessing pupils' ICT skills in subject work to inform teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9;
  - improving the arrangements for managing the network;
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision more effectively.

*[paragraphs: 38; 54; 86; 140; 146; 162; 184; 187; 188; 203; 209; 210]*

- (3) tighten the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the work of the school, by:
- implementing more rigorous accountability systems between senior and middle managers;
  - ensuring that all middle managers systematically monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility in order to improve standards;
  - developing a more consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation across the school as a whole.

*[paragraphs: 85; 107; 108; 109; 118; 121; 140; 181; 203; 209; 235; 274]*

- (3) implement a more consistent approach to the development of pupils' numeracy skills, by:
- clearly identifying a coordinator for numeracy across the curriculum;
  - developing a whole-school policy for the development of pupils' numeracy skills;
  - ensuring that all subjects include in their schemes of work and in daily planning how they plan to use and develop pupils' numeracy skills through subject teaching.

*[paragraphs: 11; 38; 57; 92; 162; 180; 209; 273]*

- (3) improve the provision for the most capable pupils, by:
- establishing more rigorous systems for identifying these pupils;
  - ensuring that all departments plan work that is adequately challenging for the most capable pupils;

- coordinating the school's provision for these pupils more effectively;
- monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision on a systematic basis.

*[paragraphs: 13; 20; 43; 53; 137; 176]*

## **Sixth form**

- (1) extend the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, especially in business studies, leisure and tourism, design and technology, history and geography, by:
- ensuring that students have adequate access to computers, both in and out of lessons;
  - including the use of ICT more frequently in teachers' planning.

*[paragraphs: 20; 50; 75; 240; 246; 254; 264; 273]*

- (2) implement a clearly defined programme of enrichment activities as an entitlement to support students' academic and personal development.

*[paragraphs: 31; 72; 120]*

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

- extend the opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country and prepare them more effectively for life in a multi-cultural society;

*[paragraphs 59; 71; 81]*

- monitor more rigorously the provision for hearing impaired pupils.

*[paragraphs 69; 109]*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	156
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	4	39	78	34	1	0	0
Percentage	3	25	50	22	1	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	20	17	11	0	0	0
Percentage	4	40	34	22	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 two percentage points.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	798	167

<b>Free school meals</b>	No of pupils
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	57

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	56	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6 (7.2)
National comparative data	n/a (8.1)

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8 (0.6)
National comparative data	n/a (1.1)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	78	83	161

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	60	54	50
	Girls	75	55	55
	Total	135	109	105
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	84 (93)	68 (84)	65 (78)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	26 (48)	40 (55)	24 (35)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	64	58	48
	Girls	78	70	54
	Total	142	128	102
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	88 (87)	80 (87)	63 (79)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	50 (36)	58 (60)	19 (29)
	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	73	92	165

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	29	67	69
	Girls	54	87	90
	Total	83	154	159
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (52)	93 (92)	96 (96)
	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	39.5 (39.0)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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	0
	National	n/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	39	34	73
	Average point score per candidate	82.0 (11.1)	119.4 (8.5)	99.6 (10)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	23	19	42	25	19	44
	Average point score per candidate	57.4	101.1	77.1	62.0	93.7	75.7
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

\* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
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
Parent/pupil preferred not to say

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
919	51	1
0	0	0
32	0	0
0	0	0
1	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	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 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	378

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	52
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.0
Key Stage 4	22.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2948275
Total expenditure	2935165
Expenditure per pupil	3077
Balance brought forward from previous year	130772
Balance carried forward to next year	143882

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	965
Number of questionnaires returned	549

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	55	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	52	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	55	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	55	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	37	57	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	50	14	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	32	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	51	12	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	52	42	3	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	50	3	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	48	10	1	13

## 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

- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and there is good capacity to improve further.
- The acting head of faculty provides good leadership and effective management.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient consistency in the quality of teaching across the year groups.

127. In 2001, pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was well above average compared with pupils' performance nationally and well above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance was better in English than in mathematics and science. Girls did much better than boys, as is the picture nationally, but when compared with their respective national figures, there was little difference. The pupils' average points score has improved year by year and on average over the last three years has been above the national average, largely as a result of the slightly better performance of the girls. Given pupils' below average attainment on entry to the school, many pupils are achieving very well, which reflects the very good provision made for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. In 2002, the school's performance was less strong, being average overall, although at Level 5 or above, the results were well above the national average. When compared with the performance of pupils in similar schools, the results were above average. The department came very close to meeting the school's target of 85 per cent of pupils reaching Level 5 or above.
128. In 2001, the GCSE examination results in English language and English literature at grades A\*-C were significantly below the national average but above average for grades A\*-G. Girls did much better than boys in both subjects. Compared with their average points score at the end of Year 9, pupils' results indicate that they did not achieve as well as expected. In 2002, the results at grades A\*-C in both subjects improved considerably, being close to the national average in English and not far below average in English literature. Again, the results were above average for grades A\*-G. Nevertheless, comparison with their earlier attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 indicates that many pupils in this year group continued to underachieve. The school suffered considerable disruption from staffing difficulties during this period, which affected pupils' progress during the GCSE course. Both fast track groups were affected and a mixed ability group was taught by four different teachers. Three teachers left between July and December 2000 leaving key posts unfilled for the remainder of the academic year. The situation improved somewhat in 2001/02 and the GCSE results reflected that. Currently, the department's situation is more stable, albeit with an acting head and several part-time or newly or recently qualified teachers, and the department's work is being conducted effectively.
129. In the work seen, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9. Many pupils in Years 7 to 9, bearing in mind their below average attainment on entry overall, are achieving very well. This is as a result of the implementation of the national strategy for teaching English in Years 7 and in Year 8, the use of 'progress units' for the 20 per cent of pupils who enter the school at Level 3 or below, and the use of computer-assisted learning software for those who have weak literacy skills. The effects are apparent in the written work throughout Years 7 to 9, which shows that many pupils have the ability to write about a wide range of interesting reading and writing tasks in a lively and expressive way. Effective use is made of ICT to draft and present written work accurately and attractively. Pupils are confident users of word-processing and publishing software. By Year 9, higher and average attaining pupils articulate ideas and express opinions clearly, using a wide vocabulary. Their analytical skills are strongly developed and they annotate texts effectively using highlighting, underlining or side notes and select examples from a text to illustrate a point. Their writing is lively, accurate and suited well to the task. The lowest attaining pupils write at some length in an appropriate style. Their written work benefits from the carefully structured 'frameworks' provided by teachers, but their overall standard remains below

average because of continuing difficulties with spelling, sentence punctuation and a tendency to write as they speak. However, many have achieved very well to reach this standard given their starting point.

130. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation, representing good achievement given the lack of continuity in teaching encountered by some groups during Year 10. Lower attaining pupils write at some length, although difficulties with over-conversational expression and punctuation persist. Average attainers show a strong grasp of character and key issues raised by their set texts. Higher attainers write fluently, accurately and with personal involvement. In lessons, the higher attaining pupils are developing a wide-ranging vocabulary to use in the analysis of poetry and to give greater expression to their writing. In a 'fast track' group, pupils tackled some demanding poetry and novels with success. Standards amongst pupils in Year 11 following a media studies course are above average. They speak intelligently about the preparations for and progress of their current project, are capable users of ICT including video-editing software for video features or advertisements, and show above average skills in designing, writing and laying out their own magazines.
131. The quality of teaching in English is good overall, and pupils learn well as a result. Teachers manage pupils well through a combination of good humour, knowledge of the needs of individuals and the expectation that they will work hard. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Well-planned lessons and carefully structured activities contribute much to pupils' progress. Teachers provide well-presented, stimulating extracts, worksheets and other materials, which help pupils to understand their learning and make an appropriate written response. This applies particularly to lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, who benefit from the way work is carefully structured for them. Gifted and talented pupils have also been identified and they make as good progress as their peers because their work is suitably challenging. Teachers usually make effective use of a variety of methods to encourage and reinforce learning, including short tasks, question and answer sessions, paired and group work, and provide opportunities to use ICT to develop good writing. Teachers have incorporated the new Framework for English into schemes of work and, as a result, pupils acquire knowledge about language and gain confidence in writing, speaking and reading particularly well in Years 7 to 9. In one very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher ensured that pupils themselves rehearsed their previous learning at the beginning of the lesson. She asked questions that required pupils to explain why or how something was so, rather than just recall information. She waited for the right moment to interject a question or comment when reading aloud so that pupils' understanding of and empathy with the main character and their sense of anticipation of the story's development were enhanced. As a result, pupils learned a great deal about being aware of others, attending to the detail of a text and reading for understanding, and all were involved in the learning at some point in the lesson. When teaching is less effective, although never less than satisfactory, it is because teachers over-explain, an activity is over-prolonged, or teachers rely too much on the voluntary contribution of a few pupils. As a result, the pace of the lesson slows and pupils do not take an adequate share of responsibility for contributing to their own learning.
132. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in 1996. Standards are higher by the end of Year 9. Pupils are achieving well overall compared with the previously mixed picture of progress. The quality of teaching has improved in Years 7 to 9. Good leadership and management by the acting head of faculty provide clear direction and a firm grip on procedures so that the faculty works effectively on behalf of its pupils.

## **Drama**

133. Drama is part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and is offered as an option for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Two drama lessons were seen, one in Year 7 and one in Year 10. In the Year 7 class, pupils' learning was very good. They learned about the 'rules of conduct' in drama lessons, how to 'hot-seat' a character and how to use role-play to enact characters and situations. They responded readily to the teacher's pleasant, friendly manner, her good control and very good demonstrations, and by the end of the lesson, were able to act out the roles of townspeople in a meeting very effectively. Pupils in the Year 10 class spoke with confidence, using the vocabulary of drama well. They cooperated readily with each other in randomly chosen groups. They were able to improvise around a theme or idea and in a short time produce a 'freeze frame' that summed up the idea without words in effective tableaux. Not all the pupils are entirely in control of their performance at

this stage of their course and some lack confidence in front of an audience. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment is in line with expectations overall. Teaching is good because the teacher pays particular attention to important vocabulary and encourages pupils to use it. Pupils are involved in a good range of activities that prepares them effectively for production of their own group improvisation. The teacher's evaluation of group work helped pupils improve their performance at the second or third attempt. Overall, however, good learning takes place and pupils improve their drama skills well. This teacher has sole responsibility for drama in the school and is carrying out her duties conscientiously and well.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Pupils are achieving well by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- The good quality of the teaching ensures that pupils make good progress.
- The planning and use of homework are very good and have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and achieve well.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not share learning objectives sufficiently with pupils or make enough use of a mental starter at the beginning of lessons.
- Exercise books are not marked frequently enough to ensure that pupils receive regular feedback on their work.
- ICT is not used enough to meet National Curriculum requirements.

134. In the national tests in 2001, pupils' attainment was above the national average overall and well above average when compared with similar schools. At Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above, the results were well above the national average, with no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The school's results in 2002 were not quite as high as those in 2001 but were in line with the national average overall and at Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above. They were also average when compared with the results of pupils in similar schools. In 2002, a higher proportion of boys than girls attained Level 6 or above. The school's results have improved considerably since 1998.

135. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were significantly above the national average at grades A\*-C and were well above average when compared with similar schools. The boys' results were significantly above the national figure for boys and were better than those of the girls, whose results were above the national figure for girls. In 2002, the school's results were above the national average, not quite as high as those for 2001. The dip in results was predicted by the school and is in line with pupils' earlier attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9. At grades A\*-G, the school's results were well above the national average. The results in the GCSE examinations have improved at a rate broadly in line with those nationally over the last three years although there was a considerable increase in 2001.

136. In relation to their earlier attainment on entry to the school, pupils are achieving well at both key stages. Pupils arrive at the school with below average skills in mathematics but by the end of Year 9, their attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of Pythagoras' theorem, indices, probability, gradient and intercepts, and coordinate work. However, some of the lower attaining pupils find difficulty in some of these topics, especially Pythagoras' theorem and indices. Pupils' work on some aspects of algebra, particularly the solution of equations and work on angles, is weaker than in other aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do those with a hearing impairment. These pupils receive very good support in lessons, which enables them to achieve well.

137. Standards are also in line with the national expectation by the end of Year 11, reflecting the GCSE examination results in 2002. Most pupils are achieving well. The higher attaining pupils are very competent mathematicians. They have a good knowledge and understanding of higher level topics, especially in the areas of algebraic manipulation, trigonometry, sequences, standard deviation, using and applying mathematics, and statistical diagrams. Nevertheless, they

underachieve because of the lack of sufficient extension work available to them in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well, showing good knowledge and application in a range of mathematical topics, including solution of equations and probability. Pupils are less secure in their knowledge of facts about angles, including angles at a point, and corresponding and alternate angles.

138. Overall, the teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this very well in planning lessons. For example, in the teaching of probability in Year 9, the lesson was broken down into several very short activities, enabling the pupils to work at a very productive pace and make considerable progress by the end of the lesson. Most lessons are divided well into three parts, although the learning objectives are not usually shared with the class. When they are shared, pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and take more responsibility for how well they are doing. Almost all lessons start with good use of question and answer sessions. These activities are carefully planned and check pupils' understanding well. Pupils are very often expected to explain their answer. This was very well managed in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were explaining the Fibonacci sequence of numbers. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are not so well developed. Word walls are on display in all classrooms and these make an effective contribution to many lessons as teachers make frequent reference to them to reinforce the important mathematical language required. Teachers have good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of pupils through diagnostic and unit tests. However, teachers do not mark pupils' exercise books frequently enough and this means that pupils receive insufficient individual feedback on any conceptual difficulties they may have. Homework, which is set at the end of every lesson, is carefully thought out and very well structured to meet the needs of pupils and to reinforce the learning that has taken place in the lesson.

139. In the higher attaining groups, especially in Years 10 and 11, pupils are given opportunities to explore their findings and reflect on what they have found. For example, pupils in Year 10 discovered trigonometric ratios from an investigational lesson on similar triangles. Pupils make good progress, mainly because of the high quality, well structured teaching they receive. Occasionally in Year 8, due to the poor behaviour and lack of concentration from a small number in the class, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

140. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, especially in the standards achieved by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The quality of teaching is now good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the subject and how standards can be improved further. The availability of ICT resources to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum for all pupils remains unsatisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning is under-developed.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is good overall: clear planning and the sharing of the learning intentions of lessons with pupils enable them to make good progress.
- The use of key words in every lesson helps pupils to spell scientific vocabulary correctly when writing and to use it accurately in their work.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes enhance their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment and marking are not used sufficiently to plan work and set targets for pupils.
- Curriculum planning does not take enough account of the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and is not monitored.

141. The National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average overall, showing an improvement over the results in the previous three years when they were average. When compared with similar schools, the results in 2001 were above average. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above was above the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. In 2002, the results overall and

at Level 5 or above were in line with the national averages, lower than the school's performance in 2001. When compared with similar schools, the results were broadly average. The GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 in 2001, both for double and single science, were significantly above the national average and were well above average when compared with similar schools. Around two-thirds of pupils study single science, with the remainder studying double science. In 2002, the GCSE results were not quite as high as those in 2001 but remained significantly above average in both double and single science. The results in science were better than the results in English and mathematics.

142. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. Pupils enter Year 7 with lower than 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 use their previously acquired knowledge in new situations competently. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils named the different forms of energy in our system and were confident in their understanding about energy transferring from one form to another in everyday situations. In this lesson, the lower attaining pupils made good progress, identifying energy transfer devices and describing what form of energy they produce; the higher attaining pupils recognised that although total energy in a system is conserved, it can be dissipated. Most pupils use their numeracy and literacy skills to good effect in their work.
143. Standards are higher in Key Stage 4 and by the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is above average. By the age of 16, they have become confident and competent learners and most make good progress and achieve well. This is particularly true of pupils studying for the double award in science. Good levels of literacy and numeracy help them to learn at a good pace. Pupils bring their previous knowledge to new situations well, predict the outcomes of experiments and form useful hypotheses; for example, in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were studying the stopping distance when applying the brakes on a car and discussing a model simulation. All pupils understood the need to add the distance travelled during the reflex time to the distance travelled once the brakes were applied and predicted the effect on this of variables such as wet roads and the consumption of alcohol. In most cases, pupils' practical skills are good. They work safely, understanding the need to develop a good code of practice for working in a laboratory, as in a Year 11 lesson, for example, where pupils were cracking crude oil and investigating the products of distillation. In all lessons, pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language do well and make good progress.
144. Pupils' attitudes to work are consistently good at both key stages and make a considerable contribution to the standards they attain. Pupils behave well, remain focused in lessons and take care of the laboratories and equipment. Most complete their homework on time and seek help from teachers to support their learning and to extend their understanding. They work hard, take a pride in their work and support each other well. They share very good relationships with their teachers and enjoy their science lessons.
145. Teaching and learning at both key stages are good overall and in a significant minority of lessons are very good. Lessons are planned well, start promptly and proceed at a good pace. The work covered is relevant to everyday situations. The learning objectives of lessons, which are clearly understood by the pupils, are most often achieved. All teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subjects and they work effectively in teams, sharing their knowledge and experience of effective practice. They know pupils well, have high expectations of them and give good support. As a result, pupils acquire knowledge and skills quickly and learn well. In the best lessons, the teachers' skilled and perceptive questioning challenges pupils and enhances the learning of all, including the higher attaining pupils. In Years 7 to 9, the national strategy for science is developing well and the teachers are using its teaching approaches effectively in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is clearly defined and opportunities to learn and develop skills are identified. Teaching strategies are successful in testing pupils' knowledge and understanding, and in securing good progress. In a Year 7 lesson that was an introduction to the Force and Space unit of study, some particularly effective teaching resulted in all pupils making very good gains in their learning. Pupils were very keen to take part and were clearly enthralled when observing pictures of the earth taken from space. Very good control of this lively class was significant to the success of the lesson, with pupils enjoying taking part and developing their understanding of how theories about our solar system have changed. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Pupils find the corrections and

comments useful in helping them to understand how well they are doing but they are not, as yet, given specific short-term targets to achieve.

146. Leadership and management are very good. A very good handbook sets out clear policies and expectations, with a sound structure and clear lines of communication within the department. The head of department coordinates the work of the Key Stage 3 coordinator, the primary liaison teacher and the ICT coordinator. These people work well together as a team to promote high standards. The curriculum is organised well and taught through well-planned and resourced units of study. Teachers stretch the higher attaining pupils and support weaker pupils by giving them extra time as they prepare for external examinations. There is good planning for the use of ICT in lessons but there are too few computers in the department to support active learning. Teachers encourage pupils to use the school computers and their computers at home, and direct them to appropriate sites on the Internet. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the department is good. There is a consistency of teaching practice across the department, particularly in the use made of key words and of learning objectives. Very good data is kept on pupils' attainment at the end of each key stage including reading ages and standardised test scores. This data is beginning to inform curriculum planning and to be used to set targets for individual pupils, but is not sufficiently developed as yet. The layout in four of the six laboratories does not allow for the wide variety of approaches necessary for the teaching of science.
147. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved. Teachers use the knowledge and abilities of pupils in lessons to good effect and pupils are involved more actively in lessons. Teachers have received training in using ICT and opportunities to use ICT in lessons are now planned. The monitoring of teaching and learning is taking place. The assessment of pupils' progress is improving but the use of assessment to inform future planning and to meet the learning needs of all pupils is not adequately developed. Although the national strategy for science is helping to extend the multi-cultural dimension of the science curriculum as well as the planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, these aspects do not feature sufficiently in departmental planning.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4.
- Leadership and management are very good and standards are rising.
- An encouraging atmosphere and very good personal relationships enable all pupils to feel confident and make progress.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of non-specialist teaching rooms restricts opportunities for large-scale three-dimensional work and storage facilities are insufficient.

148. Pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation by the end of Year 9 and is above the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 11. Many pupils join the school in Year 7 with low standards in both their practical skills and their knowledge and understanding in art and design. The standards reached by Year 11 represent good long-term achievement. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. More attention is given to fostering pupils' knowledge of artists and designers from many cultures. Procedures for gathering assessment data are sharper, better used by teachers and contribute effectively to pupils' progress. Art is gaining in popularity at GCSE, with more girls than boys choosing the subject.
149. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicate that standards were above the national averages, but this is not reflected in the work seen during the inspection, which is in line with the average overall. Teachers are not applying the National Curriculum level descriptions accurately enough in making their assessments. By the end of Year 9, pupils use a wide range of media effectively, including graded pencils, paint, printmaking and ceramics. They develop sound levels of specialist subject vocabulary and use it appropriately, when evaluating their own work and discussing that of other artists. Most have good knowledge of

a wide range of artists such as Georgia O' Keeffe, Roy Lichtenstein, William Morris, Paul Cezanne and Pablo Picasso. Most are able to make useful comparisons between their own work and that of these artists, using for example, their colour range, quality of line and style as a starting point. Pupils' sketchbooks show clear lines of development, from initial tentative sketches to confident final pieces. Regular homework exercises are taken seriously and contribute well to pupils' finished presentations. Pupils use computers effectively for research. They also scan and modify images, for use in their own drawings and paintings. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection. Pupils develop increasing confidence, skills and imagination because teachers carefully teach the skills of drawing, painting and three-dimensional representation on a step-by-step basis.

150. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were above the national average. In 2002, they were not quite as high and were broadly in line with the national average. From pupils' current work, standards are above the national expectation and better than the GCSE results in 2002 would indicate. In Year 10, pupils adapt quickly to meet the challenges of the GCSE course. Pupils in Year 11 sustain concentration through extended themes and develop ideas creatively. They make good use of homework projects to practise skills and make detailed preparatory sketches from first-hand and some secondary source materials, such as books, the Internet and periodicals. They talk knowledgeably about their ideas and work, show sound reasons for their choices of materials and know how they want their work to develop.
151. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Teachers create a welcoming ethos for all pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background. The quality of relationships is very good. Teachers support, care for and take pride in their pupils and their achievements. They have high levels of practical expertise and subject knowledge, which pupils recognise and admire. Teachers have high expectations. They plan stimulating and often challenging learning experiences. They strike a good balance between whole class and individual help. Teachers regularly track pupils' progress and give clear verbal feedback, to explain grades awarded, so that pupils know what to do to improve further. This particularly supports pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress. Teachers are sensitive to individual pupils' needs and plan appropriately matching work. The teaching of ceramics is very successful. Displays of pupils' work are insufficiently labelled and interpreted, which makes it difficult for other pupils and visitors to the school to appreciate their value.
152. Leadership and management are very good and in some respects, they are excellent. The head of department makes very good provision for future development and skilfully fosters teamwork. This feature has sustained high standards throughout a potentially disruptive period of staff changes. The use of non-specialist teaching rooms restricts pupils' experience of sculpture, especially in Years 7 to 9, where large groups of around 30 are taught together. Storage space in the department is insufficient for large three-dimensional works to be kept safely between lessons. As there is no technical support, teachers spend a great deal of time outside lessons on tasks such as preparing clay, mounting displays and setting up teaching and learning materials in non-specialist rooms.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been planned well.
- The subject is coordinated well and taught by a team of strong and committed teachers within a broad and relevant programme that incorporates citizenship, religious education and personal and social education.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good: they are interested and well motivated in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment arrangements are not yet fully in place in Years 7 - 9.
- Coordination of the contribution of other subjects of the curriculum to citizenship, together with other wider opportunities for pupils to participate in school and community activities, is lacking.



153. Pupils reach average standards overall at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are generally well motivated and interested in lessons and enjoy being able to participate in lively discussions, as for example, in a lesson in Year 7 about rights and responsibilities in society. Lessons are usually planned well and are highly relevant to pupils' personal experiences, and as a result, they make satisfactory progress and achieve as expected. Pupils usually apply themselves well, even in the minority of lessons where the learning activities are insufficiently challenging.
154. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are gaining knowledge and understanding of how laws work and why law is necessary to protect individuals in society. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils considered data protection and used their skills in ICT to research the data protection act and copyright laws. Many pupils are able to justify their opinions orally and in written work and think for themselves as, for example, in a lively discussion about the notion of fair trial in a Year 7 lesson. As in work in other subjects, pupils generally take a pride in their work.
155. The teaching is satisfactory overall and in just under half the lessons, it is good. The most effective lessons are well structured to provide opportunities for pupils to participate fully and this, together with challenging questioning and interesting learning activities, engenders high levels of interest and motivation and good progress. In a few lessons, less challenging questioning, or simple tasks such as drawing and the matching of simple statements, result in more limited progress.
156. There is a clear and realistic development plan for the implementation of the citizenship curriculum. The curriculum is planned well, with distinct lessons for both younger and older pupils. Some elements are included in religious education and personal and social education lessons and draw on the good and well-established personal and social education programme already embedded in the school. Older pupils follow a short GCSE course. Assessment arrangements have yet to be finalised for the younger pupils.
157. Leadership and management in the subject are good. Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning in the first two years of implementation of the subject. The teaching team is strong and committed to high standards overall. The contribution that other subjects of the curriculum can make to citizenship is presently under investigation but this, together with pupils' wider involvement in school and community activities, has yet to be documented and planned as part of the wider citizenship programme.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is more clearly focused because of improved schemes of work.
- Good leadership and organisation are resulting in improved standards.
- The teaching is good: staff are well qualified and work well together as a team.

### Areas for improvement

- Not all aspects of the programme of study for Key Stage 3 are covered and ICT is not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning.
- The balance of activities in lessons is sometimes unsatisfactory and homework time is not always used well.
- The workshops and textiles room are cramped and not appropriate to the demands of the subject.

158. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards were well above the national averages in 2001 and 2002. A comparison with work seen in lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that these assessments are too generous, and are based on incomplete coverage of the programme of study. Pupils come into the school with a low level of attainment in the subject. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the standard expected nationally and although a minority are above this standard, it is not to the extent that the teachers' assessments would suggest. Teachers are not applying the National Curriculum level descriptions accurately enough.

159. In 2001, the GCSE examination results overall were below the national average. The best results, which were above the national average, were in textiles, with about three-quarters of those entered gaining grades A\*-C. In resistant materials, graphic products and food technology, the results were well below average. In 2002, the results improved substantially and were broadly similar to the national average overall. The results in textiles were almost as good as those of the previous year. There was a marked improvement in the results in food technology, which were well above average. In resistant materials, the results remained well below average. The results in graphic products, although considerably improved over those in 2001, were below the national average. The standards achieved by pupils currently following examination courses are in line with national expectations, on a par with the overall GCSE examination results in 2002. These improvements in standards have come about as a result of clearly focused teaching and improved schemes of work.
160. The majority of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9. In lessons, about one-third of the pupils are attaining standards that are better than might be expected when account is taken of their earlier attainment. In these years, girls tend to produce design work that is better than that produced by boys, but the difference is less marked than in the examination groups in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs, including pupils with a hearing impairment, achieve as well as other pupils in their groups. Pupils are particularly talented at generating ideas for their designs and in the application of graphic skills. Some particularly effective work occurred in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, where pupils produced good initial ideas following clearly structured teaching. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show particular confidence when doing practical work in food technology. In Years 10 and 11, pupils also make good progress and are on course to achieve well by the end of Year 11, with about one-third attaining at a higher level. Pupils in all years are able to apply what they have learnt to new situations. In a Year 10 food technology lesson, pupils worked with confidence on a task designed to show how eggs change the structure of a food product. Most were able to explain how eggs contributed to the change and the ways in which this differed from an earlier task.
161. The majority of teaching is good and is never less than satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching is good, and occasionally very good, in more than half the lessons. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is good in over a half of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. Pupils' learning is effective because of the good quality teaching, which ensures that lessons are planned well and proceed at a brisk pace, with effective use of a range of teaching approaches. At times, there is too great a concentration on the process of designing, rather than allowing pupils to design and, therefore, the pace of some lessons becomes too slow. Teachers set high standards and the majority of pupils respond well to these demands. The majority of pupils make good progress.
162. Currently, the subject makes a small contribution to the development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. However, schemes of work and teachers' planning give insufficient information as to how these skills are to be developed in lessons. Although the department contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, this is not reflected in the scheme of work and in planning. The department currently makes very little use of ICT in lessons to enhance pupils' learning of design and technology, mainly because of a lack of resources, and therefore the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. In particular, computer control is not taught. This omission was identified as a weakness in the last inspection report. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are very good, but insufficient attention has been paid to ensuring that the assessment of work at the end of Year 9 is accurate.
163. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The recently appointed head of department has made considerable progress in raising standards and in devising a more structured scheme of work. He has a clear vision for improvement and is ably supported by staff responsible for food technology and textiles, who are also very capable. All members of the department work well together as a team and provide advice and support to each other as required. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Changes to the scheme of work have been made to address comments made in the last inspection report, but further work is required to improve the balance of designing compared to the teaching of skills and to make more effective use of the time available in lessons. Many of the tasks that pupils undertake develop essential skills with some elements of design work, but there are limited opportunities for open-ended design and make tasks, which are required by the programme of study. Whilst good work is produced, there is an imbalance of activities, with insufficient scope for pupils to develop their design and technology

capabilities. Homework time is mostly used well to support learning, but a greater emphasis on designing at home would allow more time in lessons for practical work.

164. Resources are adequate in some areas, but are insufficient in others. There is a lack of textbooks for examination classes as well as software for computer-aided design and modern computers with the capacity to run such software. Most rooms, apart from those used for food technology, are inadequate and too small to meet the demands of the subject. The furniture in the room used for graphics is totally unsuitable: the tables do not have space for pupils to sit with an appropriate posture, and the stools are too high for the height of the tables.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 through good teaching and their enthusiastic and positive response.
- Teachers assess and track pupils' progress rigorously, and set targets for improvement.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- The leadership of the department is good and there is clear commitment to raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Subject-specific software is not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning.
- Lesson planning does not provide enough opportunities for the teaching of literacy skills and citizenship.
- The higher attaining pupils do not have enough opportunities for individual research.

165. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated that standards were above the national expectation, with over one-third of the pupils attaining Level 6 or above. Standards were lower in 2002, particularly at Level 5 and were broadly in line with national expectations. In both years, girls reached significantly higher standards than the boys. Pupils' current work shows that standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with the standard expected nationally, similar to the teachers' assessments in 2002. The GCSE examination results for geography are consistently among the highest in the school and in 2001 were significantly above the national average and when compared with similar schools. The results in 2002 were significantly above the national average at grades A\*-C although there was a lower proportion of the highest grades, partly reflecting lower coursework marks. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls at GCSE level. In their current work, pupils' attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally and not substantially different from the GCSE examination results in 2002. Pupils with special educational needs attain well.

166. Pupils make good progress between Years 7 and 9 and by the end of Year 9 are achieving well. They describe geographical features in detail and explain the underlying processes, such as the patterns of crime in Maidstone and the stages in the heroin trail from Afghanistan to Kent. In written work, they balance the impact of physical and economic factors on the environment, such as the environmental destruction of the tropical rainforest. All acquire a broad geographical vocabulary and use technical terms accurately. Basic map work skills, such as direction and scale, are understood well in Year 7. Pupils in Year 8 are able to select appropriate graphical techniques for the presentation of climate and weather data.

167. Pupils consolidate their achievement and continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11, achieving well by the end of the key stage. In their work on physical geography, pupils are able to identify, classify and map the major rock types in the United Kingdom and explain the distribution patterns. They understand the interaction of erosional and depositional processes in determining river valley landscapes. Their GCSE coursework on coastal areas shows that they are able to set an objective, conduct their own surveys, analyse and present data to a high standard, using statistical and graphical techniques. Many can evaluate their own methodology.

168. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a hearing impairment, make good progress throughout the main school and achieve well. Teachers have very good classroom

management skills, which enable them to give help to individual pupils. In a Year 10 lesson, a support teacher effectively reinforced their understanding of geographical terms in the water cycle. However, individual education plans are not used consistently to guide curriculum planning. The higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but do not have regular enrichment work beyond the challenge of discussion activities. The use of the Internet for individual research is not well developed. Some topics have been introduced in Years 7 to 9 specifically to stimulate the interest of boys, such as their journey to the football ground and the origins of overseas players, and this strategy has resulted in a higher level of achievement.

169. Teaching is good overall and in a small number of lessons, it is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. Planning is very good, both in content and in the use of a wide range of interesting resources. Explanations of new concepts are clear and concise, and pupils are then able to apply them to unfamiliar areas, developing their understanding of both place and process. The teachers' enthusiasm for geography is shared with the pupils, who are motivated and sustain concentration. Homework is regularly set and marked, with positive comments that set clear targets for improvement. Teachers keep detailed profiles to track the progress of each pupil and identify underachievement at an early stage. In the very good lessons, expectations are high, lesson objectives for all pupils are clearly stated from the outset and a brisk pace is maintained throughout. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in group and pair work where they both challenge and support one another. In Year 7, they were able to work out different ways of measuring scale and in Year 9, linked their work on the trade in heroin to their personal and social education topics. Occasionally, lessons lacked momentum as the teacher talked too much and allowed discussions to drift.
170. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural and moral development through the wide range of global and contrasting case studies, which encourage them to develop a sense of place through the eyes of the local people and to take management decisions that benefit the community. Good use is made of local resources for fieldwork and coursework. Curriculum planning does not yet include sufficient opportunities to develop citizenship. Statutory requirements are now met for ICT, and much coursework is word processed, but subject-specific software is not yet used well to allow pupils to work at their own pace. Geography makes a good contribution to the teaching of numeracy. Statistical data from a range of sources are interpreted accurately and presented through a range of charts, graphs and statistical tests. Literacy skills are satisfactory but are not yet clearly incorporated into curriculum planning and there is insufficient reading aloud.
171. Leadership and management of the department are very good and there is a clear commitment to the improvement of standards. Comprehensive schemes of work have been written since the last inspection, which reflect statutory changes. New textbooks have been purchased to meet course requirements. Marking is rigorous and pupils' progress is assessed regularly and systematically, with clear targets set for improvement. Teachers are more familiar with the assessment of work according to National Curriculum levels. Geography is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9, with an appropriate allocation of time. There is very good teamwork between specialist staff and those from other humanities departments.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning: they usually behave very well, and are attentive and industrious.
- Teachers plan a range of interesting and appropriate learning opportunities, including a very good programme of visits to places of historical interest, which engage and motivate pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Boys do not do as well as girls in the end of Year 9 assessments or in the GCSE examinations, and there are no clearly defined strategies to improve the attainment of boys.
- Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are not accurate or consistent enough.

172. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 as reported in the statutory assessments undertaken by teachers in 2001 was well above the national average. Girls performed marginally better than the boys overall but did far better than the boys at the higher levels. The results for 2002 showed a similar picture. These assessments do not accord with the standard of work seen during the inspection and indicate that teachers are not applying the National Curriculum levels accurately enough. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally, although the higher attaining pupils are attaining higher standards than this.
173. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were marginally below the national average. The performance of girls was well above average, and the girls did far better than the boys at the highest grades. The results for 2002 were broadly similar to those in 2001, although an increased proportion gained the highest grades of A\* and A. Again, although the girls did significantly better than the boys, the gap between them narrowed. This indicates that some of the work undertaken in the department to improve boys' attainment is beginning to have an impact. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national expectation and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls overall.
174. By the end of Year 9, pupils achieve well. The majority of pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils are gaining a strong grounding in knowledge and understanding within the history topics studied. This is underpinned by an increasing appreciation of the importance, value and limitations of evidence. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were investigating the role of women in the First World War by reference to primary evidence. In this lesson, many pupils were able to draw upon what they had learnt so far about the war, including information from their visit to Ypres, one of the battlefields, and use this and the information from the source to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
175. The majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 11. Pupils are able to consolidate and build upon their historical knowledge and understanding, and many pupils have developed a good understanding of chronology. They are able to describe and explain events and arrive at conclusions through the analysis of a range of sources of evidence, as for example in a lesson in Year 10 where pupils investigated aspects of Russia under Lenin's leadership. In this lesson, pupils made clear gains in understanding the importance of Lenin to the development of Russia at that time. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in using historical sources and, arising from this, many produce well-structured and organised written work, with accurate use of dates and terms and good understanding of important concepts. A few pupils, often those with average or below average attainment, do not make such good progress as the majority of their peers because they do not always apply themselves in lessons as well as they might and are not as conscientious with homework.
176. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language and the higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although the latter do not have sufficient enrichment work to ensure that they reach the highest levels of which they are capable.
177. The teaching is mostly good and has many strong features. All teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, to which the majority of pupils respond positively. The well cared for classrooms and high quality displays contribute to a stimulating learning ethos, which is the foundation for the work in history. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to engage pupils in the story of history from the outset. Carefully targeted questioning makes demands on pupils and usually provides challenge, which ensures that they make good progress. Lessons are planned well and incorporate a range of learning activities to provide interest and challenge and enable pupils to learn effectively. The vast majority of pupils behave very well, are well motivated and enthusiastic, and work hard. They usually work effectively together when required. Much of the work produced for homework is of a good standard, for example, the 'Great Plague Survival Guides' produced by some pupils in Year 8, which are of high quality.
178. An excellent lesson in Year 8 exemplifies the key strengths in teaching that make for effective learning. In this lesson, pupils were asked to list quickly anything they knew about the Great Fire of London. After sharing their lists with each other and the teacher, the teacher told the story of the Fire, directing the pupils to the evidence of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn. Then, in pre-selected groups, pupils were asked to research together the question of who caused the fire. This resulted in a high level of interest amongst all pupils and some lively discussions. The teacher monitored

the learning effectively, checking progress. Pupils were highly motivated and totally absorbed in the task. In the plenary at the end of the lesson, pupils were able to demonstrate clear gains in knowledge and understanding of the fire, within the context of a sound knowledge and understanding of other aspects of life in seventeenth century London gained from previous lessons.

179. There are no significant weaknesses in teaching. Teachers are aware of the different demands of mixed ability classes and plan lessons carefully to ensure that activities are well matched to the different needs of the pupils within them. In some lessons, these strategies are not always effective and more work needs to be done in this area, especially in relation to the large mixed ability classes in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' work is conscientiously marked in line with whole school policy. Some very useful feedback is given, especially to older pupils studying for the GCSE examination, on how to improve their work. Pupils in Years 7 - 9 do not receive regular information about the National Curriculum level within which they are working.
180. The contribution of history to the development of pupils' literacy skills is good. The understanding and accurate use of key vocabulary is a feature of most lessons and due attention is paid to handwriting, spelling and punctuation, and ample opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their other writing, reading and oral skills. The attention given to developing pupils' ICT skills is good for some classes but as all teachers do not uniformly address this, it is only satisfactory overall. Scant attention is paid to developing pupils' numeracy skills and this is unsatisfactory. The contribution to pupils' personal development is satisfactory although with careful planning there is potential within the history curriculum for this to be much greater.
181. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of department has been in post for just over one year when a separate subject department for history was established. He has set clear standards for teaching and learning in accordance with the aims and values of the school. The teaching team share these and are committed to improvement through the exchange of good practice and staff development. The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a very good programme of visits, which enriches pupils' learning experience. Included in these visits is Rochester Castle, the First World War battlefields in Belgium and a residential trip to Berlin for pupils in Year 11. So that standards can be further improved, the department development plan needs to be more detailed and more sharply focused on raising attainment, especially that of boys. Teaching and learning are monitored by the headteacher but the head of department is not sufficiently involved in this work.
182. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The curriculum arrangements for Years 7 - 9 have been revised and the quality of teaching for these pupils has improved significantly as specialist teachers are now being deployed. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met, although the assessment of pupils' attainment against the National Curriculum levels is not accurate. Standards at GCSE are not as high as at the last inspection but are rising steadily again. Teaching and learning are good and the vast majority of pupils achieve well against their earlier attainment. The contribution of the subject to developing pupils' skills in ICT is satisfactory overall and improving.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The head of faculty is having a positive impact on improving the quality of the ICT curriculum.
- The quality of teaching is good: teachers plan lessons well and make good use of projectors linked to computers to demonstrate new skills and techniques.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in lessons.
- ICT is used effectively in some subjects to support learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure the provision of control technology in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment criteria are not used well enough to set targets in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' learning is sometimes affected adversely by problems with the network.
- Pupils' ICT capability in subjects across the curriculum is not assessed or used to inform teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.

183. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002, shown by the assessments undertaken by teachers, was very low compared with the national average. These standards were much lower than in previous years and fall well short of expectations, indicating that pupils made poor progress during Years 7 - 9. The evidence shows that pupils are working at a higher level than that indicated in the teachers' assessments in 2002 and are making good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Staffing difficulties and weaknesses in the assessment arrangements resulted in the making of inaccurate judgements about pupils' levels of attainment at that time. The appointment of a new faculty manager within the last year is having a considerable impact on raising standards and improving the quality of provision for ICT throughout the school.
184. Standards of pupils' current work are close to the national expectation and are much higher than the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 would indicate. Pupils in Year 9 are familiar with the range of hardware and software and use ICT well to improve and present information to specified audiences. Pupils are making good progress, particularly in Years 7 and 8, and the setting arrangements in these years enable pupils, especially the higher attainers, to make more rapid progress. In one lesson, pupils in Year 7 combined text and graphics well to convey a message to a younger audience. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with other pupils in their classes. They receive good support for learning support assistants, other support teachers and class teachers. A boy with a hearing impairment designed and constructed an effective presentation, involving several well-animated pages. A notable feature of lessons is the help pupils give to their peers. They are genuinely helpful to those in difficulty, but careful not to do the work for them. Pupils' attainment in ICT in other subjects has not been measured by the school, although there are examples of higher-level work in some subjects, for example in the drafting and redrafting of pupils' written work in English.
185. The GCSE examination results at grades A\*-C have been significantly below the national averages for the past four years and remained so in 2002. The attainment of girls has been as low as that of the boys throughout these years. As in Years 7 - 9, the standard of pupils' current work, both in lessons and in their books, is much higher and is close to the national expectation. Standards are higher in Year 10 than in Year 11. Pupils in Year 10 have progressed almost as far as those in Year 11, because of more structured teaching in Years 7 - 9, and there are plans to enter pupils in Year 10 for the GCSE short course examination. Overall, pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who have opted not to follow a GCSE ICT examination course are making good progress in lessons, which will lead to certification in Key Skills Level 2.
186. The quality of teaching is good overall and this helps ensure good learning in most lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers engage pupils' interest and attention, making good use of projectors linked to computers to demonstrate the skills and techniques pupils need to learn and develop. Subsequently, teachers have high expectations of pupils' use and application of these. Interactive whiteboards are also used well, with well-planned, animated presentations to accompany the teacher's explanations. Problems with the network hinder learning in some lessons. Passwords do not always work and in such instances, pupils cannot continue with their own work but have to share with others. Work needed for editing and refining is not always available because of problems with the printer spool. Teachers do not have access to the network to address these problems and technicians are not always available quickly enough to sort problems out before learning has been interrupted. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in lessons through the teachers' correct use of technical vocabulary in context and an expectation that pupils will do the same. Numeracy skills are also used appropriately. In one Year 8 lessons, pupils used mental calculations and estimations well to predict the outcomes of a mathematical model they were using. Teachers' expectations are high, but they are not always clearly shared with the pupils. For example, academic targets and assessment criteria are not shared with pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, in Years 10 and 11, pupils are given clear academic targets based on assessment criteria for the lesson or module. Discussion and consideration of topics such as computer security, fraud and the need for data protection assist pupils' moral and social development.
187. During the past year, the school has appointed two new managers, an ICT director and a head of faculty, to raise standards of ICT. This has led to better management of the faculty, together with some rapid improvements in learning and standards in lessons. The scheme of work has been rewritten, although control technology, which could be provided by either ICT or design and technology, is not covered. In addition to problems with the network, other inconsistencies and

weaknesses remain. The head of faculty monitors teaching within the department, but as monitoring follows a line management system, one teacher, whose other duties lie outside the faculty, is monitored by someone else. In addition, the technicians are not line managed by the head of faculty, but by the director of ICT, who does not teach the subject. The combination of these factors is affecting the learning and progress of pupils. Whilst there has been improvement in the provision for ICT in the discrete lessons, the use of ICT within subjects is not providing pupils with adequate opportunities to extend or reinforce their skills to applications within these subjects. Although there are planned links to other subjects within the scheme of work for discrete ICT and plans within subjects to use ICT to support learning, this work is uncoordinated and no overall plan exists for the systematic development of pupils' capabilities. This means that subject teachers cannot guarantee to set work to meet the needs of pupils or to extend them. Similarly, there is no coordinated method for teachers to assess the ICT used in subjects and consequently this does not inform teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.

188. Since the last inspection, examination results have declined. However, inspection evidence shows that standards are rising, with considerable short-term improvement in pupils' performance. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum has increased, although not sufficiently, and the system for booking rooms has been improved. The number of computers available for pupils to use remains lower than the national average.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve high standards because the overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Leadership by the head of modern languages is very good.
- Teachers work well as a team, producing good materials for learning.
- Teachers take pupils on visits to France, so that pupils can use their French.

### Areas for improvement

- Some teachers make insufficient use of pair work to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough to avoid basic errors.

189. Almost all pupils begin to study French in Year 7, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 9. Some pupils also study German in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue with French. They were unable to continue with German in 2001 and 2002 because the school could not appoint a German teacher: this situation has now been rectified. A few pupils have been disapplied from studying French in Years 8 and 9, and a number are also disapplied in Years 10 and 11.

190. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 indicate that pupils' attainment was below the standard expected nationally in French in 2000 and 2001, and slightly below expectations in 2002. Current standards are better than the assessments in 2002 would suggest and are above the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9. This has come about by sustained improvement in the quality of teaching. The majority of higher attaining and average attaining pupils are reaching above average standards. Pupils are stronger in speaking, reading and writing, and weaker in listening. Pupils in Year 9 write dialogues about buying train tickets, including the class of ticket, train time and destination. When speaking, pupils in Year 8 are able to look at pictures and describe clothes, giving the colour and saying whether they are striped, spotted or checked. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils are making good progress and achieving well.

191. The GCSE results in French were well above the national averages in 2000, 2001 and 2002 and were also higher than most other subjects in the school in the same period. In lessons, most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining standards that are above the nationally expected standard, reflecting the GCSE results for the past few years. When listening to French on tape, Year 11 pupils understand very detailed information about holidays. When reading, pupils in Year 10 understand information written in French about the environment, and are able to decide which



problems they consider to be the most important. Pupils are making good progress overall and achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.

192. The GCSE results in German were well above the national averages in 2000 and 2002 and were better than most other subjects in the school. No pupils were entered for the GCSE examinations in 2001. At present, German is only taught in Year 9 and only one German lesson was seen during the inspection. After only 10 lessons, pupils are achieving well. Pupils are stronger in listening and reading, and weaker in speaking and writing. They are able to listen to a German video and understand the information given about different people and when speaking German, they are able to perform a role-play asking a partner about their life. They read and understand written information about German food and are able to write about the food and drink they like and dislike.
193. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing in French and German, but pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. They make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling, which prevent them from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better standards than boys, but there are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds or levels of attainment. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute well to their general literacy, and develop their French and German skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to the development of their literacy skills. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used effectively by teachers. Pupils enjoy using computers, and produce work of good quality. Strategies for the development of citizenship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are included in the schemes of work, and contribute to the general development of the pupils.
194. The overall quality of teaching is very good. In French, almost all of the teaching is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching in the one German lesson seen was satisfactory. In French and German, teachers are proficient in the foreign language, have good accents and project their voices clearly. They use the appropriate foreign language for most of the lesson to develop pupils' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but occasionally too much English is used. Teachers plan a well-organised sequence of activities, which carefully involve the pupils in their learning. They exploit overhead projectors and other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally very good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and most teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: this improves listening and speaking skills, and develops pupils' confidence. However, some teachers make insufficient use of pair work. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, there are insufficient maps and display in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and this information is used to inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good, and meets their needs well. Teachers manage classes very well, and give pupils a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role-plays, videos and class surveys, which extend and consolidate their learning. Teachers ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress, providing challenging tasks for the higher attainers and giving support to those with special educational needs. Most pupils, including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons throughout the school.
195. Almost all the pupils behave very well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration and develop good study skills. Their response is usually very good throughout the school. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential.
196. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French and German, and observes teachers in the classroom. The faculty is very well led and organised, and this is maintaining high standards. Priorities in the development plan are clear. Staff work well as a team to produce resources to ensure effective learning. Visits to France encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The text books and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help

develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work, and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving even higher standards.

197. The department has made good progress on the issues raised in the previous report. Specialist staff now teach top sets and the sixth form. Teachers are using the foreign language more in lessons and using time more effectively with lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. They are also giving higher attaining pupils more challenging writing tasks. Although pupils correct their written work more often, it is not always carefully done.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Teaching is never less than good and is sometimes very good.
- Pupils' work is assessed regularly and is used effectively in the setting of targets.

### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT, especially in Years 7 – 9, to support teaching and learning.
- Pupils' skills of listening to and appraising a range of musical styles are not developed systematically enough in lessons.
- Music does not have a high enough profile in contributing to the general life of the school.

198. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils' attainment in music is below the expected standard. For example, they are unable to recognise individual and groups of instruments. Between Year 7 and Year 9, they make good progress in developing their skills of composing rhythms and melodies, identifying styles and traditions such as Blues, and evaluating music critically, so that by the end of Year 9, standards are in line with the national expectation. They are similar to the standards assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2002. Pupils achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment. This good progress results from the well-planned teaching and the teacher's high expectations. Pupils' performance skills develop well as the teacher gives ample scope for planning, as well as discussion and evaluation of their own work and that of others.

199. The GCSE examination syllabus followed by the school has an emphasis on composing and performing. Relatively small numbers of pupils have elected to continue this subject to GCSE level in the past. The GCSE examination results at grades A\*-C were above the national averages in 2000 and 2001 but dropped considerably in 2002 and were well below the national average. Increasing numbers of pupils are now taking music. Several of the 15 pupils in Year 11 are predicted to attain grade A in the GCSE examination this year. In Year 10, there are 13 pupils. Throughout Year 10 and 11, they make good progress overall and achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment. This is seen in the increasingly complex compositions of the pupils and their progress in performing with increasing expression, sensitivity and technical competence. By the end of Year 11, their attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally.

200. The quality of teaching is good overall and is often very good. The teacher provides pupils with a very good role model, has good practical expertise and is fully committed to developing the pupils' musical potential by communicating his own enthusiasm. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 lesson where every pupil was energetically involved in singing, clapping and stamping to African songs with a real sense of performance and interpretation, inspired by the teacher's support and guidance. Lessons are planned well, with the work meeting the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment: there is an energetic pace, which carries the lessons forward, encouraging and challenging. The expectations of staff are high. Independent learning is encouraged through the provision of opportunities for groups to plan, create and perform their own compositions with minimum interference from the teacher, who prompts and supports by asking and steering the group to evaluate what they have learned. The development of pupils' listening and appraising skills, apart from listening to their own compositions, is not covered evenly in the schemes of work

and opportunities to appreciate the best examples of a wide variety of musical styles are not incorporated sufficiently into lessons.

201. Pupils make progress in their learning principally because of the demands made on them by the teacher. They are encouraged to evaluate their own learning and to work towards their targets. This is evident in the good progress they make by the end of Year 9. Pupils are assessed regularly throughout lessons. This has a direct effect on their progress in that they come to an agreed evaluation of their weekly achievement and set agreed targets with the teacher for the next session. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified and targets appropriate to them are set: for example, simplified and shorter melodic structures. The higher attaining pupils are extended through more complex ensemble work. Key words and musical terms are displayed on the classroom walls to develop the pupils' musical literacy and, when questioned, the pupils all understood their meaning.
202. This subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. It has been less marked in the recent past because of changes in staffing. At present, the contribution of music to the community life of the school is under-developed. However, with a period of stability, it is beginning, slowly, to have a greater impact. Carol services and a summer concert were very successful, and the collaboration with the drama department augurs well for an enriching extra-curricular programme, which includes African dance and drumming, music theatre club, rock bands, and senior and junior vocal groups. Pupils who are studying and performing music play in assemblies and whole-school gatherings. These opportunities not only develop their own confidence and social skills but also provide good role models and encourage others to believe they can do the same or better. Four peripatetic teachers provide instrumental tuition in guitar, woodwind, piano, brass and drums. Several pupils have tuition outside school and progress through the Associated Board Examinations but there is a reluctance to take up the offer of tuition provided as part of the school curriculum. No string playing was observed.
203. The management of the department is satisfactory. The development plan is not detailed enough to indicate the targets or timescale of the proposed developments in the department. Resources are good apart from access to computers to support teaching and learning in music. This a particular weakness in Years 7 - 9 as the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study for music are not fully met. The library has a good selection of books related to music but there is little evidence that they are used regularly or have any impact upon the learning of the pupils. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good: teachers are knowledgeable specialists and they manage and organise pupils well.
- Teachers have high expectations and as a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are good.
- Pupils achieve above average standards in GCSE examinations.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is good.

### Areas for improvement

- The programme in Years 7 - 9 lacks balance and pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study two areas of activity in depth.
- The assessment procedures and the accuracy of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are not sufficiently robust.
- Departmental planning, including the development of pupils' skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, are not systematic enough.

204. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicate that standards were well above average. However, these high standards are not reflected in pupils' current work, which is in line with the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9. Teachers are not interpreting and applying the National Curriculum level descriptions accurately enough and are over-estimating pupils' attainment. By the end of Year 11, standards in the core programme

are also in line with the national expectations. In 2001 and 2002, the GCSE examination results at grades A\*-C were significantly above the national average. In the GCSE course, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally

205. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education programme and make good progress. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge of the skills and techniques in games and gymnastics. In games, pupils perform a range of skills with increasing control and coordination and in competitive team play, have a good understanding and knowledge of rules and positional play. In gymnastics, pupils invent and perform their gymnastic skills with control and fluency. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, for example, pupils performed a sequence moving into and out of partner balances, showing clarity of body shape, and an ability to change levels and direction. Dance is taught to girls only in Year 7 and 8. As only one lesson was seen, there is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about standards. However, on this small amount of evidence, pupils' attainment is in line with expectations. Health and fitness is taught as a discrete unit of work in Year 9 and pupils are beginning to develop a sound understanding of the importance of participating in regular exercise.
206. By the end of Year 11, pupils use more advanced techniques and skills with increasing consistency and accuracy. In games, the more capable pupils, both in the core lessons and in the examination groups, are able to anticipate moves in order to outwit their opponents and respond effectively to changing situations in competitive games. Good quality play occurred in a Year 10 rugby lesson, where pupils performed a range of skills, changing pace and direction well, and applied them into a competitive game using good communication skills. In health and fitness, pupils in Year 10 have a satisfactory understanding of how to prepare for and recover from exercise, and use technical language confidently to describe the muscle groups used during exercise.
207. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The specialist teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching a range of activities and are good role models for the pupils. Teachers give positive praise, encouragement and feedback, improving pupils' confidence and performance skills. Pupils are well managed and organised and, as a result, they change quickly for lessons and use the facilities and specialist equipment safely. The quality of continuous assessment is good overall, but the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 do not reflect the level descriptions accurately enough.
208. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They respond well to the high expectations demanded of them: as a result, behaviour and participation levels are good. Pupils develop good social and cooperative skills in partner and group work, and in competitive play they demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour.
209. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Day-to-day procedures are effective. The department works well together as a team. Staff give generously of their time and make a good contribution to promoting physical education and sport. Schemes and units of work clearly show progression in the acquisition of physical skills, although the subject's contribution to developing pupils' skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are not sufficiently embedded in the planning process. Procedures for monitoring teaching are good. The department lacks a long-term strategic development plan, with clearly identified targets for improvement, which is a weakness, and the department handbook has not been reviewed and updated recently.
210. The curriculum, which meets statutory requirements, has some weaknesses. Pupils benefit from a range of activities but a significant amount of time is allocated to games in Years 7 - 9, which affects the balance of the programme. Unlike the girls, boys do not have the opportunity to participate in dance. Health related exercise, which is taught in Year 9, enriches and extends the curriculum and promotes participation in a physically active lifestyle. In Years 10 and 11, pupils do not have the opportunity to study two areas of activity in depth. The GCSE examination course is popular and successful, but there are no opportunities for pupils to study accredited vocational qualifications. Access to indoor facilities is inconsistent, because of examinations and other school activities, and has an adverse impact on the balance and continuity of the curriculum. Resources for the development and use of ICT to support learning are unsatisfactory. The provision for extra-

curricular competitive sport is good. There are good procedures in place to support the more talented pupils and many are selected to compete at local and regional level.

211. The department continues to promote a positive ethos and since the last inspection, it has made good progress in improving standards in the GCSE examination courses. Pupils in Year 9 have the same amount of time for physical education as those in Years 7 and 8. Displays are good and recognise pupils' achievements both within and outside school. However, games still dominate the curriculum at both key stages and the limitations on access to the indoor space continue to disrupt the programme and affect the range of activities taught.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching and effective management of pupils establish a positive climate for learning and enable pupils to achieve well.
- The curriculum at both key stages provides pupils with a rich diet of religious education.
- The subject's strong contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils effectively enhances their personal development.
- Departmental management provides clear vision and direction.

### Areas for improvement

- The assessment arrangements do not give pupils enough information on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve or assess their attitudes and values.

212. Standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Year 11, standards in the GCSE short course are also in line with expectations. In 2002, the results in the GCSE short course examination were in line with the national average, lower than the results in 2001, which were well above average.

213. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is consistent with the expected levels. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts well. They make good progress in lessons and throughout the key stage and achieve well by the end of Year 9. For example, pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of the role of women in Hinduism. The teacher's variety of approaches enabled pupils to form their own views, whilst respecting the different attitudes of others. In Year 7, through a well-directed question and answer session by the teacher, pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. This lesson was characterised by very clear challenge, the teacher's high expectations and the pupils' excellent collaboration and behaviour. In Year 8, pupils explored the idea of having ideals and heroes. Through a very good brainstorm session, pupils shared their ideas and respected the views of others well. Their understanding of the different ideals and of people worthy to be called heroes was very high. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. Overall, learning is very good in Years 7 - 9.

214. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with the expectations of the GCSE short course. Through the use of current events reported in the media, pupils develop clear attitudes towards forgiveness in a Christian context and are able to express their views and feelings about punishment, crime and forgiveness. They make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding in the subject and achieve well by the end of Year 11. They learn well in lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 10 lesson showed a clear understanding of moral issues within a religious context. Through a very good question and answer session, they were able to explore their views about social responsibility. This enabled pupils to explore the range of attitudes towards party policies within a Christian context. Pupils are good at linking Christian principles with their life experiences. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic heritages. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented also make good progress.

215. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave very well, are extremely well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent, and teachers support individuals well, both academically and personally. The standard of pupils' behaviour makes a very good contribution to their progress and achievement.
216. Teaching is never less than good, and occasionally it is very good with some excellent features. It has a powerful impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers plan lessons very well and share the aims of lessons with pupils, enabling them to gain a clear idea of the teachers' expectations. They 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, question and answer sessions, and worksheets that match the needs of individual pupils. This enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion, and helps them to maintain their interest and develop their understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour extremely well, which establishes a very good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect, allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, which contribute to their achievement.
217. The assessment of pupils' work, including marking, is generally satisfactory and teachers make helpful comments in exercise books. The current procedures provide a good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand but not for assessing their attitudes and values. Teachers do not use the levels of attainment as a basis for their assessment in all classes although a pilot scheme is currently in operation. This makes target setting more difficult. Pupils, as well as their parents, are unclear about the standards they are attaining and what they need to do to improve. The department recognises this as an area for development.
218. Departmental management is good. The head of department, who receives excellent support from other staff, approaches the task with great enthusiasm and deep commitment to the pupils. The departmental development plan addresses current issues and forms a good basis for development, although priorities, time scales and costs are not clearly identified. The monitoring of pupils' work is good and enables the department to have a clear view of the development of the subject. The monitoring of the work of teachers is well established and is closely linked to the performance management of teachers. The quality of classroom display is good and celebrates pupils' achievements.
219. Since the last inspection, standards, the quality of teaching and the management of pupils have all improved. There has been significant improvement in the contribution religious education makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a very good impact on pupils' learning and achievement, and in raising standards.

## BUSINESS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above the national average and pupils achieve very well.
- The very good teaching enables pupils to make rapid progress.
- Subject leadership is strong.

### Areas for improvement

- The lack of a base room in which to establish a fixed resource area limits the range of teaching approaches.
- The range of business links is limited compared with those in the sixth form.

220. The results of the GCSE examination in 2002 at grades A\*-C were in line with the national average, lower than those for 2001, which were above the national average. The performance of the girls was noticeably better than that of the boys. In most years, both boys and girls tend to do better in the subject than in their other GCSE examinations.

221. Pupils' attainment in lessons and in their work is above the standard expected nationally. Nearly three-quarters of pupils have gained grades A\*-C in the initial assessed units that count towards the final result. The standard of work of the boys has improved so that girls and boys now perform equally well. Pupils in Year 11 have a sound understanding of key concepts. In one lesson, the higher attaining pupils appreciated the inter-relationship of demand and employment levels and the role of government through the teacher's very effective explanation and development of the subject area.
222. Most pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in the GCSE examination course. In Year 10, pupils already understand different forms of cost and most are able to carry out a break-even analysis, aided by the effective use of ICT. Lower attaining pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, share in this very good progress, as the teacher ensures that they are actively involved in classroom discussion.
223. Teaching is very good overall, and sometimes excellent. The specialist teachers maintain a strong and positive class presence and through effective classroom management, they sustain the pace of the lesson and ensure pupils' interest and involvement. The teaching is often challenging, with very strong explanatory skills that enable pupils to understand higher-level business and economic relationships. Pupils often have weaker than average ICT skills, although with effective support from their teachers they are able to use applications such as spreadsheets to model business concepts graphically. While teaching is of a consistently high standard, a lack of an established specialist room limits other teaching methods such as resource-based learning. Marking is regular and thorough, but does not always include sufficient information on how pupils could improve their work further.
224. The recently appointed head of department provides enthusiastic and effective leadership. He has brought about improvements through changes to the syllabus and assessment structure. There is recognition of the need to further strengthen assessment practice as well as extend the use of outside links to enhance learning. All of this indicates good progress since the last inspection.

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

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

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

### GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	50	*	0	*	10.0	*
Biology	3	33	*	0	*	6.7	*
Business studies	2	50	*	0	*	15.8	*
Chemistry	1	100	*	0	*	20	*
Physics	2	0	*	0	*	0	*
Statistics	7	14	*	0	*	2.6	*
Media studies	3	67	*	0	*	13.3	*

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

### 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
Art and design	9	89	*	22	*	66.6	*
Business studies	18	78	*	6	*	45.5	*
Design and technology	8	75	*	0	*	40.0	*
English	8	100	*	38	*	75.0	*
French	3	100	*	0	*	53.3	*
Geography	10	80	*	30	*	68.0	*
History	7	71	*	14	*	45.7	*
Mathematics	2	0	*	0	*	0.00	*
Sports studies	6	17	*	0	*	6.7	*
Media studies	5	100	*	20	*	72.0	*
Business (AVCE)	14	92	*	7	*	58.0	*
ICT (AVCE)	12	75	*	8	*	85.0	*
Leisure and tourism (AVCE)	20	100	*	10	*	69.0	*

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



### Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	6	100	*	66	*	17	*

*National comparison data for results in 2002 are not yet available.*

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

225. The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology at AS and A-level. Chemistry and physics were sampled and one lesson in each subject was observed. Examination results in both subjects were well below the national averages in 2001. In chemistry, students are making satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with course expectations. The teaching is good and students' attitudes to learning are positive. In physics, students' attainment is below course expectations, although teaching and learning are satisfactory. In both subjects, students make better progress in practical lessons where they support each other and work safely.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- The teaching is well structured and supports students' learning well.
- ICT is used effectively to support learning.
- Students have very positive views on the teaching of mathematics.

##### Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in external examinations are not high enough.

226. Standards achieved by students in external examinations have been well below average for a number of years. In 2002, no student achieved a pass grade at A-level and only a small number did so in 2001. The low standards have been due in the main to the school's entry policy into sixth form examination courses. This has recently changed and the calibre of students taking the A-level and AS courses is now significantly better, especially in Year 12. By the end of Year 13, students' attainment is in line with course requirements. In 2001, the pass rate for A-level was 17 per cent. The AS level results in 2002 indicate that standards are improving, providing a firm foundation for the current Year 13 students to achieve results broadly in line with the national average.

227. In lessons, the standards are in line with course expectations in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students are confident in differentiation, determining the nature of stationary points and their use, and in their understanding of the second differential. Statistical knowledge is strong in Year 13, and students show good knowledge of the binomial distribution, hypothesis testing and their understanding of probability density functions, especially in finding the expectation by integration. Topics such as surds, drawing graphs and the travelling salesman problem were not completed as well as other topics. The highest attaining students in the sixth form are achieving standards that are above the national expectation.

228. Teaching is very good. Teachers structure lessons very well, providing students with high quality and effective support especially when they have difficulties. In a statistics module lesson, for example, the teacher had clear knowledge of the examination board requirements and was able to feed this back to the students as they went through past examination questions. Model solutions to examination questions were shared with students. Students found this particularly helpful when checking through their own work and it enabled them to improve the presentation of their correct solutions as the module examinations approached. ICT is used extremely well to support the students' understanding of the determination of maximum and minimum points. In one lesson, the

teachers' use of ICT was particularly helpful when investigating points of inflexion. This practical approach enabled students to make very good progress. They are clear about what needs to be understood and they ask searching and intelligent questions to aid their understanding. Teachers use a variety of techniques well to build up students' confidence, including the sharing of solutions with other students in a number of classes. Lessons proceed at a very brisk pace, with a number of well-focused activities used to break up the extended lessons. Teachers manage lesson times well to maintain students' motivation and interest.

229. Leadership of mathematics is very good. The head of department has a very clear view on how standards can be improved and this is part of a clear strategic plan that is beginning to have an impact on raising attainment throughout the course. Since the last inspection, the quality of sixth form teaching has improved significantly. Students speak very highly about the quality of provision and the support provided by their mathematics teachers, although they would like to see improvements made to the arrangements for subject mentoring.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The teacher's very good subject knowledge, high expectations and enthusiasm ensure that the provision meets the demands of the syllabus.
- Good planning and preparation ensure that the pace of lessons is good.
- The effective use of ICT in practical work and coursework helps students to raise their levels of achievement

### Areas for improvement

- Students lack confidence in their ability to be successful in AS and A-level examinations.
- Students do not play a sufficiently active role in lessons.
- Students do not do enough to assess their own progress or set targets for improvement.

230. The numbers of students entered for A-level in past years have been low but there are currently 11 students in Year 12 and seven students in Year 13. Not all students complete the courses. The small number of students taking the A-level examination in 2001 makes comparisons with the national figures inappropriate but the results were well below the national average, continuing the general pattern of results obtained since 1999. Within the very small groups, individual students occasionally attain average and above average results, as in 1999 and 2000. No students were entered for the A-level examinations in 2002. Standards of work in lessons and in students' files reflect the pattern of results achieved in the external examinations and are below course expectations in both Year 12 and Year 13.

231. In Year 13, students' ability to concentrate and remain on task is very marked. This was apparent during a long theory session when they extended their knowledge of genetics to understanding allele frequencies and change and how the thinking of modern scientists reinforces Darwin's theory of the origin of the species. Students explained quite well how the number of alleles present in a gene pool determines the future population numbers but they were not confident in applying the mathematics involved. Students in Year 12 bring to new situations their prior knowledge and understanding from their GCSE courses. They are reasonably confident as they extend their knowledge of molecular bonding to understanding the carbon and hydrogen structures of polymers and the significance of the bonding arrangements to the digestive system of ruminants. Students in both years are skilled at keeping very good records of their work. They use computers at school and at home to research, to present their coursework and in practical work and one or two students are competent at working independently. Students in Year 12 are able to apply the Chi squared test to know if their results are significant or due to chance when investigating the characteristics of the common maize species. Students have some understanding of the test and why it is applied, and all had made an effort to present their data and ratios clearly. The work of one student was excellent.

232. Attitudes to learning are good. All students want to do well but some are not making the necessary commitment to doing so beyond the laboratory. They work together and support each other well

but they are not confident about their own abilities and, particularly in Year 13, are not too sure that their ambitions will be fully met at the school.

233. The teaching overall is satisfactory and as a result, students make satisfactory progress. Lessons are planned and organised well. Good use is made of learning resources, including ICT and audio-visual equipment. Lessons start on time and proceed at a good pace; the teacher wants to do well for the students and sets a good standard. The teacher's qualifications and knowledge of the examination requirements are very good: the examination syllabus is accurately interpreted in the units of study and work is focused on what students need to know. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning during theory sessions but they are not challenged sufficiently to contribute their views and ideas. Consequently, opportunities to extend and share students' learning are missed. Lessons are appropriately related to everyday situations. Students make best progress when doing practical work, as witnessed by their coursework files. The marking of work is thorough and gives good guidance, which is tailored to individual needs. Students appreciate this as it helps them to know how well they are doing. However, marked coursework is not returned quickly enough to keep students even better informed. Marking does not set targets for students and they are not involved in assessing their own work and progress in any structured way.
234. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. They are the responsibility of the head of the science department who coordinates the work of the teacher of AS and A-level biology. Clear policies and expectations give very good direction for the subject and are set out in the department handbook and in the department improvement plan. The biology curriculum is well organised and taught through well-planned and resourced units of study that meet examination requirements. Extra lessons are organised to support students as they prepare for examinations and the teacher is available to assist individual students as required. The accommodation is very good. The level of general learning resources is good but there is a shortage of some specialist equipment such as computers.
235. Improvement since the last inspection has been broadly satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and there are signs of improvement. The use of data to set targets, to monitor the progress being made by students and to inform planning is not as well developed as for science in the main school and the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet underway.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

236. The focus was on design and technology (resistant materials).

### **Design and technology**

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

#### Strengths

- Imaginative teaching of a good standard has resulted in improved standards.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Students produce work that is imaginative and shows a good level of graphic skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not possess textbooks, which limits the possibilities for learning by themselves.
- The use of ICT is under-developed and there is no equipment for computer-aided designing and making.

237. The A-level examination results at grades A - E in 2001 were well below the national average. The results in 2002 show some improvement, with three-quarters of students gaining grades A - E. As yet, there is no national data against which to compare the school's performance. Although modest, the improvement in the A-level results shows that standards are rising, which is confirmed by students' current work. The standards attained by the majority of students currently following AS and A-level courses are above average, higher than the examination results would indicate, and have been brought about by improvements to the quality of the teaching. The evidence for the inspection indicates that standards are improving in the AS and A-level courses.

238. Students' attainment by the end of Year 13 is in line with course expectations, with some students showing a higher level of attainment, especially in design analysis and graphics. They are making good progress overall and achieving well. In Year 12, most students are attaining higher standards than students in Year 13, because they have benefited from clearly focused teaching and the setting of appropriate targets. Most of the female students in Year 12, who generally produce a wider range of imaginative ideas for projects and have developed a higher level of graphic skills, are attaining higher standards than the male students.
239. All the teaching is good, and therefore students learn well. In some very effective lessons, students were required to carry out a design analysis of folding chairs. The students were able to identify the materials used and say why, and were able to state accurately the manufacturing methods used. Because of clear teaching about the properties of materials, students who were working on their design folders were able to justify their choices of the materials that they proposed to use.
240. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The recently introduced scheme of work, along with clearly focused teaching of a good standard has led to improvements in students' learning. Medium-term planning is strong, as is the preparation of individual lessons. This level of planning, together with enthusiastic teaching and the setting of clear targets for improvement, has led to higher standards of work. Students are clearly informed of the way in which their work is assessed, and regular assessments mean that they have a clear idea of the progress that they are making. The use of ICT is underdeveloped, mainly due to a lack of suitable computers, especially for computer-aided designing and making. As a result, students are unable to gain experience of an essential part of the syllabus. The lack of textbooks inhibits preparation for forthcoming work and revision.

## **BUSINESS**

241. The focus was on business studies. Students are able to follow either the A-level course or the AVCE course.

### **Business education**

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

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Industrial and commercial links are developing well.
- Subject leadership is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The lack of ready access to ICT facilities limits the completion of learning and assessment activities.

242. Results in the GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate level courses in 2001 were in line with the national average. Almost all Advanced level students were successful, with over half gaining distinction or merit awards. All Intermediate level students were successful, with over half gaining a merit or occasionally a distinction award. The 2002 results in the new Advanced Vocational (AVCE) qualifications that have replaced GNVQ were a little lower as staff and students adjusted to the new qualification. Nonetheless, this reflected good achievement for the students who mostly had modest results in their GCSE examinations.
243. Standards in both the Year 13 A-level and the AVCE courses are in line with national averages. In the A-level course, the challenging teaching enables students to have sound conceptual understanding, whilst the higher attaining students appreciate more complex economic relationships. Their skills of research and analysis are satisfactory and include some use of statistical theory. In the AVCE course, students understand the main organisational and financial aspects of business. For example, in a lesson on trading accounts, students, with effective teacher support, successfully completed calculations of gross profit.

244. In all the courses, students make good progress and achieve well. Almost all the A-level students currently in Year 13 successfully completed their AS level units, some with above average grades, and continue to strengthen their analytical and evaluative skills. The AVCE students, after falling behind in some Year 12 units, have retrieved all lost ground, with strong teacher guidance and clear assessment deadlines, and are on target to improve on the school's 2002 results. In Year 12, the AVCE students are developing their marketing knowledge and skills well, influenced by teaching that encourages independent research. A student, who previously had a statement of special educational need, is sharing in that good progress. The small group following the GNVQ Intermediate course contains a number of students with special learning needs. In preparation for an assessed unit on finance, these students have benefited noticeably in their computational skills in break-even analysis from some good and supportive teaching
245. The teaching is very good overall and enables students to make good progress in the three different business courses. The well-informed and challenging teaching leads to effective learning of key business and economic concepts and theory by students. Students are very interested and fully involved in lessons that mostly have variety and pace and often include outside visits, role-play and research activities. In many lessons, the focus on applying number helps students to improve their numeracy skills. Technology, such as a data projector, is used well to cover important learning points although on occasion, the students' recording of information detracts from applying ideas and consolidating their knowledge.
246. The subject leader is strong and enthusiastic and is supported well by other specialists. His efforts are proving effective in raising standards further through more varied and challenging provision. Commercial links continue to be strengthened and the improving assessment practice is being extended across the vocational and general advanced courses. Accommodation in the sixth form centre is attractive, although a lack of ICT facilities in the teaching rooms limits some learning opportunities, particularly in the AVCE course. The business courses provide valuable breadth to the sixth form curriculum and standards have improved since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

247. A small number of lessons were sampled in information and communication technology (ICT). In these lessons, teaching and learning were generally good. Students' attainment is in line with course expectations. The number of students is increasing with six students in Year 13 and thirteen in Year 12. The subject remains a more popular choice for male students.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

248. The focus was on the two AVCE courses in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. In addition, some lessons in AS and A-level sports studies were sampled. The teaching of sports studies is good and students are achieving average standards. The course is well planned and teachers use their expert knowledge successfully to motivate the students, who have very good attitudes to their work. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average at grades A - E, and lower than this in 2002. Students find the increased theory content of the subject between GCSE examinations and AS and A-level challenging.

### Leisure and Tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well when compared with their earlier attainment in their GCSE examinations.
- The teaching is good overall.
- There are very good links with leisure facilities and tourist organisations that support learning.
- Coordination of sixth form vocational education and leadership of the leisure courses are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- ICT facilities are not sufficiently effective and accessible

249. The results in the GNVQ Advanced course in 2001 were in line with the national average and these standards were largely maintained in 2002. In 2002, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades was modest but all students were successful in the AVCE examinations in either travel and tourism or leisure and recreation. This represented good achievement for most students, who performed considerably better than indicated by their earlier attainment in the GCSE examinations.
250. Standards in the Year 13 AVCE courses are broadly in line with the national average. All students have successfully completed the first year of the two-year modular programme, with most attaining around an average grade C standard. In the work seen, students have a secure understanding of leisure organisations, illustrated in work on economic and social factors associated with human resource planning. In lessons, students use their considerable research experience through the many different visits that are arranged to leisure facilities to demonstrate a good understanding of customer service. The higher attaining students apply quality assurance criteria well in their analysis of the different leisure and tourism organisations.
251. Most students are very interested in their chosen areas of focus and work hard to make good progress in their course assignments. Most students are achieving well but the work rate of a few male students is uneven. The variety of outside research activities and increased emphasis on developing ICT competence are positive features of course provision, and are enabling most students, particularly those with particular learning needs, to work more independently and to improve their basic skills.
252. Teaching is good overall, mainly because of the effective use of outside links to develop classroom learning and provide a realistic context for assessing their work. Lessons are usually planned well, with very effective brainstorming and discussions that draw on students' experiences and sustain interest and pace. One-to-one mentoring is effective in helping students and is part of a strategy to enable more to reach the higher grades. The good care and support of staff are recognised in the positive commitment of most students, although a few immature male students do not always concentrate fully on their work, which slows the pace of the lesson.
253. The new coordinator for vocational education, who is also the course leader for leisure and tourism, has made a positive impact on the arrangements for the AVCE courses, resulting in clearer and shared deadlines to help students meet targets and improve their standards. Extensive outside visits and other links continue to be developed, and include a college course for students to follow an airline booking and ticketing unit.
254. Accommodation is attractive and learning resources are satisfactory. However, ICT facilities are not located in the teaching areas and there are difficulties in gaining access to sufficient and reliable computers. This is a weakness given the modest ICT skills of students and the need to use ICT for wider research and for the presentation of work. The leisure and tourism courses make an effective contribution to the sixth form curriculum and have sustained a good standard of provision since the last inspection.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

255. The school makes no provision for vocational courses in health and social care. A small number of lessons were seen in the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma and certificate courses. Students' attainment is above course expectations and recent examination results have been above average. The teaching is very good overall and is sensitive and flexible to meet the needs of students of different levels of attainment, who are highly motivated.

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

256. The focus was on art and design, but performing arts and photography were sampled. One lesson was seen in performing arts and one lesson in photography. In performing arts, standards are in line with course expectations and the teaching is good. In the AS photography course, students' attainment is in line with course expectations and the teaching is good. There is no provision for A-level music.

## Art and design

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

### Strengths

- Students are attaining above average standards and their progress is monitored carefully.
- The teaching is very good and is tailored to meet the needs of individual students.
- Attitudes and relationships are very good and students demonstrate a mature approach to work.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Too much of the teachers' time is taken up with preparing materials.

257. At the time of the last inspection, there was no A-level course in the subject. It is now a very popular subject and many students intend to pursue art and design as a career. In the A-level examinations in 2001, the results were well below average but showed some improvement in 2002 in the proportion of students gaining grades A - E. As yet, there are no national figures available to indicate the extent of the improvement. Female students tend to achieve higher standards than the smaller numbers of male students taking the course. From their current work, students' attainment is better than the A-level results would indicate and exceeds A-level course expectations. This has been brought about by improved planning and the closer monitoring of students' progress and learning. Students make good progress during their sixth form studies and achieve well.
258. In Year 13, students work long hours on their coursework outside lessons in order to attain higher grades. They use a wide range of cultural influences in their work, such as Art Deco and Aboriginal art. One student made richly decorative paintings, using the technique of applying painted dots, in thick consistency, to simulate the working practices of Aboriginal artists from the central plains area. Students in Year 13 have sole occupancy of a small permanent studio base, where they display much of their developmental work. They take pride in their work and share a healthy spirit of competition, which constantly raises performance. Students are not afraid to take risks by using unorthodox methods. They delight in accidental effects, which they use creatively to suit their own purposes. Most students work equally well in ceramics, printmaking, paint or fabrics. They scale up sketches and small prototypes for sculptures, using a variety of accurate mathematical and electronic techniques, to achieve well-proportioned larger works. Students use computers appropriately to research new projects. They scan and modify images to inform their own works, from their sketchbooks or from the work of other artists and cultures.
259. In Year 12, students adapt quickly to sixth form work. In their drawings and paintings, students strive for originality. Their very well developed drawing skills enable them to transcribe, accurately and confidently, the images from their 'mind's eye' to paper, canvas, fabrics or ceramics. When discussing the work of photographers from a variety of cultural backgrounds, students show concern with current issues, such as the plight of the homeless, refugees and environmental pollution.
260. Teaching is very good and sometimes it is excellent. Teachers plan for a good balance between fostering students' own skills and developing their knowledge and understanding of art. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and practical expertise. They know students very well and support them personally as well as academically. In return, students trust, appreciate and respect their teachers. Teachers regularly hold one-to-one tutorials with students, negotiating future work, analysing homework, sketchbooks and coursework in depth, so that students know what they need to do to improve. Teachers create interesting still-life groups to focus students' close observational drawing and painting skills.
261. The leadership and management skills of the head of department are very good. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection. Planning and assessment are now tightly focused and have contributed positively to raising standards. As in the main school, teachers have to spend too much time preparing materials.

## HUMANITIES

262. The focus was on geography and history but psychology was also sampled. In the two psychology lessons in Year 12, the teaching was very good. Students made very good progress in both lessons, achieving standards that were in line with expectations for the course.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- The leadership of the department is good and is committed to raising standards.
- The teaching is good and students' response is enthusiastic and positive.
- Students receive effective support and their progress is tracked rigorously.
- The standard of coursework projects is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning does not emphasise sufficiently the teaching of key skills, the use of ICT or advanced statistics.
- Gifted and talented students are not given enough opportunities for individual research.

263. The A-level results in 2001 were below the national average for all maintained secondary schools although all students gained a pass grade. The results improved in 2002, although there are no national figures against which they can be compared. A higher proportion of students gained grade B, in which the quality of coursework projects was a significant factor. Students attain well in relation to their other subjects and there is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students. Current standards are in line with the expectations of an A-level examination course. Students make satisfactory progress and achieve as expected.

264. Students make satisfactory progress in Years 12 and 13. They have a good knowledge of advanced technical vocabulary, for example of the nutrient cycle in deciduous woodland in Year 12. In Year 13, they are able to explain the physical processes that interact to determine the landscape of the Dorset coast and interpret these landscapes through maps. They have a good understanding of the relationship between economic management and the occurrence of disasters such as the Bhopal explosion, and of economic factors that drive the location of trans-national corporations. Their coursework shows an ability to test hypotheses through a range of survey techniques. The teaching of key skills is not made explicit in curriculum planning and students lack confidence and training in oral presentations to the class. Students are not yet challenged sufficiently through the use of subject-specific software and of advanced statistics. The higher attaining students do not read widely enough or use the Internet sufficiently to develop and extend their skills of extended essay writing.

265. Teaching is good. Teachers, who are enthusiastic, have very good subject knowledge and plan well. Students have positive attitudes and cooperate well with each other and with their teachers. They respond particularly well when they are given opportunities for group and pair work. Homework is regularly set and assessed, and the techniques for self-assessment against A-level criteria are being taught. Teachers rigorously track students' progress, which enables them to know how well they are doing and to provide appropriate support. Students are positive about the amount of individual help and guidance they receive and teachers give generously of their time.

266. Leadership and management of the department are very good and the specialist team is committed to the improvement of standards.



## History

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge: lessons are usually planned well and have a clear structure.
- Students learn well and teachers monitor their work carefully.
- Students have good attitudes to their work and usually rise to the teachers' demands and challenges.

### Areas for improvement

- A-level results remain below the national average and there are no clear strategies in place for raising attainment.
- There is too much reliance on one style of teaching, which does not always get the best from students.

267. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average. All but one of the students taking the examination gained grades A - E, but no students attained the highest grades of A or B. The A-level results have remained below average since the last inspection. The results for 2002 were similar to those in 2001, although one student achieved a grade B. The school's performance data indicates that many students achieve at least the grades predicted for them but a few do not do as well as expected.

268. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are in line with course requirements, although several higher attaining students are attaining better standards than this. When account is taken of their earlier attainment, they are achieving well. Students in Year 13 are making good progress in their study of twentieth century Russian history. Most students keep well-ordered and thorough notes. The good depth and breadth of the work indicates appropriate wide reading overall. However, students are often reluctant to test out their knowledge and understanding in response to the teacher's questioning in lessons. Students' work indicates that they are being provided with ample opportunities to analyse and interpret key sources for the period and their skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis are developing appropriately.

269. Students in Year 12 are only in their first term of the course but in the main are achieving as expected and some are exceeding this. Standards of work are in line with expectations for the course, although a number of students are already doing better than this. Again, notes are conscientiously maintained and thorough, and supplemented by appropriate reading. Overall, the work seen is of good range and depth, with most students acquiring a good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Work centres on historical evidence and this builds effectively upon the good range of skills that students acquire in the main school. The majority of students are able to produce well-structured written work where opinions are carefully supported by reference to key evidence and there is accurate use of appropriate dates, terms and vocabulary. Students are making good progress overall.

270. The teaching is good and because of this, many students are able to learn effectively. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their explanations and questioning and in the tasks they set. Lessons are usually structured well and proceed with appropriate pace. In some lessons, the teacher's high expectations are clearly demonstrated in the challenging and probing questioning, which enables students to deepen their knowledge and understanding, as, for example, in the lesson on the failure of the revolution in Russia in 1905. In this lesson, prompted by high level questioning, students were able to express their opinions confidently and at length about why the revolution failed, drawing widely on their existing knowledge and understanding and seeking clarification from the teacher to deepen this. Some were confident enough to seize the initiative and a lively interchange ensued, allowing good progress to be made.

271. This confidence in students and high level of interchange are not features of most lessons, which usually follow a similar pattern. The lecture style lesson is most common and although this clearly has a place, the range of learning activities provided for students is limited and too little demand is made of them. There are too few instances in lessons when students are given the chance to exercise initiative, independence and responsibility.

272. Students have good attitudes to learning. The vast majority are diligent and conscientious with their written work, are attentive, and apply themselves well in lessons. Motivation levels are high although some students in both Years 12 and 13 are reluctant to participate actively in lessons even when presented with appropriate opportunities to do so.
273. The monitoring of students' attainment and progress is good, essays are usually rigorously marked and generally students are given good written feedback on how their work can be improved. Although the marking is helpful, the feedback does not sharply focus on specific learning goals related to the target grades to which students are expected to work. The contribution to the development of students' literacy skills is good. Key words and related concepts are explored and discussed in lessons and students are provided with good guidance on how to structure and improve their notes and essays. Some opportunities are provided for students to discuss and debate their work with their peers but this type of work is planned less frequently and when it does, as in a lesson on Lanfranc's legacy in Norman England, students are reluctant to contribute. The contribution of ICT to support students' learning is satisfactory but is not a regular feature of the work. Very little work is done on helping students develop their numeracy skills and this is currently unsatisfactory.
274. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum is well planned, and broad and balanced. Topics for study are selected thoughtfully to provide motivation and build on the strengths of students and teachers. The work in the department reflects the school's aims and values as a whole and there is a commitment to enabling students to succeed. The department's development plan does not currently reflect this as it does not contain clear strategies for raising attainment. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are insufficiently developed at middle management level to help in the drive to improve standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall although a clearer focus is necessary to ensure that all students achieve the results they are capable of in the A-level examination.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

275. The focus was on the A-level English literature course followed by students in Years 12 and 13. In addition, two lessons in French were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Standards are below average, but in line with the earlier attainment of the students. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and the quality of teaching is very good. Students are making good progress.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall: students benefit from teachers' careful preparation, good subject knowledge and helpful support and achieve well as a result.
- Leadership and management ensure that teachers are effectively deployed and students' progress is checked.

#### Areas for improvement

- Consider widening the provision by providing an alternative course in English language.

276. The A-level results were well below average in 2000 and 2001 but showed a considerable improvement in 2002, especially in the proportion of students attaining the highest grades of A or B. All students taking English literature have obtained at least a pass grade in recent years except in 2000, indicating satisfactory achievement given their earlier attainment in their GCSE examinations. Currently, there are nine students in Year 13, all of whom have continued from Year 12. Their AS results in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average. Some students performed less well than expected on one module of their examination and are re-taking it. This group experienced some lack of continuity in teaching during Year 12 but have now settled well with new teachers and are making good progress.
277. Current standards indicate that students' attainment overall is in line with course expectations by the end of Year 13, reflecting students' good achievement given their GCSE performance. Their

written work reveals a range of attainment from potential grade A to D. The highest attaining students produce fluent and detailed work, showing thorough knowledge of texts, above average analytical skills and evidence of wide reading. Other students, although hard working and conscientious, have more difficulty with analysis and essay structure. All students are capable of working independently, particularly in relation to gathering information about the historical background and authors of their literature texts. Students' folders contain much helpful background material and notes provided by their teachers. Their writing indicates that these have been used effectively to help essay preparation. In the classroom, most students' spoken comments about, for example, Heathcliff's rise to 'gentleman' status in *Wuthering Heights* or about presenting a scene from Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* in performance are intelligent and perceptive, showing a good understanding of these texts. Some students have difficulty in understanding Webster's complex language and therefore struggle with the subtler implications of spoken dialogue.

278. Year 12 students are capable of sustained and concentrated work. In a lesson on Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark*, students successfully explained their allocated passages and one student astutely remarked on the way the poem changes the way we look at nature. In another lesson, students' knowledge of Hardy's *Return of the Native* was more limited and several struggled to explain Hardy's complex image of one of the characters in the novel. Nevertheless, at this early stage of their course students are achieving satisfactorily overall. They have the potential to reach at least average standards by the end of Year 13.
279. Teaching and learning are good overall. The very good teaching in Year 13 is marked by detailed preparation, helpful supporting material and activities that encourage students to take responsibility for managing and organising their own learning. These qualities were evident in one teacher's 'working booklet' on *Wuthering Heights*, her classroom display about the Brontë family and the pair work in which students matched quoted material to characters in the novel. As a result, students made very good progress in comparing and analysing characters' responses and in understanding the social context. Teaching was not so effective in one Year 12 lesson on Hardy's *Return of the Native* because success in one activity ('charting' chapter titles against key events) depended on detailed knowledge that students did not yet have. A second activity, although better dealt with, was too similar to the first. As a result, students did not advance their learning sufficiently until the latter part of the lesson. The teacher worked hard to draw out the significance of chapter titles but questioning relied too much on the voluntary responses of a few students and others were not taking sufficient responsibility for their share of the learning.
280. Students in both year groups are happy with their choice of course and value the support they receive. All mention the strain of working into the extra period at the end of a long day. However, teachers usually manage these double lessons well and standards are not affected. The provision of an alternative course in English language would broaden the choice available to students and may meet their needs more effectively.
281. Leadership and management of the subject by the acting head of faculty are effective in maintaining students' standards of attainment and achievement through the careful deployment of teachers who provide a good quality of teaching overall, helpful guidance and supportive relationships.