

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PHILIP HOWARD CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Barnham, Bognor Regis

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126102

Headteacher: Mr F A Casey

Reporting inspector: Dr Faysal Mikdadi

2447

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th October 2002

Inspection number: 249805

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Catholic comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elm Grove South Barnham Bognor Regis West Sussex
Postcode:	P022 0EN
Telephone number:	(01243) 552055
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Elizabeth Bedford
Date of previous inspection:	30 th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2447	Dr Faysal Mikdadi	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? Sixth form co-ordination.
14032	Marion Saunders	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15406	Jennifer Adey	Team inspector	Art	
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics Sixth form mathematics	
1517	David Griffith	Team inspector	SEN Citizenship	
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Music Sixth form music	
16786	Dr Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science Sixth form chemistry	
2971	Kathryn Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3827	John Knight	Team Inspector	Geography Sixth form geography	
31332	John Marshall	Team inspector	Modern languages Sixth form French	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Sixth form history	
12844	Mick Saunders	Team inspector	English Sixth form English	
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education	
31191	David Sylph	Team inspector	History Sixth form politics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19983	Haydn Webb	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Sixth form biology	
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	Latin and classical civilisation	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Philip Howard Catholic High School is a mixed Roman Catholic comprehensive school catering for pupils aged 11-18. With 839 pupils on roll, of whom 107 are in the sixth form, it is smaller than most comprehensive schools. Numbers on roll have consistently increased over recent years as the school has become increasingly popular with its community. The sixth form has more than trebled in number since the last inspection. Based on the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test (NCT) results pupils' attainment on entry is above average. However, the Cognitive Ability Test results do not support this. The school serves its deanery area and immediate locality and many pupils travel in from outlying areas. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Pupils are largely white with one per cent coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Four pupils have English as an additional language, with two of them in the early stages of English language acquisition. The number of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average for secondary schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Philip Howard Catholic High School is a good school, with a strong, warm and caring ethos. It is a school that knows itself and is constantly seeking to improve. Standards are above the national average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. They are above the national average in the sixth form. Most pupils make good progress because of the good teaching and because of their positive attitude to their work. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by dedicated staff and by many governors. Coupled with this, the school is good at evaluating its work and at monitoring strategies for further improvement. As a result, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides strong and visionary leadership which has won widespread commitment to continued improvement from the school and from its local community. A strong team of senior staff and others with key responsibilities contribute fully to this high quality leadership.
- Teaching is broadly good and often better.
- Standards in test and examination results are good and improving.
- Improvements are supported by regular self-review and target-setting within a data-rich environment.
- The provision of information and communication technology, which was a weakness in the previous inspection, is now a strength of the school.
- The pupils' attitudes to the school are very good.
- The courses offered in the sixth form are good.
- Opportunities for enhancing pupils' spiritual and moral development are very good.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive.
- The improvements since the last inspection have been very good.

What could be improved

- Some pupils, particularly the less able, are not always offered a sufficient variety of teaching and learning opportunities to enable them to achieve to their full potential in certain aspects of mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages and physical education.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have no opportunities to follow vocational courses.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in modern languages, music, physical education and the sixth form centre.
- Total attendance figures are well below the national average because of a high level of authorised absence caused by the incidence of pupil sickness and of parents taking holidays during term time.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1996. Standards have improved. The quality of teaching was at least sound in only 80 per cent of the lessons during the last inspection. During this inspection teaching was at least sound in 95 per cent of the lessons and it was often better. The key issues raised in the previous report have all been successfully addressed except for one. Modern languages provision is now good. Information and communication technology provision is now very good. Attainment in mathematics and physical education now exceeds the national standards. The use of data for monitoring the quality of educational provision is now very good. Links between senior managers and key staff have become thoroughly effective. The only area that still needs further development is that of setting appropriately high expectations of lower attaining pupils and offering all pupils a variety of teaching and learning strategies to involve them in their own learning and to extend their thinking.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	A	B	B	

The school's Key Stage 3 test results in 2001 were well above the national average for mathematics and science and in line with the national average for English when compared to all schools nationally. Compared to similar schools the test results were above the national average in mathematics, in line in science and below in English. The Key Stage 3 test results in 2002 were the highest that the school has ever had. The average GCSE points score is well above the national average for all schools and above for similar schools. The test and examination results trend over the last three years has been an upward one with results improving. The sixth form results are above the national average compared to all schools nationally as well as to similar schools except for advanced level chemistry. The school achieved the targets set for its test and examination results over the last two years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and to their studies. They are keen to learn and to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour around the school is good. In many lessons behaviour is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Pupils are considerate and they have a clear sense of right and wrong. They are polite and can work together well. They sometimes lack opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and to engage in group work.
Attendance	Overall attendance in 2000-2001 was poor. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. However, a high level of authorised absence inflates the overall absence figures, largely on account of high levels of pupil sickness together with parents taking holidays during term times.

Pupils' very good attitudes to the school and to their learning contribute greatly to the good progress that pupils make. Good relationships, equally good behaviour and care for each other help to create a warm and caring ethos around the school. The high rate of authorised absence is partly caused by parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The school is aware of this problem and is working hard to convince parents to avoid this practice.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The proportion of sound or better teaching has improved significantly since the school's last inspection when the quality of teaching was sound or better in only eight out of every ten lessons. During this inspection teaching was sound or better in 123 out of 130 lessons and in 92 it was good or better. Over a third of all lessons seen were very good or outstanding. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was low at five out of every 100 lessons. In the sixth form all lessons seen were at least sound. Good teaching was consistently seen in almost every subject. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and, in many cases such as English, music and physical education, they also have considerable enthusiasm for their subjects. Outstanding and very good lessons were seen in mathematics, science, art, French, geography, information and communication technology and physical education. Where the quality of teaching was only sound or less than sound, the impact was primarily on the least able pupils. In these cases pupils were not always given a sufficient variety of learning opportunities to enable them to think for themselves, work independently and practise their learning in order to enhance their performance. In a few cases, the pupils were passive receivers of knowledge who did not listen well and consequently lost interest easily. These pupils' low literacy skills also meant that they found it difficult to do the tasks set for them. The concentration of pupils with learning difficulties in certain lower bands in Years 8 and 9 occasionally has a negative effect on teaching and learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills allows pupils to achieve good standards. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a good range of learning opportunities. The Key Stage 4 and sixth form curricula lack opportunities for pupils to pursue vocational courses. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Across the school, support for these pupils is variable. It is good in Key Stage 3 mathematics, science, geography, history and physical education and Key Stage 4 science and physical education where teachers' planning takes into account the pupils' individual needs. Where this is not the case, pupils with special educational needs make only sound or unsatisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good. These pupils have full access to the curriculum and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good. The provision for social development is good. Opportunities for developing pupils' cultural awareness are sound and need to be extended to allow pupils to celebrate British cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's strategies for caring for its pupils are very good.

The school works hard to develop effective partnerships with parents and carers. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. The quality of assemblies is good. Pupils' progress is effectively monitored and pupils are given good support and guidance where needed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff provide very effective leadership. The headteacher's personal leadership is very good. Key managers within the school fulfil their roles well. Some non-teaching staff do not yet have job specifications or a clear line management structure.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body of the school fulfils its legal responsibility. Whilst some governors make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school, others are less fully engaged.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has robust systems for monitoring and reviewing its work including the quality of teaching and learning. The school sets itself realistic but challenging targets. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses well and is aware of the need to offer further challenge to all pupils regardless of ability. Equality of access is ensured, though there is a need to enhance provision for the less able and to consider the introduction of vocational courses.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its budget efficiently and ensures that spending is allocated to meet set educational priorities.

Overall the adequacy of staffing and other resources is satisfactory. Accommodation has some shortcomings which have a negative impact on learning and progress in modern languages, music, physical education and the sixth form centre. Support staff offer very good service. Financial management is good and the school effectively applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a good school that is very well led by its headteacher and that has made significant improvements in recent years. Examination results have consistently improved. The school leads the way in information and communication technology. Hard working teachers have high expectations of pupils and offer good support. Behaviour is excellent. The school promotes a good ethos which helps in the development of the whole child. The school listens to parents and responds effectively to their concerns and communicates with them well. The setting of homework is effective. Pupils receive good advice and support. Transition from Year 6 into Year 7 is described as "superb". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is not always effective with the least able. Accommodation is inadequate in physical education and in the sixth form. One in ten parents feels that the range of activities outside the school is limited. A small number of parents said that the end of year internal examination results for Years 7, 8 and 10 were not sent to them.

Almost all parents spoke well of the school. The parents' survey overwhelmingly supported the school's good work. Inspectors agree with their positive views. Inspectors found no evidence to support the parents' concerns about there being insufficient activities outside the school and about the lack of information on the end of year internal examination results for Years 7, 8 and 10. Inspectors agree with those parents who feel that the school's support and provision for the least able does not come up to the

same good quality of its support for the higher and middle attainers. Inspectors also agree with the parents' concerns about the inadequacy of accommodation for physical education and in the sixth form. Accommodation is also inadequate in modern languages and music.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

ST PHILIP HOWARD CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 107 on roll and the number of students has consistently increased over the last few years; at the time of the last inspection there were only 30 students in the sixth form. Students have a choice of A/S and A2 courses to follow. Students joining the sixth form are those gaining a minimum of five or more GCSE grades A*-C, although a few are taken in with lower grades because of their effort and good attitudes to learning. This is a fast expanding sixth form, although currently there is no provision for vocational courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form. All teaching seen was at least sound and often better. Numbers have steadily increased and examination results are constantly improving. Most students attain results that reflect their potential based on prior attainment. The leadership and management are very good. The sixth form offers its students opportunities to do well in academic subjects whilst offering them other enrichment experiences, making it satisfactory value for money.

Strengths

- Overall results are above the national averages except in chemistry where they are below.
- The quality of teaching in all the lessons seen was at least sound and often better.
- Students are well motivated, keen and interested in their learning. Attendance levels in the sixth form are high.
- The courses offered are good.
- The curriculum is enriched through citizenship, religious education, key skills and extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment, advice, support and guidance are good.
- The leadership and management are very good.

What could be improved

- Ensure that the ongoing building programme includes improved provision for the sixth form centre.
- Enhance and broaden the curriculum by offering vocational courses.

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	Good. Advanced level results are well above the national average. The A/S results in 2001 were poor with only one out of five candidates attaining a pass grade. Teaching in mathematics is very good.
Biology	Good. Advanced level results are in line with the national average. Teaching is good with teachers having high expectations of their students.
Chemistry	Sound. Advanced level results are well below the national average. Teaching is sound overall. The work of the subject is not effectively co-ordinated. The monitoring of student performance is sound.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Music	Good. There were no students taking any examinations in 2001. Achievement seen during the inspection week was good. Teaching is very good and the students' response is excellent.
Geography	Very good. Advanced level results are well above the national average. This subject has outstanding features. Its continued success in examinations and very good teaching attract large numbers of students.
History	Good. The three students entered for the advanced level examination in 2001 all attained good results. Good teaching produces good learning with students enjoying their work.
Politics	Sound. Advanced level results are well above the national average. Teaching and learning seen during the inspection were sound.
English	Good. Advanced level results are above the national average. Teaching is good.
French	Sound. Although the number of candidates entered is too small to be statistically significant, all those entered attained grades A to D. Teaching is at least sound.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form helps the students to learn and to enjoy their studies. In chemistry, the lack of effective subject co-ordination causes the teaching to be less secure and students' learning is adversely affected. Teacher enthusiasm in music and the good GCSE results have meant that a large number of students are taking up the subject. This success is exceeded in geography. History teachers provide good learning experiences for their students. A more consistent quality of teaching in politics would help to enhance learning and improve results further. In English students do well as a result of good teaching. Students need to be given opportunities to work collaboratively and with some autonomy. Students studying French are happy that they had chosen to do so.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well supported and receive very good information on the courses available. Their tutors know them well and meet each student regularly to discuss progress. The half termly report helps students understand how they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good leadership and management help the sixth form run smoothly and well. Monitoring is effective. Accommodation in the sixth form centre is inadequate. Resources and staffing are very good. There are no opportunities for students to follow vocational courses.

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"> • Sixth form students generally like their sixth form. • They feel that they are well taught and sufficiently challenged. • They feel that their teachers are readily available to help them. • They like being given some freedoms as young adults, e.g. choice of dress, signing in and out. • They feel that they are helped to study independently. • They feel secure and safe in their sixth form. • They are happy with the good relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quarter of those surveyed felt that they were not well informed about their progress and that the range of activities and enrichments was not sufficient. Almost half felt that they were not well advised about future options. • Students felt that accommodation in the sixth form centre was poor. • A few complained about having to follow courses in citizenship and key skills, feeling that they would rather be getting on with their examination courses. • A few complained that they have been asked to pay for their course books. • Some students felt that they lacked sufficient choices in the courses offered, stating that they would like to see vocational courses made available.

Inspectors agree with the students' positive views of their sixth form. A large number of students interviewed contradicted the negative aspects of the survey returns. Inspectors agree with the views of those interviewed that the following were good: information about progress, advice on future options and the quality of the enrichment programme. Inspectors agree that accommodation is poor in the sixth form centre which is much too small and overcrowded. They also agree that the lack of vocational courses means that the school is not adequately serving all members of its community. The few students who have had to buy their course textbook were justified in being annoyed. Finally, those students who object to attending citizenship lessons need to be enthused through the content of these lessons which they believe to be currently just sound. The key skills course does contain some very easy work which is unsuitable for some students, e.g. some students' information and communication technology competency is far more advanced than the course content.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment when they arrive from their primary schools, based on their end of Key Stage 2 test results, is above the national average. Data from the Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS) show pupils' attainment to be nearer to the national averages. Very good links with primary schools minimise the disruption of transfer and enhance pupils' progress in Year 7.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' standards in 2001 were above the national averages in mathematics and science and in line with the national average in English. Over the last three years the average points trend for all three subjects has been above the national trend. This is an improvement on the last inspection when standards were broadly in line with those found nationally. The Key Stage 3 teacher assessment reflects the above average results in the tests for all three core subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining a Level 6 or above by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the national average. Given their prior attainment there are no significant variations in the standards achieved by minority ethnic pupils or by pupils with special educational needs. There are also no significant variations between the standards achieved by boys and girls.
3. By the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE examination results in 2001 show pupils attaining standards that were above the national average overall. In comparison with similar school attainment was in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in English, mathematics and science was above the national average. In all subjects, apart from French, the GCSE examination results were above the national averages. The French results were below. However, the number of candidates entered for French is significantly higher than the national average, with pupils of all capabilities being entered as a matter of policy. If the figures were to be calculated on the basis of the entries being comparable with similar schools, the GCSE French results would be significantly higher than the national average. The average points trends over three years were well above the national trend. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when standards were largely in line with the national average. The results for 2002 in the Key Stage 3 tests and in the Key Stage 4 GCSE examinations were the highest that the school has ever had. The gap in performance between boys and girls has consistently narrowed such that GCSE results in 2000 were almost the same for both, with a slight widening of the gap again in 2001. The targets set by the school are challenging. They are based on the pupils' prior attainment as well as on their CAT test results, with each projected grade being pushed up one point to ensure sufficient challenge. In 2001 half of all pupils achieved or surpassed their target grade and two thirds passed or surpassed their CAT predicted grade. Nearly half the pupils with special educational needs following the English GCSE course achieved their target grades by the end of Year 11 in 2001. There are no significant variations between the standards achieved by minority ethnic and other pupils.
4. Standards seen during the inspection week were at least in line with national expectations in all subjects. They were above average in both key stages in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and physical education and Key Stage 4 mathematics; sound in Key Stage 3 art, modern languages and music. Standards were well above the national expectations in information and communication technology. Pupils with English as an additional language can access the curriculum effectively. The two pupils receiving language support can communicate effectively and are able to follow their work in all curriculum subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as expected and make satisfactory progress. One student with the highest level of need, who entered the school with a reading age of seven years, achieved well to be average for his age by the end of his Year 9.
5. Standards of numeracy are good. Most pupils know and can use their multiplication tables and can do mental calculations. Pupils can use and interpret graphs, transpose formulae and interpret data. Key Stage 4 pupils can solve quadratic equations and can handle data competently. Older pupils in the lower attaining sets do not receive sufficient opportunities to practise mental calculations and

begin to lose their ability to do so.

6. Standards in literacy are good. High attaining pupils can use language in a range of forms for a number of audiences. Lower attaining pupils can write simply but well about what they have read. Key words are identified in subject areas. English, science and information and communication technology help pupils enhance their literacy capability by making demands of their reading skills.
7. The standards of able and middle attaining pupils are high enough given their prior attainment and their teachers' high expectations. The school does a good job in enabling these two groups of pupils to learn and improve their standards further. A significant minority of less able pupils occasionally achieves lower standards than would be expected of them. These pupils are often set work that is either too easy or unimaginative with the consequence that they achieve less than they are capable of doing. Pupils with low prior attainment would respond better to a wider range of learning styles, higher teacher expectations and independent learning strategies.

Sixth form

8. Standards achieved are above the national averages. Standards in individual subjects are well above the national average in mathematics, geography, politics; above the national average in biology, English literature and sociology and below the national average in chemistry. Entries in the other subjects are too few to make it possible to make comparisons with national averages. All candidates entered for advanced level design and technology, French, German and history attained at least a pass grade and several of them were in the upper grade range. Two of the three candidates entered for advanced level sports studies attained a grade 'A'. The results for 2002 in the sixth form were an improvement on the previous year with the average point score rising by almost one point. Almost two thirds of candidates achieved or exceeded their indicative grade based on their prior GCSE results. In art and design, classical studies, French, history and sociology all candidates achieved or exceeded their indicative grades.
9. Standards seen during the inspection week were at least in line with national expectations in all subjects. They were well above average in mathematics and geography and above average in English, art, biology, modern languages, politics and music; sound in chemistry. Standards in key skills are good and they are very good in information and communication technology. Sixth formers can work independently and they respond to their teachers' questions intelligently. They are able to discuss issues effectively using their prior knowledge. Sixth formers respond to being treated as mature young people and they can work without prompting, produce their coursework on time and write good essays.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils are very keen to learn and to succeed. Many pupils take part in the very good range of extra-curricular activities that are provided and the various charitable fund-raising activities. The Catholic ethos of the school contributes strongly to the creation of a secure and caring environment within which pupils have very good attitudes to pursuing the school's educational aims.
11. Behaviour throughout the school is good and behaviour during break times and moving around the school is good natured. In many lessons behaviour is very good. In a minority of lessons, mainly within the lower bands, unsatisfactory behaviour from a small number of pupils can hinder progress. Pupils report very low levels of bullying and generally think that this is effectively dealt with if it occurs. A very high number of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with behaviour in the school.
12. Overall, pupils' personal development and the quality of relationships in the school are good. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions upon others and a clear sense of right and wrong. They are considerate toward each other and to adults within the school and, when provided with opportunities, they have the maturity to work cooperatively. In a Year 9 citizenship lesson, a well facilitated lesson with good learning opportunities enhanced both personal and

academic skills. This enabled pupils to work together cooperatively and take responsibility for organising themselves into groups. Frequently, however, a directive teaching style does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their own learning skills.

13. Pupils are able and willing to respect the values and beliefs of others, but there are only limited opportunities for them to fully explore these issues. In a Year 8 citizenship lesson, pupils were spontaneous in their discussions concerning the topic of homelessness, but did not have time to explore this in depth. Older pupils would welcome more opportunities to discuss a range of social, moral and cultural issues.
14. Pupils are able to take responsibility and use their initiative when given the opportunity to do so. Pupils are actively involved in taking assemblies and they initiate fund-raising events. Year 8 pupils provide a 'buddy' scheme to Year 7 pupils when they enter the school. The school has a school council, but this is not yet seen by many pupils as effective. There are already plans to instigate separate upper and lower school councils.
15. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and are a significant strength of the school.
16. The overall attendance rate for the school for the reporting year 2000/2001 is well below the national average. However, unauthorised absence is well below the national average. The overall attendance rate is a significant deterioration from the time of the previous inspection. However, the figure for 2001-2002 has risen and, for the first weeks of this term when there has not been any work experience or study leave, the figure was around the national average. The school undertakes a careful analysis of attendance data and is aware that there is still a significant number of holidays taken during term time and is ensuring that parents are aware of the implications of this. Punctuality is generally good, both at the start of and during the day. Problems with transport are the major reasons for lateness.
17. There have been three permanent exclusions in the reporting year. The figures for permanent and temporary exclusions remain below the national averages for schools of similar size as they were at the time of the last inspection.

Sixth form

18. As reported during the last inspection sixth formers remain interested, keen and motivated. They enjoy very good relationships with their teachers and amongst themselves. Students respond well to being given responsibility for their own attendance and learning. Attendance levels are high. Students are heavily involved in the sixth form council and successfully manage their social affairs keeping their small social area clean and tidy. They invariably behave well and are pleasant, polite and courteous. When interviewed by inspectors, they engaged fully in mature discussions and gave their positive views of the school in an articulate and intelligent way. They also listened to each other's views with respect and consideration. Where differences of opinion arose, students showed that they were able to discuss issues openly and with considerable humour. The sixth form's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities has a good impact on the students. The students are aware that the school does not offer sufficient opportunities to celebrate British cultural diversity.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. In almost all lessons seen during the inspection week the quality of teaching was at least sound with over two thirds being good or better and a third being very good or better. There is no significant variation between the key stages in the quality of the teaching seen. Only 5 per cent of lessons seen were less than satisfactory. The figure was considerably higher at one in five during the last inspection.
20. Teaching has much real strength. Teacher subject knowledge is good and teachers can plan

effectively especially for the upper sets. In an outstanding Year 10 art lesson the teacher had produced a lesson plan that took into account every pupil's differing need. Pupils responded to her high expectations by being on-task all through the lesson producing highly inventive sketchbooks using a range of media. The teacher's high level of subject knowledge resulted in an excellent use of colour theory. In many subject areas teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and keeps the lessons going at a fair pace with pupils being offered many opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding. The teacher's subject knowledge and enthusiasm during an outstanding Year 7 science lesson received a very good response from the pupils who enjoyed the work, worked at a fast pace and learnt a great deal about the nature of energy. In many lessons pupils acquire skills and knowledge effectively. They gain an understanding of their subject and many begin to use subject specific vocabulary. Pupils are productive when their teachers demand and expect it which is mostly the case. Teachers use homework well to extend their pupils' learning. Pupils with English as an additional language learn well and they use their newly acquired language skills effectively to make progress. Pupils with special educational needs learn satisfactorily and they make satisfactory progress with their teachers' and learning support assistants' help. During lessons assessment is good at Key Stage 3 and sound in Key Stage 4. In a Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, pupils were able to talk about their own work, to explain how they designed the form that they were working on and to assess their work intelligently. In Key Stage 4 such self-assessment would enhance pupils' understanding of the level of their work and would enable them to investigate what they need to do to improve further.

21. Of those lessons that were either sound or less than sound, there was a pattern of weakness which related to the teaching of low attaining pupils. There are three reasons for these pupils' learning being at a relatively low level. Firstly, teachers tend to set the same task for all pupils. These tasks are aimed at the majority, most of whom are of high or middle ability. The consequence is that the lower attaining pupils are left behind, underachieve and often make very slow progress. In an unsatisfactory Year 9 classics lesson less able pupils did not know fully what they were supposed to do with a well produced worksheet. Instead of doing the work these pupils chatted about their arrangements for the weekend and since they were doing so quietly, they remained unchallenged. Secondly, this relative weakness is made worse in those subjects where pupils are set or banded by prior attainment. Some of the least able groups suffer from low expectations on the part of their teachers. This was a concern expressed by a small number of parents who talked about the lack of challenge for the least able with self-fulfilling prophecies. Inspectors agree with these parents' concerns. Pupils in these cases are set unchallenging work such as copying which leads to unsatisfactory attitudes to learning with pupils being easily distracted and making slow or no progress. Thirdly, a significant minority of teaching lacks variety which means that pupils do not have a variety of learning opportunities which would help them to maintain concentration and which would cater for their different preferred learning styles. Being offered the same learning opportunities over and over again causes some pupils to make slow progress and, in a significant minority of cases, no progress at all.
22. This relative weakness affects several subjects. In mathematics pupils are occasionally passive receivers of knowledge and pupils in lower attaining sets do not receive sufficient opportunities to work on numerical problems. In science some lower attaining pupils are too dependent on their teacher and lack opportunities to extend their understanding through challenging tasks. In art some pupils are insufficiently challenged and work at a simplistic level. Low attaining pupils lose concentration in classics when teachers do not give them clear instructions and guidance. Weak literacy skills hamper low attaining pupils' progress in design and technology and geography. In history the concentration of pupils with learning difficulties in certain lower band groups hampers learning. The lack of variety of tasks in modern foreign languages means that pupils of different capabilities are not sufficiently challenged. In music the achievement of less able pupils is inhibited by the nature of the work set, for example, the bias towards staff notation and keyboard skill development, which is not always appropriate.

Sixth form

23. In all lessons seen during the inspection week the quality of teaching was at least sound and in

almost two thirds it was good or better. In almost a third of the lessons seen in the sixth form the quality of teaching was very good or better.

24. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge which allows them to extend the students' own knowledge considerably. In a Year 13 sociology lesson the teacher's extensive knowledge allowed her consistently to give examples of every issue arising to keep a slightly reluctant group going forward in discussing religiosity. She used an endless array of examples from current affairs that were familiar to the students in order to maintain a rather difficult discussion of secularisation. This, as well as the teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects, ensures that students themselves want to learn. They make good progress. Sound lessons would have benefited from more open questioning techniques to allow students to respond creatively and expand on their knowledge and understanding. In one Year 13 chemistry lesson students were rather quiet and appeared disinclined to be fully engaged. Their apparent lack of confidence would have been helped with open-ended questions aimed at individuals. Assessment strategies are good and help students improve further.

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

25. The quality and range of learning opportunities are sound.
26. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the school meets statutory requirements for the National Curriculum in all of the core and foundation subjects. The curriculum is broad and balanced in these years. Information and communication technology and the provision of classical studies are two particular strengths. All pupils follow a course in citizenship, which makes good provision for personal, social and health education; the programme includes drugs education and some careers input on option choices in Year 9, but the overall time allocated to the citizenship course is low. For most of the curriculum in Years 8 and 9 pupils are divided into bands based on prior attainment. Pupils in the upper band are offered German as a second modern foreign language and some have access to Latin. The allocation of pupils to these bands is checked at regular intervals to allow movement. However, the availability of the second language only in the upper band can cause problems; pupils who are demoted can lose their German and those promoted may have problems catching up. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology within music and the classics; the curriculum time allocated to art in Years 8 and 9 is low. Within many subjects of the curriculum, there is a rather limited range of teaching and learning styles so that pupils do not experience a full range of different learning experiences.
27. In Years 10 and 11 the school offers a core curriculum for all pupils of religious education, English language and literature, mathematics, science, physical education, citizenship and information and communication technology. The citizenship course has limited curriculum time but includes health and drugs education and a satisfactory programme of careers education. One week of work experience is successfully provided in Year 10. The curriculum time allocated to the co-ordinated science course, which all pupils follow, is below average. To ensure a balanced curriculum, pupils are expected to study a subject each drawn from three option choices. A very high proportion of pupils study a modern foreign language but a small number of less able pupils are exempted from this to pursue a course in study skills. A rather larger proportion of pupils is disapplied from technology to make room for a variety of other subject choices. There is a very wide range of option subjects leading to GCSE including business studies, classics, dance, drama, Latin, law, music and physical education. However, there is no opportunity at this level to pursue vocational subjects; this means that the overall curriculum offered is insufficient in breadth and balance to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Strategies for enhancing numeracy and literacy skills are satisfactory.
28. Provision for extra-curricular activities in the main school and enrichment in the sixth form are very good. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is offered. A high proportion of pupils is involved in different forms of music, drama and dance and there are regular school productions. Clubs meet a range of different interests. Sports provision is very good; there are many clubs and sports fixtures

and a high level of participation in local leagues. The school has an exceptional tradition of success in public speaking competitions. There are French and German exchanges, theatre and other visits to enrich the curriculum as well as skiing trips and adventure weeks in France. Many pupils are involved in charity work both within and outside the school.

29. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly through the involvement of the police, magistrates and a range of guest speakers in the citizenship programme. Relationships with partner institutions are very good; links with feeder primary schools are particularly strong.
30. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's provision for spiritual development is very good. The school ethos promotes a clear set of values, principles and beliefs throughout its work. There are many opportunities through assemblies, religious services, the citizenship programme and discussions in form periods to explore fundamental values and religious beliefs. These opportunities are supported within subject courses when learning is related to a wider frame of reference and to spirituality; for example, in the study of earth and space in science lessons and in the contribution made by music to spirituality. These subject contributions are, however, not clearly co-ordinated and monitored.
31. Provision for moral development is also very good. The school provides a strong moral code and values which are promoted consistently throughout its work. Pupils have many opportunities to explore moral concepts such as personal rights and responsibilities, truth and justice. They show a well developed sense of right and wrong. Many subjects promote pupils' moral development, for example through the discussion of ethical issues around economic development in geography and the acceptance of rules and decisions in physical education. Provision across subjects, however, is again not clearly planned.
32. Provision for pupils' social development is good. The school fosters a strong sense of community; it provides many valuable corporate experiences and helps pupils to develop the personal qualities which are valued in society. The school's rewards system acknowledges pupils' contribution to the community as well as their attainment and effort. There is a strong tradition of involvement in charitable work, both within and outside the school. Subjects such as technology and mathematics provide some good opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of working collaboratively but such opportunities are limited in most subjects of the curriculum.
33. Provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. There are many opportunities within subjects and through the school's extra-curricular activities for pupils to gain experience of and engage in art, dance, drama, literature and music. Subjects such as English, history, modern languages and religious education make a contribution to developing pupils' awareness and appreciation of non-European cultures. However, overall there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to celebrate British cultural diversity.

Sixth form

34. The sixth form curriculum is exclusively academic with traditional subjects offered at A/S and A2-levels. Students who wish to follow a vocational or part-vocational further education career are obliged to go to other institutions within a short travelling distance of the school's catchment. The previous inspection report suggested that previous attempts to start vocational courses had not proved viable. Some parents and many sixth form students still expressed concern about this lack of curricular choice. Inspectors agree with their concerns and judge that the school is not fully serving its community by limiting curriculum opportunities in the sixth form.
35. In the sixth form the curriculum is enriched through citizenship, religious education and key skills, part of which is a course leading to certification in information and communication technology. There are also timetabled opportunities for physical education which all students have to attend. Sixth form students take leading roles in many of the school's extra-curricular activities. Students support younger pupils in their work. There are good opportunities for the students to exercise leadership and responsibility. Opportunities, including the effective use of visitors, for enhancing the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students would benefit further

from opportunities to celebrate British cultural diversity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. There are very good procedures in place for ensuring the care, health and safety of pupils at the school and appropriate procedures in relation to child protection. There is very good provision for the educational and personal support of pupils. The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is good. The high emphasis placed upon individual pupils and their well being is a strength of the school.
37. Academic progress is systematically monitored and recorded. Pupils receive targets based upon their initial assessment on entry to the school and their attainment during the year. This information is regularly shared with parents and the majority of parents state that they are well informed about their child's progress. A small minority of parents and some pupils expressed concerns that the method of determining targets and the system of banding within the school had a negative effect. Inspectors agree that the banding does cause low expectations of some lower attaining pupils.
38. Teachers know individual pupils well and the ethos is one of awareness and support for individual needs. The pastoral system of form tutors and year heads is very effective in supporting pupils. The school makes good use of external agencies to support pupils when necessary and has recently established a weekly session of school counsellor time from the Catholic Children's Society.
39. There are good procedures in place for promoting and monitoring good behaviour and addressing bullying. These are well known throughout the school. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very good and have produced an improvement over two successive years. Systems are in place to contact parents on the first day of absence for those pupils with less than 90 per cent attendance and those pupils on the social inclusion register. The school is aware of the need to reduce term time holidays and is regularly informing parents of the need for their children to attend school.

Sixth form

40. As for the main school, this is an area of strength in the sixth form. Very good documentation ensures that students receive detailed information on the range of courses offered to them. The four tutors are much respected and admired by the students. Each student receives very good one to one support and guidance. Tutors know their students very well.

Assessment

41. The quality of ongoing assessment is good. Students are given clear guidelines on how to improve their work. Each student receives a half-termly interim report detailing his/her attendance, number of tasks set and completed, attainment and progress towards targets set. Tutors meet each student to discuss this half-termly report. Students respond in a mature and confident way to being monitored and mentored through their two years in the sixth form.

Advice, support and guidance

42. Tutors offer good advice and support. Year 13 students spoke well of the advice they get when determining their future course of action after the sixth form. The high level of tutor knowledge of the students ensures that each student is given the opportunity to make informed choices about higher education. Through citizenship and key skills courses students receive guidance on issues such as decision making in a democratic society, society's needs of information and communication technology and a clear understanding of each individual's strengths and weaknesses. Some sixth form students felt concerned that certain aspects of the citizenship and key skills programmes were too elementary. One student, with highly developed information and communication technology skills, felt that the tasks set for him were ridiculously easy. Another student felt that instead of taking part in citizenship lessons she would prefer to get on with her advanced level

essays. These objections need to be addressed through setting different tasks that challenge the students' different capabilities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Parents think highly of the school and of its provision for their children's education. They feel that this is a good school, which is very well led by its headteacher and which has made significant improvements in recent years. Amongst the many areas that they are happy with are the school's examination results, the provision for information and communication technology, the teachers' hard work and their high expectations, the pupils' excellent behaviour, the school's good relationships with parents and the transition from Year 6 into Year 7 which is described as "superb". Their concerns are: the school is not always effective with the least able; accommodation is inadequate in physical education and in the sixth form; and the end of year internal examination results for Years 7, 8 and 10 were not sent to them. Inspectors agree with the parents' first two concerns which now make two of the four areas for improvement. The end of year internal examination results for Years 7, 8 and 10 were sent home in the school reports.
44. The school has very effective links with parents. Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with what the school provides for its pupils and students and praise highly its leadership and management. A small number of parents were concerned at the effect that the banding process has upon the achievement of lower attaining pupils and the inspection confirms that this is an area for the school to consider.
45. The school provides high quality information in the prospectus. Separate documents provide an excellent summary for each year group, detailing areas to be taught within that year's curriculum. Annual reports to parents, on pupils' progress, provide good information about attainment and effort and predicted grades for the end of Years 9 and 11. The reports include areas for improvement, but these could be more specific to enable parents to support their children further.
46. Parents are very actively involved in the work of the school, through their attendance at specific religious events, good attendance at parents' evenings and their support of the parent teacher association (PTA) activities. The PTA is successful in organising both social and fund-raising activities, for example a quiz night and a trip to the Planetarium in Chichester.
47. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning both at school and at home is very good. There is consistent use of the personal planner book as a means of communication between home and school and to record homework. There is excellent use of the home school agreement. It is used proactively in school, particularly in Year 7, to promote the values, ethos and expectations of the school. It is also used well by the school in managing unwanted behaviour.
48. The school works hard to be approachable and to welcome parents' involvement and this is reflected in the very positive views parents have of it. These have improved since the last inspection and this area is a significant strength in the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The headteacher's leadership of the school is very good and is visionary. Since his arrival the school has made significant improvements in many aspects of its work. Parents, staff and pupils speak well of the headteacher, praising his high profile around the school. Staff see him as a strong agent of change, of improved discipline and of enhanced expectations. The headteacher has high expectations of himself and of his staff. Along with his senior management team, he has put together effective strategies for monitoring teaching and for reviewing subject department work. The result is a school that knows its strengths and weaknesses and plans its work accordingly. Strengths and weaknesses are diagnosed through a programme of lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and regular departmental reviews. The school development plan sets appropriate priorities well and these priorities are worked on by all within a culture of a shared commitment to succeed. The school's 'manual of indicators' is used annually to carry out a thorough analysis of

outcomes, including test and examination results, attendance, staff deployment and other aspects of the school's work. These self-evaluation procedures have had positive impacts on teaching and learning because they allow the school to introduce new strategies to improve on weak areas. For example, recent evaluation showed that support for special educational needs pupils across subjects is inconsistent. Staff were consequently given a training session on support strategies that has begun to show results in the classroom.

50. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. It is well served by the headteacher and his senior team; heads of departments also contribute to discussions within the governing body. Although some governors are fully engaged in monitoring and evaluating the school's work, others appear complacent and feel that the headteacher, his management team and the staff are doing such a good job that governors need not 'interfere' too much. The school development plan is well written and governors feel that they can place their trust in the headteacher, the senior managers and school staff to implement the plan successfully. This trust is justifiably built on the improvements made by the school over the last six or so years. However, governors need to offer a stronger challenge to the work of the school to ensure that the improvements to date continue. Furthermore, given the findings in this inspection, that provision for the least able should be improved, governors need to ensure that their monitoring of the school's work enables them to support the improvements needed in this area.
51. Resources are satisfactory and well used. Since the last inspection the school has undergone a dramatic improvement in its use of information and communication technology both as a learning tool and an administrative tool which is now very good. Specific grants are well used. The school makes a clear link between its educational priorities and its budgeting, with staff being given clear briefings on how money is spent and why. Learning resources are adequate in all areas and very good in information and communication technology. Financial management is sound and the principles of best value are satisfactorily applied.
52. The match between staff qualification and expertise and curricular needs is good in most areas in the main school and very good in the sixth form. In art there are two teachers who are not specialists. Their work is invariably at least sound. They receive some support although this should be considerably enhanced in order to help them develop further. Performance management is in place and staff report its impact on their teaching as being positive. The induction of new staff is satisfactory. Some non-teaching staff do not have job descriptions. This occasionally causes confusion as to the line management structure. It is an irritant to many of these staff who work hard and on whose goodwill the school relies heavily. Governors and the headteacher need to produce job descriptions with a clear line management structure for all non-teaching staff.
53. Accommodation in many areas of the school is old and somewhat cramped. Teachers make the best of such limited accommodation and ensure a reasonable learning environment through attractive displays of pupils' work. There are areas, nonetheless, where the inadequacy of the accommodation has a negative impact on pupils' learning. These areas are modern languages, music and physical education. The physical education accommodation is particularly poor.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

54. Leadership replicates that of the main school. The head of the upper school works well with the head of sixth form who, in turn, has a close and good working relationship with the four tutors. The result is a smooth running sixth form with a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. The effective monitoring strategies used in the main school apply in the sixth form. There are also added opportunities allowing sixth formers to be involved through their council, which is run by intelligent and mature students who put a great deal of informal effort into ensuring the smooth running of their sixth form.
55. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Inspectors agree with the students that the social area is much

too small and that it is often cramped, noisy and oppressive. The rooms in the sixth form centre are too small to allow for pair or group work, minimising the chances of a diversity of learning opportunities. The result is that some lessons held in these rooms tend to have the students in rows with the teacher up at the front. Classrooms in the main school are slightly better given the nature of some small groups in the sixth form.

56. Sixth form expenditure remains within its stated budget. The quality of provision, enrichment and the extra-curricular variety make the sixth form cost effective. Governors and senior managers need to enhance curriculum provision to allow for vocational courses within this fast expanding sixth form which has more than trebled in size over the last three years.

Resources

57. Resources are satisfactory. Staffing is very good. Some students complained about having to buy essential textbooks. Inspectors agree with these concerns.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school should:

- (1) Ensure that provision for all pupils and particularly for the less able, is improved in varying aspects of mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages and physical education by:

- offering pupils a wider range of teaching and learning opportunities including collaborative work and independent learning;
- setting tasks suitable for the pupils' differing capabilities;
- maintaining consistently high expectations of all pupils regardless of their differing capabilities;
- helping pupils understand exactly what their level of achievement is and what they need to do next to improve;
- reviewing setting arrangements in subjects where they are hindering the least able;
- enhancing the literacy skills of all pupils.

(Paragraphs: 7, 11, 12-13, 20-22, 26, 32, 37, 42-44, 50, 55, 62, 64, 68, 72-74, 79, 81-82, 84, 90, 93, 95, 102, 108, 110, 113-115, 118-120, 131-134, 136, 137, 139, 142-143, 147, 149, 150, 157, 167-168, 170, 181, 189, 196, 204)

- (2) Increase opportunities for enhanced and broadened curriculum choices by offering vocational courses at Key Stage 4.

(Paragraph: 27)

- (3) Ensure that the ongoing building programme includes improved provision for modern languages, music, physical education and the sixth form centre.

(Paragraphs: 43, 53, 55, 136, 143, 151)

- (4) Improve the overall attendance figures by achieving a reduction in authorised absence.

(Paragraphs: 16, 39)

Sixth form

- (1) Increase opportunities for enhanced and broadened curriculum choices by offering vocational courses in the sixth form.

(Paragraph: 34)

- (2) Improve the accommodation in the sixth form centre.

(Paragraph: 55)

- (3) Improve independence in learning in English, chemistry, French, geography, history and politics.

(Paragraphs: 24, 168-170, 181, 196)

The school also needs to consider further action on the following areas:

- (1) Create further opportunities for pupils to understand and celebrate British cultural diversity.

(Paragraphs: 13, 18, 33, 35, 42)

- (2) Produce job descriptions with a clear line management structure for all non-teaching staff.

(Paragraph: 52)

- (3) Create opportunities for all governors to be more fully engaged in the school's activities, especially in monitoring and evaluating its work.

(Paragraph: 50)

- (4) Provide more opportunities for speaking and listening.

(Paragraphs: 22, 62, 131-132, 137)

- (5) Implement a strategy for numeracy across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 5, 76, 119)

- (6) Increase time for art at Key Stage 3.

(Paragraphs: 26, 86, 89)

- (7) Improve the use of information technology across the curriculum and particularly in science and music.

(Paragraphs: 26, 60, 83, 105, 129, 164, 184)

- (8) Ensure that subject contributions to the pupils' spiritual and moral development are clearly coordinated and monitored.

(Paragraphs: 30-31)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	130
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	11	30	51	31	7	0	0
Percentage	8	23	39	24	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	10	14	15	0	0	0
Percentage	3	25	35	38	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	839	107
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	38	None

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	None
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	66	None

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.51
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	72	70	142

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	52	58	64
	Girls	52	51	53
	Total	104	109	117
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (78)	77 (80)	82 (79)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (29)	54 (57)	39 (40)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	50	65	71
	Girls	51	51	64
	Total	101	116	135
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (77)	82 (94)	95 (94)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	36 (42)	51 (63)	44 (63)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	65	45

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	59	63
	Girls	28	43	43
	Total	64	102	108
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (61)	93 (97)	98 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.2 (39.6)
	National	39.0 (39.1)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS -level examinations			For candidates entered for advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	16	22	38	0	0	0
School	Average point score per candidate	15.8	18.1	17.2	0	0	0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	0	0	0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
577	21	2
0	0	0
0	0	1
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
14	0	0
221	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	365

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.1
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	2,264,131
Total expenditure	2,240,511
Expenditure per pupil	2,851
Balance brought forward from previous year	37,799
Balance carried forward to next year	23,620

Sixth Form	15
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	839
Number of questionnaires returned	241

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	44	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	44	3	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	56	2	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	61	7	2	2
The teaching is good.	39	54	4	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	44	6	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	35	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	28	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	53	7	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	68	29	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	43	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	53	11	1	3

Other issues raised by parents

Parents' comments during the parents' meeting were overwhelmingly positive. A small number of parents said that the school had not sent them their children's internal annual examination results for Years 7, 8 and 10. This is clearly a misunderstanding since the end of year reports give the examination results. Parents' written comments were also overwhelmingly positive. Some parents expressed concern over the school's insufficient challenge of the lower attaining pupils and over the inadequacy of some accommodation. Inspectors agree with these concerns as indicated in the summary box 'What could be improved'.

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.
- Teacher-pupil relationships support the pupils' learning.
- Expectations are high.

Areas for improvement

- Outlining clearly the learning objectives of each lesson.

58. Key Stage 3 English results in the 2001 National Curriculum standard attainment Tests were in line with the national average but below average compared to similar schools. Results for pupils obtaining Level 6 and above were close to the national average. The performance of boys was further ahead of the national average than girls'. Results in 2002 show significant improvement for both boys and girls. In the 2001 GCSE examinations in English language, results were well above the national average for both boys and girls. Boys' performance was further ahead of national standards than girls'. Girls do better in English than in their other subjects; boys do not. In 2001 English Literature, results were above the national average for both boys and girls. Results for 2002 in language and literature show very substantial improvement from the previous year. The GCE advanced level results have been consistently above the national averages since 1998.
59. Standards observed during the inspection were above average and in line with these latest results. Departmental planning to improve pupils' technical skills and understanding shows in the clear progress made in their writing. By the age of 14 pupils of all capabilities are writing capably in a range of forms. Lower attaining pupils benefit from well-established procedures for drafting, so that final versions are well-organised and technically correct. Average and higher attaining pupils write in more extended and sophisticated ways. For example, an autobiography of a pupil in Year 9 began 'With my surname of Wallis, people with childish thoughts had often called "Where's Gromit?" as I walked past.' The teacher's comments at the end of the piece indicated how an already talented writer might develop further.
60. By the age of 16 further progress is made. Low attaining pupils write about their reading, for instance, simply but with clear understanding. High attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are adept at appealing successfully to a number of audiences in a range of forms. For example, a pamphlet making an appeal on behalf of a national park showed a mature understanding of purpose and style. Information and communication technology features in the work of all pupils from 11-16. There are insufficient opportunities, however, for pupils to access information and communication technology during lessons. Boys and girls across the range of age and attainment achieve equal standards and both are in advance of national expectations. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress.
61. Standards of reading are also above average. Pupils read aloud very well and have plenty of opportunity to practise in lessons. By the age of 14 pupils can comment on a range of texts. For example, they can identify how argument and debate are presented in newspapers and use those devices in work of their own. By the age of 16 pupils of all capabilities can critically examine narratives, poems, theatre and media texts. Lower attaining pupils comment on character, plot and

technique simply but with good understanding. Higher attaining pupils justify their analyses of stories, plays and poems with an impressive grasp of critical vocabulary.

62. Standards of speaking and listening are good, though opportunities to develop those skills in lessons are relatively limited. Most teachers use questions skilfully to get pupils to attend and develop their thinking. However, as distinct from the provision for writing, there is not a clearly planned set of opportunities to develop skills of discussion and oral presentation. A clearer understanding of how to use talk to learn would assist pupils in becoming more autonomous. Currently, too many pupils are too dependent on teachers for direction and motivation.
63. The drama curriculum makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' presentational and creative skills. Examination results indicate very high attainment by the age of 16. The lack of time for the subject at Key Stage 3, identified in the last OfSTED report, has been satisfactorily resolved. Unfortunately, because of staff absence, it was not possible to observe any drama teaching during this inspection.
64. Standards of teaching overall are good and result in good learning. In Key Stage 3 the majority of lessons were judged to be good or better. The same was the case in Key Stage 4. At both key stages there was one unsatisfactory lesson. Most teachers plan lessons carefully, with clear learning objectives and well managed procedures to take the learning forward. For example, a very good lesson had Year 10 pupils examining pro- and anti-hunting newspaper articles and identifying the distinction between rational and emotional argument. Through the teacher's sharp questioning and timing, and a progressive series of activities, pupils moved from analysis to presenting arguments of their own in speech and writing. It was teaching and management that led to active learning of a high order. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory little progress was made because of poor organisation and a lack of clearly defined purpose. Expectations of behaviour and effort are high. Marking is usually detailed and precise, though not universally so. Homework is used well to consolidate and advance learning. Pupils, with the exception of some of the lower sets, expect to work hard and are made to do so. Where expectations are high pupils' attitudes are good. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The acknowledged priority for the department is to make the high standard of most teaching and learning entirely general.
65. Curricular provision in English is satisfactory. Schemes of work cover the requirements of the National Curriculum in clear detail. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy is evident in the majority of lessons. Teaching in other departments is beginning to contribute to the development of pupils' literacy. Key words are identified in all subject areas. Attention to the subject-specific demands of reading and writing is not consistently evident in the work of most departments. Good practice was noted in English, science and information and communication technology. Provision for literacy across the school was judged overall to be satisfactory.
66. The leadership and management of the department are good. After a period of staffing difficulty, which partially explains the dip in attainment of pupils in 2001 compared to other core subjects, substantial developments have been put energetically in train. Schemes of work have been revised to take account of literacy and Key Stage 3 national strategies. New staff have been supported in making immediate and successful contributions to the work of the department resulting in the very substantial improvement in results in 2002. Good use is made of assessment data to track pupils' progress and set demanding but motivating targets. The priorities of the school development plan are mirrored in departmental planning. The head of department currently has insufficient designated time to monitor and develop the work of inexperienced colleagues. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
67. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Schemes of work have been updated. Individual educational plans now influence planning and teaching. There is a better match of materials and teaching approaches to pupils' capabilities and information and communication technology is better represented in the work of the department.
68. The majority of pupils are very well served by the English teaching they receive. With attention given

to the provision for and expectations of, some lower attaining pupils and a focus on promoting independent learning, the department is in a good position to develop its work further.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Standards are steadily rising in all years.
- Teaching is good.
- The department is well led and has the capacity to improve.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. Many enjoy mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- Numeracy across the curriculum.
- Problem solving, which is not yet integrated into everyday teaching and learning.

69. Standards on entry to the school are above average. Standards in the first three years are above average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of the pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or above was well above the national average. The proportion of those achieving Level 6 was also well above average. The results in 2002 were slightly better. Standards have improved steadily over the last five years compared to national norms and mathematics results are broadly similar to those in science and better than those in English. The boys consistently achieve higher results than the girls. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportions of pupils gaining a grade A*-C and of pupils gaining grades A*-G were in line with the national average. Mathematics results were overall in line with many subjects in the curriculum, but lagged behind science and English. However, this gap has steadily decreased during the last five years. In 2001 a higher proportion of the girls achieved grades A*-C than did the boys. The results in 2002 were much better, with an improvement of nearly ten per cent in the proportion of pupils achieving a grade A*-C and virtually all pupils achieving a grade A*-G. The GCE advanced level results in 2001 were well above the national average.
70. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. Standards have improved, particularly in the two final years. The achievement of the pupils, that is the progress they make in the long term, has improved. The attitude and behaviour of the pupils and the quality of the teaching are better. Leadership has improved considerably, from unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection to good now.
71. The achievement of the pupils in the first three years is good. In lessons seen, progress was never less than satisfactory and in most cases was better, because of good teaching. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is at least satisfactory, although in the higher attaining sets, progress is often good or better during lessons. In general pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their peers, supported by smaller classes and good individual help from learning support assistants.
72. Pupils cover all areas of the curriculum at an appropriate level. Standards in algebra are generally good. Pupils in higher attaining sets in Years 10 and 11 can solve quadratic equations, whilst in the early years pupils are able to solve simple linear equations and use simple formulae. Standards of numeracy are generally good. Most pupils know their multiplication tables and many pupils can use a range of strategies for working out numerical problems in their heads, although this facility reduces as they get older, particularly in lower attaining sets, because they are not given enough opportunities to practise. They are introduced to general problem solving early on and, in most cases, by the end of Year 11, have learned how to form a hypothesis, record results appropriately and draw up conclusions. However, they do not have enough opportunities for practising enquiring skills during lessons and so this activity is seen as a separate skill and not as a key way of approaching mathematical problems in general. All pupils become familiar with the basic properties of shapes and learn the basic principles of handling data at a level appropriate to their set. Information and communication technology is effectively used to support learning in a variety of

ways. Use of calculators for complex calculations is good, but some pupils remain over-reliant on them when they should be working problems out in their heads.

73. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the classroom are generally very good and are best in higher and middle attaining sets. In virtually all classrooms there is a relaxed and business-like atmosphere, with the pupils clearly there to work. Standards of presentation are generally good and most pupils take a real pride in the quality of their work and try to be precise and accurate. A few lower attaining pupils leave work unfinished and few pupils repeat work that is unsatisfactory, even after the teacher has written in comments about how to correct it. Most manage to do a reasonable amount of work each lesson and for homework. Pupils are free to contribute during lessons and ask or answer questions, although the majority seem more comfortable as relatively passive receivers of knowledge and understanding.
74. The quality of teaching is good. In two out of every three lessons seen, it was good or better. There was some excellent teaching. In one lesson out of three teaching was satisfactory and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teaching was better in the first three years and in the higher attaining sets. All the teachers plan lessons thoroughly. They tell the pupils what they are going to learn, although only in the better lessons are objectives clearly distinguished from the content and only rarely do they return to these objectives at the end of the lesson, to check that the pupils have learned what they should have. In most lessons the teachers explain the mathematical processes very carefully to the pupils and make sure they understand the meaning of key words. In the best lessons, pupils are helped to develop their ability to learn independently. Most of the teachers use skilled questioning to engage the pupils and enable them to express their understanding at their own level. In general, however, pupils are still not given enough opportunities to become actively involved in lessons, or to explain in their own words how they work out answers. There are well-developed systems to assess the progress of the pupils in periodic tests, but most teachers have insufficient understanding of the progress of individual pupils during the course of the lesson, so that they can ensure that the work meets their needs. In some lessons, pupils spend over long periods working on individual tasks, with no systematic checks that they are working correctly. As a result some can waste time making repetitive uncorrected mistakes. Teaching and assessing techniques, which have been introduced by the national strategy for mathematics at Key Stage 3, have yet to be fully implemented.
75. The department is well organised and led. Many improvements have been introduced by a relatively new head of department, after a period of some instability in leadership. The department is staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers with a shared commitment to high standards and improvement and time is well used to share good practice. The head of department has a good understanding of key priorities for improvement. New technology is used very well to support administrative processes and to track the progress of the pupils in the long term. The curriculum fulfils national requirements.
76. Standards of numeracy are generally good and support the requirements for application in other subjects of the curriculum. However this is not exploited as much as it could be in some areas. Effective applications of mathematics across the curriculum are relatively rare: in geography pupils use statistics, scales in map work and graphs of various kinds; in English and in history there is some interpretation of graphs; and in science, pupils can transpose formulae and interpret data to a satisfactory level. The school has yet to implement a strategy to promote the improvement and effective use of numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Teachers use very good subject knowledge to plan and teach.
- Pupils behave and respond very well in lessons.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good.

- There are effective leadership and management.
- There are good relationships in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independence.
- There is a need for greater emphasis on what, and how well, pupils learn in lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work does not consistently offer advice on how to improve.

77. In the national tests in 2001, the percentage of pupils at Level 5 in Year 9 was well above the national average and was above average for pupils at Level 6. Over the previous three years, attainment levels were consistently above average and increased in line with national trends. The attainment of boys improved slightly faster than that of girls over this period. Boys' attainment was higher than that of girls. Preliminary results from the end of Year 9 tests in 2002 indicate that attainment was similar to that in 2001. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2001 the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above the national average, but slightly lower than in 2000. The percentage of pupils with A*-G grades was close to the average. The percentage of pupils gaining the highest grades of A and A* in 2001 was higher than the national average and was an improvement on 2000 results. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. Initial results from the GCSE examinations in 2002 indicate that the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was much higher than in 2001; nearly all gained at least Grade G. The 2001 GCE advanced level results in biology were in line with the national average and well below in chemistry. Neither of the two candidates entered for physics in 2001 attained a pass grade.
78. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. As a result of well-planned teaching, pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 9, attainment remains above national expectations. Most pupils display a good knowledge of scientific ideas that they use effectively to develop understanding in lessons. This was the case in a very good Year 7 lesson on investigational science, in which pupils' competence in interpreting graphical information allowed them to draw appropriate conclusions from experimental results.
79. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above the national average overall; it is well above average for higher attaining pupils. Achievement is good. Many pupils apply their knowledge of scientific ideas well to unfamiliar situations. For example, in one excellent lesson, higher attaining pupils used their understanding of wave motion to make clear distinctions between analogue and digital signals. In a few lessons, however, some lower attaining pupils were too dependent on teachers for information; as a result they failed to extend their understanding sufficiently. At present, not enough encouragement is given for all pupils to find out things for themselves. Progress by pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages.
80. Pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy. The standard of their written work is good. Teachers use key words effectively in lessons to help pupils develop their scientific vocabulary and provide good support for mathematical activities. Boys and girls make similar progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of appropriate support and encouragement. This was the case in a good Year 11 lesson on plant reproduction. The teacher's clear and patient explanation of the principles involved, assisted by individual help from a learning support assistant, resulted in pupils with special needs making good progress. They learned to distinguish between sexual and asexual reproduction and were able to give examples.
81. Throughout the school, pupils behave very well and respond positively in lessons. They are usually keen to learn. Relationships are very good and pupils co-operate well when working in groups. While most pupils concentrate effectively on their work, a few do not listen well and lose interest easily and the flow of the lesson is disrupted. This was particularly found among lower attaining pupils when the approach was insufficiently challenging. When teachers actively promote high expectations, pupils achieve well.
82. The quality of teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In most lessons, pupils know what is expected of them and the work contains an appropriate balance of challenge and support. In an excellent Year 7 lesson on energy, the teacher used questioning and

explanation very effectively and allowed time for pupils to reflect on their ideas; as a result, some of their earlier misconceptions were dispelled. Where lessons are less effective, teachers fail to assess pupils' understanding adequately and present work at an inappropriate level. This was observed in a Year 11 lesson on genes and chromosomes. The teacher had very good knowledge of the topic, but lower attaining pupils were not sufficiently involved; they found difficulty concentrating on the detailed explanations provided. Although teachers usually plan and teach their lessons effectively, greater consideration needs to be given to what, and how well, pupils are learning.

83. While the provision of computers in the department is satisfactory, no use is made of remote sensing and data logging. Pupils also make little use of learning programs, including simulation materials, which would assist them to gain a better grasp of scientific concepts. Assessment procedures are good. The results of end-of-unit tests in particular are used very effectively. The ongoing assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory although occasionally teachers are not always fully aware of what pupils are learning during lessons. Marking, while usually carried out conscientiously, is inconsistent and provides too few developmental comments to assist pupils to make better progress.
84. Management and leadership are good. Appropriate developments have been prioritised and a review of teaching schemes, in line with national initiatives, is underway. The issues identified in the last inspection report have largely been addressed. However, there are still some inconsistent features, particularly with regard to marking pupils' work and improving learning outcomes in lessons. More guidance is needed in these areas. While standards are good overall, better sharing of the very good practice identified during the inspection would raise these further still.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of the good teaching and organisation.
- Teaching, which is most often good and sometimes excellent in Years 10 and 11 means that pupils do well in these years.
- The good leadership of the subject has ensured good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop art historical studies and links with the outside world of art.
- Structure homework in Years 8 and 9 to augment lesson time and offer more opportunities for pupils to become independent learners.
- Offer more support for, and monitoring of, non-specialist teachers.

85. Overall standards are above average. Standards are sound in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. When pupils start school in Year 7 attainment is generally average. Standards reached by 14 year olds are in line with the average, showing that pupils are maintaining progress and that achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average; GCSE results last year were impressive and well above the national average with the majority of the pupils entered gaining high grades. Attainment on the advanced level course is in line with course expectations. Examination results of the GCE advanced level course have been very good at AS-level and good at the final A2-level. However, when numbers are small, as they are in Year 13 this year, meaningful comparisons with national averages can be difficult.
86. Achievement is satisfactory but not consistent in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils achieve well, particularly in lessons where resources are varied and the range of work imaginative. These pupils know what is expected of them, they are able to discuss their work and develop sound drawing and painting skills. In other lessons pupils' achievement is restricted by less demanding work and a limited range of materials. From Year 7 pupils are introduced to a variety of media and to the work of different artists. They work in both two and three dimensions and develop skills of planning and construction. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. Some creative constructions

which interpret the work of Gaudi were seen in Year 9. There is good use of the work of artists, including arts and crafts from non-European cultures, as a starting point for pupils' own work. However, pupils' research skills and their knowledge and understanding of art in the context of time and place remain slight. Pupils draw well from direct observation and there are good examples of portraits and drawing from nature. High attaining pupils make good progress with drawing but some pupils are insufficiently challenged and are working at a more simplistic level. There is insufficient time for art in Years 8 and 9 which makes it difficult to cover the National Curriculum in depth; it also means that some pupils do not always finish projects or build up a sufficient body of work during the year. Although there is some variation in the expectation of sketch books there has been considerable improvement in their use since the previous inspection.

87. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. At this stage pupils are expected to take more responsibility for their work and they carry out appropriate contextual studies on the work of artists. Pupils benefit from the increased time and are encouraged to experiment with a wider range of media and scale. High attainers, who are prepared to take more risks, make particularly good progress. Painting is emerging as a strength and in both years pupils have the opportunity to paint on a large scale. Some particularly well observed studies from fruit and vegetables have been produced. There is good drawing from direct observation, but apart from portraits no drawing from the figure. Pupils are able to think in three dimensions and have constructed large heads based on cubism. Information and communication technology is used effectively. Most sketchbooks are developed to a high level and are well annotated, a good foundation for sixth form.
88. In the sixth form student achievement is good and in some cases very good. One girl, who had not studied art and design since Year 9, is making sound progress on the AS course. Progress is generally good from the previous GCSE work and learning is good in both years. Students acquire the skills necessary to conceptualise imaginative responses to the new units of work. They are directing their own work and portfolios show that students carry out thoughtful investigation and explore a range of ideas. They are also prepared to experiment with a variety of materials including information and communication technology. Students talk about their work with knowledge and enthusiasm. However, they lack sufficient outside contact with art and a programme of art school links and gallery visits is needed as part of their course. They need more opportunity to evaluate their work against others.
89. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work and are keen to talk about what they are doing. In all years behaviour is generally good because students are interested in the work. Pupils with special educational needs are making sound progress although they would benefit from more art time in Years 8 and 9. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are doing well.
90. Overall teaching is good; it is very good and at times excellent in Years 10 and 11, good in the sixth form and sound in Years 7 to 9. In the best lessons there is a variety of teaching methods and activities that not only keep pupils interested but help them develop skills. However teaching between Years 7 to 9 is not consistently of such high quality; non-specialists teach some classes and the work is more limited, although still satisfactory. Although there are examples of very good homework in Years 7 to 9 expectations for homework are not always high enough or consistent at this stage. Homework is very good in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form. Teachers provide sound support for literacy through contextual studies, annotated notebooks and emphasis on key words. Pupils learn more about numeracy by measuring and scaling up designs. Homework is marked regularly, though not always with a comment that tells pupils how to improve their work.
91. The department is led and managed well. The new head of department has worked hard to ensure that the department is well organised and resources are used well. Art is a popular subject and more pupils would like to take art GCSE than can currently be provided for; numbers have also risen in the sixth form. Art has gone from being one of the worst subjects at the time of the last inspection to now being one of the best and improvement has been very good.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is sound.

Strengths

- The co-ordinator has led the introduction of citizenship effectively.
- Much of the teaching includes clear citizenship learning objectives and helps pupils become responsible citizens.
- There is a commitment to whole school provision, through subject areas and the school's personal and social education programme.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Subject areas need to be more precise about when and how they deliver the requirements for citizenship.
- The citizenship elements of the personal and social education programme need to be more clearly identified.
- The assessment and recording system does not yet provide teachers and pupils with a clear enough picture of standards achieved.

92. At this early stage of this new subject, standards are average. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of some contemporary issues in the wider society and an appreciation of the responsibility of individuals for each other in local and global communities. For example, in Year 7, pupils increase their knowledge of voluntary bodies through studying a charity project in India. Year 8 pupils are able to analyse, discuss and reflect on issues of homelessness and child abuse. In Year 9, pupils express and justify opinions well on the need for respect for human rights and the equal rights of females to take part in boxing. A taster course organised for Year 6 pupils in the summer before their admission, based on the Commonwealth Games, highlighted diversity and co-operation through different subject tasks and produced work of a good standard.
93. By the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding are sound. Pupils have an increased understanding of aspects of society they will meet in the work place. The fusion of citizenship with a number of courses which prepare pupils for adult life, results in careers work which requires pupils to put themselves in other people's roles and exercises on presenting one's own experiences in a positive manner to others. Opportunities for pupils to apply skills of enquiry and communication are insufficiently exploited.
94. Some pupils of all ages participate actively in the school council and others in an annual local youth conference, working as part of a news and editorial team conducting surveys and interviews about local facilities. A considerable number of Year 11 pupils provide practical help for senior citizens to acquire computer skills and in a nursing home and in local primary schools. Pupils studying textiles in Year 9 gain knowledge and understanding of cultural and moral issues about trade and exploitation on a global scale. The GCSE textile option allows pupils to explore the concept of an environmentally responsible company. Other pupils have been involved in a competition for constructing an environment friendly vehicle, winning first prize.
95. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress and for some, it is good or very good. Visiting speakers need to be guided better on the effective use of time and the need for quality visual aids. Pupils develop their own ideas and values very well through discussion, but need help with the skills of constructing an argument which persuades others. Teaching groups have pupils of different attainment and they work well together. All are able to contribute and they are able to organise themselves in group work, appointing leaders and exchanging ideas well. Pupils with special needs and with English as an additional language make better progress than expected. All pupils demonstrated positive attitudes in the lessons observed.
96. Teaching is good overall with examples of some good and very good teaching. Teachers mostly have high expectations and the most successful lessons are based on clear citizenship objectives, which are shared with pupils. Well prepared schemes of work provide a good basis for giving form tutors the confidence to teach the new course. Some teachers have built on this to produce their

own short-term plans and resources. In the better lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop informed opinions over time and to challenge the opinions of others. Class teachers manage pupils well.

97. The school has successfully organised citizenship teaching around its current opportunities and strengths in personal and social education, charity projects and visiting speakers. Citizenship contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but there is scope for more explicit work on the legal system, central and local government, race relations and racial equality and for debates in Years 7 to 11.
98. The assessment and recording of pupils' work is weak. It focuses on pupils' views of the varied content which is covered, rather than providing feedback on what pupils have learned about citizenship and how best to target future teaching to meet pupils' needs to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills.
99. The co-ordinator has led the introduction of citizenship effectively. Planning took into account the objectives and coverage of the National Curriculum. The school has demonstrated an obvious commitment to citizenship taught through all form tutors. Opportunities in school for visitors have been used well. Subjects have been audited for their contribution to citizenship, but have not yet identified it in their long-term planning clearly enough for it to be observed and reported on as a distinct subject and for pupils' progress to be assessed. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory.

CLASSICS

Overall, the quality of provision in classics is good.

Strengths

- The behaviour and attitudes of most pupils are good.
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute positively towards learning.
- The department is led by an experienced and committed classics specialist.
- Schemes of work in Key Stage 3 are detailed; in Key Stage 4, less so.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the use of information and communication technology in classical studies and Latin.
- The monitoring of the teaching of non-specialists needs to be fully developed.

100. Standards in Years 7,8 and 9 are in line with expectations. There is no national data for classical subjects at Key Stage 3 and the judgement on standards is based on work seen during the inspection. In classical studies, pupils can analyse and interpret both written and pictorial evidence from the ancient world. They grasp the meanings of complex words and, in one Year 7 lesson, pupils delighted in giving definitions to and pronouncing the terms 'frescoes' and 'archaeologist'. In Latin, pupils' language skills are developing steadily.
101. Standards of work produced by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are broadly in line with expectations. In classical civilisation, pupils are able to understand and interpret the plot and characters of Greek tragedy; for example in a Year 11 lesson, where pupils were making perceptive comments about the character of Oedipus, all backed up with evidence from the text. In Latin, pupils have a sound grasp of grammar and vocabulary, which was seen in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were making a good attempt at an unseen translation of a set text. Pupils use dictionaries well although they are encouraged to work out the meanings of words through English derivatives. Pupils show commitment in their lessons and in their written work.
102. Teaching is satisfactory or better in four out of the five lessons observed. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are well planned and expectations are high, thus maintaining pupils' interests. However, when lower attaining pupils are not given clear instructions and guidance, they lose concentration and interest. Teachers display an enthusiasm for the subject and pupils are

motivated by this. For example, in a Year 9 lesson a new topic, Roman baths, is introduced creatively using images of reconstructed baths found on the Internet. This presentation brought the topic to life and pupils responded enthusiastically.

103. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are good and the working atmosphere in most lessons is purposeful yet relaxed. Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to the subject, seen in the increase in numbers going on to study ancient history in the sixth form.
104. Pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from classics lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9; in Years 10 and 11 teachers are aware of the needs of those pupils in their classes.
105. Leadership and management in classics are good. The department is led by a knowledgeable subject specialist who has a vision to move the subject forward. Schemes of work in Key Stage 3 are detailed, interesting in content and appropriately pitched. At Key Stage 4, schemes of work are less well structured and detailed. Marking is regular, although there is sometimes insufficient guidance for pupils as to how to improve the next piece of work. The departmental development plan is well structured and detailed with appropriate priorities for action. The monitoring of non-specialists within the classics department is not fully developed and the good range of resources available in the one classics teaching room needs to be made available to all staff. The use of information and communication technology in classical studies and Latin is insufficient and needs to be integrated into teaching across the department.
106. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In particular, the department provides a very good range of visits to places of classical interest, for example Fishbourne Palace, the British Museum and Greece. In addition, the department now has two Latin specialist teachers and the departmental development plan has already identified appropriate areas for development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are comparable with those nationally.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in food and textiles.
- Pupils enjoy the subject because of its practical nature and they are proud of their achievements.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- There is a commitment to improve and the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The range of strategies for meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils and those with weaker literacy skills is narrow in some lessons in graphics and resistant materials.
- Planning is not securely based on assessments of pupils' progress.
- The work in Key Stage 3 does not build on previous modules in different materials.

107. Standards in tests and external examinations are comparable with those nationally. Pupils achieve well, particularly in food and textiles technology. The department does not teach the full range of pupils in Key Stage 4 because only two thirds take options in the subject. Standards for post 16 students are average. Standards across all areas are not consistent due to staff changes in graphics and resistant materials. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.
108. Teaching and learning are good and never less than satisfactory. In food and textiles lessons they are very good. Where the teaching and learning are most effective, lessons are well structured to ensure that the pace of learning is good and all pupils enjoy the lessons. All teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. In the best lessons, strategies engage pupils in relevant and

interesting activities. For example, Year 8 pupils in food technology develop imaginative products using a yeast base. In these lessons, pupils have very high levels of motivation and are proud of their success. A very good range of resources is used, for example in textiles, to help pupils understand issues such as quality control in the production of goods. Intended learning outcomes for pupils are especially clearly identified in the planning for good lessons and pupils are supported to understand not only what they must do, but how they can do the task. In this way, pupils' learning skills are systematically developed. For example, pupils were taught how to draw using two point perspective in graphics. Pupils' learning was most rapid and effective when the teacher intervened at appropriate points to clarify and reinforce the main points of the lesson. The pace of learning visibly slackened when pupils were left for too long before intervention. In the best lessons, pupils are given scope and structure to work independently and pupils demonstrate a mature and responsible approach to learning. Group activities, particularly those in food and textiles lessons, enable pupils to develop good social skills, for example, explaining their point of view, listening to and building on the ideas of others.

109. Across the department, very good use is made of starter activities to engage and focus pupils' attention at the beginning of lessons. For example, in a Year 8 textiles lessons, pupils were asked to list the six major polluters in the world. In the best lessons, pupils were encouraged to extend their understanding of the relationship between design and function and understand that there are many different solutions to design problems. Students on advanced level courses develop sound skills of analysis and present their work to a pleasing standard.

110. Feedback to pupils is inconsistent. Some teachers give frequent, full and detailed written information that helps pupils understand what they have done well and how to improve their work. Pupils are regularly assessed by assigning the best-fit National Curriculum level. However, records of what individual pupils know, understand and are able to do are insufficiently detailed to guide future learning. Tasks are not always sufficiently tailored to match the needs of all pupils. As a consequence, a minority of pupils who lack motivation often due to weak literacy skills, are not sufficiently engaged in activities and underachieve. Almost all pupils make good use of information and communication technology to design, present and analyse their work. However, although key specialist terms are identified in teachers' planning, there is no consistent approach to teaching literacy and numeracy across the department.

111. Leadership and management are good. The department works well as a team to strive for improved standards. The curriculum is broad and balanced with the exception of control technology. However, modules in Key Stage 3 do not build sufficiently on the knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly in design, gained by working in different materials. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The sketching, drawing and manipulative skills of pupils have been much improved. There is a good up-take for the graphics option as a result of staff changes. Disruption caused by staff changes in both graphics and resistant materials has militated against consistent provision across all areas. Accommodation has been extensively enhanced and is now good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- Teaching is most often good and occasionally very good or excellent.
- Pupils achieve well; their coursework assignments are of a high standard.
- Attainment is well above national averages.
- A successful department which attracts a high proportion of Year 10 and 11 pupils.

Area for improvement

- More consistent matching of tasks to the needs of individual pupils.

112. Standards of work seen during the inspection are, on average, above the national expectations in Years 9 to 11, with a significant minority well above. This represents good progress since pupils

entered the school. This also represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. These standards are in line with both National Curriculum teacher assessments and performance in the GCSE examinations over the last three years. Relative indicators show that geography is one of the strongest subjects in the school in GCSE examinations. In most of the period since the previous inspection girls have outperformed boys, although the gap is narrower than the national gender gap. Results in 2002 took a slight dip. This relatively slight decline is attributable in part to changes in staffing.

113. By the end of Year 9, most pupils' attainment is above national expectations, with several pupils well above. All pupils have good map reading skills and produce good quality annotated maps and diagrams. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding, for example, of volcanic processes and can write about them fluently. A minority of lower attaining pupils can describe these processes orally, but find difficulty in doing so in continuous passages of writing. In general, weak literacy skills hamper the progress of a small proportion of the pupils.
114. By the end of Year 11, attainment for most pupils remains above national expectations, but with a greater proportion well above than at the end of Year 9. Most pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. Higher attaining pupils have, for example, a clear understanding of the geographical factors that affect the distribution of dairy farming in Britain. Most pupils can describe and the more able can explain fluently, the importance of effective transport links on the location of industry. In their high quality coursework, pupils set up hypotheses and test them using simple statistical techniques to analyse their gathered data. Lower attaining pupils record their results using simple graphs, but are less sure in analysing their findings. As in Years 7 to 9, lower attaining pupils are taxed by any requirement to write at length. Many pupils enhance the presentation of their coursework through the use of computers. There is no obvious gender difference in observed attainment in any year group.
115. Overall, teaching is predominantly good and occasionally very good or excellent. The small amount of non-specialist teaching has sufficient expertise to teach competently in Year 7. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. Pupils' response to this very good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. Most pupils behave well in lessons and stay on task. An example of excellent teaching was seen in a Year 11 lesson when the teacher enabled pupils to arrive at well-argued decisions about farming, after skilful guidance on the use of information from a variety of sources. In another Year 11 lesson the teacher gave expert guidance in examination answering technique. In several lessons teachers help the development of pupils' literacy through emphasis on key words and opportunities to read aloud. Most lessons start with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling pupils to consolidate what they have learned before. In relatively less successful lessons there is insufficient matching of tasks to pupils' capabilities. In some lessons insecure time management results in pupils being left insufficient time to complete tasks. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Their teachers know them well and, on the infrequent occasions they are available, learning support assistants give valuable help. Homework is set regularly and provides valuable reinforcement to classroom teaching. Work is marked regularly but is too rarely accompanied by helpful comments.
116. The department has improved in many respects since the previous inspection. Marked improvements in examination results are largely due to very good management since the last inspection. The new head of department can sustain this improvement if the realistic and achievable targets set in the departmental development plan, devised by the previous post-holder, are put into effect. In this way the department's continued popularity and success will be assured.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- There are good standards of attainment at GCSE and in the lower school.
- There is good teaching with some very good features.
- Homework is used well to support pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Resources and accommodation to support learning are good.

Areas for improvement

- A more consistent focus by teachers on learning outcomes and the learning process.
- Greater variety of teaching and learning styles, especially more opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively.
- Further strategies to improve the progress made by pupils of below average attainment in the lower school.

117. In 2001 standards of attainment measured by National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. The most recent assessments in 2002 were also very good. Over recent years, attainment has been consistently above average. At GCSE, results in 2001 were well above average; girls performed better than boys but the gap between them was in line with the national one. The most recent results in 2002 were satisfactory, being negatively affected by prolonged staff absence last year. The number of pupils entered for examination was also much larger in 2002 and the groups contained a higher proportion of pupils of average and below average ability than was the case in previous years. Attainment over recent years has been above average overall.

118. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is above average. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum topics they have studied. Most pupils can describe historical events and explain causes and consequences. Most can use historical terminology appropriately. Below average pupils can describe historical events in shorter answer form but their understanding of historical concepts is weak. Above average pupils can deploy their knowledge and understanding effectively in longer pieces of writing. Source work is good; most pupils make effective use of historical sources and are beginning to evaluate them. Overall progress is good, though it is better for above average, average and special needs pupils than it is for those of below average ability. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. In Years 10 and 11 attainment is also above average. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Source work skills are well developed and most pupils can evaluate sources for reliability and usefulness. Above average pupils produce written work of a high standard, deploying their knowledge and understanding effectively. The standard of written work is often better than might be expected amongst below average pupils, though understanding is sometimes weak. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Achievement is good overall.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some very good features. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and they present their material well. They use language that pupils can understand. They make very good use of PowerPoint technology, video and three dimensional models to help focus pupils' attention, maintain their interest and develop their understanding. Their classrooms are a stimulating learning environment. Teachers use methods which meet the needs of all abilities. Homework is very well planned to support and extend pupils' learning. Work is marked

regularly and assessed thoroughly, so pupils have a clear understanding of how they can improve. Key vocabulary is taught but not emphasised consistently enough. At GCSE level, source work skills are taught very systematically, helping pupils to succeed in work which some find difficult. Overall, teachers manage their classes well and behaviour is good, often very good. Occasionally, there is a need for firmer class management and the heavy concentration of pupils with learning difficulties in certain lower band groups in Years 8 and 9 can have a negative effect on teaching and learning. In the best lessons, pupils understand the objectives and can therefore gauge their own progress but these objectives are not explained consistently. In general, a limited range of teaching and learning styles is employed in these groups and pupils have few opportunities to learn independently or to work together in groups or pairs.

120. Leadership and management are very good. There is good planning and a clear focus on targets to raise standards. The head of department provides clear educational direction. A comprehensive set of policies and good schemes of work provide support for less experienced colleagues. The department's limited budget is very well managed. The head of department provides a very good professional model and he worked hard last year to minimise the damage caused by prolonged staff absence. Pupil progress is monitored effectively. There remains some work to be done in translating department policies into practical strategies that are put into consistent practice, particularly the policy on literacy.

121. The department now offers two different course options at GCSE which has proved popular with pupils. Relationships are good, often very good and pupil attitudes to the subject are positive, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Staffing is well matched to the curriculum. Resources and accommodation are good.

122. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards of attainment have risen and teaching has improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are very good at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching is very good.
- There is full entitlement for all pupils.
- Facilities are very good.
- Leadership is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the scheme of work for teaching computer control technology.
- Develop a fuller use of the computer to monitor and record data directly from science experiments.
- Enhance the use of information and communication technology in music for younger pupils.

123. By the time pupils are in Year 9 the standard of their work is well above national expectations. At the end of Year 11 pupils have gained standards of work that are well above national averages. This is shown in the pass rate of those taking GCSE information studies and those who have completed the key skills course in information and communication technology through coursework and examinations. These standards are confirmed from the work seen during the inspection. Since the last inspection there has been a substantial improvement in the standard of pupils' work throughout the age range.

124. In Year 9 the pupils can undertake the role of the secretary and treasurer of a youth club. They can use information and communication technology to design a logo and letterhead and they write a letter for potential applications with a tear off slip for the applicant to complete their relevant details. They can use a spreadsheet to manage the club's accounts. From their learning in Year 7 they are able to use PowerPoint to design a slide show type multi-media computer presentation. Many

lessons start with a short practice using a typing tutor. This helps them to develop keyboard skills well above those normally found in similar aged pupils.

125. The high standard of the pupils' work was demonstrated in a Year 11 class when the pupils were setting up a dating agency database. They showed the confidence gained from previous high quality learning to go on to design and customise a form for the database as a user-friendly interface for the quick entry of data. They understood the meaning and function of field names, data types and primary keys.
126. The quality of teaching is always good and frequently it is very good particularly during practical sessions when technical skills are explained very well. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and they set high expectations to which the pupils readily respond. Appropriate and challenging work is set and pupils are well supported when they require help; the pace of the lessons is very good. Good teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities are fully included in the learning process. Teachers plan their lessons to a very high standard. Pupils with special educational needs have individual educational plans relating to the lesson and, as a consequence, they receive very good support. It is the synergy between the teachers' skills and enthusiasm and the pupils' interest that leads to very good learning and progress in this subject. Outstanding learning was seen in a Year 7 class. A vital and knowledgeable teacher set high expectations for learning to which very interested and enthusiastic pupils responded. Excellent planning and help, just when needed, enabled the pupils to make excellent progress.
127. The quality of learning is very good. Pupils of all capabilities and educational needs make good progress. This progress is maintained throughout the school as pupils become increasingly confident and develop more advanced skills. The majority of the pupils enjoy this subject and work for long periods of time, sustaining their concentration on the tasks set. Many are highly motivated and they can work on their own when required to do so. They are confident in their skills and they are prepared to explore new ideas and work creatively. Their work is completed with care and attention to accuracy and detail. Pupils often extend their learning through additional individual research. Further skills and understanding are also developed alongside the senior citizens when volunteer pupils teach them information and communication technology in an after school-club.
128. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure continuity as the pupils progress from year to year. Many pupils benefit from the good access to the Internet. This helps them to improve their skills through the exploration of many special educational facilities available on the World Wide Web. All pupils have equal opportunity to study this subject throughout the school.
129. The scheme of work is very good. It is well thought out and taught in an imaginative way effectively using the available time and very good resources. However, computer control technology is currently not taught in sufficient depth. Information and communication technology is used to enhance the quality of learning in many of the other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in geography students use the World Wide Web to search for information on wetland ecosystems. The use of interactive whiteboards enables the whole class to see what is on the computer screen. Electronic mail is used to enhance the quality of learning of modern foreign languages with pupils communicating with pupils in a school in France. However, there are very limited learning opportunities for younger pupils to use information and communication technology in music to write, edit and play back music. In science there is very little use of information and communication technology to monitor experiments through electronic probes and directly log and interpret the data.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are very good.
- The department is inclusive in its approach, entering a very high proportion of the intake for GCSE examinations.

- Good use is made of information and communication technology.
- Standards of teaching and learning are monitored well.
- Good leadership and management give direction to the department's work.
- Detailed lesson planning provides a good basis for teaching.

Areas for improvement

- The teachers' use of French and German in the classroom is inconsistent.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to communicate with each other in French and German.
- The level of challenge in some classes is not high enough.

130. Attainment at the end of Year 9, as measured by the National Curriculum teachers' assessments, is average. GCSE results have improved considerably in recent years and in 2001 they were well above the national average. In 2002, they were even higher, particularly given the very high proportion of pupils entered for the examination. Achievement is sound at the end of Year 9 and good to very good at age 16.

131. Listening skills in both languages develop well in Years 7 to 9, because pupils learn to understand recordings of native speakers and because, for the most part, lessons are conducted in the foreign language. Reading skills are satisfactory but would be better if more time was given to the development of extended reading, particularly for the more able. Writing for the most part consists of copying and short, repetitive textbook exercises and not enough attention is given to extended personal writing, though the higher-attaining pupils are able to write letters and accounts accurately using a range of tenses appropriately. Although pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory for most pupils and good for higher-attaining pupils, speaking skills are not well developed. For the most part, pupils are reluctant to speak and do not have enough opportunities to communicate with each other in French or German, or to speak at length. In Years 10 and 11, listening skills are further developed and pupils respond with greater confidence to a variety of recorded texts. Access to the Internet and modern languages websites has enabled pupils to make good progress in their understanding of written French and German and to improve their research and information and communication technology skills. Higher-attaining pupils write accurately and with confidence on a variety of topics, using a range of tenses and structures. The quality and presentation of the written work of lower-attaining pupils should be better. On the basis of limited evidence, the standard of spoken French is satisfactory; it is better in German.

132. Pupils' attitudes are generally good; they listen carefully and work hard. Relations with their teachers and each other are also good and enable most pupils to make good progress. Attitudes are best when expectations are high and the work demanding. By the same token lower expectations and less demanding work result in less effort. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to work in pairs to communicate with each other in French and German but when they do they work sensibly and stay on task. From Year 9 onwards, pupils have increasing opportunities to develop their independent learning skills as they use computers for individualised work and research. Pupils are generally clear about the progress they are making.

133. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A third of the lessons seen were good or better including one which was excellent. Teachers are particularly adept at preparing pupils for GCSE examinations and enabling them to reach the highest possible grade, particularly those of average attainment and below. Almost all lessons are well planned and provide a range of activities. The planning does not, however, always cater well for the different capabilities within each class. Teachers make good use of cassette recordings, overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards and computers to enhance the quality of their lessons and pupils' learning. In the best lessons, French or German was used almost exclusively, expectations were high and the pace was demanding. In a Year 11 German class, the teacher was able to extract every detail about a difficult listening text and was not satisfied until the pupils could recreate the text in their own words. In a less successful Year 8 class, the demands were lower, the foreign language was frequently accompanied by an English version and the tasks, which were the same for all irrespective of capability, lacked challenge; as a result the pupils made less effort and less was accomplished. Pupils' work is marked regularly, with reference to National Curriculum and GCSE criteria, but for the most part, the marking is not sufficiently analytical and gives the pupils little idea what they

need to do to improve.

134. Curriculum arrangements are good; most pupils have the opportunity to start a second modern foreign language in Year 8 and to choose it as their only language in Year 10. However, the movement of pupils between attainment bands means that some pupils who have started a second language lose it when they are demoted, irrespective of their progress. Equally, some pupils who are promoted to the band where pupils learn a second language find themselves at a considerable disadvantage, which the valuable help of the teachers cannot always overcome. The department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and cultural education, through the visits to France and Germany and through the emphasis on the cultures of these two countries, drawing attention to French culture in Africa and the Caribbean.
135. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and the very good records enable progress to be monitored in relation to school and departmental targets.
136. The good leadership and management of the department have enabled it to make very good progress since the last inspection in terms of results, teaching quality, management and the use of information and communication technology. The members of the department work well together as a team. Results are analysed and action plans drawn up to overcome any shortcomings. Teaching and learning are monitored on a regular basis. Departmental documentation is good, though more detail should be given in the schemes of work to methodology, assessment and the provision of a range of tasks for pupils of different capabilities in the same class. The departmental development plan is relevant and the criteria for success are clear. Resources are just adequate and reading materials for all levels are in short supply. The accommodation is adequate but departmental cohesion would be helped if the German room were transferred to be near the other rooms. Rooms are too small for some of the large classes and restrict the range of teaching approaches. Display is good.
137. To build on what has been achieved and improve further, the department should: work to bring all teaching to the level of the best; provide more opportunities for pupils to communicate with each other in French and German and develop more tasks which challenge the most able and the least able.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- The development of music as an academic subject to match its strong performance base and the improving GCSE results have resulted in excellent recruitment for the current Year 12.
- Teaching and learning build on the passion and enthusiasm of staff.

Areas for improvement

- The amount and nature of accommodation to resource a growing department and the lack of sound proofing, which seriously limits flexibility of teaching.
- The full development of the assessment system in music.
- Improve aspects of the lower school curriculum to ensure access for all, world music content and information and communication technology provision enabling the department to satisfy statutory requirements fully.
- The improvement of resources such as tuned percussion and good quality sound recording equipment.

138. The proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and above in standardised attainment targets by the end of Year 9 is above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE A*-C grades, A*-G grades and average points score in 2001 was close to the national average; it has significantly improved in 2002 against all three measures.

139. Attainment in lessons and work in the first three years is at the national average, but the nature of work severely inhibits the attainment and achievement of average and lower attaining pupils. Year 10 and 11 pupils' work is above the national average, reflecting the strong performance skills of the option group. The most able pupils are given the opportunity to shine in extra-curricular groups and through their instrumental lessons and the programme of activities and productions provides a significant extension to the curriculum for those involved, as well as acting as an effective public face for the school. However, the nature of the curriculum, with its stress on keyboard skills and linked staff notation, means that pupils with special needs neither attain nor achieve well. A significant proportion of pupils have instrumental tuition and this has a very positive impact on attainment, especially in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not have a strong sense of pulse, but some very good part singing was heard from Year 7.
140. Some very good basic composition was heard from Year 11 pupils and the written work and compositions of last year's GCSE candidates were of a good standard.
141. Teaching and learning are both good at all levels. The best teaching is characterised by excellent relationships where an atmosphere of mutual learning is created. Enthusiasm and passion for music are widespread. Organisation and management are very good and clear targets are set in all lessons. Teachers are technically very secure and the recent media and popular musical expertise of one teacher provide an exciting extension to the curriculum. Occasionally activities in lessons are not musical. Pupils were learning by listening and analysis, from prior experience and expertise, skill development and by refining their skills.
142. Pupils' response is very good. They respond very well to teacher input. They are bubbly but keen and listen well. There was some frustration in lower attaining sets in Years 7 to 9 because they could not cope with what was expected. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who usually have playing expertise, are fully committed and trust the judgement of the teacher implicitly.
143. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, but there are significant inadequacies; the bias towards staff notation and keyboard skill development is not fully appropriate for lower attaining pupils, the level of world music needs to be increased and information and communication technology use is non-existent; the recently installed computer with Sibelius software improves the situation, but sequencing software should be more accessible to all pupils. The current head of department has had a major impact on the school in all areas of musical activity and this is consequently an expanding department. She is a good leader with vitality and energy. Management is efficient. The accommodation is inadequate, as it was at the last inspection; there is still no sound proofing, which makes refinement in music making almost impossible and non-specialist accommodation has to be used. Resources are also inadequate, especially in tuned percussion and sound recording. The information and communication technology resources have improved significantly, especially at sixth form level; they are now adequate at GCSE level, but inadequate for the first three years. The music department makes a good contribution to extra-curricular activities with music being an important part of the school's life.
144. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, with significant improvements in provision since the appointment of the current head of department. The range of compositional devices has improved, but the lack of resources impedes further progress. Planning is now very good in all areas. Self-assessment is improved, but is being further developed alongside the overall department focus on assessment at all levels. The growth of music means that non-specialist space has to be used for music lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- GCSE physical education and dance results in 2002 were outstanding.

- Teaching is good overall with some very good features.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are predominantly good or better.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is poor and needs improving.
- Higher attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, need more challenge to achieve standards that reflect their capability.

145. Standards achieved by the first cohort of GCSE physical education pupils in 2002 were outstanding. Although not yet validated the results were well above national expectations. Standards in GCSE dance in the 2002 examination were well above national expectations. Work produced by GCSE physical education pupils in Year 11 shows that they have good knowledge of training programmes and they can use research skills, sometimes using the Internet, to produce independent projects. Work produced by the higher attaining pupils is of a very good standard and shows good evidence of the use of information and communication technology skills. Pupils have very good opportunities in lessons to use a range of information and communication technology applications, including PowerPoint, to make presentations on the principles of training. In practical lessons, however, the standard of the majority of pupils in Year 11 GCSE hockey and Year 10 GCSE basketball is below the expectation. They acquire new skills and knowledge but they cannot apply the skills in games at a satisfactory level. Tactical awareness is poor and they lack knowledge of roles and positions. In a Year 10 GCSE dance practical lesson all pupils achieved very good standards and the higher attaining pupils showed excellent skills of performance and composition. They composed excellent dance phrases using the vocabulary from a citizenship lesson as a stimulus.
146. By the end of Year 11 standards overall are in line with the national expectation. In Year 10 core badminton pupils learn the tactics of serving and can play drop shots and long clears with improving control. They learn rules and conventions of the game and abide by them.
147. Teacher assessment for pupils by the age of 14 shows that the overall standards are in line with the national average. The department considers that standards on entry to the school are below the expectation and so pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. However, higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently, especially in Key Stage 3 and their standards are in line with national averages.
148. Standards attained by pupils by the age of 14 are in line with the national expectation. The majority of pupils in Year 7 gymnastics can perform a good range of balances with control, individually and in pairs. They have good techniques and control when stretching as part of the warm up. In a lesson on ball skills in Year 7 the majority of boys and girls passed the ball accurately and the better performers had skills which were above expectations. The standards achieved in Year 8 basketball are satisfactory overall but a minority of pupils can perform lay up shots and set shots with good techniques. When given the opportunity pupils can evaluate their own performance and that of others but these opportunities are infrequent. The majority of pupils in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson show little control, poor co-ordination and poorly defined shapes. Overall attainment in Year 9 trampolining is unsatisfactory. The provision for the activity is inadequate with only one trampoline available for a class of 28 pupils. As a result their ability to plan sequences improves but they have insufficient opportunity to perform them.
149. Teaching overall is good and pupils' learning is good. Teachers have many very good skills and ensure that pupils learn well in almost all lessons. In Key Stage 3 teaching and learning varied from excellent to unsatisfactory in one lesson. In half of the lessons teaching was very good or excellent. In Key Stage 4 teaching and learning were always satisfactory and, in three out of four lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. Lessons were well planned with clear objectives and progressive activities that were shared with the pupils so that they were aware of what they were to learn. Teachers had good subject knowledge and gave clear instructions and explanations for activities so that pupils knew what to do to improve. In many lessons there was a good recap of previous learning to provide good links and to ensure continuity. Teachers intervened at appropriate times to reinforce teaching points and to set further challenges so pupils performed fully and

acquired new skills. Teachers used demonstrations and asked questions very well to emphasise teaching points. Activities provided often enabled pupils to apply their skills in increasingly demanding situations. Relationships were very good and teachers managed pupils very well in almost all lessons. Teaching and learning were excellent in GCSE dance and teaching was excellent in Year 7 ball skills. In Year 10 basketball teaching was very good with very good teacher knowledge and very good, progressive activities which enabled pupils to gain new knowledge and skills which they used effectively in small groups. Teaching and learning were very good in Year 7 gymnastics and Year 8 basketball. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed, a Year 9 gymnastics; explanations and expectations were not clear enough and pupils were not given sufficient teaching points, vocabulary of movement or challenge. Pupils were not encouraged to perform with quality at an appropriate level.

150. Pupils showed good attitudes and behaviour. In almost half of lessons they displayed very good or excellent attitudes and behaviour. They enjoyed lessons, stayed on task and worked with good physical efforts. They worked well in groups and showed respect to peers and to teachers. They listened well to instructions and explanations so that they knew what to do and how to improve. In games they abided by rules and decisions made by classmates when they took responsibility to referee. In GCSE dance and Year 7 gymnastics the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent. In very poor weather the attitudes and behaviour of boys and girls in Year 7 rugby were good. In the unsatisfactory lesson in Year 9 gymnastics, the pupils who were off-task were not challenged and the general atmosphere was lively.
151. Leadership and management of the department are very good. National Curriculum requirements are being met and schemes of work are in place for all years and activities. Knowledge and understanding are clearly identified and skills are introduced progressively. Procedures for assessment are very good and systems are well monitored. The department has very good systems to monitor teaching and learning. Information from lesson observations is fed back to teachers and targets are set for future development. There is a very good departmental review which identifies strengths and weaknesses and a good action plan for future developments. Accommodation is inadequate. The gymnasium is in need of refurbishment and is too small for any activity but gymnastics. Fields and playgrounds are extensive but unusable for much of the year because of flooding. The hall is used for trampolining but lessons are often disrupted for dinner preparations. The headteacher has put together a strong proposal for funding for a multi-use games area, as the school suffers from a crippling facilities deficit. The accommodation lacks the number and quality of teaching spaces required to meet the needs of the number of pupils. There are three full-time, qualified specialists in the department. Two of the less experienced staff have teaching commitments in other subjects and, thus, staffing is not entirely adequate. Dance and some of the examination classes are taught by an additional experienced teacher. Many of the lessons are one hour and 40 minutes long which is too much for many activities.
152. Since the last inspection, staff are all new and teaching has improved from satisfactory to very good overall. Since then, the department has introduced GCSE physical education, GCSE dance and advanced level physical education into the curriculum. Outstanding results have been achieved in all three.

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

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

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

GCE AS/A2 level courses

Subject	Number entered	Percentage gaining grades A-E		Percentage gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	National	School	National	School	National
Mathematics	8	100	87	63	43	6.75	5.80
Biology	15	100	88	27	34	5.33	5.25
Chemistry	5	60	90	0	43	2.80	5.90
Music	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Geography	12	100	92	83	38	8.50	5.74
History	3	100	88	33	35	5.33	5.45
Politics	6	100	87	83	34	8.3	5.30
English	19	100	95	53	37	6.53	5.91
French	2	100	89	50	38	7.00	5.59

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

154. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A2-level in mathematics, biology, chemistry, psychology and physics. The AS/A2-level courses in mathematics, biology and chemistry were inspected in detail; other courses were sampled.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- There have been steadily increasing numbers and sustained high standards at A2-level over the past three years.
- Students make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE retake group.

155. The number of students entered for the GCE A2-level examination has steadily increased in recent years, from two in 1999, to eight in 2001. Further mathematics has only attracted one pupil in each of the current Years 12 and 13. Attainment in the 2001 examinations was well above the national average. Results in the AS-level examinations have been variable, and in 2001 were poor with four out of five candidates failing to get a grade. Four students re-sat the GCSE in November of this year, of whom half succeeded in their aim of achieving a Grade C. In 2002 the A2-level results were as good as in 2001; in the AS-level all five candidates passed, of whom two achieved the higher

grades.

156. Standards of work seen in the AS and A2-level courses were well above national expectations. The students follow a modular course. This involves units that include pure mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics. Presentation is good. The students take care with their work, and use precise and appropriate processes as taught to them. Their work is generally accurate and of a good standard. In pure mathematics in Year 12 students were seen developing their understanding of the key concepts of calculus, particularly the differential function. In Year 13 the students were involved in a statistical analysis, which had a practical application for slot machines. The students' progress over the period of the course is good, influenced both by the quality of the teaching and by their own conscientious attitude. Standards in the work of the GCSE retake class are below average.

157. The teaching in the AS and A2-level course is very good. The teachers have a good understanding of the key requirements of the course and are good mathematicians. They work very hard to present the lessons in a way that challenges the students to think through the underlying concepts and achieve a good understanding as well as an ability to master the processes and methods for solutions to problems. Lessons are well organised and resourced. The students following the course are conscientious and have a very good attitude to learning. Although some are diffident about contributing actively to the lessons, they ensure that they record all necessary information and mostly get their work done on time.

158. Since the last inspection the number of students joining the sixth form has grown considerably. The pass rate and the quality of the grades are considerably improved. The course is well planned and managed. Resources for learning are good and well supported by the use of information and communication technology equipment. The students generally appreciate the high quality of provision for them in the course.

BIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is good.

Strengths

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively in their teaching.
- All elements of the biology course are taught with enthusiasm and interest.
- Students of all capabilities achieve well.
- Students have good attitudes to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use information and communication technology fully in the processing of data and making predictions through computer modelling.

159. Evidence for this inspection has been drawn from scrutiny of daily and long-term teaching plans, the work of the students, inspection of teaching of Year 13 and interviews with teachers and students. This subject has not been previously inspected under OfSTED criteria. No comparisons in standards can be made but records show that standards of work have improved over the last four years.

160. Standards in this subject are in line with the course requirements. The number of students passing with the highest grades has varied over the last four years but generally it is in line with the national average. From the work seen in the current Year 13 standards are at least in line with course requirements and there is a good percentage of students working to the higher pass grades. Male and female students do equally well although there are far more females.

161. Coursework and practical activities are thought provoking and challenge all students. Written work shows that students have a good command of all the elements of the course, ranging through cell biology, zoology and plant physiology. Diagrams from in-vitro and in-vivo observations are prepared to a good standard. Students show confidence in using the microscope and other equipment for

monitoring and analysis. They can interpret data from field observations, showing an in-depth understanding of the accuracy and relevance of the data gathered. The majority of students in Year 13 fully understand the process of energy transfer within the mammalian cell and compare this to energy conversion in the plant cell. On a macro scale they can discuss this conversion of energy in terms of the interdependence of all forms of life.

162. Teaching is good. High expectations for learning are prevalent. Teachers are good role models and they teach with an obvious enthusiasm. They have a very good command of the subject and consequently inspire the students to work with insight and diligence. Scientific language is used well. Explanations are clear and teachers provide many illustrations from the natural world. Good planning and high expectations enabled the pupils to complete the experiment successfully. Attention was drawn to the random errors that can be introduced and the statistical significance of the evidence.

163. The lesson plan for a Year 12 group on protein synthesis indicated the challenging content of the lesson coupled to a stimulating and topical range of current issues. The ethical issues associated with the human genome project were considered. It is a combination of the students' dedication and interest and the pace, rigour and advanced preparation of the lessons that lead to the good quality of learning. Students of all capabilities are very well supported as individuals. The students are confident and highly motivated. They are attentive and concerned with the quality and accuracy of their work. They work independently when required to do so to research their studies. The students value the open and stimulating learning environment that adds to their quality of learning because they can interact with the teachers and other students to discuss issues of interest and further develop their understanding and appreciation of the subject. They believe that the quality of their learning is good and they are fully confident that it will enable them to achieve their ambitions.

164. The course is organised effectively to maximise learning opportunities. Support for continued learning out of formal lessons is good. Information and communication technology is not used fully to enhance the students' understanding and interpretation of data and to monitor experiments by direct sampling through sensors. The students' work is monitored regularly. Helpful and supportive comments are given which enable the students to identify their weaknesses and improve further. The students feel that they are well informed about the progress they are making with their work.

165. Post-16 provision for this subject is managed to a good standard. The teachers work very well as a team to ensure continuity in learning. A team of technicians provides good support for learning through the maintenance and management of the more advanced equipment required for these courses.

CHEMISTRY

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to explain chemical principles.
- Teachers have a very good understanding and knowledge of advanced level course requirements.
- Students enjoy the work and concentrate well in lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Greater focus on what and how students learn in lessons.
- Strategies to help students consolidate their knowledge of the subject.
- Greater emphasis on developing study skills through independent learning.

166. Attainment at the end of the sixth form in 2001 was well below the national average, and had declined from 2000. In 2001, the percentage of students gaining A-E grades was below the national average. No students gained the highest Grades A and B. The small numbers entered for chemistry in both 2000 and 2001 make comparisons between the performance of male and female students

unreliable. The one student entered in 2002 gained Grade A.

167. This year, less than half the students who began the AS-level course decided to continue studying chemistry in Year 13. From work seen during the inspection, standards achieved by these students are close to the national average. While students are generally adept at grasping new ideas and can build successfully on earlier work, they have weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts. This was evident in a lesson on synthetic reagents, in which students' inability to recall readily earlier work on organic reactions hindered their progress. Students currently lack strategies to help them consolidate effectively their knowledge of chemical principles.
168. The number of students electing to take AS-level chemistry in the present Year 12 is similar to previous years and is small in comparison with many other subjects in the school. At this early stage of their course, students are making good progress and standards attained in lessons are above the national average. In a good lesson on the use of the mass spectrometer, students learned to work out the possible fragmentation patterns for organic molecules. This was a direct result of the teacher's well-structured explanation of the concepts involved. However, many students had poor recall of atomic structure from GCSE work, which meant the teacher having to revisit the topic; this reduced the pace of the lesson.
169. Students display a good attitude to their studies. They concentrate well and persevere in lessons. Their response is always positive. Relationships are good. However, many students are rather quiet in lessons and are over-reliant on their teachers for information and guidance. Some students lack confidence in their ability to succeed; this is particularly the case in Year 13. Too few opportunities are presented for students to work independently and to develop suitable study skills; at present, lessons are largely teacher directed.
170. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well organised and taught effectively. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm result in lessons providing a high degree of challenge for students. However, too often this leads to an over-managed approach that fails to consider students' learning requirements sufficiently. This was the case in the otherwise good lesson on synthetic reagents, in which the teacher's very focused style failed to give enough scope for students to develop and consolidate ideas for themselves. Insufficient consideration is given to how and what students will learn during lessons and to ways of assessing their grasp of new ideas.
171. The overall monitoring of students' achievement is effective, with satisfactory attention being paid to the setting and marking of homework. Teachers know their students well and provide helpful guidance and advice on ways to improve. They have a good knowledge of course requirements. Students have confidence in their teachers and feel that they can turn to them for help; as a result students have a good awareness of how well they are doing.
172. At present, work in the subject is not effectively co-ordinated. Although teachers work well as individuals, there is a lack of clarity over responsibilities for leading developments and for monitoring performance in the subject. The uptake of chemistry courses by students is comparatively low, as are completion rates. While teachers see this as a result of the perceived difficulty of the subject and a consequent lack of popularity with students, more investigation is required into the reasons.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

173. In this area, the school provides courses to AS/A2-level in art, music, performing arts and physical education. The AS/A2-level courses in music were inspected in detail; other courses were sampled.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- The development of music as an academic subject to match its strong performance base and the improving GCSE results have resulted in excellent recruitment for the current Year 12.
- Teaching and learning in music are very good, building on the passion and enthusiasm of staff.

Areas for improvement

- The need to develop a bridging course between GCSE and AS courses which also takes account of the needs of those pupils who have not done GCSE music.
- The provision of other appropriate courses in music at post-16 level.

174. There were no students in 2001 in either Years 12 or 13. However, there are 11 students in the current Year 12 AS group. Attainment in work and lessons seen was above average and although the capability and musical experience of students varied widely, overall they were above expectations for this stage of the course. Students were coping well with the demands of formal harmony and those who found it most challenging were given focused support by the teacher which enabled them to attain well. The one very able boy, who is an excellent flautist, was working at a high standard on extension tasks. He is auditioning for the National Youth Orchestra shortly and played some music by Chaminade well. All students used the music played in the listening task as an effective evidence base, gaining accurate information as well as using what they heard as a foundation for deduction; they also enjoyed the music.

175. Teaching and learning are very good; this is the first time either teacher has worked at this level and they are making a very good job of it. Relationships are excellent and there is a powerful sense of common purpose in lessons. Planning and preparation are very good and clear targets are set and shared; students know where they are going and the role played by current work in the syllabus as a whole. The support given to performing arts advanced level students for their essay work and characterisation in practical work was very good. In the best teaching the enthusiasm and passion of staff were effectively transmitted to students.

176. Student response is excellent. They expect to do well and are willing to put in the hard work necessary to do so. They listen intently and use each other's knowledge and skills well as support for learning. They accept responsibility for their own learning and progress as well as using co-operation, collaboration and ensemble as relevant modes of learning in music.

177. Post-16 academic music is new in the school and the unusually large AS group of 11 students shows how well it is developing. The department is aware that it needs to provide a broader based diet of courses at this level and is looking to resolve the issue. Sixth form students play a valuable role in extra-curricular music and provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Leadership and management are very good and link hard work, commitment and fun, with teacher enthusiasm and skills ensuring equal commitment and passion for music from the students.

HUMANITIES

178. In this area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in ancient history, geography, history, law, politics, religious studies and sociology. The AS/A2-level courses in geography, history and politics were inspected in detail; other courses were sampled except for religious education which was inspected by the section 23 Diocesan Registered Inspector who reports on it separately.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is very good, with some outstanding features.

Strengths

- Standards achieved by students on the AS and A2-level courses are well above average.
- Students achieve well; their fieldwork assignments are completed to a high standard.
- Standards of teaching are very good overall.
- The retention rate of students moving on from AS to A2-level courses is higher than the national averages.

Areas for improvement

- There are two few opportunities for students to become independent learners.

179. Standards overall are good. Results in the GCSE A-level examinations have been consistently well above the national average for the last three years and show a marked improvement since the previous inspection. The 2001 results were outstanding, with over 80 per cent of students gaining either Grade A or B passes. Female students generally outperform their male counterparts, but by a much narrower margin than the national gender gap. In relation to their GCSE results, most candidates perform better than expected. Grades achieved on the AS course are similarly much better than the national average, with a high proportion achieving the highest two pass grades.

180. The standards of work seen in lessons and in scrutiny of students' files and coursework are good overall. In both Years 12 and 13, students compile comprehensive notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources. In some cases, however, the work in students' files is poorly organised, lacking the coherence desirable in a source for revision. Students in Year 12 show a good understanding of complex concepts such as the factors affecting the ecosystems of wetlands. By Year 13 students can discuss maturely the environmental effects of human intervention in tropical rain forests. They produce well researched coursework, often using advanced statistical methods to analyse fieldwork data. They use computers effectively, both to improve the presentation of text and graphs and to search the Internet for research purposes. Students gradually improve their skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the sixth form, as illustrated by the way they take on more advanced statistics for data analysis. Good relationships with their teachers give them the confidence both to seek help without embarrassment and to discuss difficult topics in lessons. A minority of students has yet to achieve the necessary fluency in writing required for top class examination answers. There is no obvious difference in the classroom attainment of male and female students.

181. Teaching is very good overall and never less than good. Characteristics of the teaching include a good tutorial style, inclusive questioning that encourages all students to participate, challenging content and brisk pace. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and obvious enthusiasm. They match tasks closely to the needs of individual students. These qualities, together with students' overwhelmingly positive attitudes, ensure that the quality of learning is very good. Students' enthusiasm for the subject is illustrated by the high numbers who choose it in the sixth form and the high proportion of Year 12 students who continue into Year 13. Students are encouraged to discuss difficult topics such as the problems associated with population growth in developing countries. Extended pieces of writing are marked thoroughly and students are usually given clear and accurate judgements of the quality of their work, which help them to improve it. Learning is promoted further by teachers' guidance in the use of a range of resources. The teaching load is sensibly shared between specialists in human and physical geography. A slight weakness of teaching in a minority of lessons is that it tends to be too teacher led and leaves insufficient opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.

182. Good leadership and management of the department in recent years have been influential in establishing and maintaining high standards. The department is not resting on its laurels. Under new leadership the subject will continue to thrive if the improvements envisaged in its carefully considered forward planning are effected.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and resources are used well.
- Standards in Year 13 in 2001 and 2002 were good.
- Students are enthusiastic about the subject because the department provides a good learning experience.
- Curriculum provision is good particularly in the range of history-related subjects and the use of information and communication technology.
- Management is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not using information and communication technology to improve their communication skills in giving presentations.
- In some lessons students are not taking enough responsibility for their own learning.

183. Results in Year 13 were above average in 2001 although there were only three students. Standards were higher in 2002, when of the seven students three were awarded a Grade A. In AS in 2002 students were able to meet course requirements but many are retaking some modules to improve their grades. There is an upward trend in standards and in the number of students taking the subject. The majority achieve appropriately or better in relation to their results at GCSE and there is no significant difference between the results of male and female students. Standards in the present Year 13 are sound. In the recent past students have been affected by staffing difficulties but it is clear from the number of A grades that the highest attaining students have achieved well at A2.

184. The standard of work in Year 13 shows that students have built on their experience in Year 12 and gained both in knowledge and maturity in their approach to the subject. The highest attaining students can write fluently about the problems faced by the Labour party and show a high level of understanding about leadership issues during and after Harold Wilson's period in office. Lower attaining students are able to pick out key issues and to identify main factors, for example in the development of the Suez crisis. In class all students can evaluate evidence about the impact of various issues such as the Profumo affair and the race relations issues identified by Enoch Powell. The oral and written work of the highest attaining students shows a very analytical approach and a good knowledge of the political background. In Year 12 students are confident in identifying the key factors in the development of the Stalinist system in the USSR. Many students also study politics and this helps their learning in history because the periods that they are studying require an understanding of political change. The key skill of communication is developed well in written work and discussion but not in presentations in class because students do not use the modern communication technology available in the classroom. However, teachers do make very good use of this equipment.

185. Learning is good because students enjoy their studies and they are taught well. The department's assessment procedures are well developed and work is assessed in a way that is valuable to the learning of individuals. In the most effective lessons students are really active participants but in some they do not take responsibility for their own work because the teaching style only requires them to answer questions and take notes. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are really knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject. In Year 13 questioning is particularly effective because it focuses classroom discussion, challenges individuals and takes forward the learning of all members of the group.

186. The good examination results and the quality of teaching and learning are a result of the very good management and development of the subject. Procedures and documentation are good, as is support for newly qualified and student teachers. Resources have been well developed and they are effectively used. The new system of examinations has been introduced very well. History and politics students have the opportunity to go on a range of valuable visits, particularly to Westminster. It is clear that the subject has improved well since the last inspection. Students judge their experience in the subject to be very good.

POLITICS

Overall provision in politics is sound.

Strengths

- There have been very good examination results in recent years.
- Good assessment and feedback to students help them to improve their work.
- There are good resources and opportunities for independent study.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are good.
- Leadership and management are effective.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that students all play an active part in all lessons.
- Introducing appropriate staff development to support those staff who are new to teaching the subject.

187. Attainment in examinations in 2001 was well above the national average. Results in 2002 were also very good. The number of candidates entered in this subject is small; there are considerable variations each year in the capability and prior attainment of students and it is not possible to make secure judgements about performance over a longer period or about consistent differences in attainment between boys and girls. Achievement in examinations, in comparison with prior attainment, is good. Retention rates are also good.

188. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they have studied. They have an up-to-date awareness of current political developments and their significance. Most can deploy their knowledge and understanding effectively in written answers. By Year 13, most can write analytically, though some students tend to revert to largely narrative form or write only partial answers. A small number of students have weaknesses in written English which hamper their attainment. Students of above average capability can produce high quality analytical writing supported by extensive knowledge and demonstrate very secure understanding. In class discussions, many students express their ideas confidently, though a minority are reluctant to do so. Most students can deploy political concepts and terminology appropriately, sometimes very effectively. The current groups have a high proportion of able students but achievement in relation to prior attainment is sound.

189. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good features. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and they present their material in language which stimulates students' interest. Examination syllabuses are covered systematically and students practise examination questions regularly to help them develop the crucial skills of analysis. Teachers make sure that students keep up to date with current political developments; this is important to their success. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop students' understanding but they do not always check that this understanding is shared by all. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and give good individual feedback, so students have a clear understanding of their own progress and how to improve. Students take their work seriously. In good lessons, as in a Year 13 lesson on implementation of the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, there is a clear focus on developing analytical skills; students are challenged to think for themselves and they are active learners. In some lessons, there is not a clear enough focus on the learning process itself and the teaching methods can allow a minority of students to remain rather

passive. The subject is well resourced; there are good opportunities for students to study independently and they make effective use of information and communication technology to support their research.

190. Leadership and management in the subject are good. Resources are well managed and planning is good, with appropriate targets. The head of department gives clear educational direction with a commitment to raising standards. He provides a very good professional model to his colleagues.

191. Relationships are good and attitudes to the subject are positive, often very positive. The department's work was severely disrupted by extended staff absence last year, which affected students currently in Year 13; the head of department worked hard to minimise the damage caused to students' progress during this period. Staffing is now divided between the very experienced head of department himself and much less experienced colleagues, and the latter would benefit from appropriate staff development activities to help them develop further their skills and their repertoire of teaching styles.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

192. The school provides courses to AS/A2-level in English, French and German. The AS/A2-level courses in English and French were inspected in detail; the other course was sampled.

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Above average results in AS and advanced level examinations.
- Students' achievement in critical writing.
- Teachers' and students' subject knowledge.
- The focus and detail of marking.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching methods which more directly develop collaboration, interaction and autonomy.

193. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A2-level examinations are above average. Over the past four years at advanced level, standards have consistently been above national averages. Girls generally do better than boys in the achievement of high grades. However, both males and females do slightly better in their other subjects at advanced level than they do in English.

194. The work seen during the inspection was in line with these standards. Students have a secure command of critical vocabulary and read with understanding and discrimination. Their responses to texts are well expressed, extended and perceptive. At best the work is remarkably assured. For example, a Year 12 student contrasting two Romantic poems managed an original commentary, used quotation to consolidate her argument and showed confident familiarity with relevant critical texts. Students make clear progress over the two years of the AS and A2-level course. Writing about Tennessee Williams's manipulation of the audience's sympathy for Blanche in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' the majority of students showed close knowledge of the play, a developed appreciation of its context and an ability to examine subtle effects with mature understanding.

195. The achievement of AS and advanced level students is good. Male and female students progress equally well. They respond to the high expectations of their teachers by producing work of real quality.

196. Teaching is good overall. Of four lessons observed, one was satisfactory, two good and one very good. Teachers know their subject and their students very well. Lessons are well-planned and purposeful. Notable features of the good teaching were skilful questioning and very close marking of

written work. In these important respects, students are kept on their toes. They are praised for good work and developing understanding, but are also challenged in thoroughly supportive ways. Students would benefit, however, from more planned opportunities to interact and collaborate in lessons. The teacher-led approaches to analysis and commentary work well, as evidenced by consistent success in examinations. Students' independence is not sufficiently encouraged however by the relatively limited range of approaches to learning available to them.

197. There is good support for learning through regular reviews of progress. Targets are set in relation to expectations and prior attainment. Students feel themselves to be very well supported academically and pastorally. They are warm in their praise for teachers' accessibility and concern for their progress. Some expressed a wish for a wider choice of AS/A2-level syllabuses so that interests in language or media might be pursued.

198. Accommodation for the subject is satisfactory. Teaching goes on largely in lower school classrooms. It would be helpful to rearrange desks for sixth form sessions to promote a seminar approach to the work.

199. The leadership and management of the head of department are good. She models in her teaching the high expectations which stand students in good stead. She is aware of what would now be appropriate developments in approaches to sixth form teaching and the range of courses on offer.

FRENCH

Overall the quality of provision is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The commitment of students enables them to achieve well.
- Some good teaching produces a corresponding response from the students.
- The use of information and communication technology and contemporary sources ensures that the material studied is relevant and of interest to the students.
- The support given to students encourages them and enables them to make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Better preparation of some oral work would increase the confidence of students and enable them to contribute more fully.

200. The number of candidates each year is too small for statistical analysis. Since 1999 there have been seven candidates, all of whom have passed with grades between A and D and three students achieved Grades A or B. These results come after a period of three years when there were no candidates and therefore represent good progress. The three male candidates have performed less well than the female students, none of them achieving better than a C grade. Though there are currently fewer male students in Years 12 and 13, they are the most able.

201. At AS-level, all candidates have been successful in the last two years and the numbers taking French have increased substantially. In 2002, only one candidate gained more than a C, which is below average. Whilst the numbers taking AS-level are increasing, not all are continuing to A-level.

202. The standard of work of current students is average. Year 13 students are achieving in line with the predictions based on their GCSE results. Pronunciation and intonation are good but, in the lessons seen, students had only limited vocabulary when discussing culture and architecture and were not able to speak convincingly about them. Listening and reading skills are good thanks to the use of texts drawn from the Internet. The most able students write accurately on a variety of topics, including youth issues, racism and literature; all are competent.

203. Year 12 students are still in the transition stage from GCSE but are adapting well to the demands of AS-level. Their knowledge of grammar is uncertain; for example, they could not easily recall the

formation of the perfect tense or manipulate question forms. Pronunciation and intonation are good and, as a result of good teaching, students were able to talk with some confidence and answer questions about the texts they had studied taken from the Internet. They are extending their range of relevant vocabulary and more complex structures which they are beginning to use in their speaking and writing. Listening and reading skills are both good and students meet a range of texts on topical issues, which they find particularly relevant.

204. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good; where this is the case, students' progress is correspondingly good. The teachers are fluent and knowledgeable about the subject. Lessons are prepared meticulously and the learning objectives are communicated to the students. Lessons proceed at a good pace, although in the lessons dealing with French culture and architecture, progress would have been greater if more time had been spent ensuring that students had enough specific vocabulary, structures and ideas to participate fully and confidently in the ensuing discussions. Teachers help students to acquire good strategies for success in reading and aural comprehension. Very good use is made of information and communication technology and the Internet to provide students with material that is up to date, relevant and of interest to them. Marking is regular and analytical, indicating to the students how the work can be improved.
205. The students are mature and attentive and show interest in the subject. All are glad that they chose French, though Year 12 students are finding the gap between GCSE and AS-level a more difficult one to bridge than they had assumed. The department should ensure that able Year 11 students are fully challenged by the work that they undertake so that the jump to AS-level is less daunting. Students particularly appreciate the up-to-date material they meet. They have competent research skills, use dictionaries and other reference works well and are skilled in the use of information and communication technology. Their readiness to listen to and act on the advice and help they receive from their teachers ensures that they know how well they are doing and enables them to make sound progress.
206. Departmental policies support the work of the teachers and the schemes of work are full and helpful. The work and progress of the students are monitored well and the department analyses examination performance to help it to develop strategies to overcome weaknesses.