

INSPECTION REPORT

**TWYFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH
SCHOOL**

Acton

LEA area: London Borough of Ealing

Unique reference number: 101933

Headteacher: Ms A Hudson

Reporting inspector: Mr M Phillips-Davies
2687

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th February 2003

Inspection number: 249808

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Twyford Crescent Acton London
Postcode:	W3 9PP
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Hardy
Date of previous inspection:	21 st – 25 th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2687	M Phillips-Davies	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements
9406	Roy Cottington	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students: advice support and guidance?
24127	J Kidd	Team inspector	History	How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
3242	M Newman		Chemistry Biology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
4684	D Cullimore	Team inspector	Economics Information technology	How well does the school care for its students: assessment?
8076	T Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30941	K Brammer	Team inspector	English	
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	Drama	
6044	R Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
32147	A Wallis	Team inspector	Geography	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Twyford Church of England High School is a mixed multiracial voluntary aided comprehensive school in Ealing. It is a faith school run by the Church of England. The school normally has more than 500 applicants for the 180 places. Selection is on faith grounds and 15 per cent of places are allocated to students of other world faiths. There are 954 students in Years 7 to 11 and 259 students in the sixth form. Approximately 60 per cent of students are boys. About 42 per cent of students are white British, with the highest numbers among other ethnic groups being Indian (115), Caribbean (137) and African (86). The ethnic mix is unusual for the borough with a higher proportion of black Caribbean and black African students and less of those from Asian backgrounds than the borough average. Two hundred and seventy eight students have English as an additional language (EAL) but none of these is at an early stage of language acquisition. Almost 12 per cent of the students are on the special educational needs register, including 30 students with statements. The proportion of students with statements is near the national average. Ten per cent of the students are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. The attainment on entry is above average. Student mobility is low and about 80 per cent of students stay on in the sixth form, which is high.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Twyford is a very effective school and has a clear and shared vision for the future. It seeks to be an establishment which is a force for good and 'worthy of the Lord' through creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes the spiritual health of the community and achieves excellence. It already achieves this in many respects. High standards are achieved by students in the GCSE examinations and in the public examinations in the sixth form, principally the A level examinations. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form and the quality of students' learning reflects this. Leadership of the school is excellent and the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher is a significant element in this. The school is managed very effectively by a good balance of well established and relatively new staff in key management positions. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in the GCSE examinations and in the public examinations in the sixth form are high and students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- Leadership of the school is excellent.
- Relationships in the school and students' personal development are excellent.
- The very good provision made for students' care, personal and academic development.
- The high proportion of good and very good teaching.

What could be improved

- Provision made by the school in information and communication technology for all students in Years 10 and 11.

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 it was last inspected in April 1997. The standards at the end of Year 9 have improved, broadly in line with the national trend. The school has improved the standards attained at GCSE and these have been maintained at well above the national average level since 1999. In comparison with similar schools it is in the top five per cent on some measures. The results of external examinations post-16, principally GCE A levels, show significant improvement in 2002 and these will probably place the school in the top five per cent of post-16 providers nationally. The quality of teaching shows considerable improvement. There is a significantly higher proportion of lessons where it is good or better and only one lesson where it was unsatisfactory compared to about 10 per

cent of lessons at the last inspection. The leadership of the school which was a key issue at the last inspection has improved enormously and is now excellent and aspects of management also show considerable improvement. The personal development of students has also improved and is now excellent. The other key issues have largely been dealt with effectively. Whilst good improvement has been made in the provision for information and communication technology it still does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. The school has recently used its resources very well but there remain some shortages in the resources to support teaching and learning and deficiencies in accommodation, particularly in the sixth form.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels		B	!	

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

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

The table shows that attainment in the GCSE examinations has been well above the national averages in recent years and has improved in line with that seen nationally. Compared to that in similar schools the attainment in 2002 placed it in the top five per cent nationally. Girls continue to outperform boys but both perform well above the national average. The best results in 2002 were in religious studies, drama, communication studies and English and the worst in art and Spanish. The GCE A level results have shown improvement in recent years and there was significant improvement between 2001 and 2002. Whilst the 2002 national comparative figures are not presently available the school's 2002 results would have placed it in the top five per cent of all post-16 providers nationally using the 2001 national figures. The best results in 2002 were in drama, mathematics and photography and the worst in biology and business education. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are not as strong. Overall the attainment of students on entry is above average. The best results in 2002 were achieved in science where results were well above the national average; in English, mathematics and overall they were above average. The comparisons with results in similar schools are contradictory. Comparisons based on the percentage of students eligible for free school meals place the school well above average but based on prior attainment the school's results are well below average. Girls attain better than boys to the same extent that is seen nationally. The results have improved in recent years in line with the national trend. The work seen during the inspection largely reflects the standards described above. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; it is good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs (SEN) and those with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress and achieve well. The school met the targets it set in 2002.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students enjoy being at school. They value the ethos of the school, the range of extra-curricular activities and the help and support provided by the staff. The very good student attitudes make a large contribution to the progress made by students and their levels of achievement.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Exclusions have fallen below national averages and there is an absence of bullying, racism or other forms of oppressive or threatening behaviour. In lessons students generally behave very well. They show respect for staff and follow the advice and help of teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. There are extremely high levels of mutual respect across the diverse range of social and ethnic backgrounds. There are many excellent examples of students helping and supporting each other irrespective of ability, age and background. Relationships between students and staff are extremely positive. These extremely positive attitudes contribute to the creation of an inclusive and harmonious community.
Attendance	Very good. The school achieves very high levels of attendance compared with similar schools locally and nationally. Unauthorised absence and truancy are rare. Nearly all students show positive attitudes to punctuality but there are short delays at the start of some lessons due to the volume of people moving around the school in narrow and congested corridors.

The excellent relationships throughout the school, together with very good standards of behaviour and attendance and the students' very positive attitudes to school make a very good contribution to the quality of learning and achievement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very 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 good teaching across Years 7 to 11 and the very good teaching in Years 12 and 13 are clearly reflected in the generally good or very good quality of students' learning. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and it is very good in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9. In English the teaching and the learning in all seven lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 was very good. Teaching is at least good in Years 7 to 11 in all the other subjects; it is best and often very good, in drama, history, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education. The learning in all subjects in Years 7 to 11 is never less than good. The school meets the needs of all students very well, it seeks to be an inclusive community and is successful in this. In the sixth form teaching and learning are both very good in business studies, economics, art, drama and history. They are satisfactory in biology and good in all other subjects. The support provided for students with special educational needs is very good.

The provision for literacy across the school is good and standards are above average, with speaking and listening a particular strength. Students are articulate and mature speakers, have a good vocabulary and, in many lessons, use talk well to evaluate, solve problems, make decisions and develop their ideas. Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory but it is at an early stage of development due to the delayed appointment of a coordinator. Students' attainment in numeracy is above average in many subjects but they are less proficient in their graphical work in science. The mathematics department has made a satisfactory start in introducing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 7 to 9. It is working hard, and with a large measure of success, to make appropriate provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form for the diverse needs of its students. The extra-curricular provision is very good and significantly extends opportunities for the students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Students are fully integrated into mainstream classes and achieve very well. Learning support assistants make an effective contribution to students' learning. There are very good links with the school based learning mentor, literacy coordinator and Local Education Authority inclusion team.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Whilst many students have English as an additional language, there are none at early stages of language acquisition.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. It makes a significant contribution to the excellent personal development of students. Provision in each of the four areas is strong. The strong Christian ethos and the focus on achieving excellence ensure that the school's values are nurtured in its life and work. The extra-curricular provision is a particular strength.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. There are very effective and systematic procedures for measuring, monitoring and assessing students' attitudes as well as their academic and personal development. Very effective target setting and support ensure that students are able to achieve their potential. In lessons teachers provide very effective individual support. They know the students well. Effective child protection measures are in place. There are no evident risks to students' health and safety.

The school does not fully comply with the requirements for the provision of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding and she is very well supported by members of the senior leadership team and others with key management roles in the school. They successfully set a clear educational direction based on Christian values and seek to ensure that all students attain their full potential. Planning is based on clear and shared priorities and the school is very effectively managed. Aspects of the timetable could be improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors make a very significant and positive contribution to the leadership of the school. They are very well organised and fulfil most responsibilities very well except that they do not ensure the school meets statutory requirements for the provision of information and communication technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Student performance information, including the tracking of students' progress, is used very effectively to evaluate the school's performance. Senior managers are very effective in identifying priority areas for improvement and taking appropriate action. The systematic observation of teaching could be developed further.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The effective use of resources is one of the key aims of the school and they are achieving it very well. They prioritise very effectively. The present headteacher and governors, ably supported by the bursar, have removed the large budget deficit they inherited well ahead of the date in their recovery plan, whilst continuing to improve students'

attainment and the quality of educational provision.
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The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations of students. • Students make good progress at the school. • Their children like the school and it helps them to become mature and responsible. • Parents feel comfortable to approach the school with questions or problems. • They feel that the school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good. • Behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small but significant minority feel that the school could work more closely with them. • A similar proportion feel that it could keep them better informed of their children's progress. • A slightly larger proportion identified issues relating to the homework given to their children.

Parents are very positive about the school and the provision made for their children. They are discriminating and articulate and within their overall supportive comments identify some areas for improvement. Inspectors fully support the parents' positive views. They also judge that relationships with parents are positive and that the school makes significant efforts to involve them. Parents receive considerable and useful information on their children's progress but the school could do more to clarify the purpose of the various reports and meetings for some parents. The specific concerns regarding homework were diverse and some were contradictory. For example, some parents felt there was too much whilst others felt there was insufficient. Inspectors considered that homework is generally appropriately set. In addition to these points for improvement individuals or very small numbers of parents identified a few other points. None of these is viewed as being due to systemic issues in the school. Senior members of staff are aware of them and have or are taking action to bring about improvement, an example being the increase in time for teaching French in the sixth form.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

TWYFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is taught within the main school. Although sixth formers have a specific social area they share much of the teaching accommodation and the library with other year groups. There are 259 students, 146 boys and 113 girls, making it significantly larger than average. About 80 per cent of the Year 11 cohort stays on in the sixth form and there are approximately 15 students from other schools in each year group. A high proportion of students progress into Year 13 and finish their courses. Subject areas define entrance requirements for AS courses, but the school's curriculum has been expanded to meet the needs of students whose GCSE grades are not high enough for pure academic study. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average, but the attainment of individual students varies considerably. In 2002, almost 90 per cent of students in Year 13 gained entry to university or equivalent institutions of higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very good sixth form with significant strengths. Standards of attainment have improved in recent years with a significant improvement between 2001 and 2002. Students achieve very well by the end of Year 13 and attain high standards. The sixth form is very cost-effective and is over-subscribed. In addition to a wide range of academic courses, the curriculum has been expanded to include vocational courses to meet the needs of students whose academic performance at GCSE would not lead to pure academic study. Teaching is very good and standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Personal development and relationships are excellent and students are offered many opportunities to exercise initiative and to take responsibility for playing an active part in school life. In addition, they support the efforts of younger students lower down the school with willingness and sensitivity. Students are offered extensive advice on university entrance and careers officers visit the school weekly to conduct interviews and discuss relevant issues. Leadership and management are excellent and there is a cohesive and well-planned quality assurance programme, which monitors students' performance effectively, confronts underachievement quickly and celebrates students' success in all its forms.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are high and have improved steadily over the past four years. The 2002 A level results demonstrate very good student achievement.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers give students opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Leadership is excellent and contributes significantly to high levels of achievement and ensures that students' successes are recognised and celebrated.
- Personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Personal support and guidance for students are very good and those applying for higher education are supported very well and given very effective advice on relevant university courses.
- The curriculum meets the diverse needs of its students.

What could be improved

- There are some inadequacies in accommodation, which inhibit students pursuing independent study and research.
- In several subjects a lack of resources and access to ICT facilities are preventing students attaining at the higher grades.

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	Very good. Students' attainment at A-level is well above average. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students.
Biology	Satisfactory. Provision is improving because of good leadership and management and better teaching but resources are inadequate.
Chemistry	Good. Very good leadership and management are leading to rapid improvements in performance and increasing popularity of the subject.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are average and teaching is good. Leadership and management are good and the plans for improvement are entirely appropriate.
Business Studies	Good. Very good teaching and very good leadership and management result in students achieving well and attaining in line with national averages.
Economics	Very good. Enthusiastic and effective teaching has led to a steady improvement in students' attainment at A-level. Limited resources are used very effectively.
Information and communication technology	Good. Standards are improving because of effective planning, good teaching and accurate evaluation of students' performance. There is a shortage of relevant textbooks.
Art and design and photography	Very good. Standards are above average overall and well above average in photography. Teaching is good and personal development and relationships are excellent. Students are well prepared for examinations and there is a shared commitment to succeed.
Drama	Very good. Standards are well above average. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject and teaching is very good.
Geography	Good. A-level results have improved significantly. There is a positive ethos for learning and student-teacher relationships are very constructive.
History	Very good. Standards are well above average and teachers demonstrate very secure knowledge of their subject, offering their students many opportunities to express their own opinions and to present their work to their peers.
English Literature	Very good. Standards are above average and show very good improvement since the previous inspection. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.
French	Unsatisfactory. The lack of curriculum time has had a negative effect on achievement, particularly in Year 13. Teaching is good overall and students' attitudes and commitment to study are very good.

Other subjects were looked at but not fully inspected; one or two lessons were observed and the following judgements are based on that limited evidence. The commentary provides a useful additional indication on the quality of education in the sixth form but should not be used as an indicator of the provision in individual subjects. Teaching and learning were good in media studies and students demonstrated positive attitudes and behaviour, as they considered a critical response to censorship issues introduced by the film *Saving Private Ryan*. In a music lesson both teaching and learning were very good and students' attainment in analysing a piece by Bernstein was well above average. In psychology, teaching was good and students displayed a mature approach to their studies. In a physics lesson, learning and teaching were satisfactory and students' attitudes were good. There was a well-above-average presentation on migration in a good Year 13 sociology lesson where teaching and

learning were very good; the teacher facilitated students' learning very well and demonstrated very secure subject knowledge. Teaching was good in the Year 13 physical education lesson, where students showed a good understanding of a psychological model of performance measurement. Teaching and learning in German were good. Students benefited from extensive use of German in the classroom and made good progress in the understanding of quite complex grammatical points.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students receive extensive help and support with their studies and very effective advice about higher education courses open to them. Pastoral support is very good and the highly effective team of form tutors provides full support on academic and personal issues. The school calls on external support services when appropriate.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Excellent. There is a cohesive and very effective quality assurance programme, which detects underachievement quickly and ensures that students' success in all its forms is recognised and celebrated. Strategic planning is outstanding and constantly identifies issues for development and methods to bring this about. The sixth form is very cost effective and is oversubscribed. There is a range of courses to support students whose GCSE performance is below that required for pure academic study. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient space for supervised private study. There is a lack of resources and access to ICT in a number of subjects.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching and the support students receive from their teachers. • The standards students attain in the sixth form. • The opportunities students have to take responsibility for decision-making in several aspects of school life. • Personal development and relationships including the Chaplaincy programme. • The enrichment programme and the range of extra-curricular activities, including residential experiences at home and abroad. • The leadership of the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More access to ICT facilities and more accommodation for drama and for independent study.

In the pre-inspection questionnaire, students expressed concern in four areas. A fifth of students expressed dissatisfaction with the information they receive about how well they are progressing and the same proportion were unhappy with the extent the school responds to their views. A quarter believed the school could offer more enrichment activities and nearly two-fifths felt they were not well advised about future options open to them. After extensive discussion with a variety of different student groups, the perusal of relevant data and documentation and discussions with staff, inspectors are of the opinion that these are not issues of concern for the vast majority of students in the sixth form. They do, however, support students' concerns about accommodation and access to ICT facilities.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of attainment in the GCSE examinations and in the public examinations in the sixth form are high and students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

1. The full range of attainment is seen among students when they arrive in the school but overall the attainment on entry is above the national average. Approximately 60 per cent of students are boys.
2. The attainment in the GCSE examinations has improved in line with that seen nationally and it has remained well above the national averages in recent years on all the main criteria used to measure overall attainment. In 2002 approaching three-quarters of students obtained five or more of the higher grades (A*-C) in the GCSE examinations. Every student achieved at least one GCSE grade (A*-G) and almost none left with less than five. Compared to that in similar schools the attainment in 2002 placed it in the top five per cent nationally on many of the main criteria. These are consistently very good results and the work seen during the inspection indicates that the school is continuing to sustain these high standards. The school met the targets it set for itself in 2002 and has set targets for further improvement in 2003 and 2004. The best results in 2002 were in religious studies, drama, communication studies and English.
3. These results show that by the age of 16 students across the whole ability range are achieving well and that the school is very successful in allowing each student to achieve their potential. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in their time at the school and achieve well. The school clearly values each student as an individual and also seeks to meet their needs as a unique achiever. Whilst these results are a tribute to the students themselves they are also due in no small measure to the efforts and expertise of the staff and the systems established to support the students in their learning. About 80 per cent of students remain at the school into the sixth form. The philosophy and approach to learning continue very successfully. In the sixth form the school mainly offers courses leading to GCE A level examinations. It has, however, successfully developed combinations of these to suit the abilities and aptitudes of the different students. The quality of teaching improves further at this stage. It is very good with learning support systems to match. This combined with the very good student attitudes to learning has led to the very high standards achieved at A level.
4. The GCE A level results have shown improvement in recent years and there was significant improvement between 2001 and 2002. Whilst the 2002 national comparative figures are not presently available the school's 2002 results would have placed it in the top 5 per cent of post-16 providers nationally using the 2001 national figures. The school achieved virtually a 100 per cent pass rate in the A level examinations sat by students at the end of Year 13. The best results in 2002 were in drama, mathematics and photography. The work seen during the inspection reflects these very good results. In the work seen during the inspection standards were generally above those expected for the stage reached by students on their courses and they achieve well. In most subjects standards are above or well above those seen nationally. They were well above average in mathematics, drama, economics and history. Students also achieve well or very well in most subjects. Achievement is very good in history, art, drama and economics. There were no notable differences in achievement between students from different ethnic backgrounds or those with English as an additional language. The few students with special educational needs are also doing well.

Leadership of the school is excellent.

5. There has been a great improvement in the leadership provided for the school since the last inspection when it was identified as a key area for improvement. The greatest improvement seems to have taken place in the last few years, since the appointment of a number of new governors and senior staff, including particularly the present headteacher. Her leadership is outstanding and she

is very well supported by members of the senior leadership team and others with key management roles in the school. The governing body also makes a very significant and positive contribution to the leadership of the school.

6. Between them the governors and senior staff successfully set a clear direction for the school. This is based on Christian values, an inclusive approach to establishing a community of learners and a commitment to maximising the potential of each student. They have been very successful in a short period of time in creating a common and shared purpose among members of staff and this is seen in the day-to-day life and work of the school. The parents were consulted when the present aims for the school were recently produced. The great majority of the many parents who provided information for the inspection team strongly supported the direction being taken by the school.
7. The school went through a difficult period about two years ago. This left it with a significant budget deficit and also undermined the confidence in the school of a number of parents and staff. The governors and senior managers, particularly the headteacher, have managed significant change very effectively within a short timescale. They have removed the budget deficit whilst also improving results in external examinations and the quality of education provided and have regained the confidence of parents and staff.
8. Virtually all staff with management responsibilities lead very effectively by example and are prepared to take responsibility. There has been an appropriate and successful focus on building very effective teams who perform well, including the senior leadership team. Effective management structures are established and accountabilities and responsibilities are defined. The appointment of key staff has been a significant element in bringing about improvement and the school has been very successful in this at a number of levels, including a number of recent appointments.
9. The excellent leadership is supported by very effective management. Senior managers have been very effective in identifying areas where changes were needed and in acting to bring about improvement. In this they are supported very well by the governors, who are committed, concerned and very well informed with a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. A particular focus of development has been the analysis of student performance, including tracking students' progress, both personal and academic and setting clear targets for further improvement. This is a particularly strong element of the school's work and the school considers rightly that it has been very influential in bringing about improvement and raising levels of attainment. All members of staff are involved and organisational structures have been set up to support this work effectively. Heads of year and year teams are key elements in the process. They link the personal and academic development of students and are generally operating well to the benefit of students. There are examples of year groups where the work is highly effective but it is less so in others and greater consistency across the year groups is needed. A clear and useful guide to the analysis and use of data has been produced, which identifies the roles of the various categories of staff involved at different levels. Data is analysed at a number of levels, by for example different ethnic groups and individual departments. The information is used both to monitor and support the progress of students generally and to target individuals for specific support such as mentoring. Students in Year 11 who have predicted grades on the borderline between grades C and D have been supported in this way and mentoring is presently being extended to other year groups. In Years 8 and 9 students who are at risk of being excluded in the future or who have low self-esteem are being targeted. Heads of department meet fortnightly with their line managers and also twice a year with the headteacher. The first of these two meetings focuses on the results achieved and the second on the targets set.
10. The school also monitors other aspects of its work such as the quality of teaching. Monitoring of teaching is presently not as strong or as systematic as the analysis of students' performance. The internal monitoring of work in departments is supplemented by triennial reviews, involving external reviewers. Teaching has been a recent focus of professional development in the school, including such aspects as improving the management of students in lessons.
11. The present headteacher and governors, ably supported by the bursar, have removed the large budget deficit they inherited well ahead of the date in their recovery plan. Whilst reducing the

budget deficit has provided challenges it has also increased the focus on the strategic use of resources. The effective use of resources is one of the key aims of the school and this is being achieved very well. The senior management team and governors prioritise very effectively and planning is based on clear and shared priorities. Governors and the headteacher clearly seek and achieve best value for the school. They are planning in the future to seek new sources of support and funding to improve the facilities at the school, particularly aspects of the accommodation. Improvements in accommodation and resources for learning have been identified by the inspection team as key areas for improvement.

12. The leadership provided by senior staff has been very influential in maintaining and enhancing the high level of staff commitment and expertise and the very good student attitudes. These are the principal reasons for the excellent personal development of the students and the high levels of attainment at the school.

Relationships in the school and students' personal development are excellent.

13. The excellent relationships across the whole school as well as the very positive attitudes displayed by the students make an excellent contribution to the quality of learning and the high standards achieved.
14. Students are generally proud of the school and pleased to be there. The youngest students in Year 7 talk enthusiastically about it. They particularly like the range of activities available and value the efforts of teachers. When arriving for school at the start of the day or when moving about the school there is a discernable sense of enjoyment among many students. Enthusiasm for school is reflected in very good attendance levels that are much higher than national averages. Nearly all students show a sense of purpose as they move about the school.
15. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good. This makes a significant contribution to ensuring that teaching time is normally used well and to good effect. Students show high levels of concentration and are eager to do well. Nearly all students participate fully in the work in lessons. They listen, show respect for teachers, take care in their work, make good contributions to discussions and are prepared to offer their views. They work very well in groups and in many lessons give each other support and encouragement. There are a few students who, often because of specific and special needs, occasionally show challenging behaviour. However, skilled teaching usually ensures that the attention and focus of these students is quickly brought back to the task in hand. The very good standards of behaviour are reflected in the below average number of exclusions.
16. Relationships across the whole school are excellent and make a very strong contribution to the friendly, warm ethos. There is a very high level of respect for the feelings and beliefs of others and a strong feeling of inclusiveness and mutual respect across the whole school community. Discussions with students, particularly those in Year 7, revealed very low levels of bullying and an absence of any oppressive or violent behaviour. These students stressed that there was no racism. A very positive feature of the school is the way sixth form students help and mentor the Year 7 students through, for example, their involvement in the homework club.
17. The school provides many opportunities for students to take responsibility and is keen that they should be responsible for their own learning. This belief together with the high expectations of teachers within a caring community enables students to feel that they are an important part of that community and their response is excellent.

The very good provision made for students' care, personal and academic development.

18. There is a very strong and effective pastoral care structure within the school. This seeks to ensure not only the wellbeing of students but also aims to ensure that each student achieves their maximum potential. Members of staff leading and supporting this work are generally totally

committed and work tirelessly to meet these aims. Students value their work and speak glowingly about the efforts of staff, including their approachability and availability throughout the school day.

19. The systems for monitoring the students' academic and personal development are very effective and well established. Fundamental to this success is the range of criteria used to measure students' attitudes to work and their achievement as well as their standards of behaviour and attendance. These areas are assessed on a regular basis and following consultation with students and, if necessary, parents, targets for improvement are agreed. Students are aware that these measures are designed to help them achieve. They are very successful because of the additional support provided by the school: for example, additional tuition or the involvement of specialist support services to help them meet their targets. The success of this system makes a very good contribution to raising standards of achievement and to building the confidence and self-esteem of students.
20. The school has effective systems for promoting good behaviour which involve a range of rewards and sanctions. The procedures are well known and consistently and fairly implemented. However, the very positive school ethos and the excellent relationships ensure that recourse to sanctions is limited. The school places a high priority on good attendance and has effective systems in place to support this aim. There is regular monitoring of student attendance and effective action is taken when problems emerge.
21. The outcomes of the school's high expectations in terms of behaviour and attitudes to learning are seen in many areas of the school. They are very evident in the way students treat each other. Racial differences are totally ignored, and one sees students of different groups, boys and girls, mixing and laughing together. Members of staff are excellent role models and there is an ethos of care and support in the school.
22. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students. The provision is deliberate and overt: opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been mapped across the curriculum and appear in documents given to staff and students. They occur in the taught curriculum and in extra-curricular activities and pervade the life of the school. Moral issues are faced in a range of lessons, especially the humanities and high moral standards are strongly promoted within the life of the school.
23. Spirituality is fostered in the daily act of reflection which ends all assemblies and morning form periods. There are also opportunities for students to take communion each week at a voluntary service during form time: about 60 students attended during the inspection week. The Twyford Fellowship Group, which meets at lunchtime is another opportunity for voluntary prayer, praise and reflection. These activities are well supported by a Chaplaincy team of four, who are available throughout the week to offer spiritual counsel and support. Those of other faiths, who represent 15 per cent of the students, are made to feel part of the school community and their contribution is recognised without any diminution in the Christian ethos of the school. Spiritual issues are dealt with in the taught curriculum too: death and suffering are dealt with sensitively in English and drama, for instance.
24. The opportunities for social development are particularly striking, a good example being the opportunities provided for leadership and representation on student bodies, where real decisions are taken. Younger students have a high regard for older ones. In fact, virtually all students have a high regard for each other. They are able to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and school productions, and benefit enormously from the trips they go on, particularly those of a residential nature. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively in lessons and are able to consider social issues in a range of contexts, including a new course in citizenship.
25. Cultural development is provided for in a range of ways. Literature and the arts are very well taught and there are visits to theatres and drama workshops. Overseas visits are very successful, whether for photography in Bruges and Amsterdam, pilgrimage to the Holy Land, or the popular

trips to New York. The curriculum draws in work from other cultures and the school itself is a model of how different cultures can relate to one another.

The high proportion of good and very good teaching.

26. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching, compared to about 10 per cent seen in lessons during the last inspection and there is a significantly higher proportion of lessons where teaching is good or better. Teaching is good, very good or occasionally excellent in more than four lessons in every five overall, and in almost nine in every ten in the sixth form. Teaching is strongest in the sixth form where it is very good overall. The generally good and very good teaching is clearly reflected in the quality of students' learning. The good progress made by the students is due to high quality teaching and the very good student attitudes. Whilst teachers generally used the resources available effectively, there were virtually no lessons seen where students' learning was significantly enhanced by high quality resources or the accommodation.
27. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and it is very good in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9. In English the teaching in all seven lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 was very good. Teaching is at least good in Years 7 to 11 in all the other subjects; it is best, and often very good, in drama, history, ICT, music and physical education. This leads to the good or better learning seen in all subjects in Years 7 to 11.
28. The better lessons are characterised by a number of features. A key one is the ability of the teacher to motivate students to want to take part and when necessary to manage them quietly, firmly and effectively. This contrasted with the very small number of lessons where learning and teaching were only satisfactory due to the time spent in maintaining control of the students. Work in these better lessons is very well planned and teachers use methods which interest and encourage students to take part. This was seen in a Year 7 drama lesson where the approach adopted by the teacher engaged students, who were not naturally co-operative, very effectively and allowed them to experience Shakespeare in a new way. It was also seen in an English lesson where lower attaining students in Year 9 made very good progress due to the clear emphasis of the learning points, very good questioning and encouragement through praise. The very effective use of questioning was a feature of many of the lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 in English, which developed students' skill in speaking and listening and probed and developed understanding. Teachers generally show a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In many of these better lessons teachers also show a good understanding of the stage of students' development and plan the work to allow them to take the next steps in their learning. This was seen in a Year 7 music lesson where students were taught in small manageable steps, which led to a whole class performance and in a Year 11 lesson where advice on the development of students' composition was targeted to ensure each student made maximum progress. Whilst teachers' expectations of students is normally high the urgency and pace are greater in these lessons. This was seen in a Year 7 games lesson where learning was excellent due to a significant extent to the excellent use of time and in a Year 11 German lesson where the brisk pace and very good use of time by the students supported very good learning.
29. In the sixth form the teaching and the learning are best in business studies, economics, art, photography, drama and history. Teaching is good in mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, ICT, geography, English Literature and French. It is satisfactory in biology. Examples of very good teaching are found in many subjects.
30. Many of the characteristics of successful teaching seen in Years 7 to 11 are also those that produce the very good teaching seen in the sixth form. Teachers use their good knowledge of their subjects very well in devising appropriate methods to meet students' learning needs. Students benefit from a good range of stimulating activities, which capture their interest and make them want to learn. They were fully engaged and fascinated by the subject matter of a sixth form lesson in economics where the challenging questioning met the learning needs of all students. The students' understanding of business concepts is effectively developed and extended by the very well planned work in business studies. The rapid pace of lessons is another strong feature of teaching at this

level. In addition to this students at this level are given increasing opportunities to take the initiative and take responsibility for their own learning and this is seen particularly in history, drama, art and photography. Learning is also enhanced in several subject areas by a range of extra-curricular activities.

31. The excellent relationships in the school between students and between students and teachers are very influential in creating an environment within which teaching and learning can thrive. Students are very appreciative of the additional support provided by teachers and the fact that they are approachable and know them well.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Provision made by the school in information and communication technology (ICT) for all students in Years 10 and 11.

32. Progress since the last inspection has been good with attention given to many of the points made in the last report. The present leadership and management for ICT in the school are very good and the documentation produced by the head of ICT is also very good. Where ICT is taught as a discrete subject all the teaching seen at all stages was good or very good. Effective use has been made of the New Opportunities Funding to provide staff training. There has been considerable investment in computer hardware in recent years, but the school still has some way to go to meet the government target for 2004 for the ratio of computers to students.
33. The co-ordinator for ICT in Years 7 to 9 has produced a very good scheme of work for the subject. Documentation to illustrate how the programme of study is covered and the use made of ICT in other subjects is also good. The system for assessing and recording students' attainment as they progress through Years 7 to 9 is exemplary. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 8 and through other subjects in Year 9. In 2002, 87 per cent of Year 9 students gained a level 5 or above in the teacher assessments. This compares well with the national average where 66 per cent of students gain level 5 or above. Attainment is at least in line with the attainment in other subjects in the school at the end of Year 9.
34. Students' work includes good examples of the use of ICT in art, design and technology, English, geography, mathematics and photography. Some is impressive, particularly work in English done by students in Years 7 and 8. In design and technology, Year 8 students experience a good course in systems and control. Although the contributions which other subjects make to the teaching of ICT have been well documented, the coverage of the programme of study is patchy. There are limited opportunities for students to construct and use databases or to use ICT for data logging. Opportunities for students to consider their use of ICT in comparison with its use in the wider world are also limited.
35. In Years 10 and 11, those students following an ICT course are achieving well, but for others provision is limited. Currently the school fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide an ICT course for all students in Years 10 and 11. This places some limitations not only on their development and attainment in these years but also has an adverse effect on their prospects post-16. The head of ICT has a clear understanding of the present stage of development of the subject; she knows the deficiencies and the plans to improve the situation are totally appropriate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order to improve the very good quality of education and the high standards further, the governors and the school's senior leadership team need to:
 - Ensure that all students in Years 10 and 11 receive and benefit from, their entitlement in information and communication technology (paragraphs 34, 35 and 100).

Sixth form

- Increase the capacity and quality of the sixth form accommodation so that students can undertake independent study and research (paragraphs 61, 67, 68, 108, 112 and 113);
- Improve the resources to support learning and access to information and communication technology in a number of subjects (paragraphs 49, 61, 68, 73, 76, 77, 80, 81, 91, 95, 97, 102, 108, 122 and 128).

In addition to the above key issues for action the school should give consideration to:

- improving the timetable to better meet the needs of all students (paragraphs 52, 54, 62, 86 and 133).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	54
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	18	21	14	0	0	0
Percentage	1.8	33.3	38.9	25.9	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	24	31	6	1	0	0
Percentage	1.6	38.1	49.2	9.5	1.6	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 Years 7 – 11 and 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	954	259
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	109	10

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	135	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	278

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	111	68	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	83	88
	Girls	59	56	61
	Total	141	139	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (86)	78 (82)	83 (81)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (57)	56 (59)	42 (52)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	87	88
	Girls	58	58	63
	Total	143	145	151
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (81)	81 (75)	85 (77)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	55 (38)	49 (50)	45 (35)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	109	69

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	71	107	110
	Girls	57	68	70
	Total	128	175	180
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72 (67)	98 (97)	100 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	49.4 (48.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	50	39	89
	Average point score per candidate	22.8 (17.0)	25.2 (19.0)	23.8 (18.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	n/a (16.9)	n/a (18.0)	n/a (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	50	39	89	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	22.8 (17.0)	25.2 (19.0)	23.8 (18.0)	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	n/a (16.9)	n/a (18.0)	n/a (17.5)	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
510	18	0
3	3	0
92	2	0
14	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
115	1	0
19	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
137	9	0
86	6	0
61	3	1
10	0	0
161	8	0
0	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)	68.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	505

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	4,030,663
Total expenditure	3,847,189
Expenditure per pupil	3,263

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.1
Key Stage 4	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance brought forward from previous year	-276,497
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Balance carried forward to next year	-93,023
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Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22FTE
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20FTE

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	1213
Number of questionnaires returned	371

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	52	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	54	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	52	15	2	1
The teaching is good.	32	58	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	47	10	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	35	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	11	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	36	3	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	39	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	42	6	1	6

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

37. A large proportion of the students at Twyford, about 80 per cent, stay on in the sixth form. They enter the sixth form with a range of attainment and the school has effectively designed courses to meet these diverse needs. About 90 per cent of students stay on into Year 13, a good retention rate.
38. Students principally follow courses leading to GCE A levels, taking AS level examinations at the end of Year 12. All 14 students who entered for the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in business studies in 2002 were successful and about two-thirds obtained merits, which in terms of their attainment on entry indicates good progress. The GCE A level results have shown improvement in recent years and there was significant improvement between 2001 and 2002 when the average points score increased from 18.0 to 23.8 and the pass rate rose above 99 per cent. Whilst the 2002 national comparative figures are not presently available, the school's 2002 results would have placed it in the top five per cent of all post-16 providers nationally using the 2001 national figures. As attainment overall on entry to the sixth form is close to that seen nationally, these results indicate that students made very good progress in the sixth form and achieved very well. The Advanced Level Information System (ALIS) data for the school for 2002 confirms this. Girls perform better than boys to a slightly greater extent than that seen nationally. The best A level results in 2002 were in drama, mathematics and photography and the worst were in biology and business education. The results in the AS level examinations at the end of Year 12 are not as good as the A level results but still indicate good progress.
39. Work seen during the inspection reflects these results. Standards were generally above those expected for the stage reached by students on their courses and they achieve well. In most subjects standards are above or well above those seen nationally for the stage reached. They were well above average in mathematics, drama, economics and history and broadly in line with the average in design and technology, information and communication technology, biology, business studies and French. Students are also achieving well or very well in most subjects. Achievement is very good in history, art, drama and economics. It is satisfactory in biology and unsatisfactory in French. The situation in biology shows improvement over recent years and the school has recently taken action to improve the levels of attainment in French. There were no notable differences between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds or those with English as an additional language. The few students with special educational needs are also doing well.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

40. Students' attitudes to the school and to their studies are very good and they speak very highly of the support they receive. They express themselves well when discussing their work and various aspects of the school. They are fully involved in all aspects of school life and participate with willingness in the wide range of responsibilities open to them. For example, they provide support and help to younger students, particularly in Year 7 and are active in a very effective mentoring service for those students. Members of the Sixth Form Cabinet take full responsibility for many aspects of school life and provide good support for the Year 11 team of prefects. They make very positive comments about the trust placed in them by staff and of the pleasure they experience when they see improvements in provision. Sixth formers, for example, are involved in the interviewing of prospective teaching staff and they played a major role during discussions about new canteen facilities. Personal development and relationships are, therefore, excellent and are characterised by mutual respect, sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and extensive opportunities for students to exercise their initiative.
41. Students have more opportunities for spiritual development than are normally found in schools at this stage, many associated with the religious life of the school. Sixth formers have opportunities

to lead as well as participate in activities such as the voluntary communion services and the Twyford Fellowship Group. The caring and supportive ethos of the school sets a high moral tone and opportunities for the social development of students are excellent. Participation in productions, games and school visits, many of them residential, contributes significantly to the social and cultural experience of the students in the school.

42. Students' behaviour is of a very high order and attendance is very good. Registration procedures meet requirements. Some students are late at the start of the day due mainly to transport problems. When moving about the school students show positive attitudes to punctuality but there are delays at the start of some lessons due to the volume of people moving around the school in narrow and congested corridors.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

43. The quality of teaching is very good overall and students achieve well in lessons. Teaching and learning are particularly impressive in business studies, economics, art, photography, drama and history. They are good in mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, ICT, geography, English Literature and French and satisfactory in biology. An excellent lesson was seen in economics and examples of very good teaching are found in many subjects.
44. The excellent teaching in economics was characterised by challenging questioning which met the learning needs of all students, irrespective of their ability. Students were fully engaged and fascinated by the subject matter, of which their teacher had a very secure command.
45. Very good teaching in history offers students many opportunities to learn at their own pace and in their own way. Furthermore, students spend considerable time in discussion and intellectual argument and are only too willing to learn from and with each other. This emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning is also present in art and photography, where expectations are high. In addition, teachers in these areas have very good expertise and plan purposeful and enjoyable activities to enable students to work collaboratively to learn and refine techniques. In drama, initiative is fostered and, because students have the highest regard for their teachers, they are prepared to tackle the most demanding of tasks. In business classes, teachers work long and hard to plan lessons, which develop and extend students' understanding of business concepts.
46. Teachers' very secure knowledge of their subjects and of how to use methods to meet students' learning needs are key elements of teaching in most subject areas. Effective starter activities set the scene and plenary sessions at the end of lessons enable students to take stock of what they have learned. The rapid pace of lessons is another strong feature and, across most subjects, students benefit from a good range of stimulating activities, which capture their interest and make them want to learn.
47. Teaching and learning are augmented in several subjects by extra-curricular activities, fieldwork, visiting lecturers and attendance at conferences. In chemistry, for example, students are enrolled in a master class at Imperial College and in biology they attend conferences organised by examination boards. In art and design and photography, visits are an important starting point for studies and are instrumental in improving the quality of students' work. In drama, teachers spend considerable time outside formal lessons helping their students to excel in their work and have a valuable link with the National Theatre. This in turn, encourages students to give freely of their time to workshops and school productions. Students following history courses speak highly of the visits to Eastern Europe and of how these activities serve to reinforce their learning and to prepare them for the rigour of advanced study.
48. A common thread in all subject areas is the excellent quality of relationships between students and between students and teachers. There exists a very positive rapport between the staff and their charges and students speak very highly of the support they receive. Members of staff are approachable, know their students well and are always ready and willing to offer guidance and to

celebrate success. Teachers demonstrate a profound care for the welfare of their students in all areas of school life.

49. Some teaching has features which can be improved. On occasions, teaching is ineffectively planned, repetitive and lacks pace. More can be done in a minority of subjects to widen teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of students of all abilities and the use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped in several areas.

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

50. The school has a wide range of AS and A level courses and has recently expanded its provision with new subjects such as psychology. It offers vocational courses in business, art and ICT, which, along with AS provision in subjects such as drama, media studies and photography, allow access to the sixth form to students who would not otherwise meet the entry criteria. Such students may also retake GCSE courses in mathematics and English. The GNVQ programme also allows a work experience placement and access to vocationally-orientated AS courses such as music technology. Thus, while the main strength of the sixth form is in its academic provision of 23 subjects, it is also inclusive and the vocational element gives a fresh start to students who would not otherwise have been able to stay on in full-time education at the school. In a few cases, lower-attaining students are having difficulties in Year 12 and the school is reviewing whether AS courses are the most suitable provision for them. There are many other opportunities for further education in the locality.
51. Extra-curricular provision is a major strength. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to participate in activities that enrich the curriculum, especially in areas such as sport, music, drama, photography and art. Subject areas that were formerly not active in making this provision, such as science, do so through the development of fieldwork, conferences and master classes and the use of visiting speakers for higher-attaining students. Such activities include good links with outside institutions such as examining boards and higher education, including Imperial College. Every department offers an enrichment programme and there are many activities. In addition, students pay tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the wide range of residential trips at home and abroad, the well-established charity weeks administered by students in Year 12 and the plethora of opportunities students have to assist and encourage their colleagues lower down the school.
52. Some areas of the curriculum that were historically weak are in the process of being strengthened, as seen in the increasing popularity of biology, chemistry, physics and psychology. However, the numbers opting for modern foreign languages are small and this has led to timetabling problems such as, the time allocated for French, very small groups in German and Spanish being taught as an extra-curricular activity. Parents whilst expressing concerns about the situation are also pleased that the school still offers these subjects at A level.
53. Religious education is provided through a number of conferences for all students. These are organized by the head of the religious education department. Students take GCSE religious education in Year 10 and 85 per cent of them attained the higher grades A*-C in 2002. Religious education is a component of the newly introduced citizenship course in Year 11. This arrangement disrupts continuity and the take-up of religious studies at AS level is low. However, there are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and to develop social and ethical understanding and practice. Overall, the provision for students' social and personal development is excellent.
54. There are several timetable problems in the post-16 curriculum. These include the absence of sufficient time for practical work in science, the loss of time through lesson transition, insufficient time for modern languages, the absence of resource bases for minority subjects such as psychology and sociology and split classes in a minority of subjects.

55. Nonetheless, the curriculum is good overall and there is very good provision for extra-curricular enrichment, personal development and the inclusion of students who would not normally be admitted to traditional sixth form courses.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

56. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress are very good and are recognised as such by the students. Although marking is variable across subjects, most is good and offers students detailed advice on how they might improve their standards. Teachers are more than willing to give of their time to assist students who are experiencing difficulty or who wish to go further in their studies.
57. The two assessment weeks during the year are valued by students and staff alike and generate new targets for attainment. Most students interviewed during the assessment week knew exactly the levels at which they were operating and their final predicted grades. Departments are becoming more adept at analysing data and using it to promote higher levels of attainment. A particularly good example of assessment practice was seen in a Year 13 history class, when students' presentations were enhanced by prior knowledge of exactly how they would be assessed and graded.

Advice, support and guidance

58. The educational and personal support and guidance given to students are very good. Prior to joining the sixth form, students receive extensive advice and individual interviews, which outline course requirements in great detail. The quality of written information given to students is high and each department outlines the major features of their courses and the procedures for assessment.
59. The procedures for monitoring students' performance are very good and the co-operation between form tutors, subject teachers and the head of the sixth form is effective in ensuring that underachievement is recognised quickly and that success is celebrated regularly. Teachers who feel that students are falling behind send letters expressing their concern to parents and the head of the sixth form and her team are meticulous in mentoring students and contacting parents when circumstances demand. Personal achievements are monitored and celebrated through the Twyford Portfolio and students spend considerable time with their form tutors setting targets and evaluating performance.
60. The school is actively involved in the Connexions programme and external staff involved in the initiative visit school each week to offer advice and to conduct interviews with students. Students speak highly of the advice and support they receive on university entrance. The programme is very effectively led by a sixth form tutor. Students benefit from relevant information provided by their subject teachers, from form tutors who monitor the progress of their students towards university application and also from visits to higher education institutions organised by the school. Those students applying to read medicine or applying to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge are offered specific advice and trial interviews.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

61. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers. They make positive comments about the quality of teaching and also of the many opportunities they have to play a major role in many aspects of the life of the school. They value the student council and the Sixth-Form Cabinet and are only too willing to play their part in assisting students lower down the school. They appreciate the advice they receive on university entrance but would like more accommodation for independent study and for drama. They say that they would also benefit from more access to ICT.

62. Parents agree that their sons and daughters are well supported, but they are not happy with the time allocation for modern foreign languages. They value the contact with teachers and, along with their offspring, demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction with sixth form provision. As parents and students said on more than one occasion, they feel privileged to be associated with the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

63. The situation in the sixth form reflects that in the school. Leadership is excellent and this is supported by very effective management. The director of post-16 education is valued highly by teachers, students and parents. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well, are aware of the issues and play a full and significant role in planning the future direction of the sixth form. There is a cohesive and very effective quality assurance programme, which comprises regular lesson observation and ongoing analysis and evaluation of the performance of each individual student. Strategic planning is outstanding and constantly identifies issues for development and methods to bring this about. The school does not rest on its laurels and the already excellent provision for students' personal development is also an area of future emphasis: students are to be encouraged to lead even more clubs and societies and to play a more formal role in the school's quality assurance processes.
64. The quality assurance programme is a particularly strong feature of the sixth form provision and is augmented by information from the Advanced Level Information System (ALIS). Pastoral and academic oversight of students' performance is at the heart of its provision and liaison between the director of post-16 education, form tutors and subject departments ensure that areas of concern are confronted on a regular basis and that students' success in all its forms is recognised and celebrated. Students themselves speak highly of the support they receive and have the utmost confidence in their teachers.
65. Tutors monitor the progress of their students on a regular basis and the Twyford Portfolio of Achievement is a key document in this process. Students keep records of their academic performance, enrichment activities, both in and out of school, and information on vocational planning for the future. Following assessment weeks, of which there are two each year, results are collated and individual targets are set. These targets are open to review and negotiation at any time. Furthermore, tutors play a seminal role in monitoring progress towards university entrance and, along with subject staff, write detailed references on the achievements and potential of their charges.
66. Performance management procedures are good and are used to develop teaching and learning. The analysis of examination results is detailed and reasons for good or weaker performance are explored. The professional development of staff is very good and has played a major part in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.
67. The sixth form is very cost effective and the main school benefits from this to some degree. As overall within the school the principles of best value are applied well. The school carefully considers the appropriateness of its provision in the sixth form and its effectiveness; it is well aware of its performance against other similar institutions in the local area. Because it wishes to meet the needs of all of its students, it has introduced a range of courses in Year 12 to support those youngsters whose GCSE examination performance is below that required for pure academic study. It consults effectively and when appropriate takes action but only after due and careful consideration. The sixth form is not only popular with students at the school; it is also becoming increasingly attractive to students from other schools. The school recognises that accommodation is at a premium and, therefore, that decisions will need to be made about the nature of future provision.

Resources

68. Teachers are well qualified, demonstrate very secure subject knowledge and their qualifications are generally well matched to relevant curriculum areas. Provision for teaching and learning resources is satisfactory overall, but there are areas where this is not the case. There is a shortage of textbooks in a minority of areas and this has a detrimental effect on independent learning. The sixth form section in the library is generally inadequate and ICT equipment and software appropriate for students is limited within some curriculum areas. Although students speak warmly of their social area, accommodation is a major issue and is unsatisfactory overall. This is because there is insufficient space for supervised private study and there are too few specialist drama rooms.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National comparisons are not yet available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	25	100	n/a	76	n/a	4.2	n/a
Chemistry	13	100	n/a	85	n/a	4.4	n/a
Biology	19	74	n/a	32	n/a	2.5	n/a
Physics	14	86	n/a	37	n/a	2.9	n/a
Design and Technology	16	75	n/a	25	n/a	1.8	n/a
Business Studies	14	93	n/a	21	n/a	2.2	n/a
Economics	16	100	n/a	44	n/a	3.4	n/a
ICT	44	80	n/a	0	n/a	1.2	n/a
Physical Education	12	100	n/a	75	n/a	4.1	n/a
Art	21	100	n/a	19	n/a	2.0	n/a
Photography	28	100	n/a	61	n/a	3.8	n/a
Music	4	100	n/a	75	n/a	3.8	n/a
Music Technology	7	100	n/a	71	n/a	4.0	n/a
Drama	26	100	n/a	50	n/a	4.0	n/a
Media Studies	30	100	n/a	33	n/a	3.1	n/a
Geography	7	100	n/a	43	n/a	3.3	n/a
History	30	100	n/a	43	n/a	2.4	n/a
Religious Studies	7	100	n/a	0	n/a	1.4	n/a
Sociology	16	100	n/a	56	n/a	3.4	n/a
Psychology	21	91	n/a	24	n/a	2.3	n/a
Politics	12	67	n/a	25	n/a	2.2	n/a
English	45	98	n/a	29	n/a	2.8	n/a
French	7	86	n/a	29	n/a	2.4	n/a
German	6	100	n/a	17	n/a	2.0	n/a
Spanish	2	100	n/a	50	n/a	3.0	n/a

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	20	100	n/a	85	n/a	8.6	n/a
Chemistry	10	100	n/a	60	n/a	7.4	n/a
Biology	16	94	n/a	25	n/a	4.6	n/a
Physics	5	100	n/a	80	n/a	8.0	n/a
Design and Technology	5	100	n/a	20	n/a	4.4	n/a
Business Studies	8	100	n/a	13	n/a	4.8	n/a
Economics	17	100	n/a	65	n/a	6.9	n/a
Physical Education	10	90	n/a	40	n/a	5.6	n/a
Art	14	100	n/a	64	n/a	7.0	n/a
Photography	31	100	n/a	74	n/a	8.3	n/a
Drama	14	100	n/a	71	n/a	8.4	n/a
Media Studies	23	100	n/a	22	n/a	6.1	n/a
Geography	5	100	n/a	80	n/a	7.2	n/a
History	23	100	n/a	48	n/a	6.9	n/a
Religious Studies	6	100	n/a	100	n/a	8.7	n/a
Politics	9	100	n/a	78	n/a	8.0	n/a
English	43	100	n/a	42	n/a	6.3	n/a
French	6	100	n/a	33	n/a	5.7	n/a
Spanish	2	100	n/a	50	n/a	6.0	n/a

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Business Studies	14	100	n/a	64	n/a	0	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

69. The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. One lesson in physics was observed in which learning and teaching were satisfactory and students' attitudes were good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students make rapid progress so that their A and AS level results are very high.
- Teaching and students' learning are of good quality.
- Students' attitudes to, and interest in, mathematics are very good.
- Leadership and management are good and very effective action is taken to make improvements.

Areas for development

- The use of information and communication technology as a learning tool is underdeveloped.
- The teaching of statistics and mechanics is over-dependent on key personnel.

70. When they start their sixth form course, students' attainment is slightly above average. They achieve well throughout the AS and A level mathematics courses to reach a very high standard. The Advanced Level Information System (ALIS) data for the school also indicates that students make faster progress in mathematics than in most other subjects. AS and A level results in 2002 were very impressive and a very high percentage of students in each of these examinations attained a grade A or B and all gained a pass grade. The department also offers a GCSE retake course that is successful in enabling students to improve their Year 11 GCSE mathematics results.
71. Lesson observation and the scrutiny of students' work demonstrate that attainment by the end of Year 13 is well above average. Male and female students perform equally well; in fact, all groups of students achieve well. They have a very high level of expertise in their work in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. For example, in a very good lesson on volumes of revolution, students used their well-established knowledge and understanding of both calculus and algebra to tackle A level standard questions successfully. Projected A level grades for the current cohort of students show that they should reach similar grades to those attained by students in 2002. A small group of students taking the further mathematics examination are performing at a very high standard and all demonstrate the potential to attain A or B grades.
72. Teaching is good overall and students learn well. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They are enthusiastic and have high expectations of what students can do. For example, in a Year 12 statistics lesson the teacher's very good grasp of the subject matter, the pace of delivery and an effective plenary session enabled the students to make rapid progress in their knowledge and understanding of sampling. The very positive rapport between teachers and students in mathematics lessons is particularly impressive and contributes significantly to the effective learning that takes place overall. Students make considerable efforts to understand exactly what is required to reach high standards and collaborate on joint tasks very maturely and productively. A small amount of weaker teaching is ineffectively planned, repetitive and lacks pace, with the result that students gain little benefit from the lessons.
73. The department is well led and managed. Members of staff are strongly committed to improving and maintaining AS and A level results and give freely of their time to support students outside formal lessons. For example, teachers provided extra AS level revision classes during half term. These were very much appreciated by students and contributed to their very successful examination results in 2002. The tracking of students' progress is very good and students are fully

aware of how they are progressing and can realise their potential. A positive result of this is the very high student retention rate from AS to A level mathematics courses. There has been very good progress in improving both students' attainment and the quality of teaching since the previous OFSTED inspection. The use of information and communication technology remains underdeveloped. The teaching of statistics and mechanics depends on certain key members of staff and the current departmental evaluation document notes the need to train others in these areas to be sure of maintaining standards.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The curriculum is augmented by educational visits, conferences and fieldwork
- Management is good and this is leading to improvement in performance and increasing the popularity of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies is not wide enough to support and challenge students of all abilities.
- Resources for practical work and for ICT are limited and there is insufficient emphasis on the development of students' numeracy skills.

74. Attainment at AS level is average, although in 2002 results were disappointing compared with students' prior attainment. Results at A level in 2001 met national expectations, for the first time in four years. In 2002, the A level results improved slightly and the school's predictions based on GCSE performance were met. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls and minority ethnic students performed as well as their peers. The percentage of students attaining grades A and B is close to the national average, although still below the school average.
75. Standards observed in the school are average and students in Year 13 are demonstrating significant improvements in performance in comparison with their AS results. There is, for example, good practical work on respiration but there is room for further development in numeracy, the use of ICT and the analysis and evaluation of investigations. Assignments on photosynthesis and human physiology are accurate and well informed, as is work on genetics and biochemistry. Achievement in biology is satisfactory overall and the numbers following courses in the sixth form are increasing.
76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Year 12, for example, students show good understanding of animal fertilisation, as a result of the very secure subject knowledge of the teacher allied to clear exposition of the topic. A wide range of attainment was represented in this class. Occasionally, learning is hampered by the teacher's lack of clarity on the level of knowledge of each student. The department now needs to develop teaching strategies both to support the endeavours of students who find the work difficult and to challenge higher attaining students. In Year 13, good lesson planning led to students producing good practical work on ventilation and going on to prepare well for investigative coursework. The pace of lessons is limited owing to a shortage of resources but teachers use considerable ingenuity- for example, by using a bell jar and hosepipe in the absence of a spirometer. The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped. The department needs to consider the use of spreadsheets, datalogging, simulation packages and digital microscopy in order to support their students' learning in many aspects of the course. Nonetheless, students' attitudes to their studies are good and they thoroughly enjoy their practical work.
77. Management of the subject is good and significant improvements have already been made in a short period of time. A new scheme of work is being written and teaching materials are being developed. Assessment systems are being put in place and coursework is now graded more accurately. Furthermore, students attend examination board study conferences and enrichment activities, such as a lecture on the ethics of genetics. Staffing and accommodation are

satisfactory. Resources have been improved recently but are still not adequate in that practical and ICT resources are very limited, textbooks are in short supply and library provision is poor. Systems for monitoring departmental performance need to be improved and there needs to be more emphasis on professional development, especially as there is a lack of experience of A level teaching. However, recent improvement has been good and this owes much to the commitment and vision of the staff.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Attainment at both AS and A level is above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and teachers demonstrate very secure knowledge of their subject.
- Learning is fostered and enriched by recently developed practical work, visiting lecturers and master classes for talented students.
- Management is very good and is leading to significant improvements in departmental performance; students are opting for the subject in increasing numbers.

Areas to be improved

- The planned curriculum is not yet fully in place and the use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped.
- There is a shortage of textbooks and library provision is poor.

78. Students' attainment at AS level is above average. Results at A level in 2001 were above average although the numbers entered were small. In 2002, the A level results improved and exceeded the predictions based on students' GCSE grades. The percentage of students achieving grades A and B was high. This demonstrates a rising trend and good achievement. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls and students from ethnic minorities perform as well as their peers.
79. Standards observed during the inspection mirror these results and are above average overall. In Year 13, students' numerical skills were good, in work on ionisation energy for example, and they showed secure knowledge and understanding of complex concepts, such as chemical structure and bonding. Laboratory skills are very good and students are able to follow complex written instructions and achieve practical success in spite of the short time available in single periods. Achievement in chemistry is good and the subject is becoming increasingly popular.
80. Teaching and learning are good, with very good features in both Years 12 and 13. In Year 12, for example, because teachers' methods served to reinforce prior learning, students' understanding of chemical equilibria was enhanced. In Year 13, because of good lesson planning and appropriate pace, students made impressive progress in practical work in both organic and inorganic chemistry. However, there is often insufficient time for reflection on the theory underlying the work, since the practical sessions are shorter than normally found. Teachers explain things well and support the development of students' literacy well. The syllabus also provides opportunities for regular practice of numerical skills. There is some use of ICT, in work on acids and bases, for example, but there is not enough access to computers in the laboratories. Relationships between students and teachers are warm and students' attitudes to their studies are very good. Practical work is characterised by high levels of co-operation and students' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning.
81. The head of department joined the school last September and management of the subject is very good. The new scheme of work is now being implemented and teachers have written study guides for their students. Effective assessment systems are in place. Use is now being made of enrichment activities, such as visiting scientists and master classes at Imperial College for higher-attaining students. Staffing is good. The three well-qualified members of staff demonstrate very

good subject knowledge. Accommodation is not ideal but is satisfactory for the numbers in A level groups, although the flooring needs attention in places. Resources have been improved recently, with the purchase of basic equipment, such as burettes. However, ICT resources are very limited, textbooks are not available and library provision is poor. The monitoring of departmental performance is good and professional development is seen as important. The newly-qualified teacher is well supported. The commitment, industry and skill of teachers are playing a significant part in bringing about very rapid improvement in departmental performance and in the popularity of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

82. The focus of the inspection was on design and technology. The department offers courses in design and technology – product design at AS and A level. Specialist options are offered in food technology, graphics, systems and control, textiles and resistant materials.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are good and give clear direction to the development of the subject.
- Good facilities in teaching rooms, which support a wide range of work.
- Much of the coursework produced by students is of high quality.

Areas for improvement

- The timetable restricts the level of specialist teacher expertise available to students.
- Students' design thinking is not always apparent because they omit original rough sketches from their folders.

83. In 2002 five students took the A level examination and all achieved a pass grade but only one obtained a grade B or above. In 2001, all seven students gained a pass grade, but the results were better, with 43 per cent reaching grade B or higher. Although the results in 2002 are broadly in line with the national average, they are not as good as in most other subjects in the school. However, the GCSE attainment of students who opt for design and technology is lower than that for the great majority of other subjects in the school.
84. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average for most students and above average for a significant minority. Year 13 students are in line to attain similar results to previous years, but some of the work indicates that a few students could attain at higher levels. In textiles, for example, there is very mature design work for an evening dress and in graphics a student is in the process of producing interesting ideas for a web site. In Year 12, there is some good work in systems and control and, overall, the work for their stage of development is of a higher standard than that for Year 13, with students demonstrating the potential to perform at the higher grades. Most students achieve well and there are examples of course work of high quality. Design work produced by girls is better than that produced by boys. Students normally carry out good evaluations of existing products, but there is a tendency not to include initial rough sketches in design folders, thus making it difficult to track progress in students' thinking during the development of the design. Students make good use of ICT in their design folders, computer-aided drawing being an example, but there are times when the use of ICT is inappropriate. An example of this is the scanning and importing of initial design sketches into a page, rather than the inclusion of the original sketches.
85. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. They are always at least satisfactory, although occasionally only just so, and good in about half the lessons. In these better lessons a range of appropriate teaching methods are used and students respond well as a result. In a good Year 13 lesson, for example, students worked productively in pairs to assess each other's design folders, using the assessment criteria for the coursework. They noticed quickly where further work

was required to improve the quality of the design folders. In contrast, there was too much time spent on teacher explanation and insufficient time for students to apply their skills in another lesson that aimed to show students how to use a digital camera and import the images into desktop publishing software. Because relationships are good, students display positive attitudes to the subject. Moreover, for some it is very relevant to future career plans. They work well in lessons and genuinely want to make progress.

86. A new head of department has recently taken up his post. Leadership and management are good and are leading to rapid improvements in the provision for the subject. Students speak positively about recent changes and recognise these improvements. A recent audit of departmental strengths and areas for development has been carefully thought through and the proposed plans for change are entirely appropriate. The schemes of work for the sixth form courses are in need of review, in order to provide students with the necessary grounding of skills and knowledge for imaginative designing and making. The existing timetable arrangements are unsatisfactory since they do not allow students sufficient access to appropriate specialist staff, and lead to some lack of supervision. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now better provision for the use of ICT, including work for systems and control, and an effective dust extraction system has been installed.

BUSINESS

87. The focus of the inspection was on economics and business studies courses in the sixth form. The business studies courses included GNVQ Intermediate, AS and A level.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress, with the majority showing good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- Teaching is very good and contributes significantly to the good progress made by students.
- The excellent attitudes and mature approach students display to their studies, which support the development of their independent learning skills.
- The range of courses offered by the department, which meet the needs and aspirations of its students.
- Leadership and management of the department, which are a major contributory factor to the year-on-year improvement in public examination results.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to raise the standards of achievement and attainment of the higher-ability students are not formalised and relevant resources are not fully developed.
- Links already in place with the local Education Business Partnership for GNVQ students need to be extended, to enable all students to gain first-hand knowledge of the way in which local businesses function.

88. The results of students taking A level courses have improved over the last three years. In 2002, a 100 per cent pass rate was achieved in the A level course with 13 per cent achieving the highest grades. Results for students completing the same course in 2001 and 2000 were below the national average with no entrant attaining the higher grades. All students who completed the AS level course for the first time in 2001 achieved a pass grade. In 2002, one student failed to achieve a pass grade. However, a bigger percentage of students attained higher grades than previously. Since 2001, all students who have followed a course leading to an Intermediate GNVQ have achieved at least a pass, with many achieving merit standard. A very high percentage of the students who achieve both pass and merit grades begin this course with relatively weak GCSE

grades. Overall results indicate, therefore, that students taking business studies courses make good progress and achieve well.

89. The GNVQ intermediate course is growing in popularity. The integration of a one-day per week work placement into this course makes a major contribution to the development of learning skills and the employability of students. At the end of this course, the majority of students begin a two-year advanced level course leading to either an AS or A level in business studies.
90. Standards for current sixth form students are in line with those expected nationally and students are making good progress. Year 12 students on the advanced business course demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of cash flow in business and, using their computer skills, they can produce spreadsheets to show patterns of income and expenditure over several months. Year 13 students on the advanced vocational business course have recently completed all their coursework. They are able to give a very clear analysis of the results of investigations carried out to establish the reasons why staff turnover in a local nursing home is so high.
91. Teaching of business classes is very good, which supports very good learning. The four teachers delivering the wide range of courses offered in Years 12 and 13 all have different areas of expertise, which complement each other. The courses are very well planned and meet the requirements of the public examination boards. Students are very well prepared for both internally and externally assessed coursework. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to plan lessons that develop and extend students' understanding of business concepts. The support offered to students, both in and out of lessons, is very good. Members of staff are approachable and always ready to offer guidance. However, the department needs to ensure that all lessons are planned and delivered using a wide range of resources, to ensure that students identified as capable of gaining the highest grades are given every opportunity to do so. There are links already established with the local Education Business Partnership but more visits could be arranged to local companies to enable students to gain a broader perspective on a wide range of business organisations. Moreover, representatives from local businesses could be invited to work with teachers in the classroom to teach relevant aspects of the courses.
92. The subject is very well led and managed. Schemes of work have been reviewed and the new AS business course has been introduced successfully. The subject has been positively and effectively promoted and courses in business in Year 12 are now very popular. There are regular assessment opportunities built into the schemes of work and, as a consequence, examination results have improved substantially since September 2000. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored, with the result that staff work as a team and maintain a clear focus on improving standards.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Students' attainment is well above average, with a high proportion gaining grades A and B in the A level examinations.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students are well motivated and positive about the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The provision for textbooks, journals and ICT is inadequate and hinders learning.

93. Over the last five years there has been a steady improvement in A level examination results. All students passed the examination in 2002 with the majority gaining an A or B grade, well above the national average. This is the result of very good teaching and also of well-motivated and capable students.

94. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average in both year groups, representing very good achievement. Work in students' files, for example, demonstrates a good understanding of cartels. In class, students are able to use the tools of economic analysis with confidence, particularly in relation to graphical analysis and all are making good gains in knowledge irrespective of their prior attainment. Students are able to describe the concept of 'terms of trade' and higher-attaining students are able to explain how fiscal policy could help cure a balance of payments deficit. The extensive use of question and answer techniques encourages students to talk about and explain economic ideas. The key skills of numeracy and communication are being developed well although the use of ICT as a learning tool is underdeveloped.
95. The quality of teaching is very good, with many positive features, in spite of resource constraints and a very small teaching area. Lessons are characterised by a rich variety of activities including discussion, short tests, note taking and teacher presentations. Moreover, the subject knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher motivate students to produce high standards and the quality of learning is very good. Students are well supported and the teacher works effectively with them on an individual basis and as a group, although paper-based records of student achievement are limited to the essentials.
96. Students are very positive about their learning. Attendance is good. They behave responsibly, are co-operative and there are good relationships between all involved in the learning process. The work scrutinised was generally carefully completed although some of the boys' files were rather untidy and this would constrain effective revision before examinations.
97. Leadership and management are good with staffing of high quality, good use of very limited resources and a scheme of work which prepares students for higher education, for the world of work and for the wider community. The Parent-Teacher Association has provided textbooks in the last year but resources for students' personal research are very limited and there is insufficient access to ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

98. The focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology (ICT). The school has recently introduced the AVCE course in ICT.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Attainment in Year 12 is above average and students make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and some is very good.
- Teaching rooms are well equipped.
- Leadership and management are good and are leading to the introduction of effective strategies for improvement.

Areas for Improvement

- There is a severe shortage of relevant textbooks.

99. The Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) in Information Technology is new to the school and students will sit the first examination in Summer 2003. Results of the AS examinations taken by these students after one year were below national averages. However, standards are improving and work seen during the inspection suggests that the final results will be in line with national averages. The Year 12 group are at a higher standard and are performing above national averages in the AS assessments.
100. Students' work observed in classes and through reviewing files is satisfactory in Year 13 and good in Year 12. There is considerable variation in competence, mainly because of the difference in the

skill levels of students when starting the course. Until very recently, students in the main school learnt very little ICT unless they took business studies or taught themselves. Those AVCE students who took business studies for GCSE, therefore, have better ICT skills than those who did not do so. Other students are enthusiasts and have developed their ICT skills at home. The remainder fit neither of these categories and often find the course very challenging. However, all students are achieving well because of the effective support of the teachers. Higher-attaining students demonstrate an understanding of the applications of complex facilities and make good use of graphical images. All students are able to design a spreadsheet form and provide links to other documents. In the future, it is anticipated that many more students will have the skills necessary to start the course because all students will develop better ICT skills prior to joining the sixth form.

101. Teaching is good and students are making good progress in their skill development. Because the A level cohort is the first to be taught, there is a particular pressure on teachers to plan and evaluate effectively. This is being done conscientiously, although there were clearly difficulties with the assessment of the AS students in 2002. A particular feature of the teaching is the very secure subject knowledge of teachers and the very effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Teachers demonstrate profound care for the welfare of their students by offering them detailed advice, orally and in writing, on their levels of performance and how they may improve their standards. Marking is, therefore, good and key skills are being taught well. Students respond well to the teaching and the quality of learning is good. They are generally positive about the subject and attendance is good. Relationships are good on the whole although students tend to work quietly on their own or in small groups on investigations. They are developing good research skills and are willing to take responsibility for their own learning.
102. Leadership and management are good, with high-quality staffing and good documentation. Moreover, the curriculum meets the needs of most students and the opportunities for vocational learning are excellent, with effective use of assignments placed in the context of the world of work. In addition, appropriate and effective changes are being put in place to improve standards following the disappointing AS results. Accommodation and resources are good on the whole, although many students do not have a textbook and there is, therefore, a heavy reliance on photocopying.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

103. The focus of the inspection was on art and design, photography and drama. In addition, media studies and music were sampled. In the media studies lesson, teaching and learning were good and students demonstrated positive attitudes and behaviour as they considered a critical response to censorship issues introduced by the film *Saving Private Ryan*. The music lesson was very good and students' attainment in analysing a piece by Bernstein was well above average.

Art and Design and Photography

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

Strengths

- Well above average attainment and very good achievement in photography.
- Above average attainment and good achievement in fine art.
- Teaching, learning and individual support for students.
- Very good attitudes of students and their success as independent learners.
- Very good range of learning opportunities through photography, GNVQ and A level fine art courses.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of resources for art and design.
- The quality of information and communication technology (ICT) provided for students.

104. The overall standard of work in art and design is well above average. Results at A level have been consistently well above average, with a high proportion of students achieving A and B grades in the

past two years. Students' AS and A level results in fine art and photography were well above average in 2001 and the results for 2002 were at a similar level. The average points score in 2001 was high compared to the performance of art students in all other maintained schools. The attainment and achievement of students of different ethnic groups are similarly high. Girls performed, on average, better than boys in both years. These represent very good standards of achievement in art courses since the students' results at GCSE were average, with a few above average, on entry to Year 12. Students taking the photography course enter the sixth form with little or no experience of the subject.

105. At A level standards of work seen in fine art are average and progress is good. Predicted grades for 2003 are slightly down on previous years and reflect an average level of attainment. Some disruption to staffing has been a contributory factor. In photography, standards of work seen were well above average and students are on course to achieve grades similar to those in previous years. In Year 12, students taking GNVQ Intermediate and AS art and design sustain much of their interest from their GCSE work, drawing and modelling from direct observation and developing their colour and three-dimensional skills through mixed media in a structured and systematic way. Achievement overall is very good and students show good gains in reinforcing skills, in comparison with their previous attainment. In Year 13, higher-attaining students show a sophisticated understanding of what is needed in purposeful preparatory studies. The majority demonstrate an increasing understanding of technical knowledge and skill in drawing and painting, assisted by sketchbook exemplification to stimulate ideas. Students with weaker drawing skills are improving their techniques and display average competence, for example, in figure drawing, because the choice of media and artists' reference material are interesting and relevant.
106. Standards of literacy in annotation and the use of art and photographic vocabulary are good. Students are well supported with writing frames so that they focus on structure and content, for example, on how to look carefully at, analyse and describe a painting or photograph. Students' preparatory photography studies are beginning to show connections between their own research and that of other artists, so that they express a personal view in their work. For example, the 'Amsterdam' theme shows a developing maturity in how students address interesting personal and social issues. Students demonstrate very good attitudes to art and design and photography and the majority are very keen to learn. Visits are an important starting point for their studies and are improving the quality of students' work overall, particularly in photography. Where the rate of progress is slower than expected, such as for GNVQ students, the students have limited opportunities to see original art and design to extend their ideas and imagination so that they can make informed choices about selecting materials. Students respond positively to the opportunity to share their developing expertise and insights with each other. There are good examples of lessons where students are beginning to share analysis and evaluation of their work, which is improving levels of planning, presentation and analysis. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is an underdeveloped feature in art and design whilst good use is made of the Internet and digital cameras in photography.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and is reflected in the high numbers continuing from AS to A level, particularly in photography. Expectations are high and relationships are very good, both of which help to stimulate and motivate students through a two-year course. Teachers have very good expertise and show very good knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses in preparing them for examinations. They plan activities geared to individuals, which encourage them to learn independently. The pace of learning is very good particularly in single-period lessons. Teachers have very good expertise and plan purposeful and enjoyable activities to enable students to work collaboratively to learn and refine techniques. Marking and assessment opportunities are very good. Targets to complete work in lessons are inconsistent across some art and design groups and some homework lacks rigour. As a result, in a few lessons, time is not best used at the beginning and end of lessons to raise perceptions of how to move ideas forward and evaluate what has been learned.
108. Leadership and management are good overall and reflect the good improvement in maintaining standards since the last inspection. The monitoring and evaluation of the department's performance is less rigorous, because of recent management staffing difficulties. However,

present shared responsibility between key art staff is effective and courses match students' aspirations and build upon their previous knowledge and understanding. AS and A level photography is very effectively managed, separately from art and design. Assessment procedures are very good and are well linked to course criteria with clear guidance on student self-evaluation. Students' personal development is effectively focused through schemes of work that include spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities. Sixth form art and design accommodation is limited. Sixth form students share mainstream classrooms with other year groups and there is no discrete area for students to continue study outside of the lesson. This is having a detrimental effect on the achievement of GNVQ students and on the quality of preparation for higher education. Art resources are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks and good quality painting materials to raise achievement in the higher grades. Library provision is limited, with a lack of good quality picture resources to enhance the critical and contextual aspects of art and photography. The use of ICT is underdeveloped and links with art and design and photography are limited.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Results in public examinations and standards in lessons are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching is very good and teachers display very high levels of industry.
- There is a rich programme of extra-curricular drama.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The department is understaffed.
- There is a shortage of good teaching space.

109. A level examination results have been well above average in drama for the past four years with no students attaining at lower than grade D. In three of these four years, at least half the students have gained A grades with none securing less than a grade C. The results in 2001 were less impressive, although grades A to C predominated and the standard of performance was in line with national averages. Half the candidates achieved a grade A in 2002, maintaining this upward trend. AS examination results for 2002 were equally impressive. Nearly 70 per cent of students reached grades A and B and most of the remainder achieved grade C.

110. In written work seen during the inspection, these high levels of attainment are confirmed and are being maintained. Students plan, present and evaluate their work with great confidence and are developing drama skills in a very mature fashion. They are able to present work in naturalistic and non-naturalistic ways, which demonstrate high levels of competence, energy and imagination. They collaborate extremely well in groups, using their voices, body movement, properties and sound effects to produce some exciting work. They thrive on previously unseen stimulus material and also on set texts such as *The Cherry Orchard* by Chekhov or *The Trojan Women* by Euripides. Their ability to role-play a scene is particularly impressive. They keep very good notes and produce written work of a very high standard. This represents very good achievement, particularly since the department often accepts students onto courses with lower GCSE grades than most other subjects demand; some students have not followed a GCSE drama course.

111. Although students show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning, they also benefit from very good teaching. The two specialist teachers are adept at choosing appropriate and challenging tasks for their classes and use their subject knowledge and experience to very good effect. They have very high expectations of their students and are prepared to put in much time after school to help them excel in their work. Students trust their teachers and are prepared to tackle the most demanding of tasks and the quality of students' learning is very good. Homework

is set, including reading assignments and students complete it thoroughly. Moreover, teachers assess their students' work in detail and offer extensive advice on how they might improve their standards. The teaching leads to high levels of student engagement, very warm relationships and a real sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment. Moreover, students' learning is enriched by many theatre trips and workshops: the department has a valuable link with the National Theatre and this serves to encourage students to participate in extra-curricular drama activities and to give freely of their time to clubs, workshops and school productions. Furthermore, teachers encourage their students to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. The students do so with maturity and sensitivity.

112. Teachers work extremely hard. During the inspection week, they were also mounting a production of *Oklahoma*, as well as playing a very full part in other aspects of the life of the school. The department is at least half a specialist teacher short and sixth form sets are rather large: groups of up to 24 students are manageable because of the quality of the teaching and the high levels of motivation, but they limit the time needed for everyone to present their work and evaluate it in a lesson. There is also limited accommodation and too many lessons are taught in the hall or the community room, far away from valuable resources. However, the department is very well led and managed and high teaching standards are maintained through close co-operation and moderation of work completed in each teaching group. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teachers in training are made welcome and there is a real commitment to professional development. In summary, this is a highly successful department that contributes very effectively to both the academic and personal development of its students.

HUMANITIES

113. The focus of the inspection was on geography and history. In addition, psychology and sociology were sampled and also a lesson on sports psychology. Teaching was good in the Year 12 psychology lesson and students adopted positive attitudes to study. Psychology is hampered by the lack of a base in which resources and display may be developed to aid learning. In the Year 13 sociology lesson, the student presentation on migration was well above average and students' learning was facilitated very well by the teacher, who demonstrated very secure subject knowledge. Teaching was very good in the Year 13 physical education lesson, where students showed a good understanding of a psychological model of performance measurement.

Geography

Overall the provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- A and AS level examination results improved markedly in 2002.
- There is a positive ethos for learning and student-teacher relationships are very constructive.
- Very good leadership and management have led to a significant improvement in departmental performance since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Information and communication technology is not fully used to support learning.
- New curriculum initiatives have not yet been monitored and reviewed.
- Fieldwork opportunities are not yet fully developed.

114. Overall, students' attainment is above average. In the 2002 A level examination all students gained a grade in the A to E range, with over 80 per cent attaining grades A or B. School data indicates that both male and female students' grades were in line with predictions, when compared to their attainment at the end of Year 11. In the 2002 AS examination, all students gained an A to E grade and over 40 per cent attained grades A or B. These results represent a marked improvement on performance during the previous three years. Between 1999 and 2001, results were below national averages and students did significantly worse in geography than in their other

subjects. Course completion rates are now very good and the numbers of students taking A level geography are increasing steadily.

115. In work seen during the inspection, students' achievement is good and standards are above average. In Year 13, for example, students understand clearly why some areas of the world are vulnerable to natural hazards and what impact these have on the people living there. They can analyse data, plot this on maps and recognise and explain the distribution of natural hazards with confidence. Both male and female students respond well to challenging questioning by teachers, which encourages them to explore their ideas in more depth. In Year 12, students have a good understanding of globalisation and interdependence. Higher-attaining students use specialist vocabulary accurately and have a sound grasp of the more complex geographical concepts. Lower-attaining students are less secure in their knowledge of the topics covered and make fewer contributions to group discussion. Students make use of ICT for researching geographical issues and for presenting coursework, but the planned use of ICT and the use of video material are not yet fully integrated into lessons.
116. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, but learning objectives are not always shared explicitly with students to enable them to focus on the main issues. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use varied and relevant examples effectively to engage students' interest and improve their understanding. A two-day field course has been introduced for Year 13 students but the full range of fieldwork opportunities has yet to be developed. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set demanding and challenging tasks to which students respond well. Students show trust and confidence in their teachers and this has a very positive impact on their learning, which is good. They come to lessons well organised and prepared and have very good attitudes towards the subject.
117. Leadership and management of the department are very good and have led to significant improvements since the last inspection. Departmental documentation is now very thorough and priorities for further development have been clearly identified following an effective departmental review. A new syllabus has been introduced, schemes of work updated and assessed assignments rewritten, all of which have contributed to an improvement in standards. The department has not yet had time to fully monitor and evaluate these changes and this remains a priority if the present rate of improvement is to be sustained. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and good use is made of prior attainment data to set realistic targets for students.
118. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The strength of collaborative working within the department indicates that it has both the capacity and the commitment for further development.

History

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

Strengths

- Percentages of students attaining grades A and B and attaining grades A to E in the A level examinations have been consistently well above average for four years.
- Teaching is very good and provides students with many opportunities to express their opinions, to pursue personal research and present their findings to their peers.
- History is a very popular subject in the sixth form and students benefit from a wide range of historical visits both at home and abroad.
- Relationships between students and between students and teachers are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Although augmented by the industry and talents of teachers, the department lacks resources to support students in their search for the truth and there is a severe shortage of textbooks.

119. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. Because teachers challenge students relentlessly and encourage them to pursue personal research, achievement is very good and the quality of class presentations is very high. Moreover, students display profound

skills of source analysis and evaluation, which would not go amiss in an undergraduate seminar. In Year 12, they are already well aware of the conflicting views of leading historians and can, for example, discuss the effect of propaganda on the home front during the Second World War with skill and verve. Moreover, they defend their views with confidence and support their opinions with convincing evidence. In Year 13, their background knowledge of Britain's application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in the early 1960s is such that they debate the opposing arguments in a balanced fashion, using historical terminology quite naturally and in context. Overall, students possess quite a perceptive understanding of the nature of historical evidence and of the pitfalls in using it.

120. Attainment at A level has been consistently well above average for four years. In 2002, for example, from a large entry, every student reached at least grade E and half the students attained at the higher grades A and B. Girls attain at a slightly higher level than boys but both genders perform well above the standards expected nationally.
121. Because teachers possess profound knowledge of their subject and because they are expert facilitators, students have many opportunities to learn at their own pace and in their own way. Furthermore, because there is emphasis on pair and group activities, students spend considerable time in discussion and intellectual argument and are only too willing to learn from and with each other. Challenging questions are not just the preserve of the teachers: following presentations of their findings from personal research, students are required to expand on their views during extensive questioning from their classmates. Their learning is thus reinforced, because they are becoming quite adept at defending their opinions. Teachers know their students well and intervene at just the right moments to highlight important issues and to check the understanding of difficult concepts. In a very good Year 12 lesson, for example, students were able to make accurate and quite complex comments on a variety of nineteenth-century Russian politicians because the teacher had such high expectations of what they could achieve. In Year 13, the quality of debate about entry into the EEC was very high and owed much to the very effective planning of the teacher, who left students in no doubt as to how their contributions would be assessed and graded. The emphasis on students acting as co-learners and the trust teachers place in them to take responsibility for their own learning are having a most positive effect on maintaining high standards of attainment. In addition, students display a mature attitude to their studies, have the utmost regard for their teachers and speak highly of the many opportunities they have to take part in historical trips both in England and abroad. The quality of teaching is, therefore, a major strength of the department and is very good overall, which leads to very good quality learning.
122. Leadership and management are effective in promoting high levels of teamwork and there is a shared commitment to the delivery of the subject. Teachers work long and hard to produce thought-provoking resources for their students but are hampered by a severe shortage of relevant textbooks. Nonetheless, the marking of students' assignments is often outstanding and teachers give their charges detailed advice on how they might improve their work.
123. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection and has maintained the high standards of achievement. Relationships between teachers and students are outstanding and history continues to be a very popular subject. Moreover, teachers care deeply for the welfare of their students and the department is, therefore, well placed for future development and further success.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

124. The focus of the inspection was on English Literature and French. In addition, German was sampled, in which teaching and learning was found to be good. Students benefited from extensive use of German in the classroom and the secure subject knowledge of the teacher, which led to good progress in the understanding of quite complex grammatical points.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are above national expectations.
- Students' enthusiasm and positive attitudes to the subject, to their teachers and to each other, contribute very well to their learning.
- Teachers' marking provides very good guidance and support.
- Very good leadership and management ensure clear educational direction for both teachers and students.

Areas for development

- Middle and lower attaining students are too dependent upon their teachers.
- Library resources are inadequate to support and enhance students' learning.

125. Standards attained in the A level examination have risen considerably since 1999. In 2001, they were above the national average, having been below in the previous year and indicate that the achievement of both male and female students is good. The 2002 results mirror those of 2001. Standards in AS examinations over the past two years are similar to those at A level.

126. English literature is a very popular subject and there is a wide ability range in the sixth form. The standards of work seen are above average and, given their attainment at GCSE, students' achievement overall is good by the end of Year 13. The most able write fluently, maturely and with authority. Critical opinions are well supported by well-chosen textual references and essays show a good awareness and understanding of writers' themes and style, as well as the social and cultural influences, which shaped their works. They are able to make and sustain independent judgements and to investigate areas, which they find particularly interesting. The scholarly approach seen in coursework is most impressive and there are very perceptive and strongly argued examination practice essays which, for example, consider whether academics are correct in classifying *Hamlet* as a revenge tragedy. The less able write with less assurance; their style is sometimes mechanical, restricted by a limited vocabulary. Although they are usually able to identify the key techniques and conventions used by writers, they often have difficulty when commenting upon the effectiveness of language, tone and style. Characters and plot are sometimes seen as real people and events, rather than literary constructs and unnecessary historical or biographical information is offered instead of personal opinions or analysis. Additionally, lower attaining students lack the confidence to make their own interpretations, relying instead on those of their teachers or other literary critics: hence they restrict their chances of gaining the higher grades.

127. Orally, most students, even those who find writing difficult, are above average. They are able to present their research findings to their class confidently and competently and read texts aloud, though many do not attempt to read Chaucer's Middle English. They work well in groups and readily engage in role-play and hot-seating activities, using talk effectively to explore and refine their ideas.

128. Teachers readily give extra time at lunchtime and after school to provide additional help and guidance to those who require it. Students' learning is also enhanced considerably by a wide programme of extra-curricular events, such as theatre visits, writing workshops and conferences; and there are good opportunities for them to use information and communication technology, computers and CD-ROMs, for personal research and reading. However, the book stock in the library is inadequate to cater for the study needs of the almost one hundred students who take the English courses.

129. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the lessons in which teaching is very good, students are constantly challenged and stimulated by the well-planned activities, which provide regular opportunities for them to be fully involved in their own learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 12 lesson in which students were given information about the philosophies of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Steiner. This enabled them to discuss and understand the symbolic significance of the major

characters in Friel's play, *Translations*. In less successful lessons, students are not encouraged to question the teacher or each other, to evaluate closely the interpretations of critics, or to choose their preferred ways of working. The less-able, in particular, therefore, easily accept other's views, instead of developing their own and becoming truly independent learners. Additionally, in these lessons, students do not sufficiently consider the effect of language and imagery upon readers, although they can readily identify the techniques being used. A strength of the teaching is the high quality of marking which provides a useful dialogue with students and clearly shows them how they are performing and what they must do to improve. Teachers have a genuine love of their subject and this is appreciated by the students, whose own very positive and enthusiastic attitudes also make a significant contribution to their learning.

130. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a collaborative approach to both lesson planning and teaching, which ensures excellent opportunities for the sharing of best practice. New teachers are well supported. The work of the department is regularly monitored and planning for improvement is appropriate. The large sixth form team of highly-committed and industrious teachers is constantly looking for ways to move forward, to improve its practice and, thereby, the achievement and attainment of all students.
131. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards have risen from below average to above average, all teaching is at least good and marking is consistently rigorous. Moreover, A level work is well planned and there are very good quality assurance systems in place. The achievement of male students now equals that of females and it continues to improve because of the newly-written and challenging schemes of work, good teaching and the high levels of student commitment to study.

French

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use French extensively during lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The attitudes and commitment of students to their studies are very good.
- Students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is developing well during the AS course.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated to French is inadequate and has a negative effect on students' progress.
- There is evidence of underachievement, especially in written work.
- The co-ordination of teachers' work is underdeveloped and there is no effective system for sharing materials.

132. Over the last four years few students have been entered for A level French. The percentage of grades A and B attained by students has been broadly average. In the most recent results only two of the seven entries gained higher grades and marks in the literature paper were disappointing. At AS level two out of seven students obtained a higher grade with overall performance broadly in line with that predicted from GCSE grades.
133. Standards seen during the inspection, based on lesson observations, student files and discussions in French with the students, are average overall, but student achievement has been adversely affected by inadequate teaching time. The school has responded by employing a French assistante from January 2003 and her contribution, together with that of an experienced specialist teacher returning part-time, has already lifted student morale. Indications are that these factors, allied to high levels of student motivation, are leading to improvements in performance.
134. Students in Year 12 are making good progress in specific aspects of French. They have extended their grammatical knowledge, for example, by learning how to construct the passive voice. Higher-attaining students can apply this knowledge well in grammar exercises, whilst other students are

well supported in the extra practice they require. Students have increased their range of vocabulary significantly, aided by careful note-taking and regular testing. Although they have frequent practice in understanding authentic and quite complex reading material, only a minority have sufficient knowledge to tackle such a challenge with confidence. Because students have had little opportunity to write extended paragraphs on relevant topics and have not had the benefit of writing frames or redrafting techniques to gain confidence, progress in writing skills is weak. They try very hard orally and three of six students who took part in a discussion were able to cite reasons why youngsters smoke, and why they themselves do not, using a good range of French expression with reasonable accuracy.

135. In Year 13, students have not made the progress their ability warrants. For example, they are not yet sufficiently skilled in using material from a French text in order to translate a related English passage back into French. They have significant gaps in their grammatical knowledge. Nonetheless, higher-attaining students speak readily in French and are often inventive in finding alternative expressions and structures to communicate what they want to say. They have a reasonable range of specialist vocabulary and expression but have yet to acquire the language necessary to argue a case persuasively rather than just to assert. In both years students have at least good pronunciation and intonation. Some of the AS files are poorly organised and do not provide an adequate basis for revision.
136. The overall quality of teaching is good and in a significant minority of lessons it is very good. The quality of learning is also good overall. All teachers make extensive use of French and they demonstrate oral skills of high quality. They habitually use well-chosen definitions and alternative expressions to explain new vocabulary. This helps to build not only the students' vocabulary but also their listening skills. They have high expectations and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Sometimes this pace is too quick, so that students are asked to do tasks for which they have not been sufficiently well prepared linguistically. Teachers prepare their lessons and material carefully but do not give students enough responsibility for their own learning, by asking them, for example, to select from a French web-site a current news item to present to the rest of the class. However, students feel well supported in their learning, speak highly of their teachers and receive much oral feedback on their work. In contrast, there is little written comment to help students understand how they can improve.
137. Student attitudes to their work are a major strength. Almost all of the students are highly motivated. They apply themselves readily in class, noting new vocabulary and expressions without prompting. They make good use of any opportunities they are given to speak French and are not afraid to make errors when trying out new language. When unclear, they ask for explanation and they show interest in how the language works. They support each other very well.
138. The department is energetically led. The head of department provides a good role model in his enthusiasm for the subject and in his concern for his students. A detailed scheme of work has been created. However, the work of the teachers is poorly co-ordinated. There is no effective system for sharing materials and no consistency in the way teachers use mark books to record students' progress. In addition, the work of the French assistante is only loosely integrated into that of the other teachers in the department. Many A level students make use of their own contacts to visit France and the department is now looking to introduce work experience placements abroad. Students in Year 12 are very positive about their experience of learning French and this augurs well for future recruitment.