

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WESTLANDS SCHOOL**

Torquay

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113526

Headteacher: Michael Stewart

Reporting inspector: Mike Young  
4345

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249811

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Hart
Date of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> December 1996

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14429	A Stillman	Team inspector	Science	Quality of Teaching
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Chemistry Post 16	
159450	N Godfrey	Team inspector	Art	Care support (assessment)
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	Accommodation
17618	M Hillary	Team inspector	Geography	Inclusion (EO) Resources
18740	M Headon	Team inspector	History	Curriculum (main school) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
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32150	K Redman	Team inspector	Post 16 Geography	Sixth form support Staffing
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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>5 - 8</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>9 - 11</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12 - 16</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>16 - 18</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>18 - 20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20 - 22</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23 - 25</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>26 - 27</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>28 - 33</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>34 - 55</b>
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>56 - 71</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Westlands School has been completely rebuilt on a site next to the football ground in Torquay, under a "Private Finance Initiative" scheme. Previously the school had two sites and very unsatisfactory accommodation. It is a large, mixed 11-18 school with 1351 pupils, 679 boys and 672 girls, including 240 in the sixth form. Torquay is a selective area for secondary education, with local grammar schools. Westlands is designated as a Bilateral School, which means it may take in two selective classes of higher attaining pupils each year. In reality the number of these pupils has varied considerably year on year. The school takes pupils from some of the most deprived wards in Torquay and there is an above average level of pupil mobility which affects lower attaining classes the most. The school has an above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (21 per cent).

Overall, pupils have below average standards when they enter the school, although this has improved over the last two years, so that Year 7 and 8 have results at Key Stage 2 that are closer to average. There is an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (3.8 per cent). A Hearing Unit is based at the school. Other special needs which feature strongly in statements or school action plans are moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Seven pupils have English as an additional language and there is a low proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities.

The school became a Technology College in September 2002 and is seeking Foundation Status. There has been a significant turnover of staff in the last two years with the establishment of the new school on one site.

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

Westlands is a good school. Pupils achieve standards at Westlands School which are higher than might have been expected given their standards on entry. Results at GCSE have improved to close to the national average. Teaching is good across the key stages and very good in the sixth form. The headteacher and governors have provided very good leadership and have improved the environment and standards at the school and are ahead of many schools in getting very good value for money. Parents are pleased with what the school provides and pupils have very positive attitudes to the school.

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

- Consistently improved its results at GCSE, with good achievement by most pupils by this stage.
- Good quality teaching has secured this achievement.
- Very positive attitudes from pupils and their very good relationships make the school a safe and friendly place.
- Good provision for special educational needs and very good provision for the moral and social aspects of pupils' personal development.
- The leadership from the headteacher and the commitment of staff have been very effective.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision.

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

- GCSE science results are too low.
- Unsatisfactory standards in information and communication technology.
- In Year 9 pupils do not achieve high enough standards in some aspects of design and technology.
- Standards are below average in French in both Year 9 and Year 11.
- Poor behaviour from a minority of boys in lower attaining classes adversely affects their learning and sometimes that of others.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has raised the standards achieved by pupils at GCSE to a significant degree since the last inspection. Standards have also improved at Key Stage 3, but more slowly and less consistently year on year. The school has also improved its teaching quality and the learning environment; buildings, facilities and resources are transformed compared to the previous inspection. Of the key issues in the 1996 report, all have been tackled by the school. The greatest progress has been made in health and safety issues, linked to the previous buildings and in raising expectations. There is still work to do in making the most use of assessment and in improving attendance, although in both cases there are now very good systems in place. The school does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations. Comparative information is not yet available for A level results in 2002.

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

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

Pupils achieve standards at GCSE which are higher than might have been expected given their standards on entry. Standards on entry are below average, particularly in literacy and numeracy. After a dip in the standards achieved in 2001, results at Key Stage 3 in 2002 improved to close to the national average. Pupils make good progress between entry and GCSE, with some particularly good progress made by pupils with special needs. The latest GCSE results were below the national average for the higher grades, but average or above for broader measures. They are improving faster than nationally. They are above average compared to schools in similar circumstances.

Standards at GCE A level have been consistently below average, but achievement is sound overall and many pupils achieve well given their standards on entry to the sixth form. Results for A level and vocational courses are improving. Current standards are broadly average for the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4. The school is achieving significantly more for its pupils than at the time of the last inspection, when GCSE results were well below average, but there are still some marked differences between the standards in different subjects. Current standards of work are still below average in French, science and in information and communication technology, but average for most subjects.

The best GCSE results in 2002 were in geography, art, music and religious education. Results were below average in French, design and technology and information and communication technology and well below average in science. Results in English and mathematics were broadly average. Boys performed well below the standard of girls at the higher grades, reflecting differences on entry.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils mostly behave well around the school and in the majority of classrooms. There is misbehaviour in a few classes, usually by boys.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is very good; they respond very well to opportunities to exercise responsibility. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory overall and is adversely affecting the progress some pupils make. The school is working hard to improve the situation.

Throughout the school the pupils' attitudes and relationships, including those of pupils with special educational needs or with a hearing impairment, make a very good contribution to their attainment and progress.

## 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 quality of teaching is good in two thirds of lessons and at least sound in nine out of ten. The main strengths of the school's teaching lie in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, the effectiveness of their planning, their high expectations of pupils' achievement and in the effectiveness of their teaching methods and classroom management. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and often very good, and their management of pupils is most effective, based on a good knowledge of individuals and their needs. The teaching benefits from high quality resources and accommodation, coupled with very good support from the non-teaching staff. Pupils learned most effectively when challenged by high expectations, but with work well matched to their capabilities and stimulating activities. They gained much less in slower, more passive lessons.

The quality of teaching is good in English, history, geography, physical education, art, music, information and communication technology and religious education in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In addition it is good in science, but at Key Stage 3 only and in maths and French at Key Stage 4 only. The specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. There were unsatisfactory lessons and some where pupils gained less, particularly in design and technology, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound overall, but good for pupils with learning difficulties.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a range of good quality learning opportunities for pupils, with very good extra-curricular provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good throughout the school, including those with hearing difficulties. Special needs pupils are very much part of the school as a whole.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for cultural development is good and for spiritual development satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good arrangements for child protection and welfare; the procedures for promoting good behaviour and improving attendance are very good but need to further improve the situation.

Parents are pleased with all that the school does for their children and the progress they make. The school has established good links with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is very good. The clear direction set has resulted in a greatly improved learning environment and a very positive culture.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have made a very good contribution to the improvement of the school and fulfil their responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has become much more effective at judging its own performance and setting targets to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used by the school and care has been taken to ensure the best value for money in new contracts for the new school.

Accommodation is now very good, while resources for learning and the staffing of the school's curriculum are good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's high expectations for its pupils and students.</li> <li>The progress pupils make at the school.</li> <li>The provision for personal development.</li> <li>The leadership of the headteacher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of homework set.</li> <li>Working closely with parents.</li> <li>The behaviour of some pupils.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with parents that the school, through lessons and through its guidance and support, encourages high expectations. The inspection team also agree that, overall, pupils make good progress; provision for personal development is good. Although there is some variation between classes, taken as a whole the amount of homework set is appropriate and the quality good. Although much good quality information is provided for parents there are weaknesses in the annual report. The school works hard to involve parents, although some are difficult to engage.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **WESTLANDS SCHOOL**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form has expanded this year to 251 students, above the national average. There are about twice as many girls as boys in Year 12. The school has also increased the range of the courses it offers students and has a good range of AS, A2 (A level), AVCE and GNVQ provision, frequently offering alternative accreditation in the same subject area. The number of students joining the sixth form from other schools is growing. There are eight students in the sixth form with statements of special educational needs, including students from the hearing impaired unit. The school has a liberal entry policy, without the kind of entry qualification common to many schools and attempts to find the right combination of courses at the right level for its students. Year 13 is currently about half the size of Year 12, but is expected to grow next year.

Group sizes for courses vary considerably, from three to over 30. The attainment of students on entry to these courses is below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Overall, this is an effective sixth form which adds value for students, based on their GCSE attainment, in particular in vocational courses. There are, nevertheless, some students who do not make as much progress as might be expected, often due to factors outside school. Standards are improving across the different courses, of which there is a good range, well matched to the varied needs of students. Support for students is good and cost-effectiveness has improved over the last year, providing sound value for money.

#### **Strengths**

- Good provision in the majority of subjects, supporting individual achievement.
- Good and improving achievement in vocational courses.
- A very good quality of teaching with very few unsatisfactory lessons and some excellent ones.
- Good support and guidance for students, which they appreciate.
- Improving cost effectiveness thanks to increasing numbers and management action.

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

- Learning is limited by small classes in some subjects.
- Insufficient numbers of students are reaching the higher grades at A2 (A level).
- Available data is not used across all subjects to monitor progress and raise standards.

*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
History	<b>Good.</b> Above average and improving results at A level. Good quality of teaching and enthusiastic students. Research skills need development.
Geography	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Above average results at A level for a relatively low number of students. Sound teaching and a very good response from students, but close monitoring of students needed.
English	<b>Good.</b> Good results overall at A level but with a low proportion of higher grades. Good teaching, but more targeted work needed to increase the higher grades.
French	<b>Good.</b> But very small groups make results difficult to compare, with no A2 candidates in 2002. Good progress in Year 13, with good teaching.
Religious Education	<b>Good.</b> The good quality of teaching and individual attention has helped achieve satisfactory standards which are improving.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Well below average results reflecting attainment of GCSE. Good, enthusiastic teaching to relatively low numbers of A2 students.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Above average standards, one of the highest attaining subjects at A2, but lower AS standards. Good teaching with high expectations and good feedback to students.
Chemistry	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Below average results and pass rate, with low numbers of students. Teaching is good but assessment against learning objectives is not frequent enough.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Results have improved and were good in 2002 but with an absence of higher grades. There is good teaching, but the Year 12 group is large which can restrict effective learning.
Health and Social Care	<b>Very good.</b> Consistently good results with students exceeding expectations, particularly at AVCE. Very good teaching, very good leadership.
Leisure and Tourism	<b>Very good.</b> Standards close to national average represent good achievement given attainment on entry. Excellent teaching and thorough assessment and recording of attainment.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Results are average but improving. Teaching is very good with very high expectations. Teachers need to develop strategies to help students reach the higher grades.
Performing Arts	<b>Good.</b> Above average standards on this new vocational course. A good, flexible range of learning opportunities to meet different needs, but with some work experiences difficult to provide. Good teaching.

Work was sampled in other subjects and courses, confirming a view of overall good provision but average standards.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance are good, both at subject teacher level and from the sixth form team. Teachers know students very well and aim to maximise opportunities for them.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good overall leadership has set a very clear direction. A new management structure has brought about improvements in monitoring and support and the expanding sixth form is now more cost-effective than previously.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses well matched to their talents and aspirations.</li> <li>• A good induction to the sixth form.</li> <li>• Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum outside main subjects.</li> <li>• Treated as responsible young adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers guidance.</li> <li>• Information on progress.</li> <li>• Thorough assessment and advice on improvement.</li> </ul>

Inspectors found the positive views of the students well founded and supported by their own findings. Evidence on support and guidance was much more positive than the above might suggest, perhaps reflecting differences between internal and external guidance. Inspectors did find evidence that information on progress varied in quality; there are shortcomings in some subjects on assessment and monitoring.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils achieve standards which are higher than might have been expected given their standards on entry. Standards on entry are below average, particularly in literacy and numeracy. After a dip in the standards achieved in the 2001 national tests, results at Key Stage 3 in 2002 improved to close to the national average. Overall, pupils make good progress between the time they enter the school and GCSE, with some very good examples of the progress made by pupils with special needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress, as do higher attaining students. Standards at A level have been consistently below average, but those for vocational subjects have been closer to the national average and overall results are improving. The school is achieving significantly more for its pupils than at the time of the last inspection, when GCSE results were well below average, but there are still some marked differences between the performance of subjects.
2. The school's results in the 2002 tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were below the national average in mathematics and science, but only just below the average in English. All improved over the 2001 results at Key Stage 3 and English improved dramatically from a low point. The overall trend of improvement at Key Stage 3 is below the national, with results much more variable than at Key Stage 4. While the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 is improving, the school remains well below average for the proportion reaching the higher level of 6. Compared with schools in similar circumstances, however, in 2002 the school was above average for English and mathematics and well above in science. This too is an improvement over 2001. The performance of boys was somewhat below that of girls, particularly in English.
3. Current standards of work for pupils in Year 9 are broadly average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but below average in information and communication technology. There is a good range of writing for different purposes in English and good support for weaker readers, while in mathematics pupils develop the basic skills they need and use algebra confidently. A similar pattern to the core subjects is followed by the foundation subjects, with pupils achieving national standards in the majority, but not in French or in design and technology. In French many middle attaining pupils are prone to basic errors, while in design and technology progress is limited by the lack of opportunity to design and make products. In religious education, standards are good.
4. Overall, pupils make good progress from their standards on entry in most subjects, as do pupils with special educational needs.
5. Results have improved at GCSE over the last five years to close to the national average last year, with another small improvement on that result in 2002. In comparison with national averages, the school generally does better when measured against the broader measure of pupils achieving 5 or more A\*-G grades, despite the number of pupils both leaving and arriving in lower ability sets during Key Stage 4. At the time of the last inspection just 29 per cent of pupils reached the higher grades, of A\*-C, while 73 per cent attained 5 or more A\*-G grades. By 2002, these figures had improved to 46 per cent and 92 per cent respectively, a rate of improvement above the national trend, in contrast to Key Stage 3. Compared with other schools in similar circumstances Westlands achieved results well above the average in 2001 and has maintained this above average profile for 2002.
6. In the core subjects by Year 11, the standards pupils achieve are above average in English and average in mathematics, but standards in science are below average.
7. In 2002, results at GCSE were above the national average in geography, religious education and music. In English language, results were slightly above average, but below average in literature.

In French and in design and technology results were below average, while in science they were well below average. Other subjects had broadly average results. In information and communication technology (ICT) the picture is mixed, with pupils doing well on vocational courses. But in GCSE information and communication technology results have been well below average. Boys generally performed well below the standard of girls and this was particularly marked in history, mathematics and in English, with performance gaps much greater than the national. However, the most significant gap was at the higher grades, reflecting differences between boys and girls when they entered the school, while their performance across all grades was much closer.

8. The standards of work of the oldest pupils in the current Key Stage 4 were, in some subjects, better than those achieved by pupils at GCSE in 2002. Exceptions to this were in French, science and ICT where current standards of work are below the national expectation for this stage. Standards were average in most subjects, but above average in physical education, religious education and geography. In science an unsatisfactory rate of progress from Key Stage 3 can still be seen in Year 11, but there are signs of improvement in Year 10 where a new Applied Science course is proving more appropriate and challenging for pupils. In French, on current standards, GCSE results are likely to continue below average as pupils at all levels of ability are reluctant to speak the language and lack fluency. The pupils' capacity to use ICT does improve at Key Stage 4, but in word processing there is still insufficient focus on purpose and audience. Pupils displayed much better fluency and understanding in preparation for English oral assessment, while also developing writing skills in tackling an increasing variety of assignments. In mathematics pupils are able to make and test hypotheses. There was a good pass rate in vocational courses, where pupils make sound progress. The schools has met its targets.

### Literacy and Numeracy

9. Overall standards of literacy in the school are satisfactory. Subject-specific vocabulary is prominent in most classrooms. Teachers promote this in art, music, mathematics, science and history. Grammatical concepts and knowledge are well taught and reinforced in modern foreign languages, supporting the work done in English at word and sentence level. Planned opportunities for oral discussion are good in a number of subjects, but there is scope to share and promote this more coherently across the curriculum. Pupils whose literacy skills are well developed do not have problems of access to the curriculum. At the other end of the scale, the pupils with literacy learning difficulties are very well supported through a range of intervention programmes, particularly as sixth form volunteers are regularly involved. There are significant numbers of pupils between these two extremes who sometimes struggle both with understanding the texts they have to read and with the writing demands of the subject. This was noted particularly in geography, history and science. The links between reading and writing are rarely developed in subjects other than English.
10. The standards of numeracy are also satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in the skills of computation and measurement in Key Stage 3 and this work is consolidated at Key Stage 4. These skills help the pupils to work successfully in geography, science and design and technology classes. The school has successfully introduced the Numeracy and Literacy Strategies since the last inspection, but further development is needed to ensure all pupils reach higher standards.
11. There are 247 (18.2 per cent) students on record as having **special educational needs**. Of these, 51 (3.8 per cent) have statements. These include students in the hearing impairment unit and nine students in the post-16 provision. Attainment, except for those with physical disabilities, is well below average. In the current Year 7, however, attainment is low, with the Year 7 intervention group catering for 12 students working at or below Level 2, the level reached by the average seven year old. These students are, at present, unable to benefit from the National Curriculum for 11 year olds. Their low literacy and numeracy levels are a severe barrier to learning.
12. By the age of 16 students achieve well. They improve in reading, spelling and writing and learn to work with numbers more accurately. They gain in self-confidence and are eager to improve. The

proportion of students achieving at least 5 GCSE grades within the A\*-G range in 2002 is above the national average, and well above the average for similar schools. This represents good achievement for students with special educational needs. A significant minority of students with statements achieve very well because they receive effective in-class support.

### Sixth form

13. The means by which attainment is reported in the sixth form has changed for 2002 and national comparisons are not yet available, but 2002 looks to have been the school's best year for results. Performance in 2001 was below the national average, as it has been for A level over the past 3 years, but not always for GNVQs and other vocational courses.

<b>2001 Figures: GCE A/AS</b>	Male	Female	All pupils
School average points score per candidate	10	9.5	9.6
England average points score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

<b>2001 Figures: VCE/GNVQ (Advanced)</b>	Male	Female	All pupils
School average points score per candidate	7.5	8.6	8.2
England average points score per candidate	9.8	11.4	10.6

14. Generally, pupils enter the sixth form with below average standards at GCSE and many retake English and mathematics at that level. Results in subjects in 2002 varied. They were above average in performing arts and health and social care, below average in art, mathematics, Leisure and Tourism, French and business education and average in English, biology, chemistry, geography, history and religious education. Similarly, the results gained by individuals display a mixture of sound or even good for some, but unsatisfactory progress for others when compared with their performance at GCSE.
15. Overall, sixth form students made sound progress between 16 and 18, but this covers a considerable range of individual performance. Students on vocational courses make good progress more consistently than for GCE A Level. It is difficult to comment on the trend in many subjects, due to small numbers of students, but art has done consistently well. Results for GCSE or GNVQ equivalent (intermediate GNVQ) in 2001 indicate that school is doing a better job for these students than nationally. At both the higher grades of 5 or more A\*-C and the broader measure of A\*-G results are about twice as good as national results.
16. In many cases, current standards are somewhat higher than the last set of results, for example, in English, mathematics and in French.

### Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Throughout the school the pupils' attitudes and relationships, including those of pupils with special educational needs or with a hearing impairment, make a very good contribution to their attainment and progress. Overall, their personal development is very good and their behaviour is satisfactory. These findings show an improvement since the last inspection. It also confirms the views of parents who consider that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, however.
18. The pupils' attitudes towards learning are very good. They are keen and enthusiastic. They listen attentively, follow instructions well and usually settle quickly to the task given. They maintain their interest even when not being directly supported by adults in the classroom. They take pride in their work. They concentrate well and, for example, in a Year 8 music lesson they listened hard when playing chords on a keyboard. They are interested in the life of the school and enjoy the extra-curricular activities, fundraising and other activities organised by the school and by other pupils. They show respect for visitors for example when Year 11 pupils listened carefully to a magistrate during a citizenship lesson. The pupils' attitudes generate a good working atmosphere throughout most of the school. Nevertheless the enjoyment of lessons does not apply to every pupil and a significant minority arrive late for school and for the start of lessons during the day.



19. Pupils' social development is also very good. Relationships with their peers and with adults have improved significantly since the last inspection and contribute to the quality of work in lessons. For example, during a Year 11 French lesson about the world of work the pupils spoke willingly in class discussion, listening carefully to the contributions of others. The respect the pupils have for the teachers means that they have the confidence to present ideas. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson introducing poetry, the teacher's technique of introducing pupils' contributions anonymously ensured they were willing to experiment with words. The pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on what they do and its impact on others. They work well in pairs as seen in a Year 11 French lesson on the world of work, willingly contributing to the class discussion and listening carefully to the contributions of others. Boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together very well when doing group work in the classroom, but also when socialising at break and lunch times.
20. The pupils' personal development is very good. Their spiritual development was demonstrated when pupils in a Year 11 history lesson showed their ability to empathise with the feelings of people who had to sleep on a rope during the depression in 1930's Germany. Pupils show respect for the beliefs and traditions of others. In a Year 10 religious education lesson about women and Islam, they clearly understood that the apparent restriction on clothing imposed on women in the Middle East could be liberating, whereas Western women have to conform by following fashion and wearing lipstick. Pupils are willing to use their initiative and to work by themselves. For example, when they are using the library and computers before and after school. Nevertheless, in the main school, not all pupils do so and in some lessons opportunities for independent working are limited, where the teacher relies too extensively on worksheets. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to undertake responsibility being both willing to take on the various tasks in each form relating to their house and, for the older pupils, to work with the younger. In several of the lessons seen where sixth form students provided support, pupils in the main school were attentive and made good progress. Pupils participate in a school council which has been able to secure changes around the school.
21. Overall the behaviour of the pupils is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils behave very well and have responded well to the moral guidance from the school. They know right from wrong and are generally polite and courteous to their peers and to the adults around them. They are welcoming to visitors. They move sensibly about the school and do not abuse the freedom to be in the building at break times. The wide corridors facilitate movement. Pupils handle resources with care, putting away tools and equipment in science and technology lessons. Although the canteen is crowded at lunchtime, the queues are orderly, noise levels are acceptable and it becomes a pleasant, social occasion. Nevertheless, there are some boys, especially in the lower attaining classes whose behaviour affects the learning of the majority; this occurred in a few lessons where the teachers do not have the skills to manage the pupils well. The school's senior staff have effective "time out" arrangements to deal with pupils who misbehave.
22. Whilst drinks bottles and crisp packets are placed in bins, a considerable amount of remainders of food end up on the floor in corridors and in the canteen. The school has to employ several staff each day to clear up after the pupils to maintain an attractive environment. Boys and girls and pupils from different cultural backgrounds get on well with each other. Instances of bullying are rare and the younger pupils acknowledge that the school generally has appropriate procedures to deal with any incidents that may take place. Last Year 5 pupils were permanently excluded and 92 had fixed term exclusions. These followed extensive support from the school and the involvement of parents and have contributed to maintaining a positive learning environment in the school.
23. Attendance overall is unsatisfactory and, for some pupils, is adversely affecting their attainment and progress. Nevertheless the efforts put in by the school have led to a noticeable improvement since the last inspection. It was just under 90 per cent last year and, based on the first two months of the current year, is continuing to improve. Parents generally state that their children are away because of sickness or medical reasons and a significant number of parents insist on taking their children on holiday in term time. In part this reflects the tourist economy of the local area

whereby many of the families need to work during the school summer holiday. However, the level of absence increases as the pupils get older. Some 140 pupils in the main school were absent last year for more than 8 weeks of the year, some for long-term medical reasons and others because of family or social problems. The level of unauthorised absence is above the national average. It is increasing in the current year, partly because the school has properly decided that holiday absences will now usually not be authorised. As at the time of the previous inspection, punctuality is unsatisfactory with some 50 pupils arriving each day after the start of school. In addition, during the inspection, the start of several lessons was delayed by ten minutes because of the time taken by pupils to move classroom from the previous lesson or to arrive after breaks.

## **Sixth form**

24. Generally, the attitudes of students in the sixth form reflect the very positive approach to learning of other pupils and their punctuality is somewhat better. In the sixth form last year the attendance level was just below 90 per cent, which is unsatisfactory. As in the main school there are students whose progress is affected by issues outside school. The school does not insist on morning registration session each day for sixth forms but registers attendance at lessons and generally students respond well to this college style approach.
25. In lessons, attitudes to learning are generally very good, whether through high levels of quiet concentration or in challenging discussions. The only real exceptions to this lie in a very few less challenging lessons, where the students are polite but restless. By contrast, in some lessons, for example in art, students' attitudes bordered on the excellent thanks to challenging teaching and clear organisation. There were good examples of developing independent research skills, for example in English where students had extensively researched "Twelfth Night" or French where the Internet had been successfully used to research Marcel Pagnol. There was also more limited development of research skills, for example in geography. Sometimes the students' response to their lessons was limited by small numbers, inhibiting discussion. In chemistry a contrast was noted between the smaller Year 13 group and the larger Year 12 group in this respect, with more and livelier discussion in the latter.
26. Relationships with staff are generally very good, with improvement over the last inspection, and underpin learning for most students. In some cases students with lower entry qualifications than in many other schools, find the transition to Year 12 difficult, as they do for example in French. Mutual respect and supportive relationships help ensure they progress. Students enjoy the social side of the sixth form and enjoy being at the school. They speak very positively of it. They were most satisfied with their induction and that their choice of course suited their aspirations and abilities. They also felt strongly that they were treated as young adults, a view inspectors would support. The school is helping them to mature, take on responsibility and develop as effective learners. Students with special needs are very well integrated and treated with respect.

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

27. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection in 1996. The quality of teaching is good in all key stages and only in one in ten lessons is it unsatisfactory or poor. The strongest teaching is in the sixth form while the lowest proportion of good or very good lessons occurred in Key Stage 4.
28. The main strengths lie in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, the effectiveness of their planning, their high expectations of pupils' achievement and in the effectiveness of their teaching methods. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and often very good, and their management of pupils is most effective, based on a good knowledge of individuals and their needs. The teaching benefits from high quality resources and accommodation coupled with very good support from the non-teaching staff. Pupils learned most effectively in those lessons where they were challenged by high expectations, but with work well matched to their capabilities and stage of development in the subject. A variety of stimulating activities also ensured more gains in learning. Pupils gained less in slower, more passive lessons or the few

where behaviour was not well enough managed.

29. The quality of teaching is good in English, history, geography, physical education, art and design, music, information and communication technology and religious education in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In addition it is good in science but at Key Stage 3 only, and in mathematics and French at Key Stage 4 only. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. In no subject was teaching unsatisfactory overall, although there were unsatisfactory lessons where pupils gained less, particularly in design and technology, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
30. Good subject knowledge was frequently demonstrated by the quality of planning and preparation where teachers combined this with their knowledge of the pupils to provide appropriately pitched levels of challenge and a variety of strategies for stimulating learning, as in English. Similarly in mathematics well controlled lessons made demands on pupils' thinking while in geography work was well matched to the pupils' stage of development. In physical education teachers used their subject knowledge to engage and enthuse pupils. Supporting these strengths were the high expectations teachers had of pupils, which showed through in the level of challenge and in the skilled use of questions. For example in French pupils were challenged by the brisk pace and tightly timed activities in the best lessons, while there was an additional level of challenge, to take work further, for the most able pupils in art. A Year 9 history lesson encapsulated many of the most positive aspects of teaching at the school. The pupils were asked to take their already successful work one stage further by writing a report on transport to Parliament, encouraging them to think both critically and empathetically.
31. There are no consistently serious weaknesses in teaching, although the teaching of basic skills and the use of day-to-day assessments are less established than the other aspects and, in Key Stage 3, the use of homework was only satisfactory. However, in a number of subjects, for instance, history, modern foreign languages and some of the older courses being phased out in science, weaker teaching demands too little of the pupils and relies too heavily on books, teacher notes and worksheets. In these cases pupils made less progress. For example, unsatisfactory lessons in design and technology at Key Stage 3 were characterised by too little learning by doing when, for example, a teacher demonstrated how to make a clock face without allowing pupils to try things for themselves. In science pupils lost interest when an investigation was poorly organised, while some information and communication technology lessons were disrupted by poor behaviour in over-crowded ICT rooms.
32. At the time of the previous inspection, non-specialist teaching was having a negative impact on the learning of some pupils. This is no longer the case. A few teachers do teach outside their subject, but without detriment to teaching quality.
33. The quality of the pupils' learning reflects the teaching and is good throughout all three key stages and strongest in the post-16 classes. Pupils are making good progress in their knowledge and understanding and are applying considerable effort to their work. In Key Stage 4 and post-16 classes they generally show interest and concentration and a good degree on independence. Pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, and good in Key Stage 4 and very good in post-16 classes where the majority know how well they are doing, what their targets are, and what they have to do to meet them. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is sound, but the current use of ICT is not strong in many subjects.
34. Teaching and learning in one-to-one and small group sessions within the special educational needs department is very good. Teachers have considerable expertise into helping students with learning difficulties to progress. They break down the work in small steps and vary activities so that students remain interested. For example, in a one-to-one lesson for a Year 7 pupil with specific learning difficulties, the teaching assistant began with work on letter sounds, moved to syllables and then a reading passage in which the pupil highlighted key words; he then drew a picture of the garage scene to show how much he understood. Clarity and the effective use of praise ensured the pupil learned quickly. Teachers have high expectations of what students can do and they motivate students to work hard and concentrate well. This explains why students'

attitudes to their work are very good and, occasionally, excellent. Relationships are very good, so that students want to learn. The teaching in the Year 7 intervention group is very good. Here, students of low attainment work very well and make very good progress in lessons because the teacher provides interesting work matched to students' capabilities. Class management is excellent. Lessons move at a brisk pace and are characterised by humour, challenge and a variety of activities.

## Sixth form

35. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good overall, with the lowest proportion of unsatisfactory lessons and the highest of good or very good lessons. Although there were a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, there were no subjects in which the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory overall in sixth form lessons. Teaching was very good in art, satisfactory in geography and good in the majority of other subjects except leisure and tourism, where teaching was frequently excellent. In leisure and tourism students are enthusiastic about their lessons and work at a very good pace, thanks to challenging and supportive teaching founded on a very good knowledge of individuals' learning needs.
36. These factors, teachers' knowledge of their subject and both an insight into and sympathy for their students, ensured the good or very good teaching across most A level and vocational courses at the school. Teachers demonstrated enthusiasm and much encouragement. Skilful questioning was used to secure understanding, as in chemistry and geography. Good research skills using information and communication technology were developed in the best examples, such as in English and in French, while another aspect of the teachers' very good knowledge of their students was to be found in the careful monitoring of learning difficulties, as for example in health and social care. In the most successful lessons, challenge and support ensured the students knew what they had to do but were also encouraged to think more deeply about ideas and values. A very good example of this occurred in English, where students were challenged to discuss issues of love, loyalty and relationships through their reading of 'The Handmaid's Tale'.
37. In less successful sixth form lessons, there was less challenge and less discussion, with a tendency to rely too much on a lecture style, for example in chemistry and geography. Consequently, students were less confident in their analysis of issues. There were also some weaknesses in the frequency of assessment, as in chemistry.

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

38. The quality and range of the curriculum is good overall in Years 7-11. The curriculum is broad and well balanced and meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. In Years 7 and 8 the National Key Stage 3 Strategy framework is embedded well. The curriculum includes Personal Development from Year 8 onwards and the range of options offered in Years 10 and 11 allows considerable choice. The provision for special educational needs is good in the school as a whole and within the specialist area the provision for students with specific learning difficulties is outstanding. Lessons after school give additional support for those who wish to improve their literacy skills. Less able pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to benefit from a range of Applied GCSE and vocational courses such as business education and science plus, which include teaching offsite at South Devon College and extended periods on work placement. The school provides equality of opportunity for pupils in terms of curriculum access.
39. The school has made satisfactory progress in its curricular provision since the last inspection although some of the weaknesses identified there still remain. The time allocation for lessons is appropriate but the teaching of modern foreign languages is hindered by the short time given to German and Spanish in Year 8 and Year 9. As a result there are no dual linguists in Key Stage 4. Discrete provision for ICT is now provided in Years 7 to 10. In design and technology at Key Stage 3 there is insufficient emphasis upon designing and making. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily collective Act of Worship.
40. The bilateral nature of the school means that there has to be some streaming of sets. But the policy which bands pupils on entry and then sets or streams them according to subject leads to gender imbalances in some sets. The large number of boys in lower sets can restrict learning opportunities in some classes. A more recent initiative to teach a Year 7 group which has been identified as needing extra support as a primary based group is having a positive effect upon their achievement.

41. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate and develop their social and academic talents. Music provides a wide range of opportunities, as does drama, art and dance and there are many sporting teams, which compete against other schools. The school also provides a wide variety of trips and exchanges as well as visits abroad. The short lunchtime restricts some of the clubs that the departments wish to offer, but this is more than compensated for by the quality of afterschool provision.
42. The programme for Personal Development is well planned and covers a broad range of issues including sex and drug education as well as careers and citizenship. The sex education programme 'Apause' is part of the teaching and parents appreciate this. Most pupils in Year 11 take part in work experience for which they are well prepared. There is a careers library with a specialist room adjacent and pupils all have good quality careers education as part of their personal development lessons. The work experience programme is well evaluated and monitored. The school has limited links with industry and finding work placements is difficult, in part reflecting local circumstances, although members of the community do contribute to school programmes and there are good links with the main feeder schools.
43. The spiritual dimension is not strong in the curriculum, although it is present in music and English. In both subjects pupils' self-awareness is developed individually and corporately and pupils appreciated the beauty of language in an English lesson on Shakespeare's plays. Provision for spiritual development is sound overall, while for moral and social development it is very good. The school reinforces right and wrong in terms of personal actions and effects upon others across many areas of the curriculum and there is considerable discussion on moral issues. There is a great deal of opportunity for pupils to develop their social skills both in lessons and extra-curricular activities and pupils co-operate well with each other and show respect for each other's opinions. Opportunities are given for pupils to take formal responsibility through the House System and the School Council. Older pupils help younger ones with reading and other activities and this encourages positive relationships. There is a great deal of opportunity for cultural development which is good. In art, pupils study Aboriginal, Chinese and African art and there are trips to theatres, museums and galleries. In terms of multicultural education, there is an awareness of other cultures through the study of world religions and units of work in history and geography and design and technology. However, not all of the issues surrounding life in multicultural Britain in 2002 are being fully addressed. The school's provision for personal development has improved since the last inspection.
44. The provision for students with special educational needs is good. Within the specialist department it is very good. This is because teaching and learning are very good; timetable planning is careful so that students do not miss vital work when they are withdrawn for help; and students feel secure and cared for when they work in the area. Within the specialist area, the provision for students with specific learning difficulties is outstanding. The staff have considerable expertise in diagnosing dyslexia and this explains why the school has 60 students with this difficulty – an unusually high number for a school of this size. Lessons after school are provided to give added support. For example, nine 13 and 14 year olds attend for two hours after school each Thursday to enjoy a variety of tasks to improve their literacy skills. The intervention class in Year 7 provides very well for low attaining students who benefit from very good teaching. One teacher takes the class for all but technology and physical education. Hence, she knows the students' needs very well and there is very good continuity within their curriculum. This is helping them to learn rapidly. Each faculty has a teacher nominated to liaise with the special educational needs department and teaching assistants are linked to mathematics, English and science so that they gain in subject expertise. These features enable assistants to be most effective in helping students to improve. There are plans to develop teaching assistants' links to other subject areas in the near future.

## **Sixth form**

45. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is good and builds on the provision of the main school. It

provides a variety of routes for accreditation including A2 and AS levels, and vocational examinations such as the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education and National Vocational Qualifications in subjects which include Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism and Performing Arts. It has a link with Dartington College for students who are following work related courses and this allows these students to obtain an NVQ.

46. A wide range of 17 subjects is offered at A2 and AS level on site as well as 11 vocational courses which are offered as both double and single award and at both advanced and intermediate level. The school takes care to allow students to study as wide a mix of subjects as possible and has made provision for individual students to take AS levels at another school where there are timetable clashes. The norm is for students to take 3 AS levels and some students prefer to take more AS levels in Year 13 rather than follow on to A2. All students follow a Key Skills course in the application of number, communication skills and ICT for two hours per week. The school takes great care in placing students on to the course most appropriate for them through structured interviews and guidance. Many courses are well designed to offer opportunities for all levels of prior attainment. Retention rates are good and only 7 students have left Year 12 in the first term.
47. All students in Year 12 undertake a week's work experience and many students have part time jobs within the community. However within the Business Studies Course there is no vocational element and this inhibits the learning opportunities. The vast majority of pupils participate in a wide-ranging enrichment programme that runs each week and allows them the opportunity to participate in activities such as art, textiles, and sign language, Community Sports Leaders Award. About 60 students are involved in a Community Action Project.
48. Sixth form students are encouraged to take an active role within the school and some help younger pupils who have special educational needs and others help run other extra-curricular activities such as music, drama clubs and sporting events. There is good opportunity for the sixth form to have positions of responsibility within the school as they chair the School Council and act as Prefects and House Captains and participate in a buddying system. Religious education is part of provision for personal development, but there is no regular provision for collective worship.
49. Provision for students' personal development is good overall. Many subjects seek opportunities to enhance personal development during the course of their lessons. The tutorial programme also allows opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences and the part that the sixth form plays in the main school develops their social awareness. Culturally there are trips and external visitors and speakers and all sixth formers who are following an art and design course undertake a 3 day residential experience.

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

50. Staff show appropriate concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage their development. The procedures within the school show a significant improvement over those operating at the time of the previous inspection. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where staff are approachable if there are any problems. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development for providing educational and personal support and guidance are good.
51. Now that the school is on one site, the pastoral system is well designed to enable tutors and heads of year to move up with the pupils during their time in the school. They therefore build up a good relationship and a full understanding of the capabilities and needs of the pupils. This ensures that attainment and progress across the curriculum are fully recognised and support is properly provided. Pupils with particular needs can be referred to the effective and wide-ranging support network provided by a group of specialist staff within the school. On the pastoral side, staff from the Connexions (careers guidance) service, the school nurse and school inclusion welfare officer provide high-quality support and advice and, where necessary, can call upon other organisations in the outside community. Pupils have the freedom to refer themselves if they wish.
52. The arrangements for child protection are good. One of the deputy headteachers is the designated person for child protection. She and other senior teachers have been trained and other staff have

received appropriate guidance. Since the last inspection the policy is now fully in place. The school follows local procedures. First aid arrangements are very good with a dedicated first aider and several other staff having full certificates. Records are kept of treatment, parents contacted as necessary by letter or telephone and all relevant staff fully informed about any medical conditions of pupils. Overall, the arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory with the heads of each department responsible for carrying out risk assessments for their subject areas. In addition, the lesson plans prepared by the teachers include a reference to health and safety. The school is aware that it needs to ensure that all risk assessments are properly carried out, that they are reviewed regularly and that all staff receive regular guidance on their role in ensuring a safe environment. The governors are actively involved in checking on the safety of the school. The teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science, physical education and design and technology. The problems identified in the previous report have been rectified by the move to the new building.

53. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and using that information to guide the planning of the curriculum have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Three times each year all the teaching staff enter the grades from their assessment of pupils' attainment into a computerised system. This system is comprehensive and well organised enabling the progress of the pupils to be monitored and compared across each subject and related to the pupil's attitude, effort and attendance record. The learning co-ordinators in each year group, together with heads of year and heads of department, analyse this information and use it to improve attainment and progress. On two days each year the timetable is suspended to allow the tutors to review with individual pupils their progress and discuss how to improve. In addition the tutors regularly award certificates for achievement and improved progress. The information is summarised for parents at the half termly meetings with tutors or subject teachers. However, the electronic grade collecting system has only recently come into operation and, while it is sound overall, not all departments are yet fully using it to modify the curriculum they offer the pupils or provide target grades at GCSE.
54. Assessment of students with learning difficulties is very good. Individual education plans highlight clear targets to help teachers plan lessons to meet students' needs. Most, but not all, teachers make good use of the plans and this promotes good learning. While students usually know the skills they need to improve, they have insufficient involvement in the setting of targets, as recommended by the new Code of Practice. The co-ordinator realises this and plans to increase their contribution. Annual Reviews are well organised and targets modified to reflect the achievement of students.
55. The procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are also very good. The positive discipline policy emphasises rewards and provides a good structure for supporting pupils. Pupils are reminded in assemblies and tutor periods of how to behave. Within the classrooms, subject teachers set out expectations and a code of behaviour following rules originally agreed with the school council. All the teaching staff recognise good behaviour with praise, commendations and house points. These and any sanctions are also recorded on a computerised system with details available to tutors and heads of year. This allows them to see whether any patterns are emerging and whether pupils need additional support. Where necessary, parents are contacted and the school is also starting to telephone parents to praise positive behaviour and attitudes of their children. Most teaching staff are consistent in their approach. Nevertheless a few pupils disrupted some lessons where the teacher did not manage their behaviour well.
56. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Using a radio linked computerised system, tutors and subject teachers take a register at the start of the day and in each lesson, ensuring accurate, immediately available information of whether a pupil is in school, has arrived on time and is attending lessons. The school inclusion welfare officer, appointed last year, works full time in the school and is successfully helping to reduce the amount of absence. She monitors the registers each day to decide what action to take such as a telephone call home, a letter or a home visit or a referral to the head of year. Pupils with a low level of attendance receive special attention or support including the use of court action against the parents if appropriate. This has successfully resulted in a significant improvement in attendance in a third of



such instances over a period of a few months. This improvement or very good attendance is rewarded with a certificate. The school has also properly decided to not authorise holiday absence except in exceptional circumstances. However, it is not yet consistently setting targets for improvement. Pupils who are regularly late are also targeted, resulting in a detention, but this action has yet to produce a significant improvement; punctuality continues to be at an unacceptable level.

## **Sixth form**

57. There is generally good monitoring and support for students' progress in the sixth form, starting with good guidance on induction. The sixth form team, led by the Key Stage 5 co-ordinator, are well informed about individuals and the factors that may help or hinder their progress. There are some very good examples of the use of assessment data to set individual targets and help plan programmes of work. It is particularly effective in art, in health and social care and in performing arts. In common with the main school, however, it is clear this is not standard practice in all departments. In geography, for example, it was clear that not all students knew their predicted targets. The school's managers have devised good systems which are yet to be thoroughly implemented by all teachers. The tutor system does provide a strong mechanism to monitor progress on a regular basis.
58. Students were very complimentary about the advice and guidance they receive from the school. They are well informed about opportunities before joining the sixth form and the great majority feel they are on the right course for them. However, the students did not rate careers guidance as highly, although this may reflect a lack of 'Connexions' support last year, which has now improved. The school has a clear philosophy of maximising opportunities for more marginal students. Effective guidance is needed given the school's entry policy and the support provided by three hours of tutor time each week certainly represents a significant investment in core provision. The teaching of key skills, which occurs at this time along with tutor support, is both satisfactory and improving on the limited evidence seen.
59. In the sixth form the school does not usually produce figures for the overall level of attendance. Nevertheless the tutors monitor the attendance of the pupils in their group each week and the head of the sixth form reviews their attendance each half term.
60. Sixth formers have a broader role in the school, for example as reading tutors for younger pupils, which supports their own development. The school has a very clear focus on the progression of its students beyond the sixth form and is proud of its record in getting students into higher education. About two thirds of its students go on to further or higher education and most of the remainder into employment. Since the previous inspection the school has enhanced the quality of guidance available to its students.

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

61. In their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors parents showed that they are pleased with all that the school does. This is confirmed by the large numbers of parents seeking to send their children to the school. The inspection team generally supports all of their positive comments which show an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Parents say that the school is well led and the teaching is good. Their children like coming to school, behave well and make progress. The school expects them to work hard, helps them to become mature and responsible and provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable approaching the school with any questions. Some doubts were expressed about the amount of homework but the inspectors conclude that the homework is set appropriately, although there is variation between classes. A few parents also feel they are not well informed about the progress of their children, although the great majority are satisfied with the amount of information provided. The inspectors generally support this latter view, although the reports at the end of year have weaknesses.

62. The school has established good links with parents and these contacts are effective. Overall, the information provided to parents is good. The school has recently changed its approach to parents' meetings so that every half term parents are invited to see either their child's tutor or the subject teachers. At these meetings, the school provides a useful printed summary of progress in each subject area as well as pupils' attitudes, behaviour and general improvement. Other information on progress comes in the form of certificates, comments in the homework diaries and telephone calls from tutors or Heads of Year although, in the latter instance, the school is only starting to include positive comments. However, the annual written reports do not fully meet requirements as the teachers' comments often provide insufficient information on what the pupils know and can do. In addition the targets are sometimes unhelpful with such general comments as 'need to work harder'. The headteacher's termly newsletters provide useful general information and are supplemented by government publications on the curriculum and letters from some of the year groups. Parents are well informed about the options available to pupils in Year 10 and the sixth form.
63. Parents' involvement with the school makes a good impact on its work and they make a satisfactory contribution to the learning of their children. The community association of some 15 or 20 parents meets each term and actively carries out surveys of other parents, arranges information meetings and performs an important role in helping the school to decide how to improve. The school works very hard to involve all parents and encourage them to help their children's education. In Year 7 almost all come to the parents' evenings, although this attendance can drop to only a quarter of the parents of older pupils; the school is trying to encourage a greater number by telephoning parents as well as sending a written reminder. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are given good opportunities to participate in the formulation and review of the individual education plans.
64. Links between the special educational needs department and parents are good. Parents speak well of the support the school offers and feel comfortable in telephoning the co-ordinator if they have any concerns. They give good support to the Annual Reviews, taking an interest in their offspring's achievements.

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

65. The headteacher and governors provide the school with very good leadership, with a clear direction towards improvement and a clear set of values. The clearest evidence of the direction they have set is the successful completion of new buildings through a Public Finance Initiative. Inevitably, this has left a residue of mainly minor management problems still to be solved, but these pale in significance compared to the huge step forward the buildings represent. The partners who have helped achieve this deserve credit for the great improvement in the pupils' learning this has brought about and the opportunities for new and imaginative approaches to teaching and learning it creates. Of equal importance, the fact is that the headteacher and governors have taken the opportunity afforded by the rebuild to move on the culture of the school, so that there is now a much clearer focus on the improvement of standards and better quality teaching.
66. Through the school improvement plan the school has set itself appropriate and challenging targets which have resulted in a significant improvement in GCSE results and the school receiving achievement awards. There have been very serious efforts to improve teaching quality, as well as structural reorganisation to ensure better management of the learning process. The governors' contribution to this has been very considerable. Their determination to improve secondary education for the community they serve, informed by their knowledge of the school and the nature of its intake, has met with considerable success. Through the new buildings they have also dealt with the many health and safety issues which formed such a prominent part of the previous inspection report in 1996. The governors also meet all of their statutory duties with the exception of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The quality of leadership has improved since the last inspection in respect of the governors' role, but also in the capability of senior and middle managers to ensure the school's aims are realised. The support and commitment of staff to these improvements is very good.

67. The school's achievement of Technology College status in September 2002 is the latest part of the process of transforming teaching and learning which the school's leadership has planned, although much of the impact of information and communication technology on learning is still to come. The school effectively has three plans, a strategic plan which gives the overall direction for three years hence, a detailed development plan for the next year and, incorporated into these, the development plan for its new Technology College status. Through additional funding, the school has managed to put together a relatively generous amount per pupil, but as some of this is short term and dependent on bids there is a natural anxiety about whether this is sustainable. The governors have been closely involved in these financial decisions and have worked hard to maximise benefits to their pupils. Recent audit recommendations have been implemented and specific grants are well used. The school has invested well in teacher development as well as learning resources; planned expenditure to support improvement is very good. The principles of best value have been successfully applied in contracts to support the new school environment and the experience has put the school ahead of many others in obtaining very good value for money in providing for its pupils and students.
68. Ambitious systems to monitor and support quality have been introduced but are yet to permeate the whole staff. All teachers are provided with information on pupils' progress and predicted targets at GCSE, allowing them to set challenging targets with their pupils, as well as students in the sixth form. However, not all pupils or students were aware of these and it was apparent some subjects had approached this much more thoroughly than others. The school has a good, rolling joint review system for departments involving senior managers in lesson observation and some of the impact of this was evident from improvements in teaching and learning. There is also an expectation that departments will review themselves each year but, as with the pupil progress targets, the impact of this is variable from subject to subject and in some, such as French, there is a lack of systematic monitoring of teaching.
69. Across the subjects of the curriculum, leadership is mainly good, with strong teams contributing to improvements in what pupils achieve. There is strong leadership in English, despite the absence of the permanent head of department. There is sound leadership in mathematics. In science the leadership is satisfactory, but improvements are beginning to bear fruit. The leadership in art, music, ICT and religious education is very good, but in design and technology it is unsatisfactory, with some aspects of the subject doing much better than others. There is also an acting head of department in French, which is delaying development. The current leadership of ICT is very good and there is a capacity to improve. Leadership of year teams, including learning co-ordinators, is also good.
70. Leadership of the special educational needs department is very good. The co-ordinator works extremely hard to ensure paperwork is up-to-date. She has built up a strong team of teaching assistants whose expertise and commitment have a significant role in the good achievement of students. The co-ordinator monitors the work of the department carefully, through regular meetings, scrutiny of teaching assistants' record books and class visits. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively so that they can offer maximum support to as many students with learning difficulties as possible. The co-ordinator and the teacher who organises work for students with specific learning difficulties, have arranged training for all staff on how to prepare different work for students with learning difficulties, as well as how to make best use of teaching assistants in lessons. This explains why the provision across the whole school is good.
71. Improvement in Special Needs' management since the last inspection is good. Staff use of individual education plans is much better; students' achievements are good rather than sound and leadership and management are now very good.

### **Staffing**

72. There is a good match between the numbers, qualifications and expertise of teaching staff and the demands of the curriculum. A few teachers do teach outside their own subject, but this does not have a negative impact on quality. Teaching staff are very well supported by a well trained and organised team of teaching assistants and indeed by non-teaching staff more generally. The

school has invested in particular forms of support for its pupils, such as a school nurse and social inclusion welfare officer, entirely appropriate to its circumstances. The turnover of staff over the last two years has been significant, partly explained by expansion but also in part engineered by the school's senior team specifically to improve the expertise and energy of their teaching force. There are satisfactory and improving arrangements for performance management. There are very good, innovative arrangements for the induction and professional development of staff, all of whom have access to accredited courses.

### **Resources**

73. Resources in the school are good and well used by teachers and pupils. Although there are some shortages in ICT and design and technology overall the provision is good in all subjects and very good in GNVQ. In art and design there is a very good range of equipment and materials. Religious education has a good range of artefacts and in geography pupils were making good use of maps provided by the Ordnance Survey.
74. The library makes a useful contribution to pupils' learning. There is a good range of topic and fiction texts suitable for pupils of all ages. Subject teachers make good use of the library, particularly English, history and geography. Staff in the library and resources area are very accommodating and try to obtain resources and texts for sixth formers from other sources.
75. The school makes good use of the resources gained as a result of the new buildings. The school has benefited from grants as a result of National Grid for Learning and Technology school status. The provision of computers is 30 per cent higher than the national average, a huge improvement over the 1996 figures.

### **Accommodation**

76. The school's accommodation is now very good. It has moved to new, purpose-built accommodation, which has addressed the many shortcomings caused by the poor, dilapidated buildings in which the school was housed at the time of the last inspection. The new buildings are impressive and in many ways provide an exceptional environment for the school. Spacious, carpeted corridors contribute to the calm atmosphere that pervades the school and light, modern, well appointed classrooms have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. The school is now able to teach the full National Curriculum in music, drama and PE, which was impossible in the previous buildings. Good use is made of opportunities to stimulate learning by well-presented displays throughout the school and the suites of rooms for subjects have enhanced the efficiency of departments. The dedicated sixth form accommodation is well used. It is popular with students and promotes a good sense of community amongst the oldest pupils. There are inevitably some shortcomings, which have yet to be resolved. These include the need for pupils to carry heavy bags full of books, as there are no lockers, other than for sixth form students. Also the popularity of the school's meals has resulted in the dining facilities now being too small to cater for the demand. Plans have been agreed to address the shortage of storage in PE, yet insufficient sound-insulation between rooms impacts on teaching and learning opportunities in drama and music. The quality of the specialist rooms for ICT is very good, but some of the rooms are too small for the sizes of classes using them. In design technology some of the rooms for resistant material work are crowded. Good use is made of the school's outstanding educational and recreational facilities by the local community, both in the evenings and at weekends.

### **Sixth form**

77. A new management structure for the sixth form, with a Key Stage 5 co-ordinator, a learning co-ordinator and a dedicated tutor team, has set the culture for improvement. At the same time, sixth form numbers have expanded significantly in the last year, making it possible to run a wider range of courses more cost-effectively. The headteacher and governors have also acted to increase cost-effectiveness by combining classes wherever possible without a serious impact on learning. There was a reduction in the funding per student over the last year, though spending per student is still in the upper quartile compared to national averages. In a sense the sixth form epitomises the aspirations that the managers of Westlands School have for their pupils and students, by

maximising opportunity and support to enable students to take advantage of what is offered. However, the headteacher acknowledges there is a need to reduce the number of students retaking GCSE, if students are to have the best start to their post-16 courses, by improving performance at entry.

78. Support for individuals is strong and why some students fail to fulfil their potential is well known. Leadership of subjects and courses is generally good and in no subject is it less than satisfactory. There are examples of very good leadership in art, in leisure and tourism and in health and social care underpinning students' learning and progress in these subjects.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. Improve the standards achieved by pupils in science by:

- eradicating unsatisfactory teaching, ensuring that work in class is neither too hard nor too easy to take pupils forward;
- ending the rotation of teachers in Year 11;
- improving the assessment and monitoring of pupil progress, ensuring all know their targets.

*(See paragraphs 7, 8, 105, 106 and 110-113)*

80. Improve the standards achieved in information and communication technology by:

- improving access to the computers now available;
- ensure an appropriate range of options for pupils at Key Stage 4;
- improving the provision for and assessment of pupils' skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum.

*(See paragraphs 7, 8 and 152-157)*

81. Improve the standards achieved in design and technology at Key Stage 3 by:

- enhancing opportunities to design and make products;
- improving the pace of lessons and allowing pupils to do more;
- developing common strategies between different elements of design and technology.

*(See paragraphs 3, 128, 131-133)*

82. Improve the standards pupils achieve in French by:

- providing more stimulating and varied activities in all lessons;
- putting more emphasis on the skills of speaking and learning;
- developing the monitoring of teaching to ensure consistent quality.

*(See paragraphs 3, 8, 158-162)*

83. Improve the behaviour of boys in lower attaining classes by:

- reviewing the banding system and introducing more sets;
- making use of good practice in special needs classes to raise standards of literacy;
- reducing the large number of boys in some classes.

*(See paragraphs 21, 31, 49, 54)*

84. In addition, the school and governing body should also consider addressing the following:

- attendance *(see paragraph 23)*;
- lateness to lessons *(see paragraph 23)*;
- making sure all teachers use the good information available for setting targets *(see paragraphs 33, 37, 52)*.

## Sixth form

85. Reduce the negative effects of small sixth form classes in some A level courses by:

- encouraging more research-based work and wider reading;
- improving opportunities for discussion by combining classes where appropriate;
- making more use of information and communication technology.

*(See paragraphs 37, 214, 218, 247, 252, 253, 259)*

86. Enable more students to reach higher grades on A level courses by:

- improving standards on entry and reducing GCSE retakes;
- targeting students to encourage and develop their potential;
- encouraging students to contribute more to lessons and explore ideas.

*(See paragraphs 26, 76, 210)*

87. Use data to raise standards by:

- setting aspirational targets which are communicated to students;
- ensuring the monitoring of students' progress is as good in all subjects as in the best.

*(See paragraphs 56, 218, 225, 267, 273)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	126
	Sixth form	40.7
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		42

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7-11</b>							
Number	6	27	64	35	11	3	0
Percentage	4	18	44	24	8	2	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	8	10	23	2	2	0	0
Percentage	18	23	51	4	4	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 the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1100	251
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	263	18

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	220	26

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	59
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	126



## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	120	116	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	74	74
	Girls	85	70	71
	Total	151	144	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (54)	61 (58)	61 (60)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (11)	31 (23)	33 (21)
	National	(28)	(42)	(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	70	66
	Girls	86	73	68
	Total	163	143	134
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (64)	61 (66)	57 (51)
	National	(65)	(68)	(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (12)	32 (31)	20 (20)
	National	(31)	(42)	(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	104	129

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	23	91	97
	Girls	84	125	126
	Total	107	215	222
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (44)	92 (95)	95 (98)
	National	51.2 (48.4)	86.8 (90.9)	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	31.8 (35.6)
	National	34.6 (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	74
	National	73.2

### 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	11	29	40
	Average point score per candidate	10.9 (8)	11.2 (12.3)	11.2 (10.9)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.8)	17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)

		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	9	27	36	4	8	12
	Average point score per candidate	10	9.5	9.6	7.5	8.6	8.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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

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

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

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
1161	92	5
0	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
6	0	0
175	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)	78.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1141

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,953,854
Total expenditure	3,897,927
Expenditure per pupil	2996
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,672
Balance carried forward to next year	55,947



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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23.6

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1100

Number of questionnaires returned

134

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	59	7	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	16	4	4
The teaching is good.	30	59	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	48	9	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	40	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	49	10	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	48	44	1	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	46	4	2	5

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The good quality of teaching.
- Very good pupil behaviour and attitudes.
- The impact of excellent accommodation and good resources on teaching and learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- The number of pupils attaining higher grades.

88. Attainment on entry in Year 7 has been below the national average in recent years. The current Year 7, however, arrived with a slightly above average percentage of pupils gaining National Curriculum level 4 or better. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs), the results over the last three years have been uneven. In 2000 they were well above average, whereas in 2001 they were below average for level 5 and well below for level 6. The most recent results in 2002 show a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the average level 5, to within two per cent of the national expectation. There is still a considerable shortfall, however, in the number of pupils achieving level 6 or better. Results are in line with those in similar schools.
89. GCSE results in English in both 2001 and 2002 are slightly above the national average for pupils gaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades. In English literature the 2001 results were above average, but in 2002 they fell below the A\*-C grade average by comparison with similar schools. Girls did better than boys performance in both subjects and the gap was significantly greater than that found nationally. Pupils entered for English in 2002 did markedly better in the subject than in the average of all their other subjects.
90. In lessons observed and in the scrutiny of work across Years 7 to 9, standards are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve satisfactory standards. Evidence from pupils' work shows that the department is successfully raising the achievement of the more able pupils, particularly in Year 9. At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress and achieve good standards, in line with their attainment in public examinations. There is still scope, however, to raise the standards of boys' performance by a considerable margin.
91. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory at both key stages; in good examples of whole-class discussion pupils respond positively to teachers' questions. However, the quality of such work could be significantly improved by allowing pupils time for more considered responses. More able pupils, for example, in a Year 9 poetry lesson, made excellent progress in understanding implicit meanings when they enjoyed the opportunity for extended discussion. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson made considerable gains in their learning when they were able to enact and discuss the early emergence of characters in *The Crucible*. At the time of the inspection most Year 11 pupils were well involved in preparing to give individual talks on their recent work experience, as part of their GCSE oral assessment. In one lesson, the teacher discussed the examination assessment criteria with her class, pointing out how to improve from one grade to the next.
92. The quality of teaching at both key stages is never less than satisfactory and it is good overall. Relationships with pupils are positive and supportive with good expectations of behaviour. In some lessons the teaching was outstanding, characterised by excellent planning and preparation, appropriately pitched levels of challenge and variation of strategy within the hour-long lesson. It is features such as these that would push satisfactory teaching into the good or very good category.



Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good but the department has yet to make full use of the very wide range of assessment data available to guide their planning and inform teaching. Pupils at Key Stage 3 in particular do not have a clear understanding of what attainment levels mean and how they relate to improving their work. The marking of pupils' written work is often very good, with diagnostic comments giving clear indications for improvement. The quality of marking is, however, inconsistent across the department. Teaching in drama is also good. Pupils' experience of drama prior to the GCSE course is limited and teachers work hard to encourage rapid progress in essential skills.

93. As an integral part of the statutory curriculum all pupils read a wide range of good quality literature, including work by Shakespeare, pre-twentieth century and contemporary authors and a variety of texts from different cultures and traditions. In one Year 8 lesson in the library, a small group of weaker readers were very well supported by two teachers and a number of sixth form volunteers. In other lessons at Key Stage 3 pupils were very keen to read out loud and many did so with fluency and intonation. A Year 10 class responded well to a lesson in the computer room where they had to locate, read and evaluate a variety of Internet web sites.
94. There is a good range of writing for different purposes and audiences in Key Stage 3. Year 7 and 8 pupils enjoy writing autobiographies and stories; in Year 9 they produce good quality work in the form of newspaper reports in tabloid and broadsheet styles. Elsewhere in Year 9, a class produced some very good extended writing to analyse the power of persuasive language in advertising. Year 10 and 11 pupils go on to develop their writing skills as they tackle an increasing variety of coursework assignments, many of which are presented most effectively in word-processed formats.
95. The acting head of department is providing strong leadership and relationships within the team are good. The momentum of the department's work has been sustained effectively during the prolonged absence of two colleagues, one of whom is the head of department. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is having a positive impact in the department, particularly in the revision of schemes of work and standards of literacy across the school are satisfactory. There has been some good improvement since the last inspection. Most teaching of the subject is now done by qualified specialists and there are fewer shared classes. There are good examples of the use of ICT. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are now more in line with national expectations. Clearly the new accommodation is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Lessons are well-prepared, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Staff are committed to improving standards for all pupils.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils which enhances learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention given to setting individual targets, particularly for less able pupils.
- There is not enough effective monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work, to ensure consistency of standards.
- The use of assessment information for planning is unsatisfactory.

96. The standards of attainment of the current Year 7 group of pupils were broadly in line with national expectations on entry to the school. In previous years, standards have been slightly below national averages, with fewer pupils attaining the highest grades. This has been reflected in the Key Stage 3 test results which have also been below the national average, although results have been in line with those of similar schools. Broadly, this is still the case although some improvements can be

seen. Previously, boys' results were well below those of girls, but last year, their results improved considerably and now equal those of girls.

97. At GCSE, girls' results have improved steadily year on year and the most recent results are above previous national averages. Boys' results continue to lag well behind the national average; the most recent results confirm that last year's group of boys had been weaker mathematically on entry to the school and that they had done as well as could be expected.
98. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3. They improve their basic computation, measurement and data-handling skills and this helps them with work in science, geography and design and technology. They are introduced to algebra early and use it with increasing confidence. They also learn to use computers within mathematics: Year 7 pupils had worked on computer generated geometrical designs which were used to enhance corridor displays: Year 9 pupils used the Internet and spreadsheets to investigate the best way to spend money on buying a computer. By Year 9 standards are in line with the national average.
99. During Key Stage 4, pupils continue to develop investigative skills and use them successfully in coursework: they make and test hypotheses, using algebra to generalise findings. Much of the work is directed by the demands of the examinations, however, with little use made of information and communication technology and only limited reference to the world of work. Standards by Year 11 are average. Pupils make good progress by the end of the key stage.
100. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is good and sometimes very good: the teachers conduct well-controlled lessons which make demands on pupils' thinking and which promote good standards. Lessons are carefully planned, with some teachers making good use of new technology to make presentations more interesting and explanations clearer. The teachers' skills in using new technology improved as a result of staff development sessions where teachers shared good practice. Good examples were seen in work on geometry where teachers could manipulate shapes on screen, making the lessons more lively. In Key Stage 3, a small number of lessons were unsatisfactory, due mainly to ineffective class management. Teaching in the class run along primary school lines is very good: the teacher makes good use of individual plans to set targets for the pupils and to show them how to improve their learning.
101. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from the support given by teaching assistants. Pupils with impaired hearing get very good support from assistants who are skilled in helping the pupils with their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. As a result, pupils usually work well and do their best to improve.
102. Regular testing and records inform staff about pupil progress, but this information is not extensively used to set targets for learning. Pupils benefit from extra help after school and from the teachers being readily available for extra tuition.
103. The head of department gives a sound lead in subject management and teaching. Teaching guidelines are clear and there is a strong emphasis placed on improvement of standards. Although teaching and learning are monitored, the monitoring has had insufficient impact on improving consistency of approach to ensure high quality provision.
104. Since the last inspection there have been a number of positive changes, with a number of new staff, and there has been good progress overall. The department has extended its use of computer technology and the curriculum has been considerably revised. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory.
105. A national project has been introduced at Key Stage 3 aimed at improving number work, but it is too early to judge its impact on learning.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The students' response to new courses in Years 7, 8 and 10 is improving standards.
- Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good.
- New accommodation has provided a better learning environment.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' response to older courses in Years 9 and 11 results in below average standards.
- Standards in GCSE A\*-C grades are below average.
- Assessment and target-setting are unsatisfactory.

106. The provision of science is generally sound but varies between the engaging work in the new courses in Years 7, 8 and 10 and the older, more knowledge-based courses being taught in Years 9 and 11. The faculty has introduced a number of good measures to improve the work with these years but the students' response overall is still weaker than with the new courses. The faculty is working hard to develop all areas of its work and to overcome two years of very poor GCSE results. Its facilities and resources are very good.
107. Standards of attainment in the double award science examinations in 2001 and 2002 were well below average. The results have fallen from 40 per cent A\*-C in 1997 to 20 per cent in 2002. Part of this of this is due to a significant increase in the proportion of pupils taking the double science exam and part to a small increase in the number of pupils taking separate sciences. Both trends depress the double science results. For all this, 20 per cent A\*-C is less than half the national average and is acknowledged in the school and faculty as being very poor. There have been very few A\* and A grades achieved in recent years. Science has been performing generally less well than other subjects in the school.
108. In contrast, at Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above in the science SATs matched the national averages in 1999 and 2000 but in 2001 fell just below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 and above was also below average. The school's 2002 results have improved slightly whilst national results have stayed static. When the school's results are compared with the standards achieved in similar schools they are above average. There are no significant gender differences in the pupils' performance over time at either key stage.
109. Pupils enter the school with average science results and maintain that position throughout Key Stage 3. While standards at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory overall, however, the rate of pupils' progress has declined. Observation of pupils in class and of their work generally supports this, although where Year 10 pupils are working on the new Applied Science GCSE their progress is better than the Year 11 course, where standards are below average. On this and the new Year 7 and 8 course, pupils are more engaged in the work: they find the materials and the challenge more interesting and they rise to the higher expectations. The quality of work they are currently engaged in has improved and good progress is being made. In Year 7, for example, one class reached a high standard in their ability to discuss distillation, while in Year 10 pupils clearly enjoyed the experimental science the course engaged them in.
110. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good with virtually all lessons being satisfactory or better. At times it is excellent. At Key Stage 4 the teaching is unsatisfactory overall. It is excellent in some lessons but it is unsatisfactory or poor in a significant minority. Where the teaching is good it benefits from thorough planning, good pace and high expectations. Good use is made of time and homework and there is a manifest enthusiasm for the subject. In unsatisfactory or poor lessons, however, too little is expected of the pupils for effective progress.

111. Teachers' knowledge of the pupils is relatively good in Years 7, 8 and 10 but in Year 11 a rotation system operates such that the pupils change teacher approximately every half term or so. Whilst this provides access to specialist subject knowledge, it does mean that the groups change just as the teacher is getting to know them, a weakness for continuity, focused monitoring and expectations. The use of support staff is a strength both in the good, planned use of teaching assistants to support learning in lessons and in the good use of the faculty's technicians.
112. The teaching does have its weaknesses too. In a minority of lessons there was a mismatch between the demand of the work and the capability of the pupils with the work being too hard in one case and too easy in another. In both cases the teachers were not sufficiently sensing how well their pupils were working and in both instances, apart from poor progress, the pupils' behaviour deteriorated. Another difficulty was seen when the lack of co-ordination of investigation work within the department meant that a group of pupils set out on a new investigation without any look back to see how much they had achieved last time. The investigation was being run in total isolation from any previous work and lacked rigour.
113. The majority of pupils now make satisfactory progress and this is in line to improve next year when all pupils will be working on the new courses. Where the pupils' learning is good, they make good progress in their knowledge and understanding, being motivated and enthusiastic about their work. On these occasions, they work well and make good use of time. In the better lessons, pupils put considerable effort into their work and are capable of sustained concentration. Pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing is at best only satisfactory and often weak. Their work is marked, but the marking mainly consists of ticks and pupils are not receiving enough information to really help them move forwards. Target setting is technically in place, but the majority of pupils are not aware of their grades in science. Pupils with SEN are well supported by the combination of small size groups and teacher assistants.
114. The courses offered by the school meet the requirements of the National Curriculum except that they do not yet provide sufficient ICT work for the pupils to do themselves. The management of the faculty is satisfactory overall, with good support being provided by senior managers; recent developments are beginning to bear fruit. However, standards are still low, there is still some unsatisfactory teaching and assessment procedures are weak. The faculty has made some important changes since its last inspection in 1996, not least in the introduction of the new courses, the large increase in the numbers of pupils taking double science and the move into the very fine new accommodation. However, its results are still behind those of 1996 and therefore improvements since then cannot yet be said to be satisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are good.
- Management is very effective.
- Good quality of teaching ensures quality in learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience three-dimensional work in Years 7 to 9.

115. By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments and the analysis of work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are average when compared with national expectations. A significant increase has been achieved in 2002 in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels within the National Curriculum teacher assessments. Pupils experience a wide variety of creative experiences. As a direct consequence of the quality of provision, combined with good teaching, the majority of pupils show an interest in their work and are achieving considerable success. By the end of Year 9, the majority draw and paint with confidence and can use a good range of techniques such as print making, collage, mixed media techniques, digital photography and some

limited three-dimensional construction. They increase their knowledge and understanding about certain artists and cultures and are gaining in an understanding of perspective, proportion, scale in drawings and accurate observation.

116. The overall achievement of the students from Year 7 to Year 9 is good. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well. Some interesting work is being produced. In Year 7 pupils are learning about perspective and the use of colour by studying the work of Henri Rousseau. In Year 8 pupils are developing their skills and knowledge in the use of computers and digital cameras by taking self-portraits and then using computers to distort the image. Year 9 students are being introduced to the work of artists who specialise in Surrealism and Art Nouveau to develop their visual and aesthetic awareness. Year 9 pupils have used computers and scanners to produce photo silk-screens, but there are insufficient opportunities for 3-D work. Homework assignments, which include written annotations and evaluations, are improving research skills and assisting in the promotion of high standards in lessons. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, reflecting the quality of teaching and learning.
117. In 2001 GCSE results grades A\*-C were above the national average and were better than most other subjects within the school. Over the past two years, from 2001 all pupils entered for GCSE Art have achieved a pass. GCSE results in 2002 fell below those achieved in the previous two years. The 2002 results could be seen as the consequence of the disturbance caused to the continuity of the pupils' education by the new building programme and the absence, through illness, of the Head of Department. GNVQ results in 2002 were above average when compared to schools of a similar type. Achievement of pupils in Years 10 to 11 is good and current standards are average. Pupils in Year 10 are developing an understanding of the impact of commercial designers on fashion by designing and making hats and headdresses based upon natural forms. Year 11 pupils are developing skills in graphic design by using Photoshop computer software.
118. The majority of pupils from Years 7 to 11 make good, and often very good, progress due to the challenging and often diverse nature of the experiences on offer together with very effective teaching. Throughout all year groups the majority of pupils are often articulate when discussing their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. The promotion by teachers of key words in many lessons is having a positive effect upon the pupils' understanding of technical language within the subject. Group or class discussions occur in all lessons and play an important role in promoting the use of language, the formation of opinions and the ability of the pupils to defend those opinions. Homework is used to good effect. The attitude of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good and often very good in Years 10 and 11. In general the pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and to accept responsibilities in lessons.
119. Teaching is good. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress. Teaching methods are highly effective. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching and specially designed learning opportunities, which offer them the opportunity to succeed. The most able pupils are offered extension studies in order to provide them with additional challenges. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are good, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures to raise creative and visual appreciation. Connections are established in many lessons to the school literacy strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. All classrooms within the department and certain public areas around the school contain very good displays of work, providing encouragement for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced.
120. Assessment is effective and is used as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. It includes a certain amount of self-assessment and, therefore, when questioned, the pupils were well aware of teachers' expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given target grades for examinations and are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving their targets. Work is marked at periodic intervals, usually linked to the completion of a project. This marking is always reinforced by supportive comments by the

teachers and pupils in all year groups are well aware of their level of achievement and what they have to do to make further progress. Pupils with special educational needs are given individual learning targets, which are reviewed regularly by the teachers within the department and the Special Needs Coordinator, who also teaches in the department.

121. The management of the department is very good, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The teachers offer a range of complementary skills and expertise and work as an effective team. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is very good and is having a positive effect upon the quality of education provided. Resources are good and used effectively, as is ICT, providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities.
122. The last inspection drew attention to the fact that procedures for assessment were not effective. This is no longer the case. The achievements of all students are assessed and recorded and used to good effect in raising attainment and providing levels of work commensurate with the needs of the pupils in all classes. The amount of storage space, seen as a problem, has been improved also and the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- A senior manager has led the introduction of citizenship well.
- The personal development programme has been effectively modified to extend existing topics and incorporate new topics.
- Some trialling of units has already taken place.

### Areas for improvement

- Some departments that are expected to contribute to citizenship do not include citizenship in their plans.
- Assessment and recording systems are not yet in place.
- Opportunities for all pupils to participate are not yet available.

123. Standards are likely to be in line with national averages at the end of Year 9 and 11. Limited evidence is available at this early stage but some pupils are already gaining sound levels of knowledge and understanding in relation to the criminal justice system and personal finance.
124. In one very good Year 9 history lesson there was a lively discussion about the relative power and influence on the political system of factory workers, as opposed to factory owners, during industrialisation in the UK. In one Year 10 geography lesson pupils were able to express their own views and the views of others regarding China's one child policy. In a Year 11 English lesson pupils were able to discuss successfully the relatively civilised behaviour as opposed to savage behaviour in the "Lord of the Flies."
125. In the sixth form the leisure and tourism group were able to investigate the impact of changes in society connected with the changing nature of leisure activities. In a Year 12 photography class pupils were exploring the use of significant photographs showing the aftermath of the First World War in Germany and changes in society during the 1940s.
126. Citizenship is taught through a combination of PSHE lessons and some subject areas. Because of the embryonic nature of the course in citizenship, not all pupils are able to participate in citizenship activities.
127. In the lessons observed pupils made satisfactory progress. During a visit from a local magistrate pupils were gaining knowledge and understanding of the criminal justice system. Pupils were able to discuss issues around punishment and sentencing. In a good lesson on personal finance pupils from the hearing impaired unit were fully included into a discussion and decision-making exercise.

128. Teaching in the small number of lessons observed was satisfactory. In one or two subject lessons aspects of citizenship could have been developed further. Teachers are sometimes rather uncertain about how to handle discussions and pupils were unused to discussing issues in some lessons. Teaching of citizenship in history is good as a result of the informed discussion of issues.
129. Issues related to religion, gender and race relations are mostly handled well and citizenship makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment and reporting are not yet in place and discussions about these aspects are at an early stage. There are clear aims and objectives in the school's policy. Some departments have yet to complete a full audit of their role in citizenship. At present there are only limited opportunities for pupils to take part in community activities.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**, other than in food and textiles at Key Stage 4, where it is good.

### Strengths

- The good progress and very good standards achieved by pupils in textiles at Key Stage 4.
- The very good progress and good standards achieved by pupils in food at Key Stage 4.

### Areas for improvement

- The progress the pupils make at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory.
- The standards and progress the pupils make in graphics, resistant materials and systems and control.
- The failure of the management of design and technology to bring about sufficient improvement.
- Insufficient use of assessment to help pupils' improve in graphics, resistant materials and systems and control.

130. By the end of Year 9, the pupils achieve standards that are below average and they do not make the progress they should over Key Stage 3. Standards have not risen significantly since the last inspection when they were also below average. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials and manufacturing processes are sound overall and have improved since the last inspection. They are good in food and textiles, as are the pupils' research, analytical and testing skills. The pupils' knowledge of mechanisms has also improved. However, their ability to use their knowledge and skills to design, make, evaluate and modify products is limited by insufficient opportunities for full "design and make" experiences. For example, in Year 9, the pupils learn about electronic components and circuits, but never design and make a product that uses them. Consequently, the pupils' ability to design and develop products for a purpose is limited, particularly in resistant materials, while their ability to use systems and control to make things work is poor. Workbooks often limit the development of design skills as the spaces for pupils to work in are small and do not encourage the exploration and development of design ideas. The pupils' design skills are also limited by teaching that fails to build sufficiently on learning gained with different teachers earlier in the year.
131. The pupils' computer-aided design and manufacturing skills are at a very early stage of development. However, some pupils are making good progress. For example, Year 9 pupils used a graphics program for the first time and successfully developed nets for packages. Good use is also made of ICT to analyse and modify the nutritional properties of food products and to embroider designs in textiles.
132. By the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve standards that are average overall, as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, they are above average in food technology and well above in textiles. In 2002, 75 per cent gained A\*- C grades at GCSE in textiles and 61 per cent did so in food technology. Conversely, standards were well below average in resistant materials and graphics with 34 per cent gaining A\*-C grades in graphic products and 27 per cent in resistant

materials. The progress that the pupils make is well illustrated by the 2002 GCSE results, where pupils in textiles generally gained one third of a grade higher than the average for their other subjects and in food an outstanding two thirds of a grade higher. In resistant materials, they achieved one third of a grade lower on average and two thirds of a grade lower in graphics. Standards and provision in textiles have improved significantly since the last inspection and good standards in food have been maintained. But otherwise, the subject has not improved. The girls achieve higher standards than the boys, by a margin that reflects the national average. In lessons, the pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers on different courses and where they have individual support from classroom assistants, it is sometimes better. The more able pupils make good progress in food and textiles, but fewer do so in resistant materials and graphics.

133. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching was good or very good in about one third of the lessons seen and unsatisfactory in one in five lessons, all in resistant materials. The teaching of food and textiles is good, particularly at Key Stage 4, where teachers' expectations are high and they provide good feedback to ensure pupils know how to improve. However, in lessons in resistant materials and graphic products, pupils are often taught with less urgency and challenge, resulting in lower standards and pupils failing to reach their full potential. The management of coursework is not good enough, with insufficient pace and motivation provided by the teacher. This results in some pupils falling behind and not fully completing their work for the examination. For example, in one resistant material lesson, some pupils were still slowly exploring ideas when they should have started making products. In textiles, the pupils are well motivated by practical activities, the good range of materials and techniques used and the stimulating approaches used in lessons. In food, teaching is often rigorous, well structured and continuously builds on and applies previous knowledge and skills. In most instances the teacher's enthusiasm and support enables pupils to enjoy and recognise their own success and there is a heavy emphasis on learning through practical activities.
134. At Key Stage 3, there is often insufficient learning by doing or stimulating activities and materials to motivate pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the pupils became bored while a teacher demonstrated how to draw the clock face which they would make using computer-aided equipment. This session was far too long, without a chance for pupils to try things themselves. Consequently, they began to misbehave, which reduced learning and the progress they made.
135. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are generally sound and often good. Where the pace of lessons is good, activities are interesting and the pupils are designing and making their own products, they are interested and their attitudes are good. Where the pace of lessons is slow, and there is insufficient motivation by the teacher, or pupils do not consider they are doing well, their interest and attitudes to learning inevitably decline.
136. The leadership and management of design and technology is unsatisfactory as insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly to improve standards. The department lacks vision and clear strategies to manage the changes required. There has been insufficient liaison between teachers of resistant materials and those of food and textiles, to ensure common strategies and to share good practice. Good progress has been made in trialling assessment and monitoring systems to track pupils' progress in food and textiles. However, these systems have yet to be adopted across the whole department. Consequently, insufficient use is made of assessment to help pupils improve and to inform teachers' planning. Monitoring pupils' progress and the impact of teaching across the department is also unsatisfactory. Changes in staffing caused some disruption last year and the sharing of examination groups between part-time teachers makes consistent progress more difficult to achieve. The subject is generally resourced to a satisfactory level, yet there is insufficient equipment for computer-aided design and manufacture and for systems and control.
137. Accommodation is now grouped together and provides a modern, aesthetically pleasing environment. However, some of the rooms, particularly for resistant material work, are crowded. This results in cramped conditions for many of the groups currently using them.



## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers know their pupils well.
- Pupils make good progress in both key stages.
- Preparation for fieldwork/coursework/examinations is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Data analysis, target setting and tracking progress are insufficiently developed.
- Literacy should be integrated into planning and teaching.

138. The standards pupils achieve in Year 11 are above average. Results for A\*-C grades in the 2002 GCSE were well above the national and school average, representing good progress for these pupils. Year 11 pupils have just completed some very good fieldwork accounts. These include annotated maps, photographs and diagrams, which illustrate coastal features and aspects of coastal management. Pupils have been able to use a range of techniques and have produced some high quality reports, involving a range of computer generated graphs and diagrams. Pupils in Year 10 are already making good progress in acquiring geographical skills and knowledge related to population. Most pupils in Year 10 are able to describe and briefly explain the process of migration and could answer questions related to population structure shown on population pyramids. Some pupils were able to discuss the issues surrounding China's one-child policy and use key questions to draft a newspaper account.
139. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. This represents good progress for the majority of pupils based on their standard on entry to the school. Pupils are able to explain the patterns and processes connected with city life and changes in village life. More able pupils can explain the factors affecting the location of settlements. Pupils can use Ordnance survey maps to identify different types of settlement and are writing more extended pieces of work which include the use of correct geographical terminology. Pupils use ICT effectively to produce graphs of data collected in previous lessons.
140. Year 8 pupils can describe volcanic features and the processes that create them. More able pupils can describe and begin to explain the patterns made by volcanoes across the world. Lower attaining pupils have acquired basic mapwork skills. Middle attaining pupils can describe patterns and processes but are sometimes not given enough opportunities to explain these in detail.
141. Year 7 pupils have all mastered the basic mapwork skills and most pupils can use the eight points of the compass and give a four-figure grid reference. In one very good Year 7 lesson pupils were describing routes and identifying relief features on a local Ordnance survey map.
142. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages.
143. Teaching is good. Clear planning, instructions and explanations ensure that pupils are clear about what they have to do and what is expected of them. Good questioning ensures that teachers are able to check understanding and develop pupils' knowledge of the subject. Good management of the classroom, behaviour and resources mean that most pupils make good progress during lessons. In two lessons very good use was being made of Ordnance Survey maps to develop pupils' map and enquiry skills in Years 7 and 9. Some teachers are developing the use of information and communication technology to research and present statistical data. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and match the level of work to their prior attainment. Preparation of pupils for CGSE coursework and examinations is very thorough and ensures that pupils achieve well.
144. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are invariably good with only the occasional example of poor behaviour. The vast majority of pupils listen carefully, stay on task and complete work

conscientiously. Pupils co-operate effectively in pairs when necessary. Pupils attempt to answer the teachers' questions and follow instructions. Pupils generally have good relationships with other pupils and other adults.

145. Leadership of the subject is sound. The acting head of department has maintained the momentum of the department very well and there has been good progress since the last inspection. There is good day-to-day administration. Teachers have a collegiate approach to planning and sharing good ideas. The use of information and communication technology is developing but still needs to be developed further. Although teachers are aware of some pupils' problems with written work, the department has not yet introduced literacy strategies to any great degree. Assessment is sound and pupils preparing for GCSE are made well aware of the criteria. However, better use needs to be made of the information about pupils to set challenging targets and monitor pupils' progress towards meeting them.

## HISTORY

Overall the quality of provision in history in the main school is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and 4.
- Pupils have a good understanding of key events and their causes and consequences.
- Good leadership and management of the department.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Further develop the analytical skills of lower attaining pupils at both key stages.
- Increase the amount of ICT used in lessons.
- Increase the variety of teaching methods used for some less able groups.

146. The standards of most of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 are average both in their work in lessons and in exercise books, although some less able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. When the prior attainment of most pupils is considered their achievement is good. The 2002 teacher assessments show attainment to be broadly average. By the end of Year 9 pupils' understanding of chronology is good, most are able to use historical terms accurately and make links between events and give reasons for their causes. Most can extract information from a variety of sources to answer historical questions. The more able can use extended writing to explain key historical features and are beginning to be able to examine historical sources critically and to understand interpretations.
147. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were close to the national average and in terms of relative school performance indicators were at the norm. There was a marked difference between the achievements of boys and girls, the latter doing significantly better. The work seen in both the current Year 10 and 11 is at national standards and the work of boys is not significantly below that of the girls. Results have fluctuated over the last three years and 2002 has seen a rise after a dip in 2001. The 2002 results represent satisfactory achievement when compared to the results at the end of Year 9 but the progress of the current pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to recall and make links between topics, explain cause and consequence and more able pupils can evaluate sources at a sophisticated level. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were able to explain the meaning and relevance of two Punch cartoons on the League of Nations.
148. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good at both Key Stage 3 and 4. There is some good teaching in Year 7 and 8 and some very good teaching in Year 9. The subject knowledge of the specialist historians is good and they draw on their wider knowledge for illustration. In most lessons a good pace is maintained and teachers use a variety of teaching methods which impact positively on the learning. In a Year 9 lesson on how different modes of transport adapted to industrialisation, having conducted their own investigations from sources, pupils then had to prepare a report to Parliament on the way forward. The teacher by skilful questioning encouraged the pupils to think empathetically but critically. Where teachers challenge pupils' thinking, pupils respond well, asking relevant questions. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by assistants who give them help and ask them probing questions that in turn help the pupils' learning. Pupils' records and Individual Education Plans are used to guide the planning of lessons for these pupils. Where teaching is less effective it is because teachers' planning does not allow for the variety of tasks and pupils spend too much time on one activity, leading to insufficient challenge in the lesson. At Key Stage 3 less able pupils are not being given enough opportunities to write at length or to evaluate sources that they are too often using as comprehension exercises.
149. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have placed an appropriate emphasis upon preparing pupils for the GCSE examinations and set varied and challenging tasks. In a lower attaining GCSE group pupils were set to examine a set of photographs of German families' living conditions during the depression and, by comparison with American photographs of the same period, they were able to make the connection between the rise of Hitler in Germany and the

Depression in America and to explain it clearly. There is constant revision of topics and links are made between countries, as a result of which even less able students can make connections.

150. There are good relationships within the department and teachers use praise freely to motivate and reward good work and behaviour. Pupils generally behave well but some lower attaining pupils lack listening skills. Pupils mostly treat other pupils with respect and listen carefully to presentations by others. Pupils enjoy seeing their work displayed and take pride in its appearance.
151. Although the department has made good progress in assessment and has a very comprehensive database of target levels, pupils at Key Stage 3 do not always understand these. At Key Stage 4 most pupils are aware of their predicted grades and how to improve them. Teachers monitor the work of pupils carefully and are offering additional lessons to those pupils on the C/D borderline who need support.
152. There are opportunities for all to participate in history and a comprehensive range of trips contributes to providing a stimulating learning environment. Overall the curriculum is in line with the National Curriculum, although more work needs to be done on the schemes of work to ensure they include an overview of all of the skills required. At Key Stage 4 the way the curriculum is structured with different numbers of lessons being taught each year of the two-year course is unhelpful in terms of planning and revision as is the fact that classes are split between two teachers. This does not help with continuity.
153. The leadership of the subject is strong and the enthusiastic head of department articulates a clear vision for the department. There is a strong team spirit between the teachers and they support each other well. The day-to-day management is also good. Examination results are carefully analysed and steps have been taken to investigate areas for improvement. The development plan focuses on subject-specific strategies for raising achievement.
154. The use of ICT is covered in the schemes of work but more access to ICT suites needs to be available to allow the department to develop the use of this tool further. Additional support needs to be given to the non-specialist historians to develop their historical skills. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The rate of progress towards a successful central department, with an effective team.
- The rate of progress towards a cohesive curriculum.
- Network management and technical support.

### Areas for improvement

- The pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory overall.
- Sufficient access to computers.
- The appropriate use of computers and communications in all subject areas with effective assessment of pupils' skills.

155. Despite improvements, the standards achieved by the majority of pupils by Year 11 are unsatisfactory. The pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of aspects of the information and communications technology (IT) are assessed each summer at the end of Year 9. In 2002, 62 per cent of the Year 9 pupils reached or passed the nationally expected standard of Level 5. This is very close to the figure achieved the year before in the country as a whole. It is not appropriate to judge standards in IT, or any changes over time, from these data, however, as they are not all reliable. On the other hand, standards were assessed in inspection week by considering what the pupils of Year 9 can do, know and understand. This generally showed that their attainment is

below national levels; in rather fewer than half the lessons seen, for instance, the pupils' work is up to those levels or better. As an example, even in Year 9 very few pupils can enter text into a word processor fluently and accurately, although most know how to add 'clip art' and images from other sources. Significant weaknesses, such as pressing the <ENTER> key at the end of each line and typing everything in capital letters, are shown by several pupils in most classes. Again, when adding illustrations to text, most do not have more than a vague idea of what kinds of illustrations might be relevant to any particular kind of text and even fewer can relate those illustrations to the people likely to read the document.

156. In recent years a small but widely varying proportion of Year 11 pupils (a quarter on average) enter for a GCSE or equivalent in an IT subject. Success rates in vocational courses have been 100 per cent, though numbers have tended to be small, while the proportion reaching Grade C or higher in Information Studies GCSE has also reached 100 per cent. It is usually far lower. Rather more pupils enter the third course offered (GCSE IT), but here the success rates are generally well below national standards. In other words, although there are some contexts where exam success is excellent at the end of Year 11, not many pupils are involved, and most of the candidates do far less well. The pupils' work during the inspection showed much the same picture. In fewer than a quarter of Year 10 and Year 11 lessons are the pupils generally on course for Grade C or better at GCSE or equivalent, although this does reflect their prior attainment. The weaknesses in word processing in the earlier years still generally apply in Year 10 and, to a lesser extent, Year 11, although by Year 11 most pupils can now use a wider range of techniques with some degree of success and are also able, on occasion, to produce some useful work using other software, like a spreadsheet or PowerPoint. However, few pupils are clear how to tailor what they do to a given purpose and audience. Progress is sound, however, given where pupils started from.
157. In lessons in Years 7 – 9, and in almost all in Years 10 – 11, the teaching was at least satisfactory. It was often good, if not very good, and is good overall. The lessons that were not satisfactory both involved classes too large for the rooms involved and for the number of computers available and there were a number of disruptive pupils with little interest in learning. There are several significant strengths in the teaching in the many good and very good lessons, such as very careful and thoughtful planning, a great variety of activities to keep the pupils thinking and working and a good pace to keep motivation high. However, not all teachers base their plans on specific and appropriate learning objectives. The aspect of teaching that needs most attention is assessment. Although there is some good practice, this does not always apply in lessons or to every topic or area.
158. Since the last inspection, progress in the department has been good. However, it is much more significant that there have been great improvements during 2002: very good leadership and management by the acting head of department and much support from senior managers have ensured quite remarkable progress from a very difficult situation. The acting head of ICT very closely monitors the work of the pupils and teachers in the department and effectively provides direction, vision and clear and friendly guidance as the staff move towards becoming a strong and focused team. The main aspect of the department's work that is still fully to be addressed is what should be done in Years 10 and 11. At the moment there are three different GCSE courses taught in the option blocks, with the European Computer Driving Licence to be followed by all other pupils. Such a range of qualifications causes inefficiencies and, when linked with over-large classes of poorly motivated pupils, leads to behaviour problems. The assessment of pupils' skills is also unsatisfactory, though improving.
159. The quality of the accommodation is now excellent, although none of the department's rooms is large enough or provided with sufficient computers for the size of some of the classes that use them; the rooms tend to overheat even in cold weather and some cables are too easily accessible to pupils.
160. At the time of the inspection, the computer: pupil ratio had reached 1:3.5, 30 per cent better than the national figure, but there are many problems of access. The school is aware of the major problems of deployment of so many machines and the difficulties of effectively networking them; it has also already started to make serious attempts to co-ordinate the IT-based work of all the

subjects. The school is preparing plans to enable more computers to be available and appropriately used outside of lesson time. As it is, although there are aspects of good practice in some subjects, such as English and art and design.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The achievement of Year 11 pupils on the Certificate of Achievement course.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils.
- The match of staff to the curriculum.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
- More stimulating and varied activities in lessons.
- More emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- More regular access to ICT.
- A more regular and formal system of monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and, above all, of sharing good practice.

161. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average in comparison with that in the core subjects. Although some criteria have changed in awarding National Curriculum levels in modern foreign languages, there has been a steady improvement in standards over the four years up to 2001. Attainment in 2002, however, fell back to the unsatisfactory standards achieved in 2000, but this may reflect adjustments made in teachers' assessments, in accordance with the changed criteria.
162. In 2001, attainment at GCSE in French (there are no entries in other languages) was below national averages in the number of A\*-C grades awarded, but above average in the number of A\*-G grades. Standards have risen over the previous three years. Girls performed better than boys, but not in any more significant proportion than nationally. Attainment in 2002 fell owing to a sharp decline in the performance by boys, whereas girls' attainment stayed similar to that of 2001. A consistent feature in the analysis of GCSE results since 1998 is the high proportion of D and E grades gained. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress and predicting grades should enable the department to target these pupils with strategies to improve their attainment. A group of 17 lower-attaining Year 11 pupils completed a Certificate of Achievement course in French in 2002, 12 gaining distinction, the rest credits at merit plus and merit.
163. Inspection evidence suggests that attainment at the end of Year 9 will be below average. Given the relatively low attainment on entry, this represents satisfactory progress. Higher-attaining pupils in the present Year 9 are beginning to use past and future time, but will need more extensive practice to ensure a firm knowledge. Overall they write accurately and are able to manipulate more complex grammatical constructions. Many middle attainers are prone to basic errors and have difficulty remembering grammatical rules. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well at a simpler level, recognising and reproducing key words and phrases accurately from visual stimuli and in matching exercises. All pupils, however, have limited opportunity to reinforce their communication and comprehension skills through speaking and listening. Pupils in Year 7 are making good progress in their first term. Although they make mistakes in spelling and gender and can forget plural endings, effective feedback from teachers and encouragement to check their work are resulting in improvements in accuracy. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 are beginning to produce extended written work of good quality. Standards in German and Spanish are satisfactory, given the one lesson per week time allocation.
164. Attainment at GCSE is likely to continue to be below average. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 are showing fluency and accuracy in their extended writing and coping efficiently with more complex constructions. Middle attainers are using past and future time confidently, but less accurately. However, pupils of all ability levels are reluctant to speak and are not always articulate in their fluency and pronunciation. Their listening skills are also not as sharp as they ought to be at this level. This suggests that historically they have had only limited opportunity to practise these skills, as is the case currently in Year 9. Discontinuity of teaching and disaffection in the past, caused by prolonged staff absence and changes of supply teachers, may be contributory

- factors, but progress from Year 9 to GCSE is unsatisfactory.
165. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved. Although French had a negative impact on the examination performance of the school as a whole in 2002, teaching is now good overall. Over half of the lessons were good or better and none were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons pupils were fully involved immediately in class exchanges, constantly challenged with a brisk pace and varied, tightly-timed activities, which tested all four skills. The creation of an enjoyable atmosphere increased motivation. Pupils were eager to show their retention of what they had learned previously and good planning ensured that that knowledge was extended, practised and reinforced with ever more demanding tasks. In many of the other lessons the objectives were explained, and mostly achieved, good planning built on prior knowledge or introduced new key words and phrases. Good materials ensured that tasks were staged to challenge pupils' capabilities and some good learning took place. Much of the lesson, however, tended to be teacher-led, opportunities to use the target language more consistently were missed and there was an over-reliance on practice through worksheets, good though these were. The atmosphere was more routine, as pupils completed their work dutifully, with a minority becoming distracted. There were too few instances of teachers' varying activities by involving pupils in pair- or group-work, especially oral practice, or in listening to authentic French on tape or video. Homework is now appropriate and relevant and directed to extension and consolidation of knowledge.
  166. The department follows the school's assessment policy and has access to data which has recently allowed regular tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and informs individual target setting. Marking is frequent and consistent and teachers give good, constructive feedback to pupils, especially on ways to improve performance. Many materials are effectively modified for pupils of different ability and there is good support for transient pupils, and those with impaired hearing and special educational needs.
  167. Arrangements for Key Stage 3 are not wholly satisfactory. The second language is seen by the school as a valuable experience for those Year 8 and 9 pupils in the appropriate bands, but at present it does not go beyond that, as there are not sufficient numbers choosing to continue to GCSE. The current practice of teachers' sharing Year 9 classes is under review. The management and governors of the school are currently considering a range of options for improving modern foreign language provision. Owing to the recent long-term absence of the head of department, the opportunities for trips abroad are in abeyance. The department has identified appropriate opportunities for using information and communication technology within the scheme of work, but more regular and formal integration is dependent on greater access to the facilities available to it.
  168. The department is currently affected by the long-term absence of the head of department, so that the implementation of many strategies and action plans is on hold. The team, under the leadership of the acting head of department, is coping well in ensuring that disruption to learning is kept to a minimum, and specialist supply teachers are now covering the affected groups. Clear policies and a detailed scheme of work and action plan are in place. Since an intense and detailed departmental review took place in March/April 2002, further monitoring and evaluation of teaching have not been implemented, despite the support and encouragement of the senior team to do so. In view of the need to raise attainment in the main school, and to involve pupils more in their own learning, the department needs to establish a programme with some urgency. A system, which allows mutual observation by all members of the team, will be particularly valuable in the sharing of good practice.
  169. Since the last inspection lessons are better planned and opportunities for reading and writing are better developed, but insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. Progress has been satisfactory.



## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The high quality of staff in music, with a very good range of skills to resource development.
- The intensive development of music's role in school.
- Very good resources and accommodation for music.

### Areas for improvement

- The refinement of assessment in the lower school to provide a manageable system which links criteria for success to National Curriculum attainment target levels.
- The balance in music technology between skill development and musical content.

170. The proportion of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2002 gaining level 5 or above in teacher assessments is below the national average, but is steadily improving. There was no examination group at GCSE in 2001; however, of the seven pupils taking the examination in 2002, nearly 90 per cent gained grades A\*-C with an average points score of 5.0, which is exceptionally good.

171. Attainment in work and lessons seen with Years 7/9 is at the national average and in Year 10 is above the national average. There is no Year 11 group. Progress is good and pupils with special needs often attain as well as their peers. Pupils in Year 7 perform their own group compositions, carefully controlling the sounds in effective musical ensembles. Some Year 8 pupils were still at the de-coding stage with staff notation, but listen well for information and enjoyment. Some Year 9 pupils were confusing sound effects with music in the film music project. One Year 11 pupil produced a very successful extended atonal composition in binary form, the second section was exceptionally good using interlocking imitative work in this imaginative composition for wind quintet. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum; however, in some lessons, abler pupils do not receive appropriate extension work. Instrumental teaching is expanding rapidly and supports a broad programme of extra-curricular music which provides a significant extension to the curriculum for those involved. ICT provision is strong.

172. Teaching and learning are good at all levels, significantly improving since the last inspection. Teaching is characterised by good planning and preparation with clear targets set in all lessons; criteria for success are defined and linked to informal assessment in the lesson with teacher, mutual and self-assessment at the end of each topic. Feedback is good, focusing on individual and group development. Questioning both reinforces and develops learning. Relationships are often very good, making pupils feel secure and building an atmosphere where pupils delight in each other's success. Occasionally there is an inappropriate stress on technical skill development, rather than musical development, in music technology work.

173. Pupil response is very good at all levels. They are often bubbly and full of life, but most settle well. However, in some lower sets the behaviour of a small number of boys impedes the learning of all. Pupils are mutually supportive, and listen and concentrate well. Many do not find more extended listening to music easy. The attitudes towards their own and each other's work in a Year 7 class carrying out an end of task assessment was exemplary.

174. There is a broad and balanced curriculum, building on a range of published materials, with additions from the department. It is undergoing continuous refinement, particularly in music technology and ICT, where the excellent resources have only recently been fully operative. A wide range of historical and world music is built into the curriculum at all levels. The different strengths of the staff are very well used to broaden the musical experience of pupils. GCSE music is offered, and there is a very large group in Year 10; relevant developments are planned for post 16 music courses. The current assessment system is sound, but needs to be refined to make it more manageable as well as linking more closely into criteria for success and national attainment target levels. Leadership and management are very good, and a collegiate style ensures that all staff are involved; the Head of Department's enthusiasm carries others along. She is, above all,

someone with a clear vision.

175. Progress since the last inspection is very good and all the issues have been fully resolved. There are exciting developments in instrumental teaching, extra-curricular work in bands, and the curriculum at all levels which will underpin continuous growth in the role of music in the school. The role of music technology is particularly significant.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The facilities and learning environment are very good.
- The organisation of the department is effective.
- Provision of a good enrichment programme.
- Achieving the Sportsmark award.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient consistency in the assessment of the levels in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3.
- Allowing sufficient time in lessons to apply skills and challenge all pupils physically and intellectually.
- Extend the range and balance of teaching and learning strategies to ensure the evaluation strand of the attainment target is implemented in all activities.

176. The levels of attainment reported by the school in 2001 were well above average. However, in the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally, with a significant minority achieving levels beyond this. The consistency and reliability of teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 need improvement. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9 as a result of effective teaching and the commitment, attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. In lessons pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils also make good progress to achieve the standards expected. Gifted and talented pupils achieve good levels of performance through the enrichment programme.

177. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the results were slightly below the national average. However, there is significant improvement in 2002 grades, with 67 per cent of pupils achieving grades in the higher A\*-C category. This is above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining a pass (A\*-G) has consistently been above the national average. Overall since the last inspection there has been improvement in GCSE results with significant differences year on year.

178. Inspection evidence shows that the standards achieved by pupils aged 16 in the core physical education programme are at least in line with national averages. Attainment by pupils currently taking the GCSE examination is at the level expected nationally. Pupils in this course are making good progress overall but results are better in practical work than in the theoretical parts of the examination.

179. Standards and achievement in dance are at least satisfactory and at times good in Key Stage 4. In 2002 64 per cent of pupils achieved a grade in the A\*-C category. Standards in GCSE theory are not as high in the practical element. Levels of literacy and pupils' lack of self-confidence in writing generally are a key factor in relation to dance coursework. The staff are addressing this issue and there is very good teaching to support pupils in the examination groups in the school currently.

180. In games lessons in both Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils develop their understanding of the strategies, as well as recognising the importance of improving techniques, in order to implement the tactics they wish to use. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher adapted the lesson with less able pupils to

- achieve good levels of understanding in rugby. Pupils' knowledge of health, fitness and preparation for specific activities is good. Facilities are now very good. The impact of the accommodation on teaching, standards and staff morale is evident. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
181. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, as is the manner in which they conduct themselves. The clear expectations and quality of relationships are the key to the good ethos for learning observed in most lessons. In a minority of lessons there is evidence of a lack of concentration and low-level disturbance from some pupils, which hinders learning. However, in most lessons, pupils work hard and respond well to the good teaching.
182. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good. The strongest feature of the teaching is the effective organisation and support for pupils. Teachers use their knowledge to engage and enthuse pupils. The quality of relationships is good and there is a climate of mutual trust and respect. Teachers manage pupils well, including the challenging behaviour of a significant minority, allowing them to learn in a safe and calm environment. Lessons are planned effectively to ensure a balance in teaching of existing skills and learning of new ones. Teachers own knowledge of the areas of activity is good. Pupils' achievement is good and progress is very good in lessons where evaluation skills are planned and applied. Teachers give constructive feedback and observational skills are good.
183. There is, however, an over reliance on the teacher giving direction in most lessons. There are examples of very good teaching. For example, in a Year 8 basket-ball lesson very good learning was evident because the teaching focused on learning points across the three strands of the attainment target. The teacher also explained the purpose of the learning activity, gave feedback as to where pupils were in their learning and what they needed to do to improve. Assessment in lessons overall is sound. In the best lessons teachers focused on the learning gaps, used praise appropriately, built on pupils' responses and handled misconceptions well to steer pupils towards a clearer understanding. Learning and progress are not consistently recorded against the national curriculum levels. The current schemes of work and assessment procedures are a good foundation to improve standards further. Consistent use of assessment criteria, in relation to pupils' capability to plan and evaluate is key raising levels of attainment further.
184. Teaching is very good in dance, with some excellent features. Use of resources is good and the development of the web site to support learning in GCSE dance is good. This is an important strategy to help and improve the self-confidence and knowledge of pupils. Expectations are very high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour and personal approaches to dance. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen to instructions, communicate appropriately in groups, try new skills and are prepared to choreograph dances alone and with others. Systematic progress is aided by well-planned and challenging teaching. In a Year 11 GCSE lesson the teacher created a stimulating learning environment through the effective use of video and enthusiasm for the subject. The self-confidence of pupils in the theory of dance is a barrier to the raising of standards further.
185. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The head of department is calm and leads by example. He delegates appropriately to ensure colleagues have responsibilities within the department. Most have a leadership role as well as opportunities to manage key areas of work. Overall there is good support from the headteacher and senior leadership team. The team have a commitment and understanding of the areas for improvement. To raise standards further some rigour in relation to self-evaluation will be required at team leader level.
186. The department contributes positively to the personal development of pupils. There is a clear moral code and the teachers endeavour to promote principles, which clearly distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities in lessons as well as good extra-curricular provision, such as team games, to develop and express moral values. The programmes extend their personal and social understanding of physical education and sport. Their spiritual development is enhanced by the work. It helps them to gain a sense of achievement and develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others. There is a supportive culture of success and

teachers also work sensitively to help the pupils when they have to cope with limitations in their performance. Cultural awareness is particularly strong in dance.

187. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There is an upward trend in GCSE results. There have been significant improvements in the quality of the accommodation although storage of major items of equipment creates difficulties. Other achievements include introduction of GCSE dance and A and A/S level. The department have worked hard to broaden the range of enrichment activities. The school gained the Sportsmark award in recognition of an extended programme of sport.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good results in GCSE examinations.
- The leadership of the head of department is excellent.
- Good relationships, attitudes and behaviour.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment and target-setting procedures and matching work to the specific needs of different pupils, particularly the most able.
- Increased emphasis on the diversity of perspectives to be found within religious communities.

188. Results in the A\*-C grades for the GCSE examination have been consistently very good over recent years. In the GCSE examinations, in the summer of 2002, 32 year 11 pupils sat and 24 of them obtained grades A or B, 29 were awarded grades A to C, with the other three gaining a D grade pass. The previous year, 2001, 40 pupils sat the examination with 28 of them obtaining A to C grades and all obtaining A to E grades.

189. For pupils who do not take the subject to examination level in Years 10 and 11, good standards are achieved in a programme of study that covers fully the demands of the locally agreed syllabus.

190. Standards, related to work in the agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 3, are good. Work in exercise books is often neatly presented, although it does not always demonstrate the levels of understanding and interest evident in class discussions and responses to teacher questions.

191. There are examples of outstanding achievement. A pupil in the 2001 examination achieved an A grade when her attainment in core subjects at the end of Year 9 would have indicated an E grade to have been her most likely result. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 not following the examination course achieve well. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 3 is good.

192. Pupils' behaviour in class is usually good and often very good. Pupils respond well to the tasks set and work productively and cooperatively. A significant difference in attitude towards the subject between boys and girls is, however, evident in the numbers opting to take the subject to GCSE where girls are always in a considerable majority.

193. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. The department is fortunate in having the services of four knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist teachers. The subject has responded to recent initiatives, with particular attention now being paid to the development of pupils' literacy skills and the use of information and communication technology being strongly encouraged, although this is inhibited by limited access to facilities.

194. The department utilises a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies; good use is made of whole class teaching, groupwork and individual research. Videos and artefacts are used particularly well in many classes, a good example being a non-examination Year 10 class on

Islam where a teacher was able to show examples of different styles of clothing and use a brief clip of an appropriate video.

195. Class management is good. Good relations are maintained within lessons and work usually proceeds at a brisk pace. There are lessons where some time is wasted at the beginning in giving out books and taking the register, leaving pupils without anything to do. Attention needs to be given to encouraging pupils to take more personal responsibility for their learning in some lessons. For example, in an upper set Year 8 class, the teacher read to the class and dictated notes when the pupils were well able to read the book and make their own notes.
196. The department is pioneering the use of an eight level scale for assessing pupils' attainment in religious education. Excellent work has already been done and this now needs to be built on so that pupils and their parents know what levels they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next level. Planning is very thorough with a school scheme of work set out in detail lesson by lesson. Teachers then produce plans for each of their lessons that include provision for the needs of particular individuals and groups of pupils. There could, however, be more emphasis on the different perspectives of different religious communities.
197. Leadership is excellent. The subject is led by a teacher who combines very good subject knowledge and considerable teaching skill. She is determined to develop the subject further. She is fortunate in having the support and assistance of the previous head of department and two good, though less experienced, teachers. Together they make an exceptionally strong team that works very effectively.
198. The last inspection report detailed a largely satisfactory situation with some good features and some weaknesses. Since then there have been considerable improvements in standards achieved, in the quality of teaching, and in the resources and accommodation available for learning in religious education.

## **HEARING AND IMPAIRMENT UNIT**

199. Overall the education of the 12 pupils and students with a hearing impairment is of a good standard and there are some very good features. They are well integrated into the school as a whole and make good progress in their subjects.
200. The management structure for the centre is unusual. However, it has some undoubted strengths. The co-ordinator for the centre is a qualified teacher of the deaf. This post holder has recently chosen to reduce from a full-time to a part-time post. The manager of the centre is a senior learning assistant who has extensive experience and knowledge and is a very capable practitioner. The manager provides very good management for the learning support assistants; she also provides very good liaison with the mainstream teachers, colleagues in the special education department, outside agencies and, most importantly, with the parents and pupils. The co-ordinator draws up the centre's development plan and this forms part of the school development plan.
201. The support across the curriculum provided for the pupils is very good. The level of support is carefully considered, with some pupils having one-to-one support in lessons and those pupils in other lessons managing very well unsupported. There is also some withdrawal for one-to-one support for pupils who have additional special educational needs. The pupils are made aware of deaf culture and the difficulties, which pupils may have in acquiring social skills are dealt with as they arise during the pupils' school career.
202. Resources are of a good standard. Many of the learning support assistants have achieved relevant Stage 1 qualifications for teaching hearing-impaired pupils. In addition 22 of the mainstream teachers have achieved the Stage 1 qualification. This provides the pupils with a range of possible support mechanisms. The accommodation in the newly-built school is of a good standard, comprising of a suite of rooms, which are shared with the Special Educational Needs department. It would be enhanced by the provision of one or two small rooms, which could be used for one-to-

one teaching and testing. The acoustic conditions in the classroom are very suitable.

203. The profile of the Centre is high and the quality of training provided for the mainstream teachers is very good. There is always an induction programme for newly qualified teachers appointed to the school, as well as for new members of staff. The training about different strategies for teaching the curriculum to the pupils with a hearing impairment is continually updated and reinforced at training sessions for the whole staff.
204. As part of their enrichment programme, the students in the sixth form have the opportunity to learn Signed Supported English. The self-esteem of one of the sixth form students, who has a hearing impairment and who helped teach the course, alongside one of the learning support assistants was greatly improved.
205. The provision for audiology is very good; the hearing aid of every pupil is checked at the beginning of every day, as is usual practice in such centres, units and schools. The audiologist from the local hospital visits once a term to test the pupils' hearing aids. The benefits from this are two fold - the checks actually take place and the time which the pupils lose from lessons is minimised. The unsatisfactory aspect of this is that it removes the responsibility for the checks from the parents. The parents are responsible for taking the pupils to the hospital for their child's regular hearing test.
206. The Centre has good liaison with agencies from outside the school. The speech and language therapist visits weekly and documents activities for the pupils. These are practised under the guidance of the learning support assistants. The centre has good links with the deaf community and the co-ordinator for the centre has good links with other educators of the deaf working in similar units and centres in the South West. There are also good professional links with the LEA Advisory service for Hearing Impaired pupils.
207. The staff at the centre are very well motivated and contribute to very good provision for the pupils and students with hearing impairments.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### Business Education

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Very good relationships.

#### Areas for improvement

- A formalised scheme of work which includes the integrated use of ICT.
- Ready access to ICT.

208. The GCSE course has been restarted this year and there are no pupils in Year 11 studying the subject. Results in 2002, with only 13 pupils being entered, showed a good pass rate with an above average number of students gaining the higher grades. In lessons, the standard of work is in line with national standards. Pupils make sound progress overall and those with special educational needs good progress. For example, in a good lesson on franchising pupils developed their understanding of what this involved by reference to well-known examples like 'MacDonalds' and 'Body Shop'.
209. In Year 10, the quality of teaching is good. The teacher is new and has developed good relationships with the pupils. He is very knowledgeable and is developing sound schemes of work which fully integrate ICT into the lessons. There is an expectation that work is completed to a high standard, well presented and presented using appropriate computer software. The work of the

pupils matches the syllabus.

210. Learning is good or very good in lessons. Relationships are very good and pupils listen well to their teacher, acknowledging his expertise. They join in the lessons with enthusiasm. The teacher asks searching questions and they respond willingly. The pattern of the lesson is crisp, with many changes of pace and direction. This keeps pupils on their toes and ensures that learning takes place. Pupils follow instructions well and complete their tasks quickly and effectively. Pupils work hard to keep up, have confidence in their teacher and ask questions when they do not fully understand. The teacher responds to their needs and gives suitable explanations, ensuring understanding. As the pupils are given strong challenges, both of content and time, and teachers have high expectations, the work is completed well. Homework is regularly set and appropriately challenging. All pupils, regardless of capability, are well challenged and make good progress.
211. Accommodation is very good and resources are good, with a dedicated room for business studies and well-specified computers. The co-ordination and management are improving well to a good standard.
212. Overall then, since the last inspection, improvement has been good.

## 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 2001.

### *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	1	100	62	0	15	2.00	1.51

### *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	5	80	87	20	43	4.40	5.8
Biology	2	100	88	50	34	6.00	5.3
Chemistry	5	60	91	0	43	1.60	5.9
Business Studies	1	0	93	0	33	-	5.5
Art	6	100	96	33	46	6.00	6.6
Art and Design	1	-	-	-	-	12.00	12.2
Leisure and Tourism	4	-	-	-	-	9.00	10.1
Science	1	-	-	-	-	6.00	9.8
History	6	83	88	33	35	4.33	5.45
Geography	4	100	92	50	38	6.00	5.74
English Literature	16	100	95	19	37	5.13	5.91
English Language	9	78	92	11	39	4.00	5.27
French	1	100	89	100	38	8.00	5.59

### *Intermediate vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Information Technology	5	60	82	0	35	0	24
Health and Social Care	3	100	83	67	40	0	28
Leisure and Tourism	15	80	84	7	42	7	21



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

The inspection covered A-level pure mathematics together with AS level mechanics and statistics. The teaching of the application of the number element of the key skills award was not seen, but students' work was scrutinised.

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

#### Strengths

- Lessons are well-prepared and effectively delivered.
- Teaching encourages the students to work hard.
- There is good support outside the classroom for individual tuition.

#### Areas for improvement

- More involvement of students with discussion during lessons.
- More use of computer technology.
- A broader resource base together with improved library provision.

213. In recent years, very few students have studied A-level mathematics. Results have broadly followed attainment at GCSE, with only the more able candidates achieving success. The AS results last year were poor: many students entered the course without the necessary grades at GCSE and found the work too demanding. This weakness at AS level has affected work in the current A-level course. Students have an insecure grasp of previous knowledge, which hindered the work on trigonometric identities; they were also uncertain about applying the binomial theorem. As a result, progress is sometimes slow.

214. Currently, 17 students are following AS level modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Many students have not attained the top grades at GCSE, but so far their work in class and written work indicate that they are coping with the courses and achieving good standards compared to their prior attainment. In statistics, they understood frequency distributions, probability functions and could work out problems on measures of dispersion. In mechanics, they used vector algebra to resolve forces and had worked successfully on dynamics.

215. Lessons are well taught and delivered with enthusiasm. The demands of the examinations are emphasised and students given a high level of support both in class and in individual tutorials. Teachers spend most of the lesson teaching the content of the courses and giving examples of good practice. Little time is spent on the wider aspects of the subject or in discussion. As a result, the students tend to be rather quiet, concentrating on note taking and on doing the exercises, although they co-operate well. Their folders show that a lot of work is covered and that presentation is good. The work is marked, with indications on how to improve.

216. The application of number course was successful last year, with many students achieving good grades in the tests. The coursework contained good examples of statistical analyses: one project focused on local environmental issues; another examined the nutritional elements of food to comment on quality. This course is well managed by the key skills co-ordinator.

217. Resources could be enhanced, as there are insufficient relevant books in the library and not enough use of ICT. As in the main school, the head of department gives a good lead in the teaching of sixth form students.

## Biology

The provision is post-16 biology is **good**, whilst in chemistry it is satisfactory and in physics the numbers are too small to give a clear indication.

### Strengths

- Good standards and progress.
- The quality of teaching, focus, subject knowledge, pace and expectations.
- The feedback to the students on how well they are progressing.

### Areas for improvement

- Lack of breadth in teaching and learning styles.
- Insufficient opportunities for students to consolidate ideas through discussion.

218. Standards at A level are generally above average. Over the last four years attainment has been above the national average and biology has been one of the higher attaining subjects in the school. The drop out rate is low. Biology AS results in 2001 were also good, with the majority of students going on to follow the A level course and achieving above average results. The AS results in 2002 were considerably lower and from this group seven are now taking biology A level in 2002/03. Observation of students' work suggests that the AS results for 2003 will again be above average whilst those for A2 biology will be average. There is considerable variation in prior experience and qualification from year to year, but no statistical value added analyses are carried out within the department to monitor the progress made overall. Group sizes in biology A level have varied considerably in recent years, whilst the numbers taking the AS course have provided usefully sized groups.

219. The quality of teaching is good. Subject knowledge is very good, as is the interaction with students. The pace and challenge of lessons are good; expectations are high and well supported with good feedback and support. Staff are able to rephrase information and draw parallels with other aspects of the students' experience to help them appreciate and remember the point. In one A level session, for example, the class was considering the effect of hormone molecule size on allowing molecules to pass through the podocytes in the kidneys and into the urine. As an aside to the course, the teacher pointed out that some of the hormones produced early in pregnancy are small enough to get through and thus can be detected in the urine leading to early pregnancy detection. The students respond well to the teaching and make good progress. The courses are tightly focused on the examination syllabuses, although this can allow the presentation of ideas and work to be too teacher-orientated and to rely too heavily on prepared notes. The courses involve appropriate practical work and some question and answer sessions, but opportunities for the students to consolidate ideas through discussion and use of ICT are too few.

220. Students' achievement is generally good, with most making good progress from GCSE to AS work and then further good progress through to A level. With the AS group it is clear that the level of work is considerably harder and more complex than it was at GCSE and that they are coping with it. For example, in one AS lesson on enzymes, students were working on enzyme inhibitors, how they worked and how the curve produced when their rates of reaction were plotted could show some of their characteristics. Students were able to consider and discuss the material and come to good conclusions about what the graphs told them. This was well beyond GCSE. The good progress was made by all students including those who joined the course with only a C grade at GCSE. Work in the A level group equally shows good progress being made from their AS work.

221. The vast majority of students are clearly committed to achieving high standards, work hard and persevere in making good progress. Where there are brief discussions, they contribute reasonably and they are prepared to ask questions of the teacher. They listen to each other's arguments. Homework is generally well done in the AS course, although somewhat less consistent in the A level course with noticeable adverse effects on some students' progression.

222. Students' progress is closely monitored throughout both courses and useful feedback is provided. The students report being well supported and guided. Since the last inspection the department has consolidated its position but both student numbers and initial attainment are still very variable. Planning and preparation support good teaching, but the department lacks engagement with other departments in the science faculty and the lack of breadth in the teaching of the courses coupled with a lack of value added analysis suggests greater co-operation to achieve shared improvement goals could be beneficial.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- The pace of and variety of activities in lessons aids effective learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The number of students who do not achieve a pass grade.
- The size of classes.
- Rigour of on-going assessment against learning objectives.
- Insufficient discussion.

223. The numbers of students entered for the full Advanced Level chemistry qualification have varied widely from year to year, but have always been below half a dozen. The proportion passing first time has also varied widely, but has never reached above two thirds: it is always well below that for similar schools nationally. Moreover, none of the candidates has achieved a top grade of A or B. Overall, in the last five years, of the 14 students entered for Advanced Level chemistry, five passed. Formal assessment of the students in this subject at the end of Year 12 has taken place only once, in 2002, and the outcomes are much the same – just two of the five candidates reached a pass grade. The current students' work, in their files and in their lessons, also shows they are not fully meeting course expectations: their knowledge is satisfactory, even good in some cases, but understanding is often inadequate.

224. There are various reasons for this comparatively low success in comparison with national figures. The school's entry criteria are not as strict as some, nor are they so strictly applied. Class sizes are always low at this school – and this makes it hard for the students to reach pass levels, let alone the top grades. This is because small groups of chemistry students do not meet enough competition to become determined to achieve well. The work of the current chemistry sixth-formers, as assessed in their lessons, their files and talking with them, supports these findings; the Year 12 group is twice the size of the Year 13 group and the quality of their work and the depth of their knowledge compare better with national standards. Another potentially useful way to improve pass-rates is to focus the students on appropriate targets during the revision period.

225. Teaching is always good. The teacher knows the subject very well and how to teach it and puts in much hard work in preparing lessons and resources and in ensuring lessons move at a good pace. The teacher works hard to get discussions going in lessons, but this is much more successful in Year 12 than in Year 13. In the latter case there is a tendency to revert on occasion to a lecture style rather than to keep asking questions and demanding thoughtful answers. Even in the case of the Year 12 group, however, the teacher does not always assess each student against learning objectives as frequently and as thoroughly as the students need to ensure good progress.

226. The teacher is a good manager of resources, including of time, and on occasion can use IT applications, such as PowerPoint, excellently to enhance learning. While the accommodation is excellent, the students do not have sufficient immediate individual access to computers and communications in lessons, or even in the science department as a whole.

## BUSINESS

### Business Studies

A level and AS business studies lessons and work were inspected.

Overall, the quality of provision in Business Studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Results in the last year have shown a marked improvement.
- Teaching is good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Reduce the group size in Year 12. The current number is too large at 34 students.
- Provide an appropriate vocational course that matches students' prior attainment.

227. In the last three years results at A-level have been variable, with those in 2002 being above average, but with an absence of the higher grades. However, when compared with prior attainment, students progress well and achieve standards at least in line with course expectations. In the AS examination, results were generally low, with few higher grades. Current standards of work are broadly average for both Year 12 and Year 13 pupils.
228. Teaching is always good, often with very good features. This is because both members of staff have high technical expertise and a good range of teaching strategies. Their styles and specialisms contrast to form an excellent team approach. In Year 12, however, the very large group restricts the ability of the teacher to support students sufficiently for them all to learn well and make good progress. The school is planning to split this class into two to make it more manageable. The prior attainment of many of the students is moderate and a vocational course would be better suited to their needs. This would fit with the wide ranging provision and commitment that the school makes to vocational studies.
229. In Year 13, learning is good and often very good in lessons. Here smaller groups, and teachers teaching their subject with real expertise enable students to be motivated and make good progress. Explanations are clear and authoritative and the style of teaching makes students research their own thoughts and ideas and present them well. In more formal lessons, students concentrate, listening well to their teachers.
230. Students are confident in themselves because the good relationships in the classrooms give appropriate challenge and support. When they do not understand, they can readily ask their teachers to further explain, and this they do willingly. Students use computers regularly in their work and students are effective in a good range of programs. These they use in producing formal written work and for making presentations to their class or group.
231. Coursework tasks are produced well, using high level desktop publishing skills. They are supportively marked and sound improvement strategies are identified that students can follow to gain higher grades. Homework is regularly set, enabling good quality outcomes, and prepares students for their coursework assignments.
232. The accommodation is very good and resources are good, with a dedicated room for business studies with computers. There has been a significant improvement in the co-ordination and management of the subject of late. Staffing has been a problem but, with two skilful and complementary teachers now in place, effective development strategies are being implemented. Overall, since the last inspection, progress has been good.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM

A range of routes to accreditation is available and all these were inspected. Double and single awards in AVCE Travel and Tourism to Advanced level are provided, as is AVCE Leisure and Recreation to Advanced level and GNVQ Leisure and Tourism to Intermediate level. Some lessons are organised for groups of students studying at different levels and accreditation.

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The variety of routes to accreditation.
- The excellent quality of teaching and learning.
- Assessment and recording of student attainment.
- The very effective leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop action plans to improve the degree of detail in assignments.

233. Students achieve well, given their starting points. Over the past two years standards in Leisure and Tourism at Intermediate level have been close to the national average points score. In AVCE Travel and Tourism and Leisure and Recreation numbers of student are too small for accurate statistical analysis. However, standards are improving, although still below national expectations. The majority of students on all courses achieve at least a pass. Retention rates on all courses are good. A scrutiny of work during the inspection, together with discussions with students, demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding. Critical thinking is developing well, as is their ability to form and defend a point of view. Year 12 students are investigating the impact on tourism as a result of changing trends in society. In class discussions they are willing to contribute to the debate and most are formulating opinions and offering incisive comments and suggestions.

234. The quality of course work improves from Year 12 to Year 13. In Year 13 research is more thorough and there is an increased awareness of the unit requirements when submitting assignments. A significant proportion of students do not always appreciate the degree of detail required in written assignments and research. The analysis and extrapolation of data improves from Year 12 to Year 13. In a Year 13 lesson, dealing with event management, two teams of students improved their knowledge and understanding, producing business plans and effective marketing strategies. They had a maturity of purpose and a clear understanding of the requirements of the tasks. Students are using word processing skills to write their assignments. A number are capable of creating charts and importing images into their work. On all courses independent learning plays a major role in personal development. The school has provided vocational education students with their own base. Students make excellent use of this provision, often working in their own time.

235. Teaching is excellent. Planning is outstanding and teachers make extremely effective use of a variety of activities. The teachers are a strong team offering complementary skills, knowledge and expertise. As a result students are enthusiastic about their lessons and work at a very good pace. In all classes there is very good independent learning, a direct result of teaching which is supportive, challenging and knowledgeable about the learning needs of all students. Relationships are very good. Trust and mutual respect are very high. Students respond positively to the different styles of teaching they experience and therefore progress is good. Many students interviewed admitted that they had never produced so much finished work before. Assignments are clearly outlined. Teachers' comments on written work are helpful and constructive. Assignments are helpfully graded as units are completed. Regular tutorials are provided for feedback.

236. Leadership is very good. The self-assessment review, conducted in 2002, identifies many of the most important issues and is a testament to the pro-active nature of the vocational education being offered to students. Planning to deliver work-based learning is in place and a learning

partnership is planned with a local technical college and two local schools. A training partnership has also been developed with Torquay United Football Club. Resources are very good and are having a significant supporting impact upon the quality of education, particularly the designated sixth form base for vocational education.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Both GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses were inspected. The number of students taking the course has grown steadily over the past three years, and the majority complete it.

Overall, the quality of provision in Health and Social Care is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Examination results are consistently good, especially the advanced certificate of vocational education.
- Very good support given to students.
- The leadership of the subject is very good.
- Very good teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Reduce the amount of leaflets and worksheets.
- Teaching methods which encourage more student participation in lessons.

237. Examination grades at both intermediate and advanced levels are above the national average, with students achieving results which demonstrate that they have made very good progress. The current Year 12 intermediate group have a sound knowledge of the units covered so far. For example they clearly understand the various stages of human development and were able to discuss the important characteristics of each stage in a confident manner. They have already made several visits to local care units and clearly understand the core value base which underlines health care work.

238. The Year 12 advanced group are developing good, independent learning skills. They appreciate the importance of developing good communication skills and have already used some of this knowledge in health care in the community. The work of the Year 13 advanced group is of a very high standard. They are able to discuss complex health concepts, such as homeostasis, in a confident manner and can analyse and evaluate research issues well. A Year 13 piece of coursework demonstrated a competent understanding of the value of questionnaires and statistics in health care studies.

239. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject well to plan lessons that challenge students to produce high standards of work. Lessons proceed at a good pace, although students tend to be swamped with information leaflets and worksheets and need more opportunities to respond and discuss implications. Teachers use ICT well to assist students in the development of independent learning skills. Assignments are well structured with appropriate assessment carried out in an efficient manner. Very good support is given to students of all levels of capability and special care is taken to ensure that those with learning difficulties are monitored carefully. As a result students enjoy the course, are highly motivated and are keen to do well.

240. The leadership of the subject is very good. The verifier's reports indicate a high level of organisation and competence in assessing students' work. There is a strong team spirit, with all of the team committed to ensuring that students achieve their full potential.

241. Although not mentioned in the last report the department has made good progress. Numbers taking the course have increased and results have remained consistently good.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and performing arts, where lessons were seen and work examined across GCE A level, GNVQ and AVCE courses.

### Art

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

#### Strengths

- Improving achievement.
- Very good teaching, with teachers working as an extremely effective team.
- The attitudes of the students and their relationships with their teachers are very good.
- Very good leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- Develop strategies in order to improve achievement in the higher grades of external examinations.

242. The school offers a good range of courses. These include GNVQ Advanced Level, GCE AS/A level courses in fine art and photography and AVCE courses leading to either single or double awards. The school has increased its range of courses since the previous inspection. These changes offer better opportunities for students to make progress and enable them to study at the level most appropriate to their needs and capabilities.

243. The analysis of results and work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are average. The numbers of students on any of the courses is relatively small, making statistical comparisons with national averages difficult. Attainment has improved since the last inspection. For the past three years all students taking GCE AS and A-level examinations have achieved a pass. The overall pass rate for AVCE and GNVQ courses has been average, based on a very small number of students. The quality of work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are improving. Retention rates on all courses are good. A significant proportion of the work produced is good, particularly in drawing, painting, printing and photography. Students' portfolios demonstrate that they have carried out thoughtful investigation and creative exploration of ideas. A Year 12 class is producing good quality work using dry point etching techniques.

244. Photographic students are using digital cameras and Photoshop computer software to develop graphic designs based upon patterns. Effective use of computers as research tools is evident in sketchbooks and individual assignments. The Internet, Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator are all available. The work produced by students in Year 13 demonstrates that the development of skills and knowledge is improving over the two years of their studies. Students are confident when working with a variety of materials and resources. They are articulate and can discuss their work with confidence and demonstrate pride in their achievements. Their attitude toward the subject borders on excellent and is probably a major contributor to the quality of work produced in their portfolios and displayed throughout the Art Department and the school reception area. Progress is good when consideration is given to the students' prior attainment.

245. Teaching is very good overall. The lessons are challenging and well planned to provide all students with opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective. The relationships between the teachers and the students are very good, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Project briefs are well designed: they include clear aims and objectives, well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for completion. Consequently, students know what is expected of them and work at a good pace, making good, and often very good, progress. The use of a wide range of resources maintains students' interest and helps them to learn. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures to raise creative and visual appreciation. The department has made regular use of the skills of artists in residence, which makes a considerable contribution towards the quality of education being provided. Students are also given the opportunity to make visits to regional and national art galleries. All

classrooms within the department contain excellent displays relating to the work of significant artists or cultures, providing an opportunity for pupils to learn and appreciate the wider aspects of art education.

246. Students learn well as a direct result of very effective teaching and the promotion of independent learning skills; they are attentive and productive. They rise to the challenges set by their teachers and use their time well, often working outside set lesson times in a designated area within the department. Students support and help each other, talking and listening to each other.
247. Assessment is particularly effective as an influence on future curriculum development, lesson planning and helping students reach targets. It includes a certain amount of student self-assessment and the students were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Work is monitored and assessed at periodic intervals usually linked to the completion of a project. Teachers maintain detailed records of attainment and progress. Students are very complimentary about the level of support given to them by their teachers. Strategies need to be developed to increase the numbers of students who achieve the higher grades in external examinations.
248. The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is clear vision and very effective planning which promotes high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team. They regularly monitor attendance and progress against individual targets. The quality of the work of the students on display in the Art Department and around the school is impressive, promoting high standards, interest in the subject and celebrating achievement.

## Performing Arts

Overall, the quality of provision in Performing Arts is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good organisation and thorough preparation of lessons.
- A flexible range of learning opportunities.
- Hard work and detailed documentation provided by both teachers and students.

### Areas for improvement

- A lack of vocational experiences for the students and teachers.
- The complexity of the range of courses available.

249. Sixth form students have opportunities to study for a combination of the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education, AS level and A2 level GCE courses in performing arts, drama and music. The basic course is intended to be the AVCE, which is equivalent to one A2 level, with the possibility of dual certification in either drama or music GCE for those that can cope with the extra work. However, several students have opted out of the AVCE and study only for the AS or A2 examination, so these have become the main qualifications. The Year 12 students are time-tabled for 10 hours study, but the Year 13 for only 5, and they are expected to “fill in” on the Year 12 course. Most classes have students from both years in them. This leads to a situation when there may be up to five qualifications being studied by the students in any one lesson. Three lessons were observed that covered all the students taking the different courses.
250. Overall, standards are above average. These are new vocational courses and were not reported on in the last inspection. Seven students took the AS level in drama and theatre studies during the first year of the course last year (2002). The results were above the national average, with five students gaining a grade “B”. Four students have stayed on to take the A2 examination and three to complete the AVCE. One unit of the AVCE was submitted for assessment, with satisfactory results, but some students did not achieve as highly as would have been expected from their GCSE results; they will re-submit their unit later. The girls did much better than the boys. The AVCE is a two-year course and the six units required do not have to be submitted until the end of it. As part of the development of the new course the work was submitted early to get an indication



of how well the students were progressing.

251. All the students are very well organised which helps them to cope with the range of courses they are following. The Year 12 and 13 students co-operate well; their folders for the AVCE and their GCE courses are very thorough and detailed, showing good levels of key skills, particularly literacy. Their research is extensive and uses ICT well to present the work and illustrate it. They keep their academic and vocational work separate when necessary, and the two complement each other in that they give a wider perspective of the subject. Their practical work is progressing very well. There is very good collaboration between students with different talents to produce and develop performances such as the pantomime they are working on. It is lively and well presented, they are enthusiastic and take their different roles seriously. The more able pupils take a lead in the direction and development of the productions, are used well in class and achieve highly. Most students have taken a GCSE examination in drama or music and have achieved well on these popular courses; they have progressed well during their time on the sixth form course. Many do other work in the performing arts, such as working with Key Stage 3 pupils in extra-curricular activities, with local theatre groups or school productions. Their experience of professional environments and of the arts industries is, however, inadequate to provide a wide enough experience for a vocational course. All spoken to were considering higher education courses rather than direct entry into the profession.
252. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan and prepare the courses, the units for assessment and individual lessons very well. They are enthusiastic, work well as a team and have very high expectations of the students. They support and challenge the students continually, giving them constant reminders of the tasks set, the work required and the progress they are making. Targets and time limits are set and adhered to. The completed work, and that in progress, is marked regularly with constructive comments and detailed records. The pace of lessons is brisk and the students are given a lot of responsibility. There have been no opportunities for staff to attend training courses, despite the school's efforts to support them, and the teachers have had little external advice on how to introduce and develop the new vocational course. It was introduced in response to low numbers taking drama and music in the sixth form, and concerns about the viability of the A level groups. It is an unusual course for a school, being more common in colleges preparing students for employment in the arts industries. The teachers have put in a tremendous amount of time and effort into developing the course and are now much more familiar with the requirements than they were when it was introduced. Nevertheless they have done very well in preparing students and linking this vocational course with the GCE courses that students have opted for. The flexible range of courses allows students to find appropriate learning opportunities. The lack of the teachers' vocational experience in the arts industries has been a drawback, but their expertise and professionalism, and visits to local venues have filled in some of the gaps. Learning is therefore good, students enjoy the lessons and work together well to develop performances. They concentrate well to develop their practical skills as well as debating and discussing each other's work to increase their understanding, producing written records of their progress and completing assessment units. Year 13 students find the extra time to study for their courses and the way they work with the Year 12 students is a positive feature.
253. Leadership is good. Once the decision had been made to introduce the vocational course the two subject leaders worked very quickly to develop a coherent strategy. This supports the students and has created an effective structure to provide a stimulating environment for teaching and learning. The complexity of adding AS and A2 GCE to this course has been managed well. The overlap between courses has been explored and ways of supplementing each developed. There is still a lot of paperwork, for both vocational and academic work, and ways of reducing this and approving prior learning are not yet developed sufficiently. The accommodation is good and enhances the learning opportunities of the students, but equipment, especially for ICT and control technology of lights and effects, is only adequate, and is limiting the students' experiences of the professional situation. Staffing is good, but there is no permanent technical support for productions.

## HUMANITIES

Both history and geography AS and A level courses were seen and work sampled.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Results showed an improvement in 2002, especially at AS level.
- Good teaching.
- Very good subject knowledge amongst the staff.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Students are very enthusiastic and work well as a group.
- Assessment procedures and marking are very thorough.

#### Areas for improvement

- More focus on independent research skills and wider reading.
- Analytical skills in essay writing.

254. At present, 11 students study the AS level course and six the A2 course. The department accepts pupils with a wide range of ability and some have modest results at GCSE. Some of the history students are new to the school in the sixth form.

255. Students' performance in the A2 examinations improved this summer and results are on a rising trend. All students who took the A2 examination gained grades A- E which is above the national average. This shows an improvement compared with the history results in the last inspection. Results in the AS examination are also improving and all of these pupils gained grades A - E. For three out of the five candidates at A2 their history grade was the best they attained. Their achievement when compared to their prior attainment is good. At AS 45 per cent of students obtained A and B grades which equals the national average. These students achieved well in relation to their results at GCSE. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students.

256. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of samples of students' work in the present Year 12 and Year 13 indicates that standards are average and that achievement is good. The students are benefiting from good planning and co-ordination of the A2 and AS level courses and teaching which is well focused upon the demands of the examination. In Year 13 students have built on their experiences in Year 12 and have gained in their knowledge and maturity of approach to the subject.

257. At A2 and at AS level most students are able to use historical terminology very accurately to explain causes and effects of key events in the periods studied. In a Year 12 lesson on the causes of the 1905 Russian Revolution, students talked of the underlying political ideologies with confidence and in a Year 13 lesson on Gladstone and Liberalism students were able to offer a series of convincing explanations for his stance on a number of issues. They are however less confident when asked to discuss and analyse different historical interpretations of an event or movement. The written work of some students is still focused on the narrative rather than the evaluative. Students were able to evaluate the sources in context, as in a Year 13 lesson where sources on the battle of Stalingrad were examined.

258. The subject knowledge of the teachers within the department is very good and the quality of teaching is good overall. There is a carefully planned scheme of work, which is tightly focused, and teachers prepare material carefully, so that the timing and pace of the lessons are conducive to good learning. The two teachers involved in teaching the A2 and AS level courses regularly discuss the course as well as the most effective way of teaching the topics. Teachers use skilful questioning to ensure that historical concepts are fully understood. In a Year 13 lesson the

differences between Gladstone's and Disraeli's views on foreign affairs were very well elicited by the teacher by questioning based around one of Gladstone's speeches. Marking is thorough; advice is given on how to improve skills and students in Year 12 have been given advice and guidance on how to structure essays.

259. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methodology. Students work in pairs, preparing and making presentations or reports for distribution to other students or enter into debates for and against a viewpoint. Students are encouraged to brainstorm ideas and a range of methods of remembering and selecting ideas are encouraged, such as the use of spider-diagrams, pictograms, highlighting texts or bullet pointing notes. There is often too much dependence upon the teachers giving information and over-reliance on text books. A greater focus on developing a broader range of research skills would support and extend students' learning. Their use of ICT, apart from web site investigation, remains underdeveloped and there are limited opportunities for them to manipulate statistical information so as to gain an insight into the links between political, economic and social effects.
260. Students are enthusiastic about their history lessons and their attitude to learning is very positive. They are generally well motivated and co-operate well with each other, sharing resources and listening respectfully to each other's opinions and encouraging each other. Students enjoy very good relationships with the staff and are quite prepared to ask if uncertain and to volunteer their opinions. Most students prepare the work set and come fully prepared to the lessons, although a few have not prepared by completing the reading or tasks and are unable to contribute effectively.
261. The good teaching and learning arise from the good leadership and management of the head of department. He is eager to build on what has already been achieved and appreciates the need for students to develop their independent learning skills further.

## Geography

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

### Strengths

- In 2002 the results of the relatively small number of A level students were above the national average. There was a high pass rate in the AS examination.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Some lessons have insufficient challenge and too few opportunities for students to consolidate their learning.
- Closer monitoring of individual student progress.
- The use of ICT and fieldwork.
- Teacher co-operation to share good practice.

262. Currently seven students are following the AS level course in Year 12 and 16 the A level course in Year 13.
263. In 2002 the attainment of the five students entered for the A level was above the national average. They all gained a pass grade, with 60 per cent attaining the highest grades, A and B. In the AS level examination 91 per cent of a much larger group of students achieved a pass grade, with 13 per cent gaining A and B.
264. The standard of current work in Years 12 and 13 is generally average, although there are some good features. In lessons students demonstrated sound levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good and there are good relationships with their teachers.

265. Year 12 students demonstrated the ability to absorb and understand a range of concepts relating to climatic change and answer questions enthusiastically and competently. They were well able to analyse and evaluate ideas related to the causes of global warming and its likely wide ranging effects in the United Kingdom.
266. Year 13 students had a sound understanding of location and nature of wildernesses, worked enthusiastically in small groups researching the effects of tourism on the land and people of Nepal and were able to construct a mind map. They demonstrated the interest, confidence and ability to engage in class discussion productively.
267. However, students' written records do not always reflect these positive traits. In some cases there is limited evidence of personal research and the materials are poorly organised. Some exercises are incomplete or missing. This may adversely affect revision and closer teacher monitoring of standards of work is required. There is little systematic, individual target setting or monitoring, using the information held on the school database, nor much student self-review. As a consequence, some students are not sufficiently challenged or stretched.
268. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good and very good features. In the best lessons, the objectives are clearly articulated to the students, who are kept on task by good pace and a variety of activities. The students' understanding is extended through good subject knowledge, the provision of appropriate stimuli and resources and the asking of well thought out and open-ended questions. Teachers miss no opportunity to test understanding of key geographical terms and concepts as the lesson progresses and check these again before the lesson ends. There are ample opportunities for students to consolidate their learning with an emphasis on research, analysis and evaluation.
269. Teaching is less than satisfactory in the minority of lessons where the teacher is under-prepared and does not give pupils sufficient opportunity to consolidate their learning. In these circumstances some students become confused and, despite their inherent good nature, a little bored and restless. Their learning and potential progress consequently suffers; they are insufficiently challenged. Whilst students are encouraged to use the Internet to research topics other opportunities should be sought for students to use computers in their studies. Equally they lack a programme of fieldwork to further independent learning.
270. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department who has been responsible for this subject for a number of years is currently on secondment and has been temporarily replaced by his second in department who has very limited sixth form teaching experience. He is benefiting from the good departmental documentation and resources established by the substantive post holder and the support of those who have more experience. However, he is developing new schemes of work and wishing to take the department forward. He is fully committed to the success of the students and has attended examination board in-service training related to the AS and A level courses.
271. The department should actively co-operate to develop the work in the sixth form, particularly in respect of teaching styles, target setting and monitoring and the assessment of students' work. The use of ICT and fieldwork should be extended as soon as possible to ensure that students are further challenged and supported to realise their full potential. There have been significant improvements in respect of accommodation since the last inspection. Sixth form teaching now takes place in well appointed rooms with access to computer facilities, providing a stimulating working environment.

## Religious Studies/Religious Education

Lessons were observed in religious studies A level but not the core religious education programme.

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.

- The quality of individual attention given student.
- The match of the A level syllabus to the needs of the students.

#### Areas for improvement

- The core RE programme needs to be better monitored.
- Insufficient appropriate textbooks.

272. The quality of provision of religious education is **satisfactory** in relation to the core programme and **very good** in relation to the A level programme.
273. Over recent years the number of students sitting A level religious studies has been very small with just seven pupils in each of the last three years. In the current Year 13 there are four students, but there are now 14 students in Year 12 preparing for the AS level with all of them currently proposing to continue on to A2.
274. Students who have taken the A level examination in the last three years have all obtained a pass grade in the B to E range, with most obtaining a C or a D. Students' A level grades have in the past usually been in line with expectations based on their performance at GCSE.
275. Inspection evidence suggests that the current standards and level of achievement is good, which is somewhat better than previous results would suggest.
276. Teaching of the A level course is good, with both teachers combining a good subject knowledge and teaching expertise with a sensitive and encouraging approach to the students and their individual needs. A good example of this was the effort a teacher made in setting up an interview with a Quaker for a Year 13 student who needed to investigate Quaker beliefs about pacifism for a coursework assignment. In Year 12 a lesson on Christian ethics led into an unplanned discussion about rape which the teacher judged needed to be allowed to continue whilst she insisted on the highest standards of intellectual rigour and clarity - this lesson was an excellent example of the contribution the subject makes to the personal and moral development of students. Very good notes, produced by staff, are available to students. The department liaises very effectively with the school library to ensure access for students to the study materials they need. Notwithstanding this, there is a shortage of suitable textbooks to support the new A level course.
277. Students respond very well to the subject at A and AS level. Attitudes in lessons are enthusiastic and purposeful. Students participate in discussion freely and listen carefully to one another and to their teachers.
278. No lessons in the core RE programme were seen during the inspection and therefore no judgements can be made about the standards achieved by students or the quality of teaching. However, the programme has been designed to conform to the requirements of the local agreed syllabus and incorporates input from members of local religious communities and others involved in charitable and social action within the local area.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature but media studies was also seen. Two lessons of Year 12 literature were seen. Because of staff absences and consequent timetabling changes, it was not possible to observe any Year 13 literature teaching. However, a wide range of students' written assignments was sampled. French was the only foreign language seen.

Overall provision for English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- There is high take-up in Year 12.
- The media studies curriculum is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Targeting students to increase the numbers achieving A and B grades.

279. Results in the 2001 and 2002 English literature A level were good in that all students passed, but the proportion of students gaining A-B grades was well below the national average. The number of students entered, however, was small – nine in 2002. By contrast, there are 42 students in Year 12 studying for the new AS and A2 examinations.
280. Overall the standards of teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. This was seen, for example, in an outstanding lesson where students were challenged intellectually to discuss their reading of Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, dealing with issues of love, loyalty and relationships. In a Year 12 media lesson, the teacher's excellent planning and provocative questioning engaged students in high-level arguments about the social, ethical and moral issues in advertising. Some of the Year 13 literature coursework shows highly developed skills in research and response to literary texts, as in the essays on humour and song in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. There were other examples of good quality writing in media studies assignments, where students analysed the representation of women in men's magazines or the celebrity status of 'the Beckhams'. Year 13 media studies students are able to show their understanding of film genre theory when they make good use of their technical skills to make short sequences of video film. In another Year 13 lesson students worked most effectively in small groups – carefully selected by the teacher – to plan and prepare a presentation on media industries. This work is very well supported by a weekly programme of visiting speakers from the local professional media community.
281. The sixth form English and media provision is very well managed. The high quality accommodation and resources enable staff and students to make productive use of the library and new technologies in their everyday work together.

## Modern Foreign Languages – French

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

Strengths

- The teachers' profound knowledge of their subject.
- The Year 13 students' use of the Internet for independent research.

Areas for improvement

- Regular and formal access to information and communication technology.

282. GCE advanced level results have fluctuated over the last four years. Until this current year, which has seen increased recruitment to French, very small groups have made comparisons unreliable. Only one student (male) offered advanced level French in 2001 (grade B). Two girls achieved grade E at AS level in 2001, but did not continue, therefore there were no candidates for A2 in 2002. 2002 AS results revealed that half of the six (female) candidates obtained grades C, D, and E, and the other half did not obtain a grade. Of those only one is not continuing to A2, so retention rates are good. Boys rarely take up French at advanced level.
283. The current Year 13 students are achieving above their previous AS attainments. In their written work students are assimilating well the idiom of French expression and sentence construction, especially in the way they present their arguments. They are developing a "feel" for the language, despite inaccuracies in verb forms and agreements. They come to lessons well prepared and show a high level of independence in note-taking and in the general approach to their work. In their research for the current coursework topic, they have been making skilful use of the Internet to find information on Provence and on Marcel Pagnol. In one lesson they were involved in individual discussion with the teacher of how they were going to present their topic. This was an exploratory session in English, when they discussed the information they had found, outlined their main themes, the angle from which they were going to approach their arguments and the conclusions

they were going to make. The teacher was able to suggest consulting their colleagues on other angles and other sources of information and to encourage them to examine and justify their opinions. More regular access to ICT would help their research.

284. Students in Year 12 are finding the transition to AS level extremely demanding, especially in view of the absence of the head of department. They have had plenty of work set, which has been followed up by other members of the team, and are settling in confidently with the new specialist supply teacher. They are showing a high degree of responsibility in note-taking and in producing and preparing work to deadlines. Much of the extended written work still shows the influence of English expression and sentence construction and has not progressed much beyond the higher level of GCSE. In classwork they are coping well with difficult authentic French in both reading and listening tasks, but the more sophisticated language encountered in the texts has not yet fully impacted on their confidence in expressing their ideas either orally or in writing.