

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT MARLOW SCHOOL

Marlow

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110535

Headteacher: Clive Ricks

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans
1049

Dates of inspection: 11-15 November 2002

Inspection number: 249820

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern non-selective

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11-18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Bobmore Lane
Marlow
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ian Lee

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1049	Brian Evans	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design Performing arts (Sixth)	
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)	
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History Business education (sixth form)	
4430	Richard Eaton	Team inspector	Music	
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship History (sixth form)	

20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Geography Leisure and tourism (sixth form) Special educational needs	
.8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form) Physics (sixth form)	
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	French (sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Great Marlow Foundation School is bigger than most secondary schools, with 1097 students on roll, 994 of whom are in Years 7 to 11. There is a good balance of boys and girls in each year group. The size of the school has increased since the last inspection. The local education authority operates a selective system and 36 per cent of students move on to grammar schools at the end of Year 6. As a result, attainment on entry is below average. Twenty per cent of students on roll travel from High Wycombe. Overall, there is a balance of boys and girls although the proportions vary from year to year. About ten per cent of the students are from a wide range of ethnic minorities. Eighty-one students have English as an additional language but none are at the early stages of acquiring English. The main languages other than English spoken by students are Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali. The number of students who have special educational needs in Years 7 to 11 is above average, including 15 students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Their disabilities are largely related to moderate learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties, but a few have other needs. The number of students eligible for free school meals is average. Students come from an average range of socio-economic backgrounds. Although the school has had a significant turnover of teachers in the last two years, it is fully staffed, with temporary teachers used only when there is temporary absence.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. The headteacher and senior managers manage the school's staffing and financial resources efficiently and create a secure learning environment within which students achieve well. Teaching is good. As a result, standards are improving. Students relate very well to one another. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership to both staff and students that allow improvements to be made on raising achievement.
- Most students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for students' personal development results in good attitudes to learning and good behaviour.

What could be improved

- The application of students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all subjects.
- Use of assessment data to guide teachers' planning on raising achievement.
- Opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. It has responded well to the key issues in the report and has made good progress. GCSE and Year 9 national test results show a substantial improvement in standards. Curricular provision is more broad and balanced. Double science is now studied by the large majority of students in Years 10 and 11 and there is improved provision of academic courses for sixth form students. The substantial investment made in computers and software is benefiting students' ICT skills, although in many subjects these skills are not practised enough. Tutor periods are used more effectively to support students' personal and academic development. Teaching has improved still further. The rate of exclusions has been reduced without compromising the high standards of behaviour expected from all students.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	C
A levels/AS levels			E	

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

The above table is based on the typical GCSE 'points' scored by the students in Year 11, and the typical A level and AS level points scored by sixth form students. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. In 2001, the GCSE average point score per student was above average when compared with similar non-selective modern schools. The trend in the school's averages between 1996 and 2001 was above the national trend. In 2002, Year 11 students had a lower profile of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 than in previous years but value-added measures show that students continue to achieve well. The school sets realistic but challenging GCSE targets and has come close to meeting them over the past two years. ICT skills are below average and students do not have enough opportunities to apply these skills in many subjects. In the sixth form, results gained by students entered for AS and A level examinations have been consistently below average. However, this is in the context of students beginning courses, mostly A level, AS level and vocational courses, with very modest GCSE grades.

By the end of Year 9, students achieve well, given their below average attainment on entry to the school, and standards are average overall. Students' results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average in English, below average in mathematics and average in science. Results were above average in English when compared to non-selective modern schools, well below average for mathematics and below average for science. Improvements in national tests by the end of Year 9 over the past six years up to 2001 have been below the national trend. However, test results in 2002 in all three subjects show a significant improvement over 2001. The inspection team judge students to be achieving higher standards than those indicated by the 2001 English tests because teaching and learning have improved and because of the positive impact of an effective literacy strategy. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Boys do not achieve as well as girls in English; the reverse is true in mathematics. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. Literacy and numeracy skills are below average on entry. Overall, they are average by the end of Year 11. In work seen, there was no significant difference between attainment of the different ethnic minority groups. Students achieve well in Years 12 and 13. This judgement is further explained in the sixth form summary annex to the report.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students apply themselves very well to their work and participate well in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is good but there are occasional lapses by a minority of students. Staff and students work well together in dealing effectively with any incidences of oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and	Good. Students show a mature understanding of different viewpoints and

relationships	relationships are good.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. The most effective teaching takes place in Years 9, 10 and 11 and it is in these year groups that students achieve best. Teachers have a good command of their subject and explain tasks very clearly so that students gain a good depth of knowledge. They expect students to work at a good pace, and as a result students try hard. Literacy and numeracy are taught well in English and mathematics and these basic skills are reinforced well in other subjects. Teachers are less effective in many subjects in providing opportunities for students to use ICT in their lessons. This is part of the reason why students' independent learning skills are weaker than other aspects of learning. Generally the school meets the needs of individuals well at all levels, including those who have special educational needs and students from ethnic minority groups. Teachers try, with some success, to overcome differences in attainment between boys and girls although patterns of achievement can vary between subjects and from year to year. There is a high proportion of good teaching, which builds on students' positive attitudes to school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. ICT is not integrated into a number of subjects in Years 7 to 11. The time allocated for Year 7 music is restricted.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Learning support assistants provide good support for students in partnership with teachers.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The relatively few students make good progress and are fully integrated into the school curriculum.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Although the school does not meet statutory requirements for daily corporate worship, assemblies are often well-crafted, moving opportunities for personal development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. A well-organised pastoral system ensures that students are well known to teachers who have responsibility for them. Procedures for child protection and ensuring students' welfare are not reviewed frequently enough. The monitoring of students' academic development is satisfactory although teachers do not use assessment data enough in planning their programmes of study. The school has the confidence of all its communities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by the deputy head and senior staff. The sixth form is well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Monitoring systems are good.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has turned round a deficit budget through efficient financial controls and there is now a small budget surplus. The principles of best value are applied in an exemplary way. The school constantly evaluates its practice and its cost effectiveness. Accommodation in a number of areas is cramped. Staffing and learning resources are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children make good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school working more closely with parents. • Homework. • Information about how their children are getting on at school • A greater range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspection findings support parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors found a few inconsistencies in the setting of homework between subjects and between teachers but, overall, homework is set and marked regularly. The pastoral staff work closely with parents. Written reports on progress are at least satisfactory and often good. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is smaller than average, with 103 students. The roll has steadily increased since the last inspection. The largest single group is White British. Few sixth formers enter the school from other schools. Overall, standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are below average. Two students are identified as having a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school provides a range of courses leading to A level or advanced vocational qualifications.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form that gives good value for money. It has much improved since the last inspection thanks to good leadership and management. Relatively few students enter A level courses with A* or A GCSE grades but value-added measures show they make good progress and achieve well by the end of their studies. Teaching is good and achievement looks set to improve further, although there is a need for more emphasis on developing students' independent learning and research skills. Support and guidance for students in the sixth form are good.

Strengths

- Support and guidance for students are of a high quality and students respond by working well on their courses. Retention rates on courses are high.
- There are good leadership and management strategies that ensure the sixth form runs smoothly and is monitored very well.
- Teaching has improved and students achieve well.

What could be improved

- The curriculum offer does not fully meet the needs of average and lower attainers.
- Teaching styles do not consistently develop students' independent learning and research skills.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics AS level	Satisfactory. Students make good progress in their AS level courses. Teaching and learning are good.
Physics A level	Satisfactory. Students achieve in line with their attainment levels on entry to the course. Teaching and learning are good.
Biology A level	Good. Students work well and achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are generally good.
Business studies AVCE	Good. Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are generally very good. Management of the subject is good.

Leisure and tourism AVCE	Good. Students achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are good.
Performing arts A level	Good. Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Management of the subject is good.
History A level	Very good. Teaching is very good and students achieve well. Management and leadership are very good.
English A level	Satisfactory. Students achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are sound.
French A level	Satisfactory. Students are well motivated and learn satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

In other subjects sampled, teaching was excellent in the Diploma for Child Care Education; good in art, media studies and psychology; satisfactory in politics; and very good in geography. It was excellent in Spanish (one student).

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Personal support and guidance is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very effective, reflective leadership. Financial arrangements are outstanding. Organisation and analysis of results are strengths, and improvement in 2002 results where there had been weaknesses demonstrates the concern to raise standards. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Monitoring of teaching is very good, but the best practice is not spread quickly enough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The choice of courses allows them to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations. The printed information about subjects and courses in the sixth form was clear, accurate and helpful. They are taught well and challenged to do their best in all or almost all of their subjects or courses. They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join the sixth form in this school. Teachers were accessible to help them if they have difficulties with their work. The school helped them to settle in well into the sixth form and sixth form work. 	<p>On questionnaires a significant minority felt that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> were not kept well informed about progress. were not given helpful and constructive advice on what they should do in the sixth form. were not well-advised by the school and/ careers advisers on what to do afterwards.

The inspection team agreed with the positive comments students made. However, they found that the reservations on questionnaires were not representative of what is happening in the sixth form. Students are kept well informed and receive good advice about what to do after Years 12 and 13. Great Marlow students receive good advice in Year 11 before entering the sixth form.

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 students' achievements

1. Overall, the attainment of students on entry to Year 7 is below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are close to the national average. Students generally make good progress through the school. However, their achievement patterns vary between subjects.
2. Inspection evidence shows that standards by the end of Year 9 are:
 - above average in physical education;
 - average in English, mathematics, science, citizenship, geography, history and modern foreign languages;
 - below average in art and design, design and technology, ICT, music, religious education.
3. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve:
 - well in English, science, citizenship, geography, history, music and physical education;
 - satisfactorily in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education.
4. In English and science students achieve well because teaching is good and students have positive attitudes to learning. In many subjects there are differences in the performance of boys and girls. In mathematics and science, boys achieve better than girls. In English, a small minority of boys underachieve. In work seen, the difference does seem to be narrowing but there remains variation between year groups. In all subjects, teachers have good subject knowledge and a firm commitment to raising standards. However, the use of assessment and target-setting procedures is not sufficiently rigorous overall. Very good leadership and well-planned lessons in history enable students to achieve well. In all years, ICT is not integrated into the schemes of work of many subjects and thus students have limited opportunities to practise and develop their ICT skills.
5. Inspection evidence shows that in Y11, current standards in GCSE subjects are:
 - well above average in ICT;
 - above average in science and geography;
 - average in English, mathematics, art and design, citizenship, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education.
 - below average in physical education.
6. Students achieve:
 - well in science, art and design, design and technology, citizenship, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education and religious education;
 - satisfactorily in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
7. Overall, standards are improving because teachers have high expectations and prepare students well for examinations. Students have good attitudes to learning and respond well to good teaching.
8. The arrangements introduced for supporting students' literacy skills are good; for example, key words are generally consistently displayed and referred to in lessons. Teachers give an appropriately high priority to meeting individual needs, particularly in reading and writing. Skills in numeracy are average and improving.
9. Students with special educational needs make good progress by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Teachers use school procedures to assess their progress. In lessons where a learning support assistant is present they make a separate note of students' progress that is relayed to the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo). For those students with an individual education plan, progress is reviewed at least three times a year. At these meetings targets are checked and if they have been met new ones are set. The progress of students with a Statements of Special Needs is also reviewed annually to assess whether the requirements of the statement are still

needed. All students with English as an additional language make good progress and have full access to the timetabled curriculum.

10. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. A co-ordinator was appointed towards the end of the summer term 2002. Following training he wrote a policy that has been circulated to staff. Each department has provided him with a statement of the provision they have for students who would benefit from opportunities to extend and deepen their learning. The co-ordinator has made a start at identifying students who teachers regard as possessing gifts and talents. For example, one student is gifted in athletics, cricket, football and rugby. Students from ethnic minority groups and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because teachers have a good awareness of their needs.

Sixth form

11. In September 2000, the AS level was introduced as a separate intermediate qualification leading to the GCE A level (A2). GCE A level results have been well below average in recent years and were well below average in 2001. Many students find the A/AS courses difficult because they start from a base of a B or C grade in their GCSE examination in the subject chosen. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades in 2001 A/AS examinations was very low. However, the proportion of students completing the courses in the sixth form – the retention rate - is above average. In work seen, standards are rising because teaching is good and students are well motivated with positive attitudes to learning.
12. In the reported subjects and courses, attainment is:
 - average in mathematics, physics, performing arts, history and French; attainment is also average in the AVCE business course;
 - below average in English, biology and the AVCE leisure and tourism courses.
13. Students are generally attaining grades above expectations based on target grades derived from students' GCSE performance. Levels of achievement are generally good. However, students' independent learning and research skills generally are weak. Students achieve very well in The Diploma in Child Care (equivalent to three A levels) and in geography A level courses because the content is well taught and adapted to their interests and attainment levels. These courses were not inspected in detail in this report.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Students' attitudes, their behaviour in most lessons and relationships are good and complement the manner in which they serve and value their school and community. Most students are confident, disciplined, and motivated learners. All groups of students concentrate well and persevere to complete tasks. They co-operate well and work effectively together, exchanging information and ideas. They respond positively when given the opportunity to work independently, which was not always evident in lessons. Students continue to display these positive characteristics and show interest in most lessons. Those with special educational needs share the positive attitudes, which are evident throughout the school. A small number of students in the lower school are not keen to learn. They take longer to settle down and, on occasions, interrupt learning and teaching.
15. Most students have a good attitude to extra-curricular activities and this supports the development of good social skills; for example, students enjoy participating in sports such as netball, basketball, football and hockey. Students are positive about the school and that the caring, sensitive and supportive of staff. They feel that the school values their aspirations. These views contribute to effective relationships and good attitudes to learning.
16. Standards of behaviour are generally good. Despite the narrow, long corridors and stairways, the movement around the school is orderly. Students demonstrate a pride in their school and its traditions by taking responsibility. Older students serve the school as head boy and girl with assistants, and as prefects. Many of these students take opportunities to work closely with

younger students, supporting their learning needs, and this supports academic standards. Students throughout the school serve on the active year and school councils and contribute to elements of school organisation; for example, a representative group of students are invited to discuss the school with applicants for senior posts. These opportunities effectively support students' personal development and enable them to value their school and wider community. There are occasional incidents of bullying and other inappropriate behaviour, which are dealt with effectively by the school. In the last school year there were 54 fixed period exclusions and one permanent exclusion. Some of the students excluded were persistent offenders. The school population has significantly increased and in relative terms exclusions have fallen over the past three years. Since the last report the school has sustained the good attitudes, behaviour, relationships and values evident in the last inspection. Attendance remains satisfactory.

17. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. Levels of unauthorised absence are below the national average and there is evidence of a steady rise in the rate of attendance. Staff rigorously pursue absences and work closely with students and parents to increase existing levels of attendance. Full attendance is acknowledged and rewarded. Registers are taken at prescribed times and comply with statutory requirements. Registers are also taken during lessons to discourage internal truancy. The education welfare officer works closely with staff to further improve attendance.

Sixth form

18. Students have positive views about the help that the school provides for them. They receive a good level of support from teachers in both their personal and academic development. Most students provide a good example and excellent role models for other students. Coursework and assignments are completed promptly. Students are proud of their school and are anxious to develop their skills.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Overall, teaching is good and makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved by students of all attainment levels. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11 and good in the sixth form. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 72 per cent and very good or excellent in 33 per cent. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. While teaching in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory, in Year 9 it is good. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, where over one in four lessons were very good or excellent. Overall, teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection when 15 per cent of lessons seen were considered to be less than satisfactory. Students are making satisfactory or better progress in spite of the major difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in a number of subjects over the past three years. The improved quality of teaching and learning is recognised by the parents.
20. Teaching and learning are:
 - very good in Years 7 to 11 in history;
 - good in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and ICT;
 - good in Years 7 to 11 in English, science, citizenship, geography, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and physical education;
 - satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and ICT.
21. The quality of teaching and learning is better, overall, in the upper and year groups than in the lower. However, in Year 9 teaching is more often good or very good because students' individual needs are more effectively met, and this is reflected in the improved standards as indicated by the test results in 2002 and by the judgements in work seen during the inspection.
22. Strategies in the school improvement plan focus on a more consistent quality of teaching and learning in all subjects. For example, the leadership group has placed a high priority on raising achievement more effectively through monitoring and support of classroom practice. Most teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Overall, the teaching of basic skills is

good. Classroom management is generally good and provides a positive environment for learning. Teachers do not always pitch the work to match students' needs because in many subjects where teaching is otherwise satisfactory, the quality and use of ongoing assessment in lessons are unsatisfactory.

23. In the best lessons, for example in science, teachers have high expectations and use a variety of activities to maintain interest. In these lessons, students appreciate the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Unsatisfactory teaching, for example in art and design, is characterised by slow pace in students' learning and weak classroom management. A general weakness in teaching and learning is the lack of opportunity for students to develop their independent learning skills. The difference between good and very good teaching is that very good lessons are characterised by a much greater contribution of students to their own learning because teachers provide them with the opportunity to do so.
24. The quality of students' learning is good. Overall, students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is satisfactory. In a significant proportion of lessons good attitudes to learning lead to a brisk pace when lessons are well-structured and include a variety of activities and teaching styles. Homework is used satisfactorily to support students' learning but there are inconsistencies between teachers and between subjects. Marking of students' work is good but again there is some inconsistency in practice.
25. Learning by students with special educational needs is good. They respond positively in lessons where tasks and resources match their learning needs closely. In an English lesson in Year 8, students with special educational needs progressed as well as others because the teacher provided an appropriate writing frame for them. The use of a model and a game helped students with special educational needs to revise the structure of the atom in a science lesson for Year 11. In many lessons teachers provide different tasks on the same topic so students with special educational needs can work at their own rate and complete the task. This occurred in a geography lesson for Year 7 on locating places on an Ordnance Survey map using grid references. Students with English as an additional language learn well.
26. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Learning support assistants do very valuable work in supporting students with special educational needs in lessons. They make a significant contribution to the progress made by individual students and students. For example, a student in Year 10 has made great strides in improving spelling and reading because his self-confidence has been supported by a learning support assistant. One assistant has supported a student with visual impairment since she started at the school.

Sixth form

27. The overall standard of teaching in the sixth form is good. In the 42 lessons observed, teaching in Years 12 and 13 was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 81 per cent and very good or excellent in 26 per cent. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. In the best practice, lessons are planned well and teachers use their subject knowledge well to motivate students to explore their knowledge and understanding further. However, in many lessons, too much teacher-directed activity in a lesson stifles students' motivation and does not inspire them to work through their own hypotheses and ideas. Students do not get enough opportunity to develop their independent learning and research skills.
28. Provision for the teaching of key skills is satisfactory but varies between teachers and departments. In English, communication skills are developed through discussions. Number skills are developed in a number of subjects, for example, in geography. However, opportunities to develop the key skills of independent learning and research techniques in most subject areas are not well provided.

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

29. Statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met, and the school provides for religious education in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. There is a sound curriculum policy, which has been developed since the last inspection. The curriculum committee of the governing body have regular informal contact with senior managers and receive formal reports annually. This enables the governing body to keep up to date with developments and ensures that they are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum.
30. The curriculum is timetabled in a fortnightly cycle of 50 teaching hours, which aims to maximise time for learning in all subjects. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum now includes citizenship, which is taught well mainly within the personal and social education (PSE) programme. French and Spanish are offered as modern foreign languages and drama has recently been introduced for all students. The curriculum is constrained by two major factors. The number on roll in the school has risen from approximately 600 to over 1000 students in recent years and this has put a great strain on specialist accommodation; for example, in physical education and design and technology. Some areas have benefited from recent building; science and the sixth form course in Diploma in Childcare Education are good examples. Design and technology and ICT provision has been affected by difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified staff.
31. Students in Years 10 and 11 study up to nine GCSE subjects. The school benefits from its involvement in an area consortium arrangement that allows students to successfully study vocational courses as part of an alternative curriculum for those who have been disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school makes good provision for the small number of students who find it difficult to follow the normal curriculum because of poor behaviour, poor attendance, or exclusion. These students are carefully identified in consultation with the appropriate staff and receive good support and mentoring.
32. The school has a good and well-established PSE programme, delivered on a whole-school tutor group basis once per week. The programme is built on a structured set of discussions, tutorials, role-playing exercises, and presentations. It includes citizenship, health education, careers education and guidance, sex education, and drugs awareness. The whole programme is vibrant and innovative and is well liked by students and engages their attention. It links well with the weekly year group assemblies and the daily form periods and the programme is monitored well by senior managers.
33. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. It begins in Year 7 and gradually increases in scope up to the end of Year 11. By Year 11, students will have received impartial and objective guidance and advice on their options post-16 from teaching staff, from the local careers service and from visiting speakers to the school. All students have the opportunity to engage in mock interviews from a range of providers, including the local Rotary Club, which has been involved with the school for almost 30 years. They will also have undertaken a two-week work experience placement, organised in collaboration with the local education business partnership. All students have open access to a well-stocked careers library, which includes electronic as well as paper-based materials.
34. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. They follow a full curriculum to the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, they normally take the same number of GCSE subjects as other students do. A few students focus on GCSE coursework or vocational studies instead of attending French lessons. They receive good support from the SENCo and learning support assistants in a selection of lessons. The learning support base is available outside lesson times for students to discuss difficulties in their work with the staff. A homework club is run before lessons and attracts daily about 20 students, not just those with special needs. The base has computers that students use confidently, and a magnifier to enlarge text for those students with visual impairment. A number of CD-Roms help students with spelling and reading difficulties to improve their skills. Provision for students with English as an additional language is good.
35. The range of extra-curricular opportunities available to students is satisfactory. There are a large number of well attended extra-curricular activities provided in physical education, including a wide range of sporting activities of both competitive and special interest nature, which enhances the

curriculum of that subject. There are some enrichment visits to the theatre, to galleries and exhibitions, and to performances. These are complemented by trips abroad, and by a range of visitors to the school. There are some homework and study clubs, but there is scope for further development.

36. The local and wider community makes a positive contribution to the learning, social, cultural and personal development of all students. Inspection evidence indicates that the careers service, employers, business commerce, community and further education representatives and friends of the school all make invaluable contributions by developing and promoting learning in the classroom and school. However, there are missed opportunities to form constructive links with minority ethnic organisations and communities.
37. The quality of the provision for students' spiritual development is good. The school has successfully developed an ethos within which students can develop in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. Religious education provides very good opportunities for students to explore values and beliefs and reflect on the ways in which they impact on people's lives. Values and beliefs are also dealt with in other areas of the curriculum, for example in design and technology, where teachers try to develop students' pride, and in physical education, where the importance of perseverance is emphasised. Assemblies and tutorial periods also make a valuable contribution towards this aspect of students' personal development. The display of reflective quotations around the school provides opportunities for students to think deeply about a range of issues.
38. The provision for students' moral development is good. The school offers clear moral principles and moral and ethical issues are discussed in assemblies, tutorial periods and within a number of curriculum areas. During the week of the inspection, for example, Year 10 students heard a visiting speaker from Compassion in World Farming. History lessons consider a range of moral issues, including the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. In religious education students consider the issue of when life begins and discuss the ethical implications of their answers. Some subjects, including art and design, however, provide only limited opportunities to explore moral issues.
39. The school's provision for students' social development is also good. The PSHE and citizenship programme underpins this. An elected school council is active and has credibility with students. Recently, for example, it has been involved on the interviewing panels for new teaching appointments. Students of all ages are active in raising money to support charitable causes: they have, for example, raised money for a hydrotherapy pool for a local school for the disabled. During the week of the inspection large numbers of students were collecting for the Children in Need charity.
40. Provision for cultural development is good. The school strives to develop an appreciation of students' own cultural traditions in many ways. The school fosters a respect for other cultures through its religious education programme and through the work of a number of subject departments, such as history and design technology. In the latter, for example, students made a mini-mosque in wood and metal, and used inspiration from many cultures in textile projects in Year 11. The school seeks to prepare students for life in a multi-cultural society by stressing the importance of equal and fair treatment for all, and by valuing students as individuals.

Sixth form

41. The sixth form curriculum does not provide a sufficiently broad base on which students can select their sixth form courses. Key skills provision is satisfactory. Apart from the very successful Diploma in Childcare Education course, there are limited vocational courses on offer to meet the needs of post-16 students who have achieved an average or below average set of GCSE grades in Year 11.
42. There are good enrichment opportunities available to students. They play an important part in the induction of Year 7 students and are attached to Year 7 and Year 8 tutor groups to provide general support. A range of social activities is planned and organised by students during the year.

Students have good opportunities to talk to careers staff and are encouraged to make regular contact with the local careers office. There is a good range of information available in school.

43. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in the sixth form is good. The school has developed, and is using, a religious studies based scheme of work, in which all students receive a scheduled tutorial programme. The work explicitly explores philosophical and ethical issues that impact on the communities with which the students interact. It serves to maintain a strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural context for all aspects of student life in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

44. The school cares well for its students. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, but some reporting guidelines need to be reviewed and staff, including the designated teacher, do not receive regular training on child protection policy and practice. Procedures for health and safety are good. The school community and governors take effective action to ensure that the school meets statutory requirements and gives priority to the safety and well-being of the school community.
45. There are effective procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development. Most teachers and support staff work in an effective manner and provide good levels of individual support and guidance. Inspection evidence indicates that students from different racial and cultural backgrounds value the ethos in which they learn and the quality of care provided. The personal, social and education programme makes an effective contribution to students' personal development. It enables students to make informed choices about healthy living, safety and sex education, and learn to work as responsible citizens of the school and wider community.
46. There are effective procedures for monitoring and raising attendance. Heads of year and form tutors work closely with the educational welfare officer to identify irregular attendance and use the information to take appropriate action. Teachers are supported by the attendance officer, who has a special brief for monitoring of absences and consistently inform parents of their child's absence and poor time-keeping. Heads of year work closely with form tutors to reward good attendance. Subject tutors make checks on students' attendance in lessons and this discourages internal truancy. These methods work well and enable the school to achieve sound levels of attendance.
47. A good clear policy and procedures on monitoring and promoting behaviour ensures that teachers manage and achieve good behaviour in lessons. The system of rewards and sanctions is consistent with good practice and helps most students to make informed choices about learning and behaviour. This enables the school community to achieve and learn in a friendly and tolerant environment. The school's measures for monitoring and eliminating bullying, racism and other types of anti-social behaviour are also good. The low levels of reported incidents of bullying and racism reflect staff commitment and good practice. Since the last report the overall provision for students' care and support remains good.

Assessment

48. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are good. The appointment of a whole-school assessment manager has enabled the school to begin to use a range of data with greater understanding. Heads of department have only recently started to focus on how to best use the centrally collated data available and to identify underachieving pupils so that extra support and guidance can be given.
49. The use of assessment information in guiding curricular planning is inconsistent. There are elements of good practice in planning but in many subjects current practice is unsatisfactory. Not all teachers have, as yet, capitalised on the potential of this information to help them plan the curriculum or to accelerate pupils' progress.

50. There is effective working between pastoral and special educational needs staff, which facilitates information exchange and a consistent approach to pupils with both learning and behavioural difficulties.

Sixth form

Assessment

51. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress have some good features. Work is marked regularly, and students feel they get good and helpful feedback to help them improve. The school makes good use of value-added measures to provide reliable predictions about students' performance and is in a position to monitor students' progress against predictions in a systematic way. Regular progress reviews are useful in identifying areas for improvement.

Advice, support and guidance

52. The school offers good advice and support for students in the sixth form. The school has a good relationship and liaises well with external careers services, which offer the students good advice. A significant number of sixth form students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that the school does not give helpful and constructive advice and they were not advised about future options. In interview, sixth form students stated that they felt that the advice given to them was good but they felt the resources available to them could be improved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Inspection evidence confirms parents' positive views about the school. Parents value their good relationships with the school. Most report that their children like school and are expected to work hard. Parents are also pleased with the good behaviour of their children and good standards of teaching. They believe that the school is well led and managed and that their children make appropriate progress and are helped to become mature. However, some parents expressed concerns about the provision of homework. Inspection evidence indicates that the provision for homework is satisfactory and that it supports students' learning and personal development.
54. Most parents enjoy a positive and constructive dialogue with the school. These parents are pleased with the good quality information they receive through the school prospectus, the home school agreement and the annual report from governors. These school documents are written in an accessible style and comply with statutory requirements. The students' end of year report also provide good levels of information about students' achievements, attainment and attitudes to their learning and their personal development, but some parents have rightly indicated that targets for improvement in some subjects are not clear. Most parents appreciate the information they receive during parents' evenings, which are very well attended. All parents are provided with regular newsletters from the school. This enables parents to celebrate the achievements of students and community, as well as to keep abreast of events, both inside and outside the school.
55. The overall impact of parental involvement in the life of the school is satisfactory. The Friends of Great Marlow are an integral part of the school and work extremely hard by hosting social and recreational functions and fund-raising events, which enable the school to purchase materials for learning and support the personal and social development of students. Parents, including a parent governor, regularly support learning of students in the school library and by supporting sports events and drama performances.
56. Since the last report the school has sustained its good relationship with most parents, continues to provide good levels of information, and values the role of parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and key staff are good. The headteacher, supported well by senior managers, gives clear leadership and direction to all staff.

Overall, standards are rising. There are clear, key priorities for action. By making teaching and learning the main priorities in the well-structured school improvement plan, the headteacher has focused staff on the need to raise students' achievement. There is good evidence of a strong focus by senior managers on ensuring that all students, including ethnic minority groups, have access to the full range of curriculum activities in the school.

58. Leadership and management are:
- very good in science, design and technology and history;
 - good in English, citizenship, geography, religious education and physical education;
 - satisfactory in mathematics, art and design, ICT, modern foreign languages and music.
59. The school has a clear set of achievable aims and values. Senior staff promote a positive environment where all students feel secure. The governors are well aware of their roles and responsibilities. The mechanisms for the appraisal of the headteacher are in place and effective. Governors receive full reports from a very efficient finance manager, which enable them to fulfil their overall responsibility for the school's financial arrangements. In the last three years, tight budget controls have enabled the school, for the first time this year, to project a small surplus of income over expenditure after a number of years where the budget has been in deficit. There are no significant outstanding issues from the last audit report. The administration uses appropriate systems for financial management. The school applies the principles of best value well. Overall, the school is effective and provides good value for money. Governors fulfil their roles satisfactorily. There are tensions yet to be resolved within the governing body but, fortunately, they have not hindered the efforts of teachers to raise students' achievement.
60. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are satisfactory. All senior staff and middle managers monitor performance. The school improvement plan is an effective working document. It is well budgeted, identifies areas of weakness and provides positive ways of rectifying them. The school has developed a good database for recording student assessment and is in the process of training staff to use this information as one element in their overall strategy for raising achievement. The analysis of comparative assessment data does not yet benefit curriculum planning in all subjects.
61. There are good arrangements in place for the professional development of all staff. Needs are identified from performance management training forms, from the school improvement plan and from department development plans. The staff development co-ordinator gains an overview of staff and school needs. She also collates the evaluation form completed by all staff attending training. The school thus has a record of all training, its quality and its suitability. The co-ordinator has control of a substantial budget. Training is well linked to whole-school and subject needs. There have been a number of staffing difficulties but these are now mostly resolved and this explains the improved standards in a number of subjects, for example in modern foreign languages, compared with past examination results.
62. The rising number of students on roll has led to difficulties in accommodation. In a number of instances, this affects the quality of education, and particularly in subjects that need a high degree of specialist facilities. For example, there are not enough science laboratories to accommodate all students for all their science classes. Art and design and design and technology areas need refurbishment and modernisation. Learning resources, including the library resource centre, are at least adequate overall and have a good impact on students' learning.
63. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCo) gives good leadership to the staff on the provision for students with special educational needs. The profile of special needs has been raised through her initiatives and the good training she has provided to staff on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Learning support assistants receive clear direction from the SENCo. She chairs weekly meetings with them very effectively so that they are well informed and are able to contribute information from their knowledge of individual students. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs provision gives the SENCo strong support. He visits the school each week to support students with special educational needs in lessons. Governors report appropriately to parents annually on the school's special educational needs provision. The school

meets the requirements of students' Statements of Special Educational Needs, and annual reviews are appropriately conducted. The handbook for special educational needs could usefully reflect more closely the practices at the school so that it is a helpful introduction and reference for all those work at the school, especially those who are new.

64. New accommodation for students with special educational needs is very good. In most subjects the school has sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff to teach the National Curriculum, and examination courses for students in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

65. The leadership and management provided in the sixth form are good and this has led to a growth in the sixth form numbers. One positive measure of the improvement is that sixth form results show up well on a value-added basis when compared with other similar non-selective sixth forms in the local education authority. Development planning is good and a clear educational direction has already been established that suitably reflects the school's general aims and values, including a commitment to equality of opportunity. The sixth form is cost-effective and most courses are managed well.
66. The school accepts that the curriculum offered post-16 does not adequately meet the needs of all students and needs to have greater breadth. A particular need is to provide appropriate vocational courses for students entering the sixth form with average or below average GCSE grades.

Resources

67. Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate. However, the increasing numbers put further strain on the already cramped provision for all students in the school. In addition, students' access to ICT for extending their learning is limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the school, the governors, senior management team and teaching staff need to:

- **ensure that students' ICT skills are applied in all subjects in line with National Curriculum requirements;
(Paragraphs 72, 87, 110, 117, 122, 131, 140, 167)
- **use assessment data more effectively to guide teachers' planning on raising achievement;
(Paragraphs 4, 22, 48-50, 60, 75, 128, 147)
- extend opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.
(Paragraphs 13, 23, 27, 72, 75, 193)

The school also needs to address the following issues:

- The disparity in some subjects between the performance of girls and boys in GCSE courses;
(Paragraphs 69, 80, 88)
- the lack of regular information and training for all staff on child protection procedures.
(Paragraph 43)

Sixth form

- Extend the range of post-16 vocational courses offered to meet the needs of many students with average or below average GCSE grades;
(Sixth form annex)
- improve students' skills as independent learners.
(Paragraphs 163, 168, 179, 196, 198)

***Already identified in the school's development plan*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	121
	Sixth form	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	5	35	47	33	1	0	0
Percentage	4	29	39	27	1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	3	8	23	7	1	0	0
Percentage	7	19	55	17	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	994	103
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	174	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	15	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	165	2

English as an additional language

	No .of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	81

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	52

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	73	93	166

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	49	51
	Girls	85	56	64
	Total	126	105	115
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (64)	63 (65)	69 (56)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (17)	36 (38)	29 (19)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	53	45
	Girls	68	58	56
	Total	103	111	101
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (71)	67 (72)	61 (61)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (22)	37 (37)	17 (21)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29).

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	73	67	140

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	35	69	70
	Girls	35	64	67
	Total	70	133	137
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	50 (50)	95 (97)	98 (87)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	38.5
	National	39

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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	10	10	20

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Average point score per candidate	6.0	7.4	6.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	791	47	1
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	17	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	27	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	67	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	13	1	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	8	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	68	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59.52
Number of students per qualified teacher	1:18.4

Financial year	2001-2002
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	350

	£
Total income	2,530,516
Total expenditure	2,479,000
Expenditure per student	2,361
Balance brought forward from previous year	(-39,652)
Balance carried forward to next year	11,864

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	21.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	34.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	43.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.65
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1097
Number of questionnaires returned	432

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	49	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	52	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	59	3	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	55	17	3	1
The teaching is good.	33	57	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	51	17	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	45	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	54	14	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	40	49	4	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	55	3	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	46	11	1	12

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

- Strong leadership of the department is driving up standards, especially in literacy.
- Teaching is good, which leads to good learning.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good and develop learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not given enough responsibility for their own learning.
- Students are not making enough use of new technology.

69. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, English results were below the national average. Results in English literature were also below the national average. Results in tests and GCSE represent good achievement overall since they are higher than would be expected from the students' standards when they entered the school.
70. In work seen, attainment in English by Year 11 students is below average. This reflects satisfactory achievement. All students write with understanding of Shakespearean texts and a range of poetry; higher attainers write with appreciation and enjoyment. They also read a wide variety of texts and can make inferences. A key feature in these students' work is their ability to place texts in a social context and then compare it with modern society. Students talk animatedly on injustice, inequality and race but cannot always transfer this to reading and writing. Overall, except for a small minority of boys, presentation of work is careful, reflecting pride in it. Students can examine media texts and research references. Lower attainers do not always use standard and non-standard English appropriately. A minority of students relies too heavily on the teacher and their work is brief, lacking in detailed understanding and insight.
71. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students were above the national average and above the national average for schools taking students from similar backgrounds. English results were better than those in many other subjects. In work seen, attainment by Year 9 students was average. This represents good achievement and improving standards, because, when the students joined the school, their overall standards were below average. Literacy skills, in particular, have improved. This is partly because of the work done by the school on the National Literacy Strategy. Not only is reading and writing a focus in subjects, but also lessons are planned to incorporate a range of learning activities. The school and the department take this very seriously and higher standards in reading and writing are emerging. Students' oral skills are developing in classroom discussion and they are keen speakers in informal situations. A speaking and listening assignment, seen in a Year 7 lesson, was planned so that the students could develop persuasive speaking and understand emotive language. The use of drama is used successfully by students to present their own persuasive arguments.
72. Writing standards are average; students have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is generally well presented except for a small minority of boys. Higher-attaining students write successfully in an historical context. In a Year 8 lesson on creative writing, students extended their understanding and use of simile and metaphor. One student wrote, 'The dinosaur had strong, white, shiny teeth dripping with slimy liquid like a waterfall'. The work of a small minority of students is less well presented. Recent initiatives to improve boys' standards include a sensitive choice of texts and rigorous teaching focused on test criteria and high expectations. These are beginning to have a positive impact. The standards of all students are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing and reading assignments. Use of ICT to aid the presentation of work and research skills is limited because of a lack of technical support.

73. Students with special educational needs make good progress by Year 9 and satisfactory progress by Year 11 because of the effective links with the special educational needs department and shared planning of work.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and there are examples of very good teaching and learning. In a small minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, students learn less because the pace is too slow and students are too reliant on their teacher. Work for different groups of students is not matched closely enough to their needs, so some can flounder and take up unnecessary amounts of the teacher's time asking questions. In the good and very good lessons there is a brisk pace; students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Students respond well to their teachers' care for their achievement and this helps develop the good relationships evident in the department. In a Year 10 lesson on 'Macbeth', the students thoroughly appreciated working to produce a structured, well-informed discussion. They consciously shaped language for a purpose, presented their findings on Shakespeare's language, developed note-taking skills for revision and increased their use of technical vocabulary. This is because the teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. In a Year 8 lesson average-attaining students worked furiously to draft and polish their work on connecting words and spoke meaningfully about writing styles. They produced a large amount of work and enjoyed it immensely. 'Lord of the Rings' and 'Shrek' appealed to their interests, the teacher's enthusiasm infected the students and careful and sensitive analysis encouraged and developed their love of the subject. As in all lessons, students' standards of literacy were developed by a focused, relevant activity. Drama is incorporated in the programmes of study and Year 7 boys and girls presented powerful presentations with a lack of embarrassment and a willingness to display their dramatic skills. Students' work is marked regularly and the department makes satisfactory use of assessment information. More detailed analysis of data would target individual students to continue to help raise standards.
75. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and students. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the students. They value and respect their head of department and this has created a committed and effective team. A more established staff is planning to develop teaching and learning still further. Procedures for assessment are clear but are not used sufficiently rigorously to set individual students' targets. Students' work is cross-checked for progress, standards and capability. The lack of ICT resources hampers students' research and independent learning skills.
76. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen for students in Year 9. Literacy teaching has been used effectively to target further improvements in English language. Teaching and learning have improved. Students' independent learning still requires development and assessment requires a more rigorous focus. Standards are beginning to rise, and, with the commitment to sharing good practice and attention to identified areas for improvement, the department has the capacity to succeed even further.

Drama

77. The provision of drama in Years 7 to 11 adds depth and breadth to the curriculum. Indications are that results in national tests in 2001 were in line with the national average at GCSE. Standards in the work observed during the inspection were at the levels expected nationally and students achieve well.
78. The quality of teaching is good and results in students achieving well. The teaching of drama as part of English for students in Years 7 to 9 not only broadens their curriculum but also improves their standards, because students are able to transfer the skills they have learned. Teachers are committed to the subject and contribute to the wider education it gives the students. In particular, the drama teachers successfully put emphasis on encouraging decision-making skills, and providing opportunities for students to think for themselves. Students learn well because lessons are well prepared and maintain a brisk pace. Consequently, all students gain insight into the

subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of drama skills. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. Students relish the subject and their enthusiasm and enjoyment are evident in lessons. Good relationships between the staff and students create an atmosphere of achievement and mutual respect. Teaching extends the learning of all students, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs. The contribution made by the department to the social and moral development of the students is also partly responsible for their success. They discuss serious issues such as equality, race, and justice in an informed and sensitive manner.

Literacy

79. Students' literacy skills are average by the end of Year 11. Over time, students achieve well because below-average literacy skills adversely affected their learning when they entered the school in Year 7. An emphasis on improving literacy is a feature of the learning in all subjects. The National Literacy Strategy has been used to aid the teaching of literacy skills. The new literacy co-ordinator has unified an initially reluctant staff who are now convinced of its worth in raising standards in their subject. Whole-school training days and subject workshops have helped to raise the awareness of literacy and its part in improving teaching and learning. The provision is good as this has been effective in raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and is emerging as a strength for students in Years 10 and 11. All subjects take the teaching of basic literacy skills seriously and consequently, so do the students. Through the use of writing frames, glossaries and study aids students gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
80. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary. In modern foreign languages, art and design, English and drama students use technical language to good effect. Skills are less secure in mathematics and physical education. Standards in essay writing are good in history but, generally, students' extended writing requires development in most subjects. The library supports all subjects by stocking specialised texts and multi-media materials. The English department has dictionaries and thesauruses available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most subject classrooms to familiarise students with specialist vocabulary. The provision of dictionaries in all subjects would further enhance learning. Carefully censored Internet access allows students to research topics in detail, although access is limited because of a lack of technical support.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics in the school is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Boys achieve well in national tests and GCSE examinations.
- Good relationships between teachers and students and create a positive learning environment.
- Lessons are well planned and enhance students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Girls' achievements are not high enough.
- Computers are not used enough to enhance students' learning.

81. The results in the 2001 national tests for Year 9 students were below the average for all schools and well below the average for similar schools. These results show that students achieve satisfactorily when their attainment levels on entry to the school are taken into account. Standards are rising because all teachers are now mathematical specialists. Boys, contrary to the national trend, achieve significantly better results than girls. The results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below average. The results in 2002 indicate that there has been a significant rise in results and standards are now closer to the national average. School figures indicate that the levels of mathematical achievement of girls when they enter the school are lower than those of boys. In work seen, the indications are that the difference between the attainment of boys and girls is

narrowing. The female members of staff are providing good role models for girls and they are responding accordingly.

82. In work seen by the end of Year 9, overall attainment is average. Students achieve well from a below average level on entry to the school. Students have a sound knowledge of area and perimeter and higher-attaining students extend this to include work on products and factors. In Year 9 higher-attaining students apply their algebraic skills to factorise and expand expressions. Students' investigative skills are below average. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs receive good support. This enables them to progress at broadly similar rates as the rest of their group. Students are grouped by prior attainment and this enables teachers to match work to the ability of students in Years 8 to 11.
83. In work seen by the end of Year 11, overall attainment is average. Students make sound progress by building on their work in Years 7 to 9. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 use trigonometry to solve problems in right-angled triangles; in doing so they make efficient and effective use of an electronic calculator. Average attainers are working towards GCSE grades B and C at both higher and intermediate level. Lower-attaining students use simple probability techniques to consider practical situations; they are numerate and are capable of gaining a GCSE grade at foundation level.
84. Improving standards are a result of the overall good teaching. All teaching observed was satisfactory or better. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 was better than Years 7 to 9, although the teaching in Year 9 is often good and contributes to the improving national test results at the end of Year 9. Some teaching, particularly in Years 7 and 8, is by less experienced teachers who have mathematics as their second subject.
85. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare lessons well. Some teachers use a limited range of strategies in their teaching but the more experienced teachers use group work, paired work and class discussion to good effect. The better lessons start well and have the main aims clearly explained to students. This is followed by clear exposition or discussion. In a Year 8 class, the work on probability resulted in a very practical approach and the teacher skilfully reviewed fractions, decimals and percentages. The practical nature of the work greatly motivated students; this approach is not as evident in other areas of the syllabus. In a number of lessons, students did not have an opportunity to contribute to their own learning by working independently. Teachers meet the needs of students with special educational needs well and regularly monitor them during lessons to ensure that they make good progress. Teachers often use humour to foster a good atmosphere and working environment. This was effectively used in a Year 11 lesson on three-dimensional coordinates where the use of a small amount of humour sustained concentration through a difficult part of the syllabus. Teachers regularly mark students' work. There are good examples of constructive marking that encourages students and indicates areas for improvement.
86. Students respond well to the good teaching. The atmosphere in mathematics is one of success and students arrive at lessons ready to work, settle quickly and are very willing to participate in lessons. In a Year 7 lesson, students became involved either by working out answers on the board or by being in one of the teams in the lesson. Students work well in pairs or groups but readily quieten and listen to the teacher when required. They give reasons for their answers and are not afraid to make mistakes. Students' record sheets in their exercise books help them to understand their own level of working.
87. Leadership and management are satisfactory and underpin the good teaching and the corresponding response from students. All teachers are mutually supportive and readily exchange ideas but the lack of a departmental base hinders this informal development of teaching. There have been several changes in head of department since the last inspection. The current head of department, in post since the beginning of the school year, has reviewed the scheme of work and integrated the National Numeracy Strategy into the overall scheme. There is not enough access to computers and hence students have little opportunity to apply their ICT skills in mathematics. Several classes are taught by more than one teacher and this causes difficulties in continuity in students' learning. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

Numeracy

88. Students' number skills are sufficient for them to access all areas of the curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place in Years 7, 8 and 9. There is good use of charts, diagrams and graphs in science and geography, and includes the use of spreadsheets in ICT lessons. Number skills are regularly reinforced in mathematics lessons and the efficient use of a calculator is also taught. Students are not over-reliant on calculators.

SCIENCE

The quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Students achieve well because teaching is good and they have a positive attitude to work.
- Teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' marking procedures do not guide students on what they need to do to improve.
- The range of resources is not sufficient to meet a wider range of students' needs.
- Access to and the use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

89. In the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9, the school's performance in science was close to the national average for all schools and better than in the two previous years. It was below average in comparison with similar schools. Performance was similar to that in English but better than that in mathematics. The attainment of boys was better than that of girls. Students achieved better than expected results given their standards of attainment on entry to the school. The unconfirmed results for 2002 indicate that performance was similar to that of the previous year. Achievement in science was higher than all other non-selective secondary schools in the local education authority.
90. In the 2001 GCSE examinations in double award science, the proportion of students obtaining grades A* to C was above the national average and higher than that of the two previous years. Overall, students' grades were better in science than in mathematics and English. Good value was added to the majority of students relative to their performance at the end of Year 9. Girls performed better than boys. The unconfirmed results for 2002 indicate that performance was lower than that in 2001.
91. Inspection evidence shows that standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment but achieve well during Years 7 to 9. Most students develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding in all science themes. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, students investigated the difference between mass and weight through discussion and by simple experiments. Two thirds of the group had special educational needs but all carried out the investigation competently and, with encouragement from the teacher, made good progress towards the understanding of a difficult concept. By the end of the lesson most of the group knew the units of mass and weight and the higher-attaining students could detect a relationship between the two prior to drawing a graph.
92. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of atomic structure. In one group, students were secure in their knowledge of the relative positions of the atomic particles and could demonstrate that they understood the role of electrons in the formation of simple compounds. In a Year 11 lesson, higher-attaining students studying group seven of the periodic table confidently discussed with the teacher the number of electrons in each shell for a range of elements. Some lower-attaining students have difficulty in following instructions as, for example, when investigating the displacement of the halogens. In a Year 10 lesson, higher-attaining students demonstrated that they had a good understanding of a range of diseases and the way in which they are spread. Students achieve well in Years 10 and

11. The written work of the higher and medium-attaining students is well presented. Lower attainers take less care and their work is often untidy. Diagrams in particular are poorly produced.
93. The improvement in written work through Years 7 and 8 is indicative of the progress that students make from entering the school until they reach Year 9. As students progress through the school the range of written work improves and the content becomes more creative. Students' numerical skills are sufficient to allow them to access the National Curriculum and students in Year 11 handle formulae competently. Students make good use of the Internet for research but the use of other aspects of information technology is limited by a lack of access to computers.
94. The quality of teaching in all years is generally good and in just under a third of the lessons seen it was very good. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives. These objectives are clearly displayed at the front of the room and this helps to keep students on task. Relationships with students are very good and humour is often used to good effect. Praise, which helps to raise students' self-esteem, is a feature of many lessons. In the best lessons expectations are high and teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest. In one well-planned lesson, for example, small groups of students in Year 10 made presentations to their peers based on diseases which they had researched. There was a brief opportunity for peer evaluation and this was followed by a question and answer session during which the teacher introduced the topic of vaccines, paying particular attention to the current controversy over the MMR vaccine. A challenging worksheet with appropriate questions was distributed. Students at all levels of attainment were stimulated by the activities and progress was good as a result.
95. Students respond well when given responsibility for their learning. A Year 9 class went on to the school field to investigate factors affecting the flight of air- and water-propelled rockets. Students organised themselves effectively with minimal guidance from the teacher. The mass and the launching angle for the air-propelled rockets were varied. Lower-attaining students found difficulty in organising their data but were able to discuss the effect of one of the variables. Higher-attaining students were able to present good evaluations. Good progress was made towards an understanding of forces and students' skills of investigation skills were enhanced.
96. Students have positive and responsible attitudes to learning. In a lesson on human reproduction the teacher's planning and very good classroom management enabled students to learn about the development of the foetus. This sensitive topic was handled well. Girls were more responsive than boys but the teacher ensured that all students were included in the activities. The achievement of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and for some it is good. The department has material which has been specially adapted to meet the needs of these students as well as the gifted and talented, but its use during the inspection period was limited.
97. The head of department provides good leadership. Staff work well together. They are implementing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and are committed to raising standards. Teaching is well supported by four laboratory technicians. The department's handbook and documentation is very good but schemes of work are currently incomplete and undergoing revision. The quality of marking is variable but it is usually regular. Students do not, however, always understand the marks and grades they are given and comments do not always tell them what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. There are insufficient laboratories to accommodate all students at all times. This affects the learning of classes taught in non-specialist rooms. Excellent displays of work create a welcoming environment.
98. The department has responded positively to the last report and improvement has been good. The majority of students now enter the double award science examination and the number of GCSE A* to C grades has risen over the past few years. The quality of teaching is now good overall and teaching provides more opportunity for students to engage in debate and share their work with others.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 10 and 11 are improving because lesson planning has improved, there is good management of students and the teaching is energetic with lots of interesting ideas that spark enthusiasm.
- The sound organisation of the subject results in clear expectations that help students to learn with confidence.
- In the best lessons there is a purposeful pace and momentum to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, some teaching in Years 7 to 9 fails to motivate or inspire students.
- The teaching rooms are dingy, with old furniture. This has a dampening effect on students' motivation.
- There is not enough art display around the school to catch students' interest.

99. Judgements are based on observation of a cross-section of lessons seen during the inspection, scrutiny of examination results, scrutiny of planning and displays and discussions with the subject leader. This shows that standards are below average in Year 9, as they are when students enter the school, but are average in Year 11. Standards in Year 11 show an improvement over recent GCSE examinations, where results have been well below average for the last four years. This is because teachers are planning more interesting lessons by introducing a better balance of activities. There is little difference between the work of boys and girls, or between students from different ethnic groups. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and now good in Years 10 and 11.

100. In lessons seen, Year 10 and 11 students were productively engaged on a range of individual topics. They had successfully researched background factual details and were considering how to further develop their ideas into GCSE submissions. One girl, who had chosen to do a project on interior design, had been encouraged by the teacher to look at earlier forms of architecture. This had led her to a study of columns in the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian style. The student had initially found this a little dull but, on closer examination, she was beginning to think about how interior and exterior design could be made more interesting by including classical features. The student had expanded her vision of art and was making good links between historical and contemporary culture. Students' use of sketchbooks is improving. Two Year 10 students had spent many hours of their own time researching fashion design. This had started as a natural teenage interest, but both were developing an appreciation of the more subtle aspects of art as they considered colour theory, pattern, texture and art as a commodity. Some students do not write in enough detail about the way that they use media or to comment on what is going well or holding them back, although teachers are now emphasising these aspects, which are an important part of the GCSE examination. As a result, students are gaining confidence in their ability to comment knowledgeably about art, which is one of the reasons that standards are improving. Students are making better use of computers in their work, either to research factual details or to use art programs that would enrich and diversify their perceptions of art. The department has recently bought some animation software and is experimenting with digital photography. Although there is little planning to develop students' literacy skills, the regular opportunities to write about art and the focus on art, specific vocabulary, are having a positive impact.

101. By the end of Year 9, students' work is below average although their achievements are satisfactory because they enter the school with below average skills. Standards are below average because some students lack self-confidence and because some earlier lessons failed to grasp their interest. However, in one exciting Year 9 lesson, students were busily engaged in making relief sculptures from cardboard. They responded well to the teacher's animated manner, enjoying the opportunity to do something out of the ordinary. As a result, several students who lack motivation were absorbed in what they were doing and produced good quality work. In one Year 8 lesson, students were considering how to create negative space in a picture by masking off areas to

create a balustrade effect in the style of a David Hockney painting. Whilst they enjoyed doing this, and accurately recreated the effect in Hockney's painting, they did not develop Hockney's ideas in an original or imaginative way. Whilst higher-attaining students take care in their sketchbooks, too many sketchbooks have work that is superficial and poorly presented. In some lessons, the quality of work suffers because there is too much chatter that distracts students from the task in hand, although this is dependent on the individual teacher's success in handling students.

102. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. However, there is too much variability in the quality of teaching. In good lessons, teachers are fizzing with ideas, they successfully inspire a creative response by engaging earnestly with students, welcoming their ideas and suggesting new ways of improving their work. In other lessons, the pace is slow and there is low-level disruption. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher did not control whispering and silliness as some students tried to make each other laugh. These students did not listen to what was being taught and their learning suffered. Some marking of students' work is informative and helpful, encouraging students to try harder. Other books remain unmarked for long periods with poor spelling and grammar uncorrected, which fails to reinforce good literacy habits. Teachers always try to be positive, although this sometimes results in over-effusive and undeserved praise. In one lesson, for instance, students were commended for producing excellent work when it was of a mediocre quality. This meant that students were too easily satisfied and were not sufficiently ambitious in their learning. In the best teaching, teachers communicate the essential technical aspects of art in a way that fires students' imaginations. In other lessons, students do not become engrossed or committed because the teacher lacks sparkle and therefore fails to animate them. The department is right to focus on the quality of teaching as the most important way of improving standards.
103. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The department is planning more systematically for improvements and has a useful development plan that identifies factors that will make a difference. The meagre resources are used effectively for improving standards across the school. The accommodation is spacious but unattractive with old furniture and a lack of recent decoration. This limits students' enthusiasm for learning. Most of the issues that were identified in the last report are being attended to, although the quality of art display has not been sufficiently improved. As a result, there are lost opportunities to encourage a positive response to the subject. Whilst aspects of world culture occasionally feature, there is insufficient celebration of Britain's cultural diversity through art.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship has been planned well.
- Much of the teaching includes clear citizenship learning objectives and helps students to become responsible citizens.
- The citizenship curriculum includes a variety of stimulating activities.

Area for improvement

- Although most teachers contribute well to the school's citizenship programme, they do not always include citizenship in their written plans.

104. Overall, students reach average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are mostly enthusiastic, take an interest in their work and all groups of students achieve well.

105. Students understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. For example, students have raised money to support a local school for the disabled and members of the school council actively participate in interview panels for new teaching appointments. Students throughout the school elect members to the school council, which is effective in involving all students. Students in a Year 7 religious education lesson showed a good understanding of the United Nations charter for children's rights. All the work undertaken has given opportunities for students to think, write and discuss. This is evident, for example, in many religious education lessons where boys and girls engage readily in discussion on a variety of moral and ethical issues such as marriage. Similarly, in geography lessons students learn about what it means to be a global citizen.

106. Teaching is good overall. Teachers mostly have high expectations and clear objectives. However, these objectives are not always included in their written plans. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. For example, all students participate in tutorial presentations covering a variety of topics such as famine, animal rights, homelessness and feminism. These provide good opportunities for students to develop enquiry skills and to express and listen to a variety of different opinions. Controversial issues are dealt with sensitively and within a clear moral framework. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson when a visiting speaker from an animal rights organisation gave a talk on free-range farming. Students will get an opportunity to hear the alternative viewpoint at a later stage. Students are also provided with a good range of opportunities to take part in school and community-based activities.

107. Senior managers have led the introduction of citizenship well. The citizenship curriculum is well planned, with distinct modules in PSHE, other National Curriculum subjects and religious education. These are backed up by tutorial periods and assemblies. A recent assembly, for example, consisted of a debate between two teachers on the future of the monarchy. Good procedures are being developed to assess and record students' achievements and to monitor the delivery of citizenship across subjects. Heads of department have audited their subjects once and are about to do so again, following the publication of government guidelines. Textbook resources are adequate and are backed up by additional library resources (including book lists and web-site addresses on presentation topics) and by impressive displays of relevant materials around the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management provide clear guidance to staff and students.
- Monitoring of students' performance provides effective feedback.
- The positive attitude and behaviour of students are conducive to learning.
- Achievement is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and learning resources need refurbishment.
- The match of staff to the demands of the curriculum limits the range of subjects offered.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities in some subject areas are inadequate.

108. Achievement is good in some design and technology subject areas but overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is below average because the lack of sufficient accommodation, resources and staffing restrict the breadth of the curriculum. The staffing situation is more difficult than at the time of the last inspection. GCSE results for the last three years have been above average in food technology, near average in graphics and textiles but below average in resistant materials. Girls generally do better than boys. The overall results are broadly in line with the results for the rest of the school.
109. Although students' technology skills are below national expectations on entry to the school, they make good progress and by the end of Year 11 they have reached attainment levels near the national average. In Year 7, students used 'oversew' stitching to make rice-filled juggling balls and in Year 9 they enjoyed using metal to manufacture a balancing toy. However, the overall standard is below national expectations, particularly in the design work, which is generally given a lower priority. Little extra help is given to students with special educational needs but they receive good support from their peers. Standards of work in textiles and food technology are high in Years 10 and 11. Design and making elements develop well and complex items are made, including dresses. Attainment overall has risen to near the national average. A number of students' coursework folders are above average in quality.
110. Overall, teaching is good and includes examples of excellent teaching. For example, in a Year 10 lesson students used computer software to create geometrical designs and subsequently programmed the sewing machines to do the stitching. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. The workbooks are a considerable help in providing continuity but can be restricting for the higher-attaining students. In other areas of design and technology, students are challenged, expectations are high and planning is good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Greater use of ICT is needed to assist with presentation and the calculation of quantities. Students are well managed so that good relationships develop. Although teaching resources are just satisfactory in the various subject areas, computer-aided design and manufacture cannot be taught effectively in the resistant materials area due to a lack of appropriate equipment.
111. Learning is good and linked closely to the good teaching. Students steadily acquire skills, knowledge and understanding. A particular strength of the good teaching and learning is that tasks are clearly related to familiar issues that students understand. Lower attainers are given some extra help by the teacher whilst high attainers are quickly identified and encouraged to produce work of a high standard, especially in Years 10 and 11. The impact of the work of the design and technology department on social, moral and cultural development is good. Students are encouraged to share and to consider the impact of their work on society. They have positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour is good. Most share and co-operate well when group work is necessary. Years 10 and 11 students are particularly encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.
112. The curriculum is restricted by the availability of qualified teachers and the facilities provided in some subject areas. The teaching of graphics as an option in Year 10 is therefore not possible in the current year due to staffing problems. The resistant materials environment is not inspirational and does not present a 'hi-tech' appearance. Food, textiles and resistant materials provide a context for all elements of the National Curriculum so that statutory requirements are met. Enrichment is provided through visits to various manufacturing firms. Health and safety regulations need to be reviewed.
113. The department is led well by a co-ordinator. What is being achieved in a limited environment is good, so far as it goes, but the lack of rooms, resources and staffing means that provision is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are detailed for each year and each subject, and documentation is comprehensive. In addition to regular meetings, daily discussions occur so that relationships within the department are very good. New teachers to the department are given help and encouraged to integrate. Careful financial management has enabled modern sewing machines to be purchased, however, as noted during the previous inspection, there are too few computers in the department for ICT to be used with full effect. The range of responsibilities undertaken by the head of department and the possibility of delegation need to be reconsidered.

114. As reported at the time of the last inspection, accommodation in the resistant materials and food technology areas is in need of modernisation and refurbishment. The separation of the subject areas and the number of part-time staff make co-ordination and dissemination of good practice more difficult. Technicians provide a valuable service.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision overall in the subject is **good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well because teaching is good overall, and very good or better in a significant number of lessons.
- Students have good attitudes to learning and behave very well because teachers have high expectations and manage classes effectively.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities in Years 7, 8 and 9 to experience geography first-hand in the local area so students may develop skills in fieldwork further.
- Use ICT more in relevant topics to extend students' skills within geography.

115. In 2001, Year 11 students attained above average results in their GCSE examinations. They performed significantly better in geography than in their other subjects. Girls performed better than boys by a margin slightly above the average. For three years from 1999 results were above average, dipping in 2002 to below average. Teachers anticipated that students would perform less well in 2002 because of staffing changes.

116. Students enter school with below average attainment. By the end of Year 9, students meet national expectations in geography and achieve well. In work seen, students have weaknesses in spelling, sentence construction and punctuation when they start in Year 7. They improve by the end of Year 9 but standards of literacy remain below average for lower-attaining students. Students have a secure understanding of physical processes that change landscapes. For example, Year 9 students know that earthquakes result from movement of the earth's plates. They understand the effects these movements have on people's lives. The standard of older students' work is above average and they achieve well. They become more independent in using subject skills to extend their knowledge and understanding. In Year 11, they investigate local geographical issues such as traffic congestion associated with a local football ground on match days. Students in Years 10 and 11 assess their progress and identify areas for improvement in order to reach target GCSE grades. This motivates them to work hard. Lower-attaining students' work suffers from carelessness – such as missing annotations from diagrams and maps, and insufficient detail given in answers. Students with special educational needs make good progress in achieving their learning targets.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A third of the teaching is very good or better. Teaching was satisfactory in one lesson. Students' motivation is kept high by the use of good teaching methods. In a Year 9 lesson, students found it helpful to re-run images of an earthquake as 'mind-movies'. This helped them to understand the demands on emergency services, and prepared them to illustrate their writing with facts and examples. Teachers give good attention to improving literacy standards by emphasising new subject words and asking students to record these in a personal glossary. Students have many opportunities to apply numeracy skills, for example interpreting trends from population pyramid graphs and comparing climates such as those of London and Rome. Students reflect upon wider issues; for example, they consider social problems associated with overcrowding in cities. In many lessons, teachers make appropriate provision for students with special educational needs by matching tasks and resources so that they can work independently. They also provide work to extend higher-attaining students who work quickly. There was one example of excellent teaching that provided for all groups of students. Students benefit when teachers write helpful comments on their work that shows them how to improve and this is seen on many pieces of students' work. In one lesson in Year 8, ICT was very

well used to help students understand the effects of extreme weather. However, ICT is generally underused as a resource. Teachers manage classes effectively so students behave very well.

118. Leadership and management are good. The head of department provides clear direction to a team of committed teachers. Good assessment procedures are used to identify how teaching and learning may be improved. Students in Years 7 to 9 have few opportunities for fieldwork, which limits the range of their geographical experiences. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement: standards have improved by the end of Year 11 and achievement is good overall. Teaching standards remain good.

HISTORY

Overall provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- The department is very well managed.
- Teaching is very good.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to developing students' skills in literacy.
- Assessment is very effectively managed and the information is used to raise standards.

Areas for Development

- Students do not have enough access to ICT.
- Students in Year 7 do not begin to work on secondary topics as early as they should.

119. In 2002, attainment in Year 9 in the school's assessment tests was below national expectations but had clearly improved since the previous year, when the school and the department had had difficulties with staffing. In work seen, attainment in Year 9 is close to the national average because of the quality of teaching, the focus on literacy and the positive attitudes of students. They have a good understanding of how to use sources of evidence and written work shows that many can write about history well and at length when required. Those who find written work more difficult show their knowledge in discussion and other oral work. Students achieve well.

120. GCSE results in were below the national average and relatively few students achieved the highest grades. In 2002, results were well below and were low in comparison with other subjects. This was the result of staffing problems and the unsatisfactory attitudes of students who failed to complete coursework. Both attitudes and standards are much better in the current Year 11 where attainment is at the national average. Boys and girls are already achieving marks close to their target grades and the overall trend is one of a noticeable improvement in standards since the last inspection. Standards are now higher because of the quality of teaching within the department and because the vast majority of students have positive attitudes to their work in class. Students achieve very well.

121. Students write about and understand the major events of previous centuries and knowledge of key issues is often good; for example, when discussing the long and short term causes of the outbreak of war in 1914. Written work is sound for the majority of students and oral work is often good. Higher attainers express their ideas very well and understand how events link together and recognise cause and effect. All students appreciate that people expected the war to be short and that conditions in the trenches were terrible. Average attainers clearly understand that machine guns and barbed wire were features of trench warfare. Higher attainers explain the rationale behind the German plan to invade Belgium and why the Kaiser believed that the British army was too small to matter. Teachers use a variety of strategies to promote understanding and there is a clear focus on skills in English because problems, particularly in written work, have been identified. Teachers use key vocabulary and worksheets to support writing well. There is an effective focus on essay-writing skills in Year 9 that later helps students with their work at GCSE. Role-play is used well; for example, in helping students understand why so many countries went to war in 1914. Statistics are also used to help students understand change.

122. Most students understand how to use a variety of sources of evidence because this skill is taught well from Year 7 onward with a clear focus on how we study history. The library and computer rooms are well used for this type of work but there are no computers in most of the classrooms so ICT is not yet an integral part of learning. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of support; in one lesson observed, three adults were working with the students. In this very effective lesson on Elizabethan portraits the symbolism that is a vital feature of the learning was made accessible to all students. Teachers encourage discussion of many issues and this contributes well to understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. Particularly apt use is made of homework tasks to extend work started in class. A particular feature of learning is the high quality of assessment procedures. Students regularly discuss and assess their own and others' work and they are very clear about how to improve. Assessment information is used very well to ensure appropriate support and challenge for all students.
123. Students achieve very well and acquire the skills required at GCSE, because teaching is very good and they all have valuable handbooks provided by the department. In Year 11, most have a very good knowledge of the topics that they have studied and individuals can compare the aims of the peacemakers in 1919 very well. Course work has been planned very carefully with the help of their teachers. Higher-attaining students have a clear understanding of why the USA and President Wilson did not approve of imperialism. Average and lower-attaining students can explain why France wanted revenge. Lower-attaining students clearly find difficulty in organizing their work and writing detailed analytical answers but they are supported and advised well. Most students in both year groups understand how propaganda can influence public opinion, how to identify bias, the link between cause and effect and how to use varied sources of evidence, including cartoons. Most show the level of skills, knowledge and understanding to reach the higher grades at GCSE.
124. Attitudes to the subject are good. Students work hard and contribute very well in lessons because they enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. Boys often contribute particularly well, for example, in discussions in Year 9 on the reasons why men volunteered for the army. However, in a few lessons students are restless and time is wasted in group-work and this is not well managed. The contribution and response from students with special educational needs is often very good and in Year 11 it is clear that individual students are achieving very well at GCSE. Students value the annual visit to the battlefields in Belgium because it helps them with their work in Year 9 and at GCSE.
125. The management of the subject is very good. Schemes of work, high-quality handbooks and very effective systems of assessment have been developed. The focus on the skills used by the historian provides a good link between work in primary and secondary school but at present students in Year 7 do not begin to work on Key Stage 3 topics as early as they should. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- GCSE standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.

Areas for improvement

- Further training is needed for non-specialist ICT teachers.
- Accommodation and learning resources for timetabled classes and across all subjects.

126. GCSE results in ICT were well above the national average in 2001 and 2002. All students gained at least a pass grade and nearly a quarter gained either GCSE A or A* grades in 2001. Results have improved considerably since the last inspection and compare very well with results for other

subjects in the same school. However, network problems, resources and difficulties in appointing suitable staff have adversely affected the development of students' ICT skills in Years 7 to 9 and across many subjects. Teacher assessments for Year 9 have been below the national average for the last four years.

127. Students' attainment is below national expectations on entry to the school. In Year 7, they make good progress in developing their keyboard skills. By the end of Year 9, students have made satisfactory progress but are still below the national average overall. Students use a range of computer software but few students use desktop publishing programs. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Word processing skills are below average. Literacy skills are developed satisfactorily and numeracy is improved by the use of spreadsheets. During Years 10 and 11, timetabled provision and access to computers is much better and students' progress is very good. By the end of Year 11, students' completion of coursework is monitored well and their ICT skills are well above average. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Talented students are particularly encouraged during Years 10 and 11.
128. Teaching is generally good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In a good Year 8 lesson on extreme weather, students downloaded a table from the Internet, incorporated it into a document file, added a written explanation and printed the final version before the end of the lesson. Lessons are planned to have a beginning, middle and end and this contributes effectively to students' learning. However, the end of some lessons could usefully include a more accurate assessment of progress. More regular completion and display of work would further help motivation. The quality of learning closely follows the quality of teaching but is affected by the need to share computers. In Years 7 to 9, students' acquisition of knowledge is also made more difficult because demonstration facilities are not always readily available. Worksheets are very helpful but some students find them difficult to follow and explanations by the teacher tend to be forgotten before they can be used. The relevance of the business-orientated applications helps students to understand how the work can be useful. They enjoy using e-mail and have controlled use of the Internet. These applications help students with moral and social development and to understand the responsibilities of citizenship. Regular comparisons with exemplar work would assist students' self-knowledge of their own learning. Students have a good attitude to their ICT work and generally co-operate with the teachers.
129. Students' progress in Years 7 to 9 is adversely affected by equipment problems and teachers having insufficient training, so that curriculum modification has been necessary. Alternating between different computer networks, shared classes, insufficient computers for the number of students and lost or double lessons have also caused loss of opportunity for many students. However, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is taught by experienced staff so that progress is very good. A range of GCSE courses are offered, providing for the needs of all students. When combined with curricular contributions from science and technology, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met but control of mechanical or electrical devices and the use of sound need further development within the department. ICT rooms are open to students at lunchtime and after school. This provision reinforces students' ICT skills. Although effort and attainment results are recorded, more frequent ongoing assessment of students' work could increase pace and concentration in some lessons.
130. The department is well led although the range of responsibilities for ICT and business studies co-ordination needs clarification. Priorities for improving the accommodation and resources of the department are clearly identified. Schemes of work and an assessment process are in place but some updating and reorganisation of these is necessary. Some network and hardware problems are still causing disruption to learning. The number of computers compared with the number of students in the school is lower than the national average and further improvements are needed to the network. Financial constraints have reduced overall efficiency until recently. For example, the department does not have its own demonstration projection system. Also, no sound is available on the computers due to hardware and software limitations.
131. The use of ICT to assist teaching is generally underdeveloped in English, science, technology, music and physical education although some individual teachers use it effectively. There has

therefore been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. ICT is well used in business studies for many purposes. It is well used in history for presentations with an interactive whiteboard and in geography for producing graphs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, which enables students to learn well.
- Very good management of students creates an effective climate for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for leadership and management of the department, whilst satisfactory in terms of interim arrangements, are inadequate in the longer term?.
- There is not enough provision of ICT to support students' learning.
- Restricted opportunities for independent learning in Years 7 to 9.

132. Results in GCSE French examinations between 1999 and 2001 show a substantial decline from a position just above to well below the national averages for both boys and girls. There is a marked rise in the unconfirmed results for 2002, largely due to the improved performance of the girls. Results show boys consistently underachieving in relation to their performance in other subjects. Results in GCSE Spanish examinations over the same period are more volatile with a smaller group of students. However, they declined sharply in 2002, with a larger entry, to well below the national averages for both boys and girls. In work seen, GCSE standards in French are below average but the trend in overall attainment is upwards as the department continues to recover from its staffing problems. There is less difference than might be expected in the performance of girls and boys. Some higher-attaining students, usually boys, give oral answers which go beyond minimum requirements, while girls are more careful and conscientious in their written work. Middle and lower-attaining students carry out the same tasks competently according to their ability but are usually heavily reliant on the support sheets provided. Achievement in French is therefore sound. Standards of GCSE work seen in Spanish in Year 11 are below average due to the students' lower level of competence at the start of their GCSE course, in combination with mixed ability sets.
133. In work seen, standards in French by the end of Year 9 are close to national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement. There is a good focus on developing literacy skills which enables all students to develop their understanding of the proper use of verb tenses and use them with appropriate vocabulary in structured speaking and writing activities. Higher-attaining students show a very good understanding of the vocabulary of the classroom and use modal verbs accurately. Average-attaining students display good aural skills which are promoted by the teachers' extensive use of French. Lower-attaining students try hard and present their work neatly but have some difficulty in remembering and applying grammar rules. Students of all levels of attainment have insufficient opportunities to apply language creatively: the cramped accommodation in several classes does not encourage flexible group work. Standards of work in Spanish are below average. The same students start the subject one year later, have less curricular time in Year 9 and the schemes of work do not provide sufficient acceleration to give them an opportunity to catch up. Achievement is therefore less than might be expected. Students with special educational needs generally make adequate progress in both languages due to informal support from their teachers but there is little systematic provision for these groups at present and insufficient contact with learning support assistants, which sometimes impacts on the achievement of the lower-attaining sets in Year 8.
134. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Newly-appointed teachers have a good grasp of their subjects and use the foreign language expertly at all times. They include good explanations of points of grammar. Teachers plan their lessons well. They give students opportunities to develop their skills and are rigorous in checking students' understanding to ensure they keep up with the lesson. Teachers help students to learn effectively by working briskly through a series of carefully-

chosen activities. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher kept all students constantly involved by using a variety of overhead transparencies to teach and test understanding of numbers, providing gaps in the sequence to provide challenge while supporting the lower-attaining students by quick reference to an attractive wall display of numbers. The game at the end of the lesson was well designed to entertain the students, capture their enthusiasm and consolidate their gains in knowledge and understanding. In almost all lessons, teachers' very good classroom management techniques and good relationships with students combined to ensure clear direction for their learning. In a few lessons, less thought had been given to adapting methods to the needs of a particular class. In all years the marking of the well-presented students' exercise books is regular and there are examples of good practice, particularly in Spanish, in the advice given to students to help them improve the quality of their work.

135. The recent staffing difficulties have had a major impact on the effectiveness of the department. The present interim arrangements for subject leadership and management are satisfactory and are having some success in stabilising the department because they allow new staff to gain experience in their posts of responsibility and lay the foundations for future development. A permanent appointment of a head of languages is needed to implement strategies for raising standards. Insufficient technological resources and the lack of a reading programme for Years 7 to 9 have an adverse effect on student achievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Specific areas of weakness raised in the previous report have not been adequately addressed, such as opportunities to use language creatively and imaginatively, ICT applications and reading programmes, while extra-curricular opportunities, previously rated as good, are at present very limited.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and motivates students to learn.
- Year 10 students make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time for music in Year 7 is inadequate.
- The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 is incomplete.

136. The GCSE results have varied from above the national average in 1998 to below the national average in 2001. The number of candidates entered for GCSE in each of these three years was small. There were no GCSE entries in 2002 and no students in Year 11 studying music. Students in Year 10 following the GCSE course show a commitment to their work and, in the practical work seen, a number show considerable musical flair. Written work is not as impressive as the practical work but the standard overall is near to the average level for the age group early in the academic year.
137. By the end of Year 9, standards are below national expectations. In Year 7, students currently receive one lesson per fortnight. This is not enough to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and adversely affects attainment. Most students make good progress in Years 7 to 9, however, and in a full programme of lessons would get nearer to average attainment. They make perceptive comments when listening to music and have good ideas for using the patterns in their own music. Students' rhythmic skills are not well developed and they find reading rhythms hard. The lack of real commitment to music by a small minority, mainly boys, in Years 8 and 9 hinders their progress.
138. Students are keen and eager to participate in practical music-making. Year 7 students sang willingly in their lesson and, in a Year 8 lesson, students were keen to develop the short musical motifs as part of their practical lesson. Year 10 students have a very good attitude to their work.

They listen well and settle to practical tasks quickly and without fuss. They stick at these tasks well. Achievement is good.

139. Teaching is good. Lessons seen were well prepared and organised and the pace was brisk. In some lessons class management is not uniformly good and this affects the amount and quality of work produced. Where class management is strong, as it is in the majority of lessons, good, open-ended and appropriate tasks lead students to learn well. There is a good balance of listening and practical activity. Teachers question well and lead students to think about the music and how a composer achieves the desired effect. This helps when students begin to compose their own music. Teachers are positive; feedback in lessons and marking in books give praise where they consider it due but are firm where necessary. The lack of a second music room causes some difficulties. However, the three practice rooms, together with the large music room, give adequate space for class work for students of all ages. A second teacher has brought new and complementary musical skills into the department, already showing in the extra-curricular activities as well as in class work. Extra-curricular activities involve relatively few, but enthusiastic, students. The popular music competition held each year provides a good outlet for students' playing skills as well as an opportunity to perform publicly.
140. Management and leadership are satisfactory. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 is restricted by lack of time. Students do not have enough access to ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching inspires good learning.
- The good achievement of students in all years is helped by their good motivation.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities enhances learning for many students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE examinations.
- Curriculum development is uncertain because assessment data are not used effectively in teachers' planning.

141. Standards in GCSE in 2001 were below the national average for the subject, and below the average of students within the school. In 2002, examination results were again below the average of students in other subjects in the school. Standards on entry to the school are below average. Boys are generally at a higher level of attainment than girls. Rates of progress in Years 7 to 9 are good for both groups of students, due to a combination of good teaching and high levels of student motivation in class. As a result, attainment improves over Years 7 to 9 to reach an average standard by the end of Year 9. This is confirmed by the informal Year 9 teacher assessments in 2001, which were average. By the end of Year 11, standards of work seen were above average. This represents good achievement for these students.
142. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, there is no significant difference in the good achievement of boys and girls. The same is true of other groups of students. In many lessons, some individual students perform at higher levels and are able to modify their ideas and their performances in response to changing circumstances. In all lessons, students demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a full range of games including netball, soccer, rugby, badminton, and gymnastics. Students know why and how to warm up before strenuous activity, and have some knowledge of the names of the muscles they are stretching. They show increasing confidence to express their evaluations of their own and others' performances.
143. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Attainment is above average and covers a wide range of skills. A small number of students work at a standard well above the national average, with one or

two students capable of exceptional performance. Other students show skill levels that are below that which would be expected of students of their age. This is because of the shortage of specialist staff available to teach these students in their earlier years in this school. Many students have success both individually and as team players, with some gaining local and regional honours in a range of activities. In lessons, students work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subtleties of high-quality games play and strive to apply the principles of games play effectively and proficiently. All students have a good understanding of health-related exercise. Their knowledge of anatomy is good and they can confidently name the parts of the body being warmed up prior to exercise.

144. In all years, students with special educational needs make good progress because lessons are planned well to meet their levels of aptitude. High attainers make good progress. Their advanced skills are used to good effect in demonstrations and with sensitivity in support of addressing individual skill deficits. Students from different groups show no signs of disadvantage. They are fully included in lessons and make similar progress to all other students.
145. Teaching and learning are good overall. All specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to health and safety, and plan their lessons carefully. This leads directly to good learning. They have high expectations of their students and give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations. Clear learning objectives for lessons, shared with students, ensure that students know what they have to do to make progress. Class management is good. Students are provided with many opportunities for independent learning. The full use of technical vocabulary contributes to the development of students' literacy skills. Teachers create a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on challenge combined with support. The ethos is of hard work and mutual respect. In the best lessons, students have ample opportunities to observe, analyse and refine their own and others' work and to comment on performance against specific criteria.
146. Students' attitudes to learning are very good in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. This difference is that there are more non-participants in the older age groups. Most students respond well to the challenges created by the purposeful approach used within the department. They are enthusiastic, appropriately turned out for all activities and show real enjoyment of the subject. They are well behaved, and work in a co-operative and supportive manner. Students react positively to the high expectations of their teachers. They are attentive and listen carefully; and the capacity of most to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their students are good. In all lessons, students work well both as individuals and when collaborating in groups of varying sizes. They react positively to the high expectations of their teachers and show initiative and a sense of responsibility for their own learning when they are encouraged to do so.
147. Leadership and management are good. The teachers form a well-balanced and experienced team. Their skills are complementary and they support each other well. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and fixtures with other schools. This provides many opportunities for students of all abilities and interests to take part in activities at levels best suited to their individual needs. The involvement of many staff in these activities sends a strong message to students about the values of personal commitment and endeavour. This underpins students' spiritual, social and moral development. Assessment procedures and schemes of work are satisfactory but are not yet linked to curriculum development or the planning of teaching. The priorities in the departmental development plan are realistic. Not enough attention is given to close and critical monitoring and evaluation of all teaching. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, but improvements are in hand. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving and are now average by the end of Year 11. This improvement applies particularly to students' understanding of moral and ethical issues.

- The quality of teaching is good; a largely specialist team who are committed to raising both standards and the profile of the subject teaches religious education.
- Religious education makes a significant contribution towards students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and towards citizenship.

Areas for improvement

- Improve standards further by deepening students' knowledge of different religious traditions.
- The department needs to consider its strategies for marking students' work.
- More use should be made of ICT.

148. Results in the GCSE examination have fluctuated over recent years. This is because the subject was an optional exam choice before 2000; after that date all students studied for the GCSE short course at the end of Year 11. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Last year's results showed a significant improvement in the number of A*-C grades obtained compared to those achieved in 2001 and inspection evidence shows that standards by the end of Year 11 are now average. This represents good achievement since students' standards are below average on entry to the school and remain somewhat below average at the end of Year 9.
149. In Years 7 to 9, students develop their knowledge and understanding of religious language and principles soundly. They learn about major world faiths and come to appreciate some of the ways in which such faiths affect daily life, for example the importance of marriage in the Hindu religion. Teachers make effective links between everyday experiences and religious values so that students generally make sense of what they study and can relate it to their own lives. Work shows that students are better at understanding what they can learn from religion than they are in gaining detailed information about different religious traditions. Almost all students, for example, are beginning to show an understanding of religious perspectives on a range of ethical issues, such as the existence of suffering in the world.
150. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are now in line with the expectations for the GCSE short course. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls or different ethnic groups. In Year 10 students examine the concept of revelation by, for example, reflecting on what the parable of the Good Samaritan can teach us. In Year 11 students understand that certain questions are difficult to answer by examining the concept of when life begins and why this might pose moral dilemmas. Students explore their feelings sensibly and feel confident to express their opinions.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Occasionally it is excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject. This means that they have generally high expectations of what their students can achieve. Students are being taught to think for themselves and to consider a wide range of ethical and moral issues. These high expectations are having a positive impact on standards in the department: students of all abilities make clear and steady gains in knowledge and understanding. Students appreciate the enthusiasm with which their lessons are taught and respond with interest and good behaviour. Teachers use an effective range of approaches that encourage students to express their views. Generally, teachers mark work reasonably but comments do not inform students clearly enough about what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. This is recognised as an area for development. Students' positive attitudes and ability to work together sensibly contribute well to their good progress. In Year 7, for example, students' work shows a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. By Year 11 students are beginning to answer difficult moral questions and they have a good understanding of why such questions are difficult. Students with special educational needs make similarly good progress between Years 7 and 11.
152. This is a well-led department with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The subject makes a significant contribution towards students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and also towards citizenship. Staffing, with three experienced specialists and one enthusiastic and committed non-specialist, is very good. Teachers work well as a team and enhance students' learning. Statutory requirements to teach religious education to all students are met. Resources

are good, although the department needs to make more use of ICT to support the development of students' independent learning skills. Improvement since the last inspection 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, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

GCE 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
Business - AVCE	18	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.0	10.5
Leisure and tourism - AVCE	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.0	10.1
Design and technology – A level	4	75	91	25	30	5.0	5.4
Art and Design – A level	3	67	96	0	46	1.3	6.6
Geography – A level	5	80	92	20	38	4.8	5.7
History – A level	5	100	88	20	35	5.2	5.5
Communication Studies – A level	8	75	n/a	0	n/a	2.0	5.5
English literature – A level	12	83	95	0	37	2.8	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and physics.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships exist between students and teachers and support learning. • Students are motivated to achieve well. <p>Areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough use is made of computers in lessons to enhance and reinforce learning.

153. The school offers an A level course, a key skills course and a re-sit course for students who wish to improve their grade or achieve a GCSE grade C or above for college entry. There were no entries for A Level mathematics in either 2001 or 2002 examinations. Three students in Year 13 are following a two-year course leading to AS Level in mathematics. This was decided after careful consideration of their progress after GCSE. Twelve students in Year 12 study a range of modules best suited to their needs. Entry to the course is by gaining a grade C at GCSE higher or intermediate level. This means that some of the students do not have the full range of algebraic skills required to start the course. The retention rates for the course are, however, good. All students make good progress through the course and standards are close to the national average.

154. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well to meet the needs of students and build upon the work covered at GCSE. Because of the range of attainment of the students, teachers carefully introduce work that reviews previous knowledge before progressing further. In an algebra lesson, there was constant review of skills learnt at GCSE level and how

these are applied to the four rules involving algebraic fractions. This was necessary for their study of calculus. Teachers co-operate well with each other, as more than one teacher teaches the course. This is beneficial as it gives the students different approaches to the subject. Students' work is well marked and feedback is generally on a group basis so that all students benefit from the comments made.

155. The good teaching draws a good response from students. Students work hard and are very willing to spend time after school to cover any weaknesses in their prior learning or to receive extra help. Students like the more mature approach that teachers adopt and this has fostered an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students are not afraid to question teachers so that they can clarify their understanding of individual topics. Many lessons are full of discussion of topics and draw together several aspects of mathematics.
156. Leadership and management are sound. Teachers are well deployed so that they can use their strengths well. The resources are sufficient but the departmental computers are old and cannot run the software required to support learning. Graphical calculators are used well within the course.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Relationships are good and enhance students' learning.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The teacher's knowledge and command of the subject are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of marking and monitoring of students' work.
- Improve access to and the use of ICT to enhance students' learning.
- Modify teaching styles to encourage more student participation in lessons.

157. No candidates were entered for GCE A level physics prior to 2002. Five students completed modules in the AS course at the end of 2001 but they did not seek to have their results registered. One student obtained one of the higher grades and three were ungraded. Three students are continuing their studies with the intention of taking the A level examination.
158. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 13 are broadly consistent with course expectations. Students are performing at levels which reflect their prior attainment and they make satisfactory progress. They are able to recall work from GCSE on waves and extend it to answer questions on energy in progressive and standing waves. In the lesson observed during the inspection students revised energy levels and the teacher explained emission spectra. Although their understanding of the concepts was sound they initially found the required mathematics difficult without the help of the teacher. The numerical skills of higher-attaining students are satisfactory but lower attainers have difficulty with many simple algebraic processes.
159. Students in Year 12 have settled down and are performing at levels at least appropriate to their prior attainment. Most of these students commenced the course having obtained grade C in the GCSE examination. All students, however, are making good progress. They have good recall and showed in the lesson observed that they have a secure understanding of forces and moments. They went on to develop a sound understanding of the concept of momentum. Some students experienced difficulty with the calculations.
160. Written work reveals that students recently completed a module on mechanics and radioactivity. The standard of work was at least satisfactory and for some it was good. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of Newton's laws and the equations of motion. Graphs are, for example, well drawn and students' understanding was confirmed by their performance in answering an old examination paper.

161. The quality of teaching is good overall and students make good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result of the teacher's enthusiasm to share his knowledge. Relationships with students are good and the teacher has an excellent command of the subject. He is able to adapt swiftly to students' varying needs. In a Year 13 lesson, a student had experienced difficulty with homework and the teacher arranged for the others to explain where he had gone wrong. All gained from the experience. On occasions, students tend to be passive and unwilling to initiate discussion or challenge statements. Students increased their knowledge and understanding of waves because the lesson was well planned and had good pace.
162. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher stimulated students' interest on the law of the conservation of momentum by comparing the momentum of a tank and a housefly hitting a window. The lesson had a variety of activities, very good pace and students made good progress. The work tested all in the group, including higher attainers.
163. Students produce copious notes but they are not always sufficiently well organised and, for a minority, fail to provide evidence of a methodical approach to study. Although set assignments are appropriately marked, these are not kept in students' folders. The remainder of their work is not marked or monitored to give advice on presentation. There is no evidence to show that they have been engaged in presentations or debate or that they have made very much use of ICT. Documentation is appropriate and the subject is well managed within the science department.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and they have a positive attitude to learning.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject and are committed to raising standards.
- Relationships are very good and students respond to the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT in students' learning.
- Teaching styles do not enable students to participate freely in discussions.
- Students lack confidence in their practical skills.

164. Three students out of the original five who started the course entered the A level examination in 2002. This was the first time that any students had been entered for the examination. The results are as yet unconfirmed but they achieved well in relation to their prior GCSE grades. In work seen, Year 13 standards are below average but students are achieving satisfactorily. They have good recall of GCSE work and in the modules studied in Year 12. Students' written work indicates that they have a sound understanding of the biochemistry of carbohydrates and of cell structure. They demonstrate in lessons that they know about the role of hormones. Their practical skills are less secure. Students lack confidence in their own ability and some are hesitant when performing simple tasks such as making up solutions. Students in Year 12 have settled down well to the study of biology and are performing at levels appropriate to their previous attainment at GCSE. They make good progress. Students have a sound knowledge of the structure of the cell and higher attainers show a good understanding of the structure and function of organelles.
165. Students are diligent in making notes as they progress through the course but these are not always checked by teachers to ensure that they are correct and appropriately organised. Apart from research which students have done at home, there is very little evidence of the use of ICT. Students attend a field course each year, which enhances their skills of investigation.
166. The quality of teaching is generally good and students make good progress as a result of the teachers' desire to share their knowledge with them. Relationships with students are very good

and humour is often used to good effect. Students listen well but they are, at times, passive and do not initiate discussion and debate. Teachers' careful preparation ensures that teaching meets the needs of students with a wide range of attainment levels. A group of Year 13 students was observed setting up an experiment to investigate the growth of yeast in different sugars. The lesson was very well prepared and the teacher skilfully adapted her teaching to ensure that students not only worked independently but also gained in confidence. Opportunities were made to revise work from the previous year as well as from the National Curriculum programmes of study. The students were anxious to learn but they lacked confidence in their own practical skills. However, the teacher's constant encouragement ensured that progress was good.

167. The same group was also observed in a lesson in which they learned about the role of insulin in the control of glucose in the body. The teacher used the whiteboard very effectively and students were easily able to make their own notes. Good links were made with previous work on other hormones in the body. The lesson was enhanced by a brief discussion of the ethical implications of preparing insulin from a pig's pancreas as opposed to its production by bacteria. The lesson had good pace and good progress was made.
168. In a lesson with Year 12 students the teacher used frequent reference to previous work in GCSE to introduce them to more advanced ideas about cell division. Recall was good and students made rapid progress towards an understanding of the cell cycle. The teacher used several different strategies to ensure that students understood. Most, but not all, students could state the names of the different phases in mitosis and the highest attainers could state the role of different organelles in the changes which take place at each phase.
169. Biology is well managed within the science department. Teachers adapt well to students with varying levels of attainment. They ensure that all are included in all activities. The subject is taught by a team of teachers who work very well together and are committed to raising standards. Many students enter the course with levels of attainment that are below average. However, good teaching and a positive attitude to work ensure that progress is good.

BUSINESS

The focus was on Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) Business and Intermediate GNVQ Business Studies.

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Assessment is rigorous and provides students with good guidance on their strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers have relevant and recent experience in business or industry.

Areas for improvement

- Documentation needs to be collated into a handbook to give a clearer overview of the course to staff and students.
- There is no office style accommodation to model the business environment

170. Attainment is at the national average. Students achieve well because teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes to their work. In 2001, standards were close to the national average and students achieved well in relation to their predicted grades at both advanced and intermediate levels. In the new AVCE qualification in 2002 results were better than the national picture in that all students passed and two-thirds of students achieved one of the three highest grades. There has been a similar pattern of sound achievement at intermediate level and students have gone on to the AVCE course. The number of students varies from year to year but the overall trend is one of increasing numbers, rising standards and good retention rates.

171. There are more male students overall but no clear differences in attainment. Individual students with special educational needs have achieved well and progressed to the AVCE course because of the high quality of support available. Overall, standards in the one-year Intermediate GNVQ and Year 13 AVCE are average. Students achieve well. Standards are lower in Year 12 because many students have not taken business courses before.
172. Attitudes to the subject are very good. The consistent vocational approach to the subject clearly challenges the highest-attaining students but also supports those who encounter problems. Students are achieving well because of the high quality of teaching and of their own response. Teaching is very good. Teachers are very skilled at questioning, to assess understanding and to encourage students to think for themselves. They have experience in business and industry and they use this to provide good vocational models for their classes, for example in human resource management.
173. In Year 12, AVCE students show a clear understanding of the value of job descriptions although they had limited understanding of some of the terms used in advertisements for management personnel. In Year 13, students use the appropriate vocabulary in looking at supply and demand. All can use developing sectors in new technology as examples while the highest-attaining students give good examples of complementary products and discuss the benefits of competition. Some students take more options, including accountancy, and they show a good understanding of accountancy procedures, including double entry. Intermediate students are making good progress. Most have not studied business before but they show a clear understanding of mission statements and higher-attaining students can explain the difference between the public and private sectors.
174. Learning in all of these vocational courses is very effective because of the pace and challenge that encourage students to apply their communication, numeracy and ICT skills. The department does not have the model office that would be a valuable resource in teaching vocational subjects. The school has valuable links with local industry through the Education Business Partnership, and students take part in Young Enterprise and work placements. Assessment is rigorous and the data is managed very well. Its use ensures that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. The department is managed well and the new head of department provides good leadership within a department where teamwork is a key feature. New courses have been effectively introduced and their quality has been recognised by the external assessor. Planning is good and documentation is comprehensive and readily accessible but, as yet, student and staff handbooks are not available. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and students respond well to the high quality of teaching in the department.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on AVCE Leisure and Recreation and AVCE Travel and Tourism.

LEISURE AND TOURISM

Overall, the quality of provision in Leisure and Tourism is **good**.

Strengths

- Well-planned teaching motivates higher-attaining students to develop independent learning and research skills.
- Students receive clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their work through regular assessments.

Areas for development

- Independent learning and research skills of lower-attaining students.
- Relevance of work experience placements so they complement students' insights of the topics they study in school.

175. In 2001, three candidates took the new Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in Leisure and Recreation. Grade comparisons with national attainment are not available because the entry was too small. Students started the course with below average GCSE attainment and two out three achieved predicted grades, and all students attained grades D or E. This is satisfactory achievement on an advanced level course for these students. In 2002, three students took AVCE Leisure and Recreation, and five took AVCE Travel and Tourism. Students overall achieved satisfactorily. One student who gained a B grade achieved well in relation to previous attainment. The proportion of students who remain on the course is very high. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. It is too early to discern any trend in the results.
176. The standard of work seen overall is slightly below expectations for an A level course. Higher-attaining students have a good overview of the industries they study. A student used a time-line to illustrate factors that contributed to the growth of travel and tourism, such as jet-aircraft. They analyse and interpret statistics skilfully: for example to gauge the increase in visitor numbers to the United Kingdom and the number of nights in accommodation, over a period of years. Such students do well in linking causal factors on changes in travel and tourism; for example, the destruction of the World Trade Centre in 2001. They show awareness of the wider impact of change on industries that support the travel and tourism industry. The work of lower-attaining students is less thorough and key information may be left out as, for example, an explanation of the assignment tasks in a portfolio of work. In an analysis of the impact of improved mobility on leisure and recreation a student omitted to label what area or country the statistics referred to. Students respond well to suggestions made by teachers on their work, but lower-attaining students require this more and lack sufficient self-motivation to move ahead independently and initiate research. All students have appropriate ICT skills to use the Internet for research and to word-process their assignments, and include tables and scanned photographs.
177. Teaching is good. Students learn to apply knowledge in new situations because teachers plan their lessons well. For example, a teacher used questioning very effectively to help students to understand the importance of customer service. She was adept at framing questions for students in the class who were studying either leisure and recreation or travel and tourism. Students respond enthusiastically to practical tasks and when working in small groups. They receive regular assessment of their work that relates directly to what they should do to improve. Lower-attaining students tend to rely too heavily on teachers to guide them to the next step in their assignments, and they do not readily embark on independent thought and enquiry. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. For example, a student with visual impairment has textbook pages enlarged in a suitable font size by a learning support assistant.
178. The co-ordinator for AVCE gives clear direction to the teaching team. She has knowledgeable understanding of the courses' criteria and organises them well. Students' recent work experience has not benefited their studies and the co-ordinator has addressed this matter. Specialist physical education teachers make a valuable input and receive good support from the co-ordinator. A new qualification is successfully in place since the last inspection. Progress has been satisfactory since the last report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on AS and A level performing arts courses.

PERFORMING ARTS

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is **good**.

Strengths

- The recently-introduced AS level and A level courses are beginning to develop a strong and vibrant theatre tradition in the sixth form.
- The overall good, and often very good, quality of teaching, which is improving as teachers gain confidence in the new courses, has a positive impact on learning, helping students to become highly motivated.
- The good management of the department results in students knowing what is expected, helping them to successfully rise to new challenges.

Weaknesses

- Standards of students' writing are not as good as their practical work, partly because the students do not have a sufficient range of texts to study.

179. The drama department offers A and AS level courses in performing arts. The first group of A level students were examined in 2002. Results were below the national average, although half the students gained a grade C or above. Students performed as well in drama than they did in their other subjects and nearly all matched or exceeded their predicted grades at A level. There are no differences between the performances of male and female students or between those from different ethnic groups, and all students make good progress irrespective of their individual starting points. The grades attained at AS and A level in 2002 were a little below the national average, although current students have enormous enthusiasm that should enable them to match the national average at A and AS level if their current rate of progress continues.

180. The standards of work of current students are average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students in Year 13 produce well-rehearsed items in which they take full account of the technical aspects of drama. In one powerful lesson, they explored the issue of mental illness. They successfully devised an original piece of theatre following an exploratory session where they successfully brainstormed ideas about mental illness. This brief, but poignant piece of drama, which used very atmospheric music and lighting, portrayed a young woman, with a child in her arms, who was suffering emotional breakdown. The pressures on the woman were portrayed by incessant whispering voices and the shrill accusatory voice of her mother, who failed to understand her daughter's plight. The effect was compelling. As well as successfully improving the students' understanding of technique, the session provided an excellent opportunity for grappling with issues of topical social and moral concern. The students' initial lack of confidence evaporated as they became engrossed in the subject matter and the business of how to portray this to an audience. Students' written work is not as incisive as their practical work. They are too accepting of others' ideas, sometime failing to penetrate beneath the surface of texts or to fully appreciate the subtleties and finer points of technique. However, the teacher is aware of this and is successfully encouraging the students to be bolder and more provocative in their critical responses.

181. Students in Year 12 are rapidly improving the depth of their understanding across a range of technical and creative requirements. They know that performing arts requires intellectual as well as aesthetic engagement. They successfully articulate why some things work and some do not. In a most successful lesson, they rehearsed an act from a text they were studying. They all displayed confidence and poise in their characterisations. They are beginning to make good links between the visual, spatial and aural elements of presentations so that all aspects of stage work are mutually supported. The students were bold and adventurous, bouncing ideas enthusiastically between one other. The results were entirely convincing. As with Year 13, a relative weakness is students' written work, which, while it is improving, is not sufficiently incisive or penetrating.

182. Teaching is good overall and is often very good. The quality of learning follows suit and is often effervescent in the best lessons. Students eagerly grasp new ideas, which the teacher successfully draws from them with just the right amount of coaxing. As a result, students are successful independent learners. The A level course is methodically planned with good tracking of individual students' progress. This is done through clear guidance given by the teacher and written assessments. As a result, students' learning is systematic and individualized. Teaching is purposeful and businesslike, which helps to encourage a serious and mature response to learning.

Teachers' often ambitious expectations result in learning that extends and challenges students, irrespective of their individual starting points. The very good quality of marking helps students to have clear ideas of what they must do to achieve even higher grades. Learning has a momentum and immediacy with little opportunity for students to fritter away valuable time. Clear guidelines successfully encourage students to be ambitious and well organised. Students overall attitudes to work are good. They enjoy what they do, respect the teachers and work well as a team when preparing practical assignments. As a result, learning is often fun whilst being stimulating.

183. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Procedures are well prepared and students feel valued and supported. The supportive relationships between staff and students promote increasingly skilful and committed levels of performance. The accommodation is suitable and there are sufficient resources, although the stock of books for students is limited, with no independent library within the department. This limits the amount of research that can be done in lesson time. The regular opportunities for extra-curricular activity, for instance on the Thursday evening rehearsals and the resulting regular performances, provide good opportunities for students to extend their active involvement.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history. Geography AS and A level lessons were sampled. Students achieve well in geography because they are taught well. Students' transition from the GCSE course to advanced work geography is planned well.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good: it is enthusiastic, well planned and reflects the strength of subject knowledge and high expectations of the students.
- Very good use is made of resources such as the interactive whiteboard and the departmentally-produced student handbooks.
- Students benefit from a choice of three sixth-form courses in the history department. The courses in ancient history and politics have begun well.

Areas for improvement

- There is little display of students' work and other materials in classrooms.
- Not enough students opt for history courses in the sixth form.

184. It is not possible to compare examination results in history with national standards because the numbers involved are too small. However, the available evidence suggests that students achieve well in relation to their GCSE grades.
185. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work confirm that current students are achieving well in terms of their prior GCSE grades. Year 12 students have made smooth progress from Year 11 work. Standards in the new AS course in ancient history, where numbers are greater, are in line with what might be expected at this early stage. Their achievement is good – none have studied this subject before and they have already made clear and rapid gains in knowledge and understanding.
186. Students' written work is carefully organised and structured to support logical conclusions based on valid historical evidence. Students are able to articulate their own views with growing confidence. The most able students articulate their own views with fluency; others are becoming more confident and work hard to explain and justify their conclusions even though they sometimes find this difficult. The teacher's careful questioning, for example, enabled a very small Year 13 group to explain the importance of Elizabeth's religious settlement.

187. Students learn very well. In ancient history, for example, students have made a good start with Suetonius and Tacitus and are developing a good understanding of the role of the Praetorian Guard. This very good learning results from both the experienced teaching in the department and from the students' own committed attitudes to study. Teachers' confident subject expertise and high expectations of what students can achieve allow them to prepare students well for the demands of the subject. This is particularly evident in the area of interpretations: students in Year 13, for example, have just watched Michael Portillo's recent television programme on Elizabeth 1 and are expected to criticise his views on her significance in British history.
188. Teaching is very good. There are significant strengths in the teaching, which have a positive impact on both students' attitudes and the quality of their learning. The content of lessons is challenging and students are encouraged to develop their own historical viewpoints. Teachers are extremely enthusiastic and work hard to ensure that students of all levels of attainment are able to reach their full potential. The close analysis of text is taught in a very effective manner. This was evident, for example, in a Year 12 lesson where the teacher enabled the students to analyse a difficult piece of text in order to pick out the key features of Hitler's ideology. Similarly, in ancient history students are taught to skim read. Teachers make very good use of questioning to clarify and reinforce students' understanding.
189. The subject benefits from very good leadership, effective management and a clear sense of direction shared by both the head of department and by his team. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and by departmentally-produced student handbooks. The department is well resourced with textbooks. Students benefit from an excellent range of courses in the sixth form with a choice of history, ancient history and politics. There is a lack of display of students' work and other stimulus materials in history classrooms.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French A level courses were inspected in detail. One Year 13 Spanish A level lesson with one student was observed and the teaching and learning were excellent.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge and understanding.
- Good relationships inspire trust and respect.

Areas for improvement

- Improved resources to develop students' research skills and extend their learning.
- Increased challenge to motivate and excite the students both in lessons and to encourage independent learning.

190. Results in the 2001 A level English Literature examinations indicate standards that were below the national average and represent satisfactory achievement because of the prior attainment of the students. Trends over time are inconsistent but, generally, standards have been maintained. Girls perform better than boys but not significantly. The retention rate is high.
191. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment in the sixth form is below average, which reflects the results of the national tests. Their attainment on entry was below average and they have made sound progress. Most students have a secure knowledge and understanding of their work. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion but falter when speaking in formal situations. Students make valid and cogent observation and use technical vocabulary in their writing. Evaluative and critical writing is a problem for many students, largely because their independent research skills are undeveloped. Some students, particularly in Year 13, cannot make sophisticated inferences from texts or sustain detailed textual analysis. Recent initiatives are

beginning to redress writing problems by careful selection of reading texts and more variety in writing assignments.

192. The study of a wide range of texts deepens students' understanding of literature but not all lesson planning allows for students to have the opportunity to air their views and develop their independent learning. When lessons are planned to include well-prepared student contributions, their comments are sharp and sensitive. Students respond positively to their teachers and each other.
193. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and includes some which is good. All teachers are knowledgeable in their field. In the good lessons there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a Year 12 lesson on 'The Tempest' the students thoroughly enjoyed comparing and contrasting the characters and discussed magic enthusiastically. Students appreciate the opportunity to receive one-to-one attention and help from their teacher, especially the lower-attaining students who have not made the leap from summarising to intellectual analysis. When the teacher tries to extend and deepen the discussion they flounder and rely on the teacher for illumination. This is because the students are over-reliant on the teacher for answers and have not developed their own learning. The teacher's insistence on the use of analysis and explanation is beginning to improve standards. In a good Year 12 coursework writing lesson on Shakespeare, the teacher took advantage of the trust and good humour of relationships to engage the students in a lively, thoughtful debate. In satisfactory lessons, students learnt marginally less because of a more pedestrian pace and lengthy exposition by the teacher. Students' work is marked regularly and consistently to a high standard although some comments are bland and do not target improvement sufficiently well for the students to know how to improve.
194. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students and the development of staff. Assessment procedures are clear, which results in marking and specific targeting to secure individual student improvement and to inform curriculum planning. This is not consistent, as some students' targets are not clear enough for them to know exactly what they have to do in order to improve. The head of department is respected and valued by English teachers for her care for staff and students, her expertise and contribution to their professional development. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Results in national tests are similar and current initiatives suggest improvement. There is still insufficient opportunity for students to develop their independent learning.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Students have good levels of motivation and are eager to learn.
- Listening skills are good.

Areas for improvement

- The amount of French language used in lessons needs to be increased.
- Written work in both years is inadequate.
- Speaking skills in Year 12 are below average.

195. A and AS level French were added to the post-16 curriculum in 2000 and therefore did not feature in the previous inspection report. The AS level results in 2001 ranged from one grade A to four U grades out of a total of nine entrants. In 2002, four out of five were ungraded with the fifth student obtaining a grade D. Three students sat the A level examination in 2002, with one grade A and two at grade D. Overall, students made unsatisfactory progress. In work seen, standards of work are average in Year 13 and below average in Year 12. Speaking skills are average in Year 13 and below average in Year 12. In both years the standard of written work is below average, with a

considerable number of errors, whilst reading and listening skills are in line with expectations. Students' achievement is, however, satisfactory overall and in a few cases, good. Retention rates during the year are good, but fewer than half continue from AS to A level.

196. In the three lessons observed, standards of teaching and learning were satisfactory, with a range from good to unsatisfactory. The good lesson included the frequent use of French, fast pace and high expectations. This resulted in good progress in Year 12 where students succeeded in understanding an audio-tape on the theme of vegetarianism, which was moderately difficult in terms of language and an important element in students' moral education. In the unsatisfactory lesson, there was not enough use of the French language by both the teacher and the students, pace was slow and time was not well spent throughout the lesson. As a result, student learning was insufficient. In the third lesson, pace was good and the presentation lively, enabling students to learn satisfactorily about French attitudes to Europe. The amount of French used by the teacher and students was generally satisfactory but it fell away in the final ten minutes. In addition, when students began to talk about their own views, they were given only very limited time to do so, which limited their learning.
197. The A level curriculum is satisfactory apart from the lack of any link with a French-speaking country, which would enable students to develop their skills independently of the teacher. Cultural education is well covered in the syllabus, an example being the theme of Europe in one Year 13 lesson, which covered French attitudes to the European community.
198. After a period of turbulence, the post-16 work of the department is now being satisfactorily managed. Written work is well marked with both helpful comments and clear correction of mistakes. Resources are unsatisfactory both in the classroom and in the library. There are no French newspapers or magazines available and only a few videos for students to use. Currently all students of French are girls.