

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSLEY COLLEGE

Redditch

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 132823

Headteacher: Mrs Lesley McGuigan

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 10th to 14th February 2003

Inspection number: 249822

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Woodrow Drive Redditch
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Nickson
Date of previous inspection:	This is the school's first inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	The school's results and students' achievements How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9986	Bill Twiss	Lay inspector		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?
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7428	Ray Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
20119	Anthony Bell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business studies Educational inclusion (including race equality)	
11828	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	History Geography	
19866	Peter Austin	Team inspector	Art and design	
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music Special educational needs	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2941	Andrew Henderson	Team inspector	Physical education	
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
7465	Richard Brent	Team inspector	Able autism base	
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingsley College is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 13 to 18. It is of average size with 953 students, including 181 in the sixth form. There are significantly more boys than girls in the main school. Almost all students are white, with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of students have English as an additional language, but are not in the early stages of learning English. The number of students with special educational needs is broadly average, but a very high proportion of these students have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The school has a specialist unit for able autistic students, and students from a special school take part in much of its work. The standards reached by students joining the school range from well above to well below average. They are just within the average range overall, but below average in modern foreign languages, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design. The school was founded in September 2001 following a reorganisation of local provision. It was working on two sites during its first year, and staff appointments were not completed. The school was fully established with permanent staff on its present site for six months prior to the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Kingsley College provides good education. While there is, as yet, no firm evidence on trends in standards, students have settled in well, and are learning well in response to good teaching. In setting up the school, the headteacher and governors have established a clear commitment to high standards, combined with equal opportunities for all students. Effective management procedures have already brought about significant improvements in teaching and in the management of subjects. The sixth form meets the needs of its students well. The cost per student is very low, and the school is short of resources for learning in several subjects. Kingsley College provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors give very clear and effective leadership.
- Well-planned and well-informed teaching leads to interesting lessons and good learning.
- There is good provision for care, guidance and students' personal development.
- Students enjoy school, work hard and are sensitive to the needs of others.
- There is very good provision for students with special educational needs.
- There is a good range of sports, arts and other learning activities outside lessons.

What could be improved

- There is too little time for some subjects, particularly in Year 9.
- Teaching in some lessons does not meet the needs of all students in the class.
- There are too few resources for learning in several subjects and in the library.
- Students' ICT skills are held back by a lack of opportunity to apply them in several subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the school's first inspection. Inspection evidence shows that it is actively improving its work, and has put itself in a very good position to improve further.

STANDARDS

No students from the fully re-organised school have yet taken GCSE or A-level examinations. Some students took Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examinations in the school in 2002. However, some teaching groups were very small, and the results cannot be compared with those of other schools.

The overall standard of work seen during the inspection, including mathematics, science and ICT, was below average in Year 11. However, students were reaching broadly average standards in English, design and technology and religious education, and above average standards in music and citizenship. Students in Year 11 are not drawn from the school's full catchment area, however, and their work represents satisfactory achievement from the standards with which they joined the school. Students in Year 10, the first group to have joined the school at the normal age of transfer, were reaching above average standards in much of their work.

Results in Year 9 national tests in 2002 were broadly average in English, science and mathematics. Students in Year 9 during the inspection were also reaching average overall standards, with average standards in English and science but above average standards in mathematics. Standards are below average in ICT and modern languages, but the most recent work in ICT showed strong signs of improvement. Students reach above average standards in religious education and citizenship. Overall, standards in Year 9 represent good achievement from students' starting points.

The standard of sixth-form work during the inspection was broadly average overall, with above average standards in business studies, performing arts and some vocational courses. This work also represented good achievement, particular from average and lower-attaining students.

Good teaching and guidance are establishing a pattern of good achievement across the school. Students with special educational needs, including those with significant learning difficulties, learn very well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, learn well, and often achieve highly. The school has set suitable targets for improvement. Inspection evidence shows little difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students enjoy school, and are prepared to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Often very good in lessons and around the school. Occasional lapses in behaviour in the playground and, less often, in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students are co-operative and willing to accept responsibility. They respect each other's feelings, views and beliefs.
Attendance	Average. Generally good punctuality to lessons.

Students have settled well into the new school and are working well together. They develop a strong sense of responsibility and citizenship, and are prepared to help each other. Sixth-form students make an outstanding contribution to the integration of students with significant special educational needs.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning in English and mathematics are good overall throughout the school. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across the school is satisfactory, with very good work in some subjects, though teachers do not yet have enough resources to develop students' ICT skills to the full. Teaching in science is good in Years 10 and 11. Year 9 science teaching is satisfactory, but rather narrow in scope, particularly for higher-attaining students.

Overall, teaching in the main school and in the sixth form meets the needs of all students well. Teachers engage students in learning, build confidence, and help them develop good work habits, particularly in examination coursework. Most mark work well and set good homework, though there are some gaps in homework in Years 9 and 10. Teaching in the sixth form is particularly good for average and below average students; in a minority of lessons, for higher-attaining students needs to target the highest A-level grades more clearly. There is good teaching in a substantial majority of lessons, and a small but significant amount of excellent teaching in German, art and design and history. There is only a small amount of variation in teaching quality between subjects, but teachers do not always fully challenge higher-attaining students in Year 9. In some lessons where teaching is otherwise sound, teachers do not ensure that students listen properly to the teacher, and allow some students to work too slowly. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, work did not promote effective learning, and lesson time was not used well. There is very good teaching in many individual lessons, in music in Years 10 and 11, and in work with students who have special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All subjects are provided, though some have too little teaching time, particularly in Year 9. There is a good range of activities outside lessons.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Very good specialist teaching and assessment is backed up by consistently effective support in lessons.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Students are making good progress in written and spoken English and in their other work. They often reach above average standards.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good in all respects. The school supports personal development well in all aspects of its work. Students are encouraged to reflect on important issues, know right from wrong, and develop a strong sense of citizenship. They are well prepared for life in modern society.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good for students' health and well-being. There is good guidance on academic work and careers.

There is a good working partnership with parents in the main school and in the sixth form. A sixth-form parents' evening during the inspection was well attended and very well organised. There is no daily act of collective worship, and there is too little use of ICT to support learning in several subjects. The new subject of citizenship has been introduced very effectively. The headteacher, teachers with pastoral

responsibility and other colleagues know the students well, expect them to work hard, and have brought them together to form a purposeful learning community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. A very clear lead from the headteacher and senior staff has built a strong sense of teamwork. Effective management systems ensure that strengths are built on and weaknesses dealt with.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors have played a key role in establishing the new school, and contribute fully to its direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses available data well, and has established a clear basis for evaluating examination results.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school allocates its limited resources very effectively to promote achievement and equal opportunities for all students.

The school is well staffed with suitably qualified teachers and teaching assistants. Accommodation is adequate, though the school site has poor access for people with disabilities. There are too few resources for learning in several subjects and in the library. New computer suites are good, but teachers have too little access to computers in lessons.

The headteacher and senior staff monitor teaching and middle management closely, identifying strengths and taking action to ensure effective management where necessary. The headteacher and governors take care to ensure that all students are fully involved in the school, and are treated fairly. Subjects are managed well by curriculum leaders. Management of the provision of care for students and of provision for special educational needs is very good. The school manages its finances very closely, and makes good use of the principles of best value in making purchases and in evaluating the effectiveness of its work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • They are expected to do their best. • The school is approachable. • Children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Information for parents. • Co-operation with parents.

Positive views from parents were much more numerous than negative comments. Inspectors agree with the points that please parents. They found that the school co-operates closely with parents and provides good information. Analysis of homework showed that it is generally good, but that there are significant gaps in homework in some classes in Years 9 and 10.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 181 students in the sixth form, with an even balance of male and female students. The sixth form offers a wide range of subjects at AS and A level, including vocational A level, as well as intermediate vocational courses. At the time of the inspection, the sixth form was the outcome of a merger of two schools' sixth forms, and was maintaining continuity in the courses students had begun in their previous schools. Most students are white. A small number have minority ethnic backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language. The school is committed to providing courses for the full range of students in the community, and a small but significant proportion of students have special educational needs. All students wishing to join the sixth form are accepted, but there are entrance requirements for individual subjects at AS level. Standards reached by students joining Year 12 range from well above average to below average and are lower, overall, than in most sixth forms. There are, as yet, no trends in sixth form numbers, and many of the current sixth form joined the school from other schools as part of re-organisation.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Kingsley College has a good sixth form that meets the needs of its students well. There are no nationally comparable data on standards, but AS results in 2002 and students' work during the inspection indicate good progress from their results at GCSE. Teaching is well matched to most students' learning needs, and the overall quality of learning is good, with some very good features. The sixth form is led and managed well, with particular strengths in day-to-day management and in establishing working partnerships among students and staff. The college is committed, for this year, to providing all of the A-level courses offered prior to re-organisation, and this leads to some very small teaching groups. In these circumstances, its cost-effectiveness is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Management and leadership of sixth form are good, with some very good features.
- Teaching is well adapted to the needs of students, and leads to good learning.
- Students' progress is closely assessed and tracked.
- Students with special educational needs are fully involved with sixth form work.
- The range of courses and other sixth form activities meets the needs of students well.
- Students work hard, form good partnerships with teachers and contribute to the community.

What could be improved

- There is too little teaching time for some subjects, particularly in Year 12.
- Some students need more guidance on the use of time outside lessons.
- There are too few facilities for ICT, and library facilities are inadequate.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching groups are small, but teaching is good. Students are reaching above average standards in their work and learning well.
Biology	Satisfactory. Standards are average. Teachers know the subject very well, but the teaching of higher-attaining students needs a closer focus on the requirements of the highest A-level grades.
Business studies	Very good. Very effective teaching enables students to reach above-average standards across a wide and demanding programme of study.
Information and communication technology	Good. Standards are below average, but represent good progress from students' GCSE results. Teaching is well thought out and effective.
Leisure and recreation	Good. Students reach average standards by Year 13 in response to good teaching. They make good progress from their GCSE results.
Performing arts	Very good. Very effective teaching enables students to make very good progress. They reach above average standards across a range of skills.
History	Very good. Overall standards are below average, but outstanding teaching enables students to make very good progress, sometimes from modest GCSE results.
English literature	Good. Good teaching leads to good progress in lessons, but learning outside lessons could be improved. Standards are average.
German	Good. Teaching is outstanding, but there is too little teaching time. Standards are average, and represent good progress from GCSE.

Other work seen during the inspection was good overall. There is some very good vocational work, but a minority of lessons offered too little challenge to higher-attaining students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. The head of the sixth form and her colleagues provide very good guidance to students on their choice of courses, on their progress and on careers and higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good, with very good features. Teaching, standards and students' progress are monitored effectively, new courses are developed well to meet students' identified needs, and costs are kept under close scrutiny. The school promotes equal opportunities for all students well, and enables them to contribute to the school and to the wider community.

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">• There is a co-operative, adult working atmosphere, with very good relationships.• Teaching is good, and teachers give very good personal support and guidance.• Courses are interesting and demanding, and all are encouraged to succeed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some students feel that guidance is not focused on enabling them to reach the highest grades.• There are too few books in the library to support study.

Inspectors agree with the positive views, which were expressed, often strongly, by most students. They found that academic guidance to students was a strength overall, but agree that students taking some courses need closer guidance on achieving high grades. They share students' views on the library.

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. There is, as yet, no clear pattern to standards and students' achievements. No students in the fully re-organised school have yet taken GCSE examinations, and students in the present Year 10 are the first to have joined the school at its normal time of transfer. Students in Year 11 were reaching below average standards in most subjects in work seen during the inspection, including mathematics, science and ICT. However, they were reaching broadly average standards in English, religious education, design and technology and physical education, and above average standards in citizenship. This year group is significantly smaller than others in the school, and was not drawn from its full catchment area. These students' standards on joining Year 9 were below average, and their achievement is satisfactory.
2. At the time of the inspection, students who had taken Year 9 national tests in 2002 were achieving well, and in most subjects were reaching above average standards in their work. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were broadly average overall in most subjects, but were above average in mathematics. While these students had broadly average standards in most subjects when they joined Year 9, they had reached below average standards in ICT, modern foreign languages, art and design and music. Well-directed teaching had enabled them to reach average overall standards in art and design and music by the time of the inspection, but standards in languages and ICT were still below average in Year 9. Overall, the present pattern of achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory, and good in mathematics. The good performance of students in Year 10 indicates that the school is establishing a pattern of good long-term achievement.
3. Overall, students' numeracy skills are satisfactory. They receive an effective foundation in mathematics lessons and apply these skills in other subjects, for example, in graphical and algebraic work in science and measurement in design and technology. References to numerical formulae and terminology are included in students' planners. Literacy skills are also satisfactory, chiefly as a result of good work in individual subjects, including art and design, history, geography and religious education. The school is doing all it can to develop resources for ICT, but teachers in most subjects still do not have enough access to computers to enable students to develop their skills adequately.
4. There was little difference during the inspection in the quality of work and standards reached by boys and girls, even in subjects in which girls do significantly better in most schools. Students with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of very good specialist teaching and very consistent support across all subjects in the school. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds also do consistently well, and are often among the higher-attaining students in their classes. However, some of these students make errors in written English that are not dealt with consistently in marking. Gifted and talented students have good opportunities in several subjects, notably music, art and design, and additional provision for physical education. By Year 11, their achievement is satisfactory, but they are not identified clearly enough on entry to the school, and some achieve less than they should in Year 9.

Sixth form

5. No students have yet taken A-level examinations, and only some of the Year 13 students took AS examinations in the school in 2002. There are no national comparative data for these results, but they showed satisfactory overall achievement. The sixth form provides for a broader range of students than in most schools. While some join Year 12 with very good GCSE results, the overall standard on entry to the sixth form is below average. In subjects fully inspected, the quality of work seen during the inspection was broadly average in English, mathematics, leisure and recreation and biology, and above average in business studies, performing arts and German. Standards were below average in ICT, and history. There were examples of good achievement in other subjects, notably the AVCE in health and social care, but a minority of students in some

subjects are achieving less than they should. In some cases, these are higher-attaining students who need more focused guidance on ways of achieving very high grades, and in others, for example, in French, they are lower-attaining students who need to take more care over their written work.

6. There is little difference in the performance of different groups of students. Those with special educational needs in the sixth form are making good progress, and students with minority ethnic backgrounds are, as in the main school, well represented among higher-attaining students. There were no significant differences in the achievements of male and female students during the inspection, and standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT were broadly average. On the limited evidence available by the time of the inspection, overall achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, and has good features in the standards reached by average and lower-attaining students in several subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Students' attitudes to their work, their behaviour, personal development and relationships are good, and are the outcome of the school's careful provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Parents are pleased with these aspects of the college's work.
8. The students are well motivated and the vast majority of them enjoy coming to the college. They are keen to learn, attentive to their teachers and are not afraid of asking challenging questions or offering their views in lessons. In a Year 9 history lesson, the students developed their thinking about how road transport has changed over the years and demonstrated that they were not prepared to take everything at face value. As the students move through the college, their attitudes towards learning mature and their confidence and independence grow. Year 11 students, for example, understand the importance of their GCSE work. They work diligently in completing their course work and appreciate the support that the teachers offer to them. All groups of students, including those with minority ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs, have similar attitudes to school, and there is very good racial harmony. Students co-operate well with each other, discussing ideas sensibly and evaluating each other's work carefully and considerately.
9. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students respond well to their teachers and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. Behaviour in most lessons is very good. In a small minority, students are too slow to pay attention to the teacher, and do not listen properly. Students get on well together outside lessons. There were no obvious signs of bullying, isolation or oppression during the inspection, and students said that such behaviour was rare and rapidly dealt with. Racial harmony is excellent. The college has not permanently excluded any students. The small number of fixed-term exclusions has been for misdemeanours such as offensive comments, smoking and theft. Such instances are rare and the college uses exclusion as a very last resort.
10. Students of all ages take their responsibilities seriously. Students in Year 9, for example, engaged in a well-reasoned debate on capital punishment and demonstrated some of the research skills they had used in assembling their questions and arguments. Students enjoy the jobs that they have in the college, and relish opportunities to take part in elections to the student council. Those who are elected take their roles as representatives positively and have made useful practical suggestions for improving the environment. Students enjoy taking part in activities outside formal lessons. They participate in the school's drama and musical performances and often attend the clubs and workshops that the teachers host at lunch-times and after college.
11. Attendance is broadly average, and there is good punctuality in the morning and to lessons, despite the considerable distances between some teaching rooms.

Sixth form

12. There is a strong partnership between students and teachers on sixth form courses. All students want to succeed, and are prepared to work hard to do so. They invest much time and effort in their coursework, and the school is particularly successful in enabling average and lower-attaining students to see the value of consistent and careful work. Students understand the need to present work well, and many make very good use of ICT in their coursework, both for writing and to present statistical material. Students respond particularly well to teaching that is very good or excellent, as in history in Year 12 and the vocational course in health and social care, which has helped some students with lower GCSE grades to proceed to advanced work. They benefit from good arrangements for work experience, including foreign placements for language students.
13. Students, particularly in Year 12, have more time out of lessons than in most schools. This time is mostly, but not always, used effectively. Some students need more guidance, particularly on what they need to do in independent work to reach high grades at A level, but the quality of work outside lessons is also held back by the lack of books for private study in the library. Attendance is broadly average, and punctuality is good. As in the main school, racial harmony is excellent. Relationships among sixth-form students, and between them and their teachers, are very good, and students enjoy the social side of sixth-form life as well as their work.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers know and understand their subjects well, and plan effectively, with clear and suitable goals for lessons. They maintain good relationships with students, and a good, co-operative working atmosphere, with a good pace of work. Teachers make good use of discussion and question and answer sessions in lessons to bring out students' understanding and develop key points, which they explain clearly. Students learn to evaluate their own and each other's work sensitively and accurately. As a result, they know that they are learning effectively, and grow in confidence. The above average standards reached by most students in Year 10, who were the only students to have joined the school at the normal time, indicate that the consistency of this teaching and learning is leading to good long-term progress, and to rising standards.
15. The quality of teaching in almost all lessons ranges from satisfactory to very good, with a small number of excellent lessons and a similar proportion that are unsatisfactory. Lessons are well focused on what students need to learn. In music and ICT, very effective teaching is helping students to fill gaps in their earlier learning, and they are making rapid progress towards nationally expected standards. In most other subjects, well-focused teaching is enabling students joining with broadly average standards to sharpen their thinking and learning skills, building a good basis for later GCSE success. There is much well-planned practical work, particularly in design and technology and in physical education. The excellent lessons during the inspection took place in art and design and German. These lessons combined very high levels of understanding of the subject with very well-designed learning tasks for students that enabled them to make rapid progress.
16. In a quarter of lessons, teaching promotes satisfactory rather than good learning because it is not matched closely enough to the range of learning needs in the class. In some science lessons, for example, higher-attaining students do not have enough opportunities to discuss their work and to explore scientific ideas. In a minority of classes, students do not take an active enough part in learning, leaving too much impetus to come from the teacher. While most teachers mark work effectively and set regular homework, some marking does not give enough guidance on points for improvement, and there are significant gaps in homework in some classes in Years 9 and 10. However, teachers organise GCSE coursework very well, and Year 11 students told inspectors they found this particularly helpful. Occasionally, teachers do not insist that all students pay proper attention while the teacher is talking, and some lower-attaining students are allowed to hand in work that is not properly presented and completed. In the small number of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, activities were not planned effectively to engage the students, and time was not used effectively.

17. Close co-operation between teachers, teaching assistants and specialist teachers for special educational needs ensures that students with special educational needs receive close and consistent support across subjects, leading to very good learning. Gifted and talented students are effectively extended and challenged in Years 10 and 11, but teachers do not plan closely enough to meet their needs in all lessons in Year 9. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds, including the small number with English as an additional language, are committed to their work and learn well, often reaching above average standards. Activities in lessons are equally well tuned in to the interests of boys and girls.
18. Within subjects, teaching is good in English and mathematics throughout the school. In science, it is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Year 9, where learning is restricted by over-reliance on a published course. Teaching in modern languages and physical education is satisfactory in Year 9, and good, with some very good features in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in all other subjects is good overall, with very good teaching in music in Years 10 and 11. There is, however, significant variation in the quality of teaching between classes in art and design.
19. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory, though there is more consistency in planning for number work than for literacy in some subjects. The school is working hard to build up provision for students to apply their ICT skills in lessons, but at present teachers have too little access to computers to do this effectively. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is not yet having a significant impact on most teaching, but very good literacy teaching in history, geography and religious education provides a good basis on which the school can build.

Sixth form

20. Teaching was good or better in all subjects fully inspected except for biology, where it was satisfactory. Sixth-form teachers know their subjects very well, and plan interesting and relevant lessons that engage students and encourage them to continue their studies in independent work. They make good use of questioning and discussion, and explain issues clearly, so that all students understand their work. Average and lower-attaining students benefit particularly from these features. Teachers generally mark work well and give guidance on points for improvement, but in some subjects this needs to be more closely focused on what the most capable students need to do to achieve the highest A-level grades. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, but in a minority of lessons teachers allowed discussion to stray too far from the point, and did not provide effectively for all students in the group. Teaching in biology is good in some individual lessons, but in others, students spend too much time copying notes instead of making their own. Teaching meets the needs of students with special educational needs well. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds are among the most successful in the school. Those who have English as an additional language are making very good progress, and receive sensitive additional support when they need it.
21. Teaching was very good in German, business studies and performing arts, with excellent teaching in individual lessons in German and history. The excellent lessons were distinguished by a particularly interesting range of resources, outstanding knowledge of patterns of learning in the subject, and very effective provision for students to develop their analytic skills. In all subjects where the teaching was very good, effective lesson planning was supported by strong planning in the medium and long term, so that learning was promoted very consistently. Very good long-term planning in the AVCE for health and social care leads to a high success rate from students who mostly begin with below average GCSE results, and has enabled some to move to advanced courses.

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

Learning opportunities

22. All subjects of the National Curriculum receive adequate coverage in the main school, and the new subject of citizenship has been very effectively introduced. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex and relationships education and education against the misuse of drugs, is well organised and effective. Students receive good careers education and guidance, and there is an extensive and growing programme of sporting and learning activities outside lessons. The curriculum has been well thought out to meet the requirements of students with special educational needs, who receive high levels of support in all subjects, as well as very good specialist provision. It enables students with minority ethnic backgrounds, including the small number with English as an additional language, to learn effectively, and provides equally well for the needs of boys and girls. GCSE coursework is well organised, with a particularly clear timetable in Year 11 that is much appreciated by students.
23. The school has effective plans to develop its curriculum, including extending the use of computers by purchasing equipment for departments. At present, however, weaknesses in the organisation of the curriculum and the allocation of time to some subjects are limiting the quality of learning. In Year 9, several subjects, including history, geography, ICT and German, receive only one hour per week. This is not enough to promote effective learning, despite the good quality of teaching in these subjects. In Years 10 and 11, there is too little time for students taking short courses in ICT and religious education, and this is significantly hindering their chances of examination success. Provision for literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics is satisfactory overall, and there is good work in individual subjects. However, the introduction of the national strategies for Years 7 to 9 is still at a very early stage, and students' ICT skills are not yet applied and developed systematically in most subjects. The needs of gifted and talented students are adequately met in Years 10 and 11, with good provision in physical education and music, but they are not identified systematically, and some learn less than they could in Year 9.
24. The school has an excellent relationship with a local special school that gives that school's students, who have very significant learning difficulties, outstanding opportunities to take part in mainstream education. Curriculum leaders have termly meetings with middle school colleagues to consider how they should build on students' previous learning. These, however, have not yet led to effective co-ordination of the curriculum between middle and secondary schools. As a result, the curriculum in Year 9 has to be adapted to deal with gaps in students' knowledge in ICT, modern foreign languages, art and design and music. There are satisfactory relationships with the community, including good arrangements for work experience and participation in sports clubs.

Sixth form

25. The sixth-form curriculum was in a transitional state at the time of the inspection, because of a guarantee from the local education authority that no courses would be interrupted as a result of re-organisation. Overall, its quality is satisfactory, with good features. The main strength lies in a good range of courses, well adapted to the learning needs of its students. These include a wide variety of AS and A-level courses, and well-designed vocational provision which offers both good practical qualifications and a second route to advanced study. However, teaching time for AS courses is lower than in most schools, and this affects standards in some subjects, such as mathematics and modern languages.
26. Students are expected to use their time outside lessons for work, and most do so, but they have more time outside lessons than in most schools, and some need more structured guidance on ways of using it effectively. The school organises provision for students to develop their key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the context of their other courses, particularly the GCSE re-take courses in mathematics and English. This arrangement takes account of students' existing standards in key skills. It is satisfactory overall, and has good features, particularly in courses such as Health and Social Care, where coursework makes very effective provision for all three key skills. In mathematics, however, a timetabling problem prevents roughly half of the students from

attending the all of their lessons in the GCSE retake course. The school began to take action to improve this following feedback during the inspection. There is a well-planned, imaginative and effective programme of additional activities and community service for sixth form students each Wednesday afternoon.

Personal development

27. Although the college does not provide a daily act of worship, overall provision for students' spiritual development is good, with some very good features. Assemblies deal with challenging themes such as the Holocaust and homelessness. They provide students with very good opportunities to reflect upon their own feelings about these issues and how they have an impact on other people's lives. There are good opportunities for spiritual development in several subjects. In a Year 10 English lesson, for example, skilful questioning enabled students studying the poem *Mid-term Break* by Seamus Heaney to consider their feelings about the death of a child. The college succeeds well in its aim of providing a reflective ethos, and students are given very good opportunities to explore different values and beliefs. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson about Buddhism, students learned about, and were able to practise, meditation. The college's emphasis on the arts also contributes very well to the students' spiritual development by providing a wide range of opportunities for personal expression. In art and design, for example, students are taught to express their own feelings in their work and when writing about and discussing the works of artists. In music lessons, students learn about the spiritual context of Indian music. Colourful and imaginative displays of students' work throughout the school help to promote a sense of wonder and provide good opportunities for students to admire, to celebrate and to respect each other's achievements.
28. Provision for moral development is good. The school's moral and values framework, set out in the prospectus, is reflected in its day-to-day life. Respect for each other is promoted by the approach of teachers and reflected in the behaviour of the students, and in the successful integration of those with special educational needs. Teachers are good role models and send clear messages of what is acceptable and what is not. Most acknowledge the part they can play in students' moral development, and explore moral issues in their subject teaching. These include, for example, recycling material in design and technology, the impact of population shift and environmental issues in geography, and reflection on the Holocaust in religious education, citizenship, and in assemblies and some tutor periods. In the sixth form, ethical considerations of trading and investment are explored well in economics and business studies, although opportunities are missed in science.
29. The school makes good provision for students' social development. In many subjects their work in pairs and in small groups helps them develop good social skills and collaborative learning. This is most frequent in English, physical education, expressive arts, and design and technology. The well-organised student council helps students understand democratic procedures and how to consider different needs and points of view. They feel strongly that they have an active role in the development of the school. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are well represented on the council. The house system similarly promotes this involvement and their social development and awareness, as does the good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Sixth-form students contribute to the social development of others by helping and advising younger students, and by forming excellent relationships with students with significant special educational needs. This feature is exceptionally well organised and effective. The positive quality of relationships across the school is testimony to the effectiveness of provision for social development, and to the successful integration of students, students and staff into the new school.
30. The curriculum provides a good introduction to students' own and to other cultures and prepares them well for life in a multi-cultural society. In religious education lessons, there are good references to the major world religions and world music plays a strong part in the music curriculum throughout the school. In English, students study and enjoy a very good range of poetry from other cultures, and in history lessons Year 11 students learn about the way of life of the Native Americans. Students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular musical activities such as the college's soul band, jazz band, choir and orchestra. College musical ensembles visit local schools

to give concerts and learning is enriched by a range of very good opportunities to work with visiting artists. In Year 9, for example, students were able to explore new and exciting opportunities in printmaking when working with a visiting printmaker. Dance specialists from a range of cultures, such as the Union Dance Company, also visit the college and provide lunch-time dance workshops. In art and design, students visit local and London galleries and a visit to New York is being planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

31. A well thought out programme of care and guidance ensures that all the students feel safe and secure in their school. As a result, they like coming to school and strive to achieve all that they are capable of. The school has a robust policy for child protection. This is effective in giving guidance to the teachers on the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. All staff take very good care of students' health and safety. A formal policy is in place and a recent survey is enabling the school to make timely adjustments and to rectify any shortcomings in its approach to health and safety. Some small safety issues were brought to the attention of the headteacher. The school maintains good working relationships with the professional support agencies, for example in providing individual support to children in care and those who are likely to miss school.
32. The school's very good monitoring of personal development is firmly rooted in a strong ethos of care, valuing all of the students as individuals. The teachers know their students well and are alert to individual needs. Formal methods such as the record of achievement and planners add to the teachers' knowledge of what is needed to support the students. The record of achievement, however, needs to be explained and promoted more consistently in tutorials. In lessons, the teachers work hard to support each student, and other students are always willing to help those who find the work difficult. Specialist care and guidance for students with special educational needs, including those who attend the able autism base, is outstanding and leads to very good attitudes and progress. Students with behavioural difficulties make very good progress in response to the work of the learning support unit.
33. Students receive good advice on their choice of subjects for GCSE and on career choices; many told inspectors that they appreciated the care the school takes in these areas. Useful relationships with the Connexions service enable students to find out about opportunities in the work place and to gain an understanding of what they must do to succeed in further, higher education or the world of work. The school's well structured programme of personal, health and social education offers very good guidance to students of all ages on many of the challenges that they are likely to face in life.
34. Procedures and policies for promoting high standards of behaviour are good. They result in good behaviour, and the school has not yet permanently excluded a student. Students told inspectors that the arrangements were fair, that there was little bullying, and that any that occurred was very quickly dealt with. Good procedures ensure attendance levels remain in line with the national picture. These include an effective computerised system and a popular range of certificates and rewards for good conduct and attendance.
35. Overall, the school has good arrangements to assess students' work, and to use information from assessment to promote high standards. It has had some difficulty in obtaining accurate information on standards reached by students joining Year 9, but has established a system of assessment and detailed targets for all students. This is used particularly well in mathematics. In other subjects, the use of assessment to set challenging work is satisfactory overall in Year 9. Students receive target GCSE grades at a rather late stage in Year 10, but by Year 11 they know clearly what standard they are expected to reach and what they need to do in order to reach it. Students with particular gifts and talents are identified by the assessment procedures and most subjects provide effectively for them by Year 11. However, the school does not have a systematic approach to this, and not all of the most able students are fully stretched from the time they join the school. The assessment of students with special educational needs is good, with some very good features, and is translated into effective individual education plans. The systems it has set up

have the potential to make an excellent contribution to learning if they can be used more consistently by departments.

Sixth form

Assessment

36. The sixth form has good arrangements for assessment. Work is marked and assessed thoroughly, and students receive regular feedback and suitable targets. Teachers in most lessons use information from assessment to match work in lessons to students' needs, and in some courses, including the vocational course on health and social care, this is carried through into guidance on coursework. However, students do not receive target grades until after the first term in the sixth form, and feedback to some students does not focus closely enough on what they need to do to succeed at the highest level. There is very close and effective assessment of special educational needs in the sixth form, and students and parents' views are taken fully into account.

Advice, support and guidance

37. Students receive a very good range of information and advice on the subjects that they can study for A-level and vocational qualifications. Close and effective day-to-day guidance and support are a strong feature of sixth-form life, and teachers' skills and experience, as well as their friendliness and willingness to help, are much appreciated by the students. A sixth-form parents' evening during the inspection had an exceptionally positive atmosphere, with strong and happy relationships between teachers, students and their parents. The school works very well with other agencies to provide accurate and realistic advice on higher education and careers. There is particular strength in work experience for students following academic as well as vocational courses. Placements have been arranged in the health service and in high technology companies for students with ambitions to become a doctor and an engineer, and another student has a placement in Germany.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Although some parents have had concerns at the founding of the new school, most are satisfied with the way in which it has been managed. The number of parents attending the pre-inspection meeting and completing the questionnaire was lower than in most schools. The tone of both was positive, but significant numbers of parents were concerned about homework, the level of co-operation with parents, and the quality of information they receive. Inspection evidence showed some weaknesses in homework in Years 9 and 10. In these years, most homework is properly set and marked, but analysis of students' planners and discussions with them show that there are significant gaps. GCSE and sixth-form course work is of good quality, and the best is outstanding. Inspectors found that the school was doing all it could to co-operate with parents, that the quality of information provided was good, and that the school was always prepared to provide more detail on request. Overall, parents' views of the college are good. Most parents are, for example, pleased with the college's approachability, the high expectations that it sets and its good teaching.
39. The college provides good information for the parents. An informative prospectus outlines what the college has to offer, its aims and expectations. The college works hard to make sure that the parents have comprehensive information about the choices that they should help their children to make as they approach their GCSE years. Teachers provide regular reports that record what students are achieving and set targets for improvement. The college's regular consultation sessions for the parents are well organised and valued. A well-attended sixth-form evening during the inspection was constructive and positive, with a strong atmosphere of co-operation and shared purpose between parents, teachers and students. Sixth-form students in conversation with staff and inspectors were enthusiastic about the range and quality of opportunities they were offered, and were clearly enjoying all aspects of the school's life and work. A member of the college's management team leads the development of relationships with parents, and all staff are encouraged to respond quickly to parents' concerns. There are particularly close relationships with parents of students who are identified as needing extra help.

40. A succinct partnership agreement outlines what parents and the college can expect of each other. Parents support the use of homework. Conversations with students reveal that their parents often check that they are completing their homework and course work on time. The college enjoys the support of the parents for the range of drama and musical productions that the students perform. Parents raise funds for the college, and these are used to provide extra items, such as support for visits. The parents are pleased that the college is trying to become a specialist arts college. A number of the parents are active on the governing body and during the inspection they, and their colleagues, came into college to offer practice interviews to sixth form students.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The headteacher and governors have worked very effectively to set up the new school. They have appointed all the staff, and the headteacher's monitoring systems have quickly identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching and middle management. This has been followed by effective action so that, by the time of the inspection, all departments were managed well, and some rapid advances were being made. The senior management team is well organised, with a clear division of responsibilities. This enables the headteacher to focus effectively on strategic issues. The school has established very detailed systems for assessing and tracking standards in all students' work, and for setting targets. This helps students to focus on goals in their learning, particularly in Year 11, but the system is not yet used to best advantage across the school. While there is as yet no evidence on trends in overall standards, the determination of management to raise standards is having an effect in several subjects. The quality of work in mathematics during the inspection in Year 9 shows significant improvement from the results of national tests in 2002, and students were making significant improvements on the standards they had reached when they joined the school in several subjects, including music, art and design and religious education. Teaching and learning in ICT have shown very strong recent improvement following a change in management.
42. The school improvement plan is a well-designed, practical document that provides a comprehensive programme for all of the issues facing the school. It is supported by good planning for each subject, though targets and criteria for success in development planning could sometimes be more clearly expressed. Policies for equal opportunities and for race equality and inclusion are well designed and fully reflected in the school's work. Its approach to involving students with special educational needs, both its own students and those from a special school, provide these students with a very good range of opportunities for learning and for personal development. In discussions with inspectors, all students felt that they were treated fairly, and many said that they were enjoying school more than they had in the past. To have formed a purposeful, harmonious and happy learning community from students from different schools, some of whom have a more difficult journey than they had to their previous school, is an important achievement.
43. The governors have a very wide range of business and educational experience, and have established very good links with each area of the school's work. They are fully involved in setting targets and evaluate the school's performance closely. A particularly efficient system of committees has helped them discharge the additional work they have had to undertake while the school was being planned and launched. The school does not complain of bureaucratic interference, but financial information is often received too late to enable the governors to plan effectively in the longer term. Financial planning, and the application of the principles of best value, are very good. The cost of each course in the main school and the sixth form is carefully calculated, there are extensive systems to consult everyone with an interest in the school, and spending is tightly controlled. Nevertheless, the very low amount the school receives for each student, and the minimal amount allocated for resources for the new school, are limiting the quality of learning in some subjects, and the development of independent learning skills. The good value for money the school provides is the result of very careful stewardship.
44. The school is well staffed with specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Performance management systems are very effective in identifying talents among the staff as well as areas for development. Very good procedures for introducing new staff to the school, including newly

qualified teachers, are reflected in the quality of new staff's teaching and management. Because of re-organisation, the proportion of time teachers spend in contact with classes is below average, but this is a temporary situation. Administrative and management staff are very well qualified and efficient, and the school has highly qualified technical staff who make a particularly important contribution to ICT. The school has adequate accommodation, though the many steep slopes on its site, and the absence of lifts in the teaching blocks, present severely limited access to people with disabilities. The school has designed a good development plan for its site.

45. The school manages its resources very well, and students use them with care and respect. Resources in mathematics are particularly well organised and of good quality. Nevertheless, the school began with few resources from the schools that were re-organised, and there are still significant shortages of learning resources in English, history, geography and religious education, and for some aspects of art and design. The issue is particularly acute in Year 9. The school has given priority to the development of good computer suites, and is building up banks of computers for use in other subjects. However, these are not yet fully in place, and the use of computers to support learning in most subjects is significantly underdeveloped. The library is used well, but is not in a position to support study effectively in the main school or in the sixth form; some departments are only allowed to buy two or three new library books per year.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

46. The sixth form is well represented in the school's development planning, and in the priorities of the headteacher and governors. A major priority of the headteacher and governors in the first year of the school has been to reassure the community that standards and the continuity of education would not suffer as a result of the re-organisation. This is leading to some small groups in Year 13 and to higher spending on the sixth form than would be usual. The quality of learning in a small minority of courses is affected by weaknesses in the timetable. In Year 12, learning in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages and mathematics, is also affected by teaching time which is lower than in most schools. The school has plans to address the issue of timetabling, in the context of other aspects of its sixth form funding, for the next academic year. It consults prospective students and teachers on the development of new courses to meet the needs of the community. Standards, teaching and learning are monitored closely, in line with the systems in the main school, and the school is introducing the principles of best value in its work as its circumstances permit.
47. The school has a clear commitment to equal opportunities for all sixth-form students, and carries this through into its planning. Courses meet the needs of students with a very broad range of abilities and learning needs, and there are very good plans to develop this aspect of its work. There are very good opportunities for students to move to advanced courses following success in intermediate vocational courses, and students with special educational needs are given effective support in AS and A-level classes. Students from a nearby special school are already well integrated with the school's sixth form, and will join the school's roll in September. At the same time, a full academic programme is being maintained, while popular new A-level courses, such as law and psychology, are being developed.
48. The head and assistant head of the sixth form provide a very strong personal lead, encouraging all students to work hard, and monitoring teaching and learning closely. All aspects of care and guidance for students are well organised, and there is constant personal encouragement for all. This ensures good consistency in teaching and learning across subjects, and there is evidence, for example in the AS results in history and business studies, that it is establishing a pattern of rising standards. The school balances its emphasis on high standards for all students with well-planned and imaginative provision for personal development, encouraging students to take a leading role in the school community and to help others. Overall, the difficult problem of maintaining existing courses for all students, while developing a sixth form that will meet the needs of the whole community in the future, has been managed well, and a very good foundation has been laid for the long-term development of the sixth form.

Resources

49. Sixth-form teachers are very well qualified for the work they do. Resources are adequate to meet the basic needs of courses, with good resources in modern foreign languages and ICT, and very good resources for performing arts. The students' study room is well equipped with computers. However, teachers do not have sufficient access to ICT in lessons, and the scope of students' reading is severely restricted by the absence of a stock of suitably demanding books in the library. This limits students' chances of achieving at the highest levels of which they are capable.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. The headteacher and governors have successfully launched the new school. In order to raise standards further, and ensure that teaching and learning opportunities are fully matched to the needs of all students, they should now pay particular attention to the following points. The school has begun to address point 4 for the main school and point 3 for the sixth form by developing its range of ICT resources.

- (1) Improve the use and organisation of time in the curriculum, by:
 - ensuring that there is adequate teaching time for each subject;
 - improving the organisation of time for students studying two languages;
 - improving the consistency with which tutorial time is used.Paragraphs 23, 32, 91, 97, 103, 104, 107-8, 110.
- (2) Improve the match of teaching to the needs of all students, by:
 - including the needs of different groups of students consistently in planning;
 - ensuring that high-attaining and gifted and talented students are identified and fully challenged in all lessons;
 - improving the consistency with which literacy and numeracy skills are taught.Paragraphs 16, 23, 35, 57, 66-68, 71, 76, 78, 121.
- (3) Improve the range and quality of learning resources, by:
 - continuing to analyse weaknesses in resources, and their effects on learning;
 - setting up a programme of renewal, with clear priorities;
 - developing the library to provide effective support for learning.Paragraphs 44, 58, 74, 91, 97, 109.
- (4) Improve the use of ICT to support learning, by:
 - identifying strengths and weaknesses in each subject;
 - establishing what ICT can contribute to learning in each subject;
 - designing a programme of development, supported by training.Paragraphs 3, 19, 23, 58, 66, 102, 115-6, 127.

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the allocation of teaching time, particularly in Year 12, by:
 - ensuring that students have adequate teaching time in each subject;
 - improving timetabling for GCSE retake courses.Paragraphs 26, 137, 181.
- (2) Improve guidance to students on their use of time outside lessons, by:
 - establishing clear patterns of study for each subject, linked to course requirements and the range of learning needs of students;
 - improving guidance to students on the importance of personal study, particularly at the beginning and in the early stages of their courses;
 - monitoring and rewarding progress in personal study closely, and taking quick action on any lapses.Paragraphs 13, 26, 163, 177.
- (3) Improve access to ICT in lessons, and the quality of support for learning in the library, by:
 - enabling more computers to be used in classrooms;
 - establishing what ICT can contribute to work in each course, and keeping up with developments;
 - developing the library to provide specific support for each course.Paragraphs 49, 137, 143-4, 149, 154, 172, 176, 181.

Other issues to be included in the governors' action plan.

Provide a daily act of collective worship. Paragraph 27.

ABLE AUTISM BASE

51. There are eight students with autistic spectrum disorders in the base, all with Statements of Special Educational Needs. Their achievements are good, and many do well, in relation to their learning difficulties, in national tests and assessments in Year 9 and at GCSE. In English, throughout the school, students make good progress in their speaking and listening. Although language problems often hinder their reading fluency, students make good progress over time, and older students have a satisfactory appreciation of examination texts. Standards are good in mathematics because of teaching which enables them, for example, to move from taking everything literally to developing their subject thinking. Students also achieve well in a course specially developed to promote their communication and social skills. Above all, the school's ethos of valuing all individuals is most evident in the students. Most are relaxed, know what is expected of them and show that they are happy. In particular, they learn to accept change and take on new challenges, such as going on to both college and work experience independently.
52. Good teaching by base and school staff, teaching assistants and visiting therapists, is reflected in the wide range of students' progress and achievements. Higher-attaining students are stretched, and many students achieve well against their individual education plans. Students learn to communicate through conversation and very soon come to understand their lessons. By the end of Year 11 most are sufficiently confident to start conversations, listen to others and ask for help and clarification. Students make friends and value one another. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson, for example, a group of students worked confidently to produce a Victoria sponge cake, and one was sufficiently confident to volunteer that he had picked up the knack from his grandmother. All staff expect students to learn to be independent in what they do: for example, lunch is used as an opportunity for students to learn both how to behave and how to face new situations. Personal and social education is taught well across the school, and this leads to strong and effective relationships, that motivate the students to concentrate and try hard.
53. Teachers and teaching assistants take a close personal interest in the education and welfare of each student, and their personal development is assessed, monitored and evaluated well. However, arrangements for more detailed assessment of issues specifically related to autism are relatively underdeveloped, and these factors are under-represented in individual education plans.
54. The quality of leadership and management is good: administration is efficient and staff are clear about priorities. The base has a secure strategic grasp of the developments necessary for further improvement, including the need for continuing professional development in both autism and its assessment.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	119
	Sixth form	47
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 9 – 11

Number	2	23	61	30	3	0	0
Percentage	2	19	51	25	3	0	0

Sixth form

Number	2	12	26	8	0	0	0
Percentage	2	26	55	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	792	161
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	71	9

Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	36	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	133	2

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	3

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	143	123	266

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	91	88
	Girls	102	83	81
	Total	184	174	169
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	69	65	64
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31	43	22
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	100	82
	Girls	96	87	77
	Total	180	187	159
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68	70	60
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32	29	24
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Figures in brackets for national results refer to the year before the latest reporting year. These are the school's first results. The school does not yet have examination results at GCSE or A-level.

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	901	36	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	0	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: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.5
Number of students per qualified teacher	14.8

Financial year	2001-2
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Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	375

	£
Total income	1,533,433
Total expenditure	1,498,164
Expenditure per student	2041
Balance brought forward from previous year	n/a
Balance carried forward to next year	35,269

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.1
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.52
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.89

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	953
Number of questionnaires returned	89

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	52	5	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	51	7	1	17
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	40	28	7	4
The teaching is good.	19	65	2	1	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	51	22	10	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	48	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	37	3	1	8
The school works closely with parents.	12	54	18	9	7
The school is well led and managed.	21	49	7	2	20
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	57	6	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	46	10	2	7

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

- Students have positive attitudes to learning.
- Year 10 students are achieving particularly well.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Year 11 are too low.
- Students need better guidance on how to reach their individual targets.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- There is a shortage of some resources and limited access to ICT.

55. Standards in English are close to average in Year 9 and Year 11. These standards represent satisfactory achievement overall, in the light of the standards reached by students joining the school. However, in the current Year 10, the first group of students to have joined the school in Year 9, standards are slightly above average. These students also obtained above-average results in the National Curriculum tests in 2002. Work seen during the inspection shows no significant difference in standards due to gender, ethnic background or special needs.
56. Students have a positive attitude to work and co-operate well with each other and their teachers. Reading and writing skills are similar to those in most schools nationally; some students can write very well, even in Year 9 – extended pieces of writing of over 2000 words were seen – but quite a high proportion of students have below-average writing skills, and many produce untidy work. Most students speak confidently, and participation in class discussions is often very good. An example of this was in a Year 10 lesson, when students talked maturely and with much sensitivity about a Gillian Clarke poem. Year 11 students have produced good GCSE coursework, but results in school examinations have been disappointing, and work still has to be done if they are to reach their targets.
57. Teaching is good, although the present team has been in the school only since September 2002, and has not had time yet to have a full impact on standards. The more experienced teachers are having more impact, and they have a good rapport with their students. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of set texts and plan and organise their lessons well. An example of very good teaching was seen in a Year 10 lesson where the class successfully analysed a Seamus Heaney poem because of careful planning and very good organisation by the teacher. This included providing worksheets with differing levels of challenge so that all students could do their best. In a minority of less successful lessons, students are not grouped in the most appropriate way, and are allowed to drift off task. Most teachers, however, relate well to their classes and have high expectations of them. Challenging work was set to a Year 11 class on how to develop an argument in writing; because of the teacher's expertise and excellent relationship with the students, they were enabled to tackle quite a difficult task with some success. Teachers' marking and guidance enables students with English as an additional language to make good progress. Overall, the teaching of literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory, but the strengths in some subjects, including history, geography and religious education, are not consistently reflected across the school.
58. There are not many computers in the English teaching rooms and access to ICT rooms and the Internet are limited. Book resources are adequate, but there are too few to support wider reading in the library. Storage space for the department's books is limited, in spite of an excellent suite of

teaching rooms equipped with up-to-date boards and screens for overhead projectors that are used to good advantage. There is good access to video players.

59. The English department is led and managed well. Staff have a wide range of experience. GCSE coursework is closely moderated, and staff are very aware of the standards required. They have been set challenging targets for this year's examinations, and individual students know what is expected of them, but many need more direction on how to reach these targets. The department has clear priorities for development, which are currently focused on Year 9 students and the need to maintain success in their coming tests. There is capacity for real improvement once the department has settled in and can evaluate its work.

Drama

60. Drama is taught throughout Year 9 and is an option in Years 10 and 11. It is also taught within the compulsory GCSE expressive arts course. Most students join the school with less experience of drama than is usually found in Year 9.
61. Standards are below average. Students in Years 10 and 11 show enthusiasm for the work, but are currently producing work at or below the national average. Accommodation for drama is inadequate, in spite of the splendid school theatre. It is the only specialist area provided for drama lessons, but the space has to be shared with dance.
62. An imaginative lesson was seen in an art room, which enabled Year 10 students to work on stage properties and make-up suitable for a production of *Macbeth*, but many other lessons are restricted because they are taught in ordinary classrooms where there is insufficient space to develop performances. Overall, the teaching of drama is satisfactory, but not all staff have good specialist skills in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning are leading to rising standards.
- Relationships, attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Students' progress is tracked closely and accurately.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Accommodation is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Planning in some lessons does not meet the needs of all students in the class.
- In a small minority of lessons, students are not fully engaged in their work.
- There is too little use of ICT.
- Guidance to students through marking and target setting needs improvement.

63. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2002 were broadly average, and boys and girls did equally well. Effective teaching has produced an improvement in these standards for students now in Year 9, whose work is now above average overall, and in some cases well above average. Students are achieving well in relation to the standards they had reached on entry to the school. Written work is well organised, with many worked examples and a concern for accuracy and layout. There is a good consistent programme of learning among students in Year 9, including number work and the use and application of mathematics. Higher-attaining students make good use of trigonometrical ratios when finding the unknown sides and angles of right-angled triangles and have good numerical skills. Average-attaining students made good use of estimating skills in establishing a hypothesis and testing it statistically to produce a scatter diagram of results. Students are engaged in their learning and apply their skills well in other subjects. Lower-attaining students, however, lack confidence in mental mathematics and have difficulty, for example, estimating and

calculating the volume and surface area of simple cuboids. The lowest-attaining students have weak numerical skills, but are making progress, helped by the National Numeracy Strategy quick practice sessions at the start of lessons. Some students find it difficult to record solutions fully in writing, preferring to give just an answer.

64. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is below average, overall, but students are making satisfactory progress given the standards with which they joined the school. Some higher-attaining students are reaching above average standards. For example, they use their good understanding of the rules of algebra to solve algebraic inequalities. Average and lower-attaining students were observed making satisfactory progress in measuring skills, reviewing the volume and surface area of solids to different degrees of complexity. Numeracy is reinforced through course work, which also provides good support with writing. Standards are above average in Year 10, reflecting a trend of rising standards among students who joined the school at the normal time of transfer.
65. Nearly all students with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching assistants provide well-focused help, and good planning helps teachers to provide suitable tasks and activities for the lowest attaining students. The provisions of individual education plans are reflected in teaching.
66. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers know the subject well, prepare thoroughly, and plan a clear framework for each lesson. They set work out clearly and explain it well. Good use is made of the National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7 to 9 resulting in some brisk and lively lessons. Its techniques are also used in lessons for older students. For example, in a Year 11 class, a starter activity on simplifying algebraic expressions used mini whiteboards. This helped the teacher to assess students' performance and to secure their understanding of the rules of algebra. Resources are used well, although ICT is not included in the present schemes of work. Teachers have high expectations, but sometimes do not share lesson goals with students. They manage students well, and develop good relationships, behaviour and attitudes. Learning is promoted through good, regular homework. In a minority of lessons, learning is satisfactory, but teachers move too quickly from one topic to the next, and some lessons lack a variety of teaching styles. In a very small minority, students are not properly engaged in their work, so that too little is learned. The use of 'bite-size' activities to help the lower-attaining students improve their concentration is infrequent, and gifted and talented students are not always fully challenged. Work is regularly marked but students do not receive enough supportive comments to help them overcome misunderstandings or improve their literacy skills. The overall contribution of other subjects to teaching and learning in number work is satisfactory, with good features in the use of data in science, but it is not yet consistent across subjects.
67. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well together and are committed to establishing high standards. The head of department provides clear educational direction. There are good monitoring procedures. Planning for the future is good, building well on national frameworks and criteria and adapting these to the requirements of each group of students. Students' progress is assessed regularly, but the results are not used sufficiently to keep students informed and to give them guidance on what to do to improve. The standard of displays to support teaching and learning reflects the excellent standard of accommodation. Resources are adequate, but ICT resources are extremely limited and there are too few textbooks for Year 9 students.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear explanations of key ideas; as a result, most students learn effectively, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Students acquire a good grasp of key principles, especially in chemistry and biology topics.
- The learning of students with special educational needs is very good.
- Relationships are very good; students have good attitudes and behave well.
- Students are set challenging targets and assessed regularly.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, more able students are not challenged sufficiently.
- Students' scientific enquiry skills are under-developed.
- There are too few opportunities for students to discuss, reason and present an argument.

68. Results in 2002 Year 9 national tests were broadly average, though a below average proportion of students reached higher levels. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were similar. Overall, standards in Year 11 are below average, but there are strong indications that students in Year 10 are likely to reach at least average standards at GCSE. Taking account of the standards they had reached when they joined the school, which are lower in Year 11 than in other years, the achievements of students throughout the school are at least satisfactory, but there are some variations within this judgement. Those with special educational needs achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well in chemistry and biology topics, but their scientific enquiry skills are underdeveloped.
69. These patterns of achievement have several underlying causes. Provision for special educational needs is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11, where courses are tailored to the needs of pupils with special educational needs, and support and guidance provided by teachers and teaching assistants are very effective. Most lessons are demanding, especially in chemistry and biology in Years 10 and 11, and the best teachers encourage students to discuss their ideas, think and explain. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop students' skills in scientific enquiry. Year 9 students investigating balancing forces on a beam, for example, did not draw on their existing knowledge to speculate about a possible relationship between forces, or devise their own methods of recording. Even higher-attaining students in Year 11 are not skilled at evaluating errors in experiments or at suggesting improvements.
70. Most students in Year 9 describe features of types of rocks and relate some of these to how rocks are formed. They develop a sound understanding of the beneficial and detrimental effects of microbes, and of basic mechanisms of defence from them. Most can describe features of chemical change and write equations representing them in words; the more able use symbols. Almost all can plan and carry out fair tests and draw conclusions from evidence, although too few evaluate their methods.
71. By Year 11, most students have good understanding of patterns in the properties of elements, and write formulae and equations to represent a variety of chemical changes. A few higher-attaining students can calculate quantities of products from them. Lower-attaining students take account of their knowledge of forces and structures when designing bridges, and show good personal skills in working with others. Many students understand the reflective and refractive properties of light, although only a minority can use scaled light diagrams to calculate features of lenses. Students understand how enzymes control chemical changes, such as digestion in the body, and the effects of changes in temperature and acidity on these processes. Most choose appropriate equipment when carrying out practical tasks such as measuring volumes, and their practical skills and techniques are sound.
72. Students have many opportunities to estimate, calculate, display and interpret data. They assimilate and apply new technical terms very well, but opportunities to discuss, speculate and argue in class are too few because tasks mostly demand short answers. This particularly affects the learning of more able students. Students use ICT effectively, for example, to model situations

such as the rate at which starch is broken down by enzymes. They research information from the Internet and present it creatively, for example, when exploring the impact of waste on the environment. However, the use of data-loggers to gather and present data is not yet developed due to technical difficulties with the resources.

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers develop very good relationships with students, resulting in good behaviour and attitudes. Their good subject knowledge underpins clear explanations, and their good questioning skills bring out and develop students' skills and understanding. Teachers plan well, especially for the introduction and reinforcement of technical terms. Learning targets for lessons are clear and lessons often get off to a good start. However, the closing sequence varies in quality and some lessons do not include a review of what has been learned. In the best lessons, tasks are challenging and take account of the range of learning needs in the class. For example, Year 10 students explore examples of energy changes accompanying chemical reactions that are graduated in difficulty. Too often, though, tasks are not adapted sufficiently, especially for more able students. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, tasks are undemanding, students are restricted to very short responses, and the teachers take up too much of the lesson in setting out the work.
74. The school has made an effective start in producing schemes of work and has effective procedures for assessing students and monitoring their progress towards targets. The head of science is providing good leadership and direction for these developments. While resources are adequate, except those for the library, accommodation is not, and some laboratories are old and unattractive.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- There is a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching.
- Very good leadership and management ensure a clear educational direction.
- The curriculum is enriched by the use of visiting artists.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching needs to be made more consistent across the department.
- Assessment and marking procedures need to be improved.
- ICT is under-used in teaching and learning.

75. Teachers' assessments in 2002 graded most Year 9 students as well above average. Evidence obtained during the inspection indicates that these assessments are too high, and that standards are average. In Year 11 standards are below average, but students are reaching average standards in Year 10. However, the standards reached by students joining the school are significantly below average, both in their skills and in their knowledge of art and artists. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory, and there are no significant differences in the achievements of groups of students, or of boys and girls.
76. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average in practical skills, but above average in written work. Students have made good progress in their ability to draw accurately from observation and in developing a confident use of two and three-dimensional techniques. Students' written studies show a good understanding of styles and ideas in art, and they are making good progress in evaluating their work.
77. In Year 11 standards are below those to be expected at this stage of the GCSE course. Although one higher attaining student showed a very good understanding of construction techniques and his sculpture was carefully made, most students do not have a sufficient understanding of materials and techniques to complete their work to a high enough standard. These students have suffered from a lack of continuity in teaching in previous years. This has meant that appropriate coursework

tasks have not always been set and that work has not been completed. Given these difficult circumstances, students in Year 11 have achieved satisfactorily.

78. Teaching is good overall; in about half of the lessons it is very good or excellent, and in the remainder it is satisfactory. The higher quality teaching has led to significant improvements in students' work. This is because the teacher has high expectations for both work and behaviour and because of the support and encouragement which is given. The teacher is enthusiastic and this leads to students' enjoyment of the work and to very good behaviour. The level of challenge in lessons is high. Gifted and talented students have not been identified but students are provided with the appropriate advice and encouragement to enable them to meet the challenges which the teacher sets. An excellent example of these qualities in the teaching was seen in a Year 9 lesson, where students were required to make rapid drawings of the human figure in order to convey movement. They responded to this demanding task with energy and enjoyment and made significant progress in their ability to describe the proportions of the human figure in different positions. These students also showed by their answers to questions that they had learned well about the Futurist artist, Marcel Duchamp. Where the teaching is satisfactory it promotes acceptable learning, but lacks pace and challenge. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, in which students were designing symbols to reflect their own moods, the motivation seen elsewhere was lacking and some students became restless because of the uninspiring nature of the task.
79. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' literacy through providing opportunities for students to learn to write critically about artists' styles. The imaginary interviews which Year 9 students had with the artist, Andy Warhol, were a very good example of this writing. There are, however, too few opportunities for students to learn about the use of computers as creative tools and their applications in the art and design industries. This is a significant weakness in an otherwise broad and balanced curriculum.
80. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear educational direction to the planning, and the curriculum leader has exciting ideas for the development of the subject, including a new GCSE course in ceramics. Assessment procedures, however, need to be improved, both for students joining Year 9, to ensure that work fully meets their needs, and for other students, who need more information on ways of improving their work. The very good use made of visiting artists enriches students' learning. Although resources for the subject are adequate overall, there is a shortage of high quality materials for examination courses.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well in practical work.
- Relationships and the working atmosphere are good.
- The department has a shared vision for development.

Areas for improvement

- Materials and teaching techniques do not always meet the needs of all students.
- Computers need to be used more in some aspects of teaching.
- Some students do not pay proper attention when teachers are talking.

81. Standards among students joining Year 9 are towards the lower end of the average range, and there are gaps in some students' skills. Standards are still within the average range at the end of Year 9, but show significant improvement, particularly in practical work. Some higher-attaining students produce design folders of a high standard, and there is good work in the healthy eating snack-bar project. Students use colour and shading well in food technology, and there is some good freehand sketching in mechanisms work in resistant materials. Where standards are lower, students have poorer presentational skills, both written and graphical. In some cases, design

ideas not developed in sufficient depth, and a small amount of work is left incomplete. There is some use of ICT, but it could be more extensive, for example in presenting graphs and the results of questionnaires.

82. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average across all design and technology subjects, and represent good achievement from the standards Year 11 students had reached on joining the school. In food technology, there is good investigation and analysis including consideration of nutritional values, costings and preparation time in a project on different types of desserts. Work in textiles shows good research into educational toys, looking at colour and shapes. There is good use of ICT, in a pop-up mechanisms project in graphics. However, there are some weaknesses, mainly due to poorer line quality, inappropriate use of colour, lack of development in ideas, and over-reliance on commercial material for research. There are spelling errors in some work, and some weaknesses in marking. Work in Year 10 is of a better overall standard, and students' predicted grades, which are reflected in their work, indicate a trend of improving standards. In child development, which has a high proportion of lower-attaining students, standards are below average, but represent satisfactory achievement.
83. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. They usually come to lessons prepared for work and respond well. However, there are some lapses in their concentration and attention, and some do not listen properly when the teacher is talking. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory overall progress and good progress in lessons where they have additional support.
84. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to good, and is good overall. Teachers know the subject well, and plan effectively to develop students' ideas and practical skills. They establish good working relationships with students in most lessons, and work proceeds at a good pace, giving students a sense of achievement. Examples of good teaching in Year 9 included a food technology lesson where students were developing practical and social skills in a cake-making project, and a textiles lesson which introduced students to a wide range of methods of joining fabrics. In a Year 10 resistant materials lesson, considerable gains were made in learning about various processes including casting, turning and threading in a metal project. This work also included good use of a complex, computer-controlled lathe. A very productive Year 11 food technology lesson developed practical skills to a high standard as part of the coursework. Satisfactory lessons have positive features but lack real pace, and have some weaknesses in matching work to students' needs. In some lessons where teaching is otherwise good, teachers do not insist that students listen properly while they are talking to the class.
85. Leadership and management are good. Documentation is well prepared, and includes good development planning, with clear priorities. Policies and procedures, including those for health and safety are in place and followed, although there are no safety lines on floor areas around machinery in the workshops. There is a good choice of courses in Years 10 and 11, with further courses planned. However, control technology needs to be taught in more depth, and computer-assisted design and manufacture are under-represented in food technology and textiles. In some areas, materials and teaching techniques do not meet the full range of learning needs in the class, including those of higher-attaining students. Assessment data are analysed and shared with colleagues and most marking is helpful and supportive. However, monitoring for consistency of practice across all areas of the faculty requires a sharper focus and students' records are not always easily accessible. The contribution of the subject to literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory, and there is some good work on cultural issues related to food in modern society. Accommodation is good. It is well decorated and offers a stimulating learning environment, enhanced by displays of students' work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Work is adapted to cater for individual student needs.
- Leadership and management promote effective learning, despite a shortage of resources.

Areas for improvement

- Text-book and library resources are inadequate.
- There is a need for greater access to computer facilities.

86. Standards are broadly average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. There are signs of significant improvement in Year 10, where standards are average. Gifted and talented students are challenged effectively in their work and achieve well. Students with special educational needs make good progress. There is little difference in the standards reached by boys and girls. Overall achievement is good because of the good quality of teaching and the effective use of individual targets for students.
87. Year 9 students have sound understanding of place and location; their geographical skills are gradually developing and they are competent in identifying the similarities between the regions they have studied. In a Year 9 case study on tourism in Blackpool, most students clearly understood the relationship between the decline of tourist numbers and the changing economic and social patterns of British society. However, opportunities to research the topic in greater depth are inhibited by weaknesses in literacy and inadequate library and text-book resources.
88. Students in Year 11 have gaps in their geographical knowledge and skills because of staffing problems in Year 10. Good teaching in Year 11 has helped them progress, but their written work is still below average, partly because of weak literacy skills. Year 10 students have had fewer interruptions to their learning, and are better able to evaluate the impact of human and physical activity on the environment. In a lesson on plate tectonics, for example, most students understood the complex terminology involved in plate movements. Less able students were helped by the emphasis on the learning of key words.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and often very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, provide a wide range of stimulating resources and set clear learning targets. They have high expectations of what their students can achieve and this provides students with the confidence required to undertake more difficult assignments and work to the best of their ability. Lesson planning is very good, and teachers choose appropriate resources to ensure that all students are fully engaged. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, groups of students understood the reasons for migration because the teacher had clearly explained the concepts of “push and pull” factors, and reinforced this by having students discuss the issues in groups. Higher-attaining students benefit from close questioning in class, and from thoughtful homework tasks. The strong emphasis placed on the promotion of literacy enables lower-attaining students to improve their work, especially their understanding of essential geographical terminology. All students benefit from individual learning targets, including National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, which are effectively monitored and reviewed.
90. Geography contributes effectively to personal development through students’ study of cultural factors in different societies, and consideration of right and wrong. There are, however, too few resources in the college library, and teachers and students have too few opportunities to use computers. The good working atmosphere in the department reflects and contributes to the overall aims of the college.
91. Leadership and management are very good. The team of teachers has a shared vision of how the subject should be taught and how standards can be further improved. Newly-qualified teachers are very effectively supported, and quickly make an important contribution to the department’s work.

Resources are carefully managed but more books are badly needed, especially in Year 9. Standards in Year 9 are also held back by below-average teaching time for the subject.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is well planned, stimulating and effective.
- Work is matched to the needs of individual students.
- Positive relationships create a very good working atmosphere.
- There is a good contribution to personal development and citizenship.
- Very good leadership and management are helping to improve standards.

Areas for improvement

- Progress is held back by inadequate text books and library resources.
- Teachers have too little access to computers in lessons.

92. Standards and the quality of provision are very similar to those in geography. They are broadly average in Year 9, below average in Year 11, but average in Year 10. As in geography, boys and girls reach similar standards. Gifted and talented students achieve well and their learning needs are matched to work of the appropriate standard. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Overall achievement is good.
93. Year 9 students' listening skills are gradually developing, and they are beginning to acquire some of the skills required for the handling and interpretation of sources. They have a reasonable understanding of how past societies functioned, and are willing to express their views on a wide variety of historical issues. In a Year 9 lesson on the loss of the *Titanic*, some able students could analyse complex evidence about the Edwardian class system to produce balanced accounts on the lifestyles of the very rich and very poor in society. However, most students found the language content more difficult to access and their accounts relied on consulting a more limited range of sources.
94. Students in Year 11 have gaps in their knowledge and understanding because of staffing problems that affected their learning in Year 10. This lack of knowledge restricts their ability to analyse and evaluate some source materials. Good teaching in Year 11 has helped them progress, but their extended essay skills are below average. Year 10 students have more knowledge, and can analyse complex historical material. For example, many students showed good understanding of historical sources dealing with scientific and superstitious issues related to the Black Death. Weaknesses in literacy restrict the quality of their written work. Teachers are helping students throughout the department to improve their literacy skills by providing structured essay plans and ensuring that they understand key historical vocabulary.
95. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. This is the key factor in raising standards. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, plan meticulously, use lesson time well and set clear learning goals. This enables students to increase the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding. Teachers produce a wide variety of stimulating resources, including video clips and historical objects to enrich students' appreciation of the period, places and personalities they are studying. They provide very good variety in their teaching strategies, and are always willing to challenge students. In a Year 11 lesson on the life style of the Plains Indians, for example, groups of students were able to compare and contrast their living conditions with those of poor white farmers because the teacher presented them with excellent contemporary sources of evidence. More able students could understand how biased contemporary sources had deliberately understated the advances made by the native Indian tribes.
96. Teachers match work to the needs of the individual, and this ensures that all students are fully included in the learning process. Work is regularly assessed and students are aware of what they

need to do to make further progress. Study of cultural factors in different societies, and consideration of right and wrong, make a strong contribution to their understanding of different cultures and to citizenship. As a result of this provision, students are keen to engage in discussion and writing activities which help to extend the range and depth of their key historical skills. This strong learning partnership is leading to very good relationships between teachers and students. It provides a strong base for further growth and improvement in the subject.

97. Management and leadership are a major strength. The subject leader has a clear view of the priorities for history and is committed to the further improvement of standards. On the other hand, learning is held back by restricted access to computers and by a poor library book stock that restricts individual enquiry and the range of investigation they can do for homework. The lack of teaching time for history in Year 9 is preventing students from gaining the full benefit from the department's strengths, and the range of learning activities outside lessons could usefully be extended.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students work hard and behave well.
- There are good assessment systems for students in Years 10 and 11.
- There are good new computer suites.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Overall standards are below average.
- Assessment in Year 9 needs to be improved.
- Students have too few opportunities to develop ICT skills in other subjects.

98. Students join the school with below average standards in ICT, and standards are still below average in Year 9 and Year 11. There have been significant, but very recent, improvements in provision, so that teaching and learning during the inspection were good, and often very good in individual lessons. However, this good provision has not yet had time to make a significant impact on overall standards, and achievement is still only just satisfactory.

99. Students in Year 9 develop good communication skills. They produce documents that combine text and graphics and communicate well with the intended audience. They learn how to programme systems to control events, for example, to work sets of traffic lights. They are beginning to use spreadsheets and databases using up-to-date software, developing their numeracy skills. Their present rate of progress is good, but has not yet made up for the gaps they had in their knowledge when they joined the school.

100. By the end of Year 11, students understand key concepts and knowledge in the subject. In their project work they demonstrate a very good working knowledge of a suitable range of industry-standard software. They know enough to compare the features of the software and to choose the right application for specific purposes. They produce a very good running commentary on their work, explaining well why they alter drafts. They analyse the problems and provide working solutions, for example when producing guidelines for software they have adapted to meet specific needs. Students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

101. Teaching is good, with very good features. In most lessons, very good subject knowledge is communicated well through expert demonstration using the interactive whiteboard, good use of technical language in context and effective support as teachers circulate to help students with tasks. Preparation and planning are good, lessons have a good pace and teachers have an enthusiasm for ICT. Lessons usually begin with the teacher sharing lesson objectives and end with

a review that helps students to understand what progress they have made. This is good practice and gives students a better understanding of their own learning. Homework is set regularly, is relevant and contributes well to progress. In lessons where teaching is not as good, the fact that some students are not working is not always noticed by the teacher, and results in some students making insufficient progress.

102. Relationships are good throughout the school, and students are keen to learn. They enjoy the practical nature of the subject and are well motivated by the technology. They are keen to take advantage of access to a computer room outside lessons, and this is always well used. However, they have as yet few opportunities to develop and apply their ICT skills in subjects across the school. The school is addressing this issue by developing small banks of computers for use in departments.
103. The subject is well managed. Rapidly developing provision includes significant improvements in accommodation and resources. Three refurbished ICT suites, with interactive whiteboards and printers, proper typists' chairs and air conditioning ensure all students enjoy a very good working environment. The department offers examination courses in ICT for almost all its 15 and 16-year-old students. However, a lack of time allocation for some Year 11 students on a GNVQ course has meant students have to follow a basic skills course instead. Assessment systems are very well developed for the GNVQ and GCSE courses, involve students in self-evaluation and are well used to inform teaching programmes. Assessment systems in Year 9 are satisfactory and developing rapidly. The head of department does not have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate of teaching, which means that opportunities to recognise and share good practice are missed. Teaching and learning in ICT are well supported by a full-time technician.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (French and German)

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching is leading to above average standards in German in Year 11.
- Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour help them to learn.
- Good leadership and management ensure good learning across the department.
- Teachers are working as a team to bring about further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, planning does not challenge all students to do their best.
- Standards in oral work are below average, especially in pronunciation.
- There is too little time for students studying two languages in Year 9.

104. Students join the school with well below average standards in French. In Year 9, standards are also below average in French, and were well below average in teachers' assessments in 2002. All students are making satisfactory progress in the early stages of German, although the hour per week allocated to German does not provide enough time for all students to prepare adequately for a GCSE course. In view of students' low starting points, however, the standards they are reaching in both languages represent satisfactory progress.
105. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining students achieve well to reach high standards in German. In French, which is studied by much larger numbers of students, the overall standard is below average - about one third of students reach average standards. Throughout Years 9 to 11, students with special educational needs achieve as well as expected, and consistent with the achievement of other students. Gifted students make unsatisfactory progress in Year 9 in French because they do the same work as their classmates. However, they achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11, where written coursework allows them to show what they can do. Girls do better than boys in some German groups, but otherwise there is no significant difference in standards. Standards in Year 11 were affected by staffing problems which had been resolved by the time of the inspection.

106. Students in Year 9 consolidate previous learning in French, fill gaps in their knowledge and begin to acquire new knowledge of verb tenses. Higher-attaining students write paragraphs about last weekend and recent holidays with improving accuracy. Other students write descriptively about family members and the local area, though they show weak understanding of grammar conventions such as the rules for using adjectives. Standards in listening and reading are generally satisfactory. Oral work, however, is weak. Few students show the ability to produce language from memory, and pronunciation is poor when they rely on written prompts. In German, students produce attractive work in the early stages of learning, covering simple topics in enjoyable work. However, they struggle to apply rules such as capital letters for nouns.
107. Progress in Year 10 is good overall. Written coursework improves grammatical knowledge and extends the range of vocabulary, causing complementary improvement in listening and reading standards. In German, higher and average-attaining students benefit from increased lesson time and already write in past tenses. However, lower-attaining students achieve poorly as work becomes far more demanding than in Year 9. In Year 11, standards in writing, listening and reading in French are broadly average. Higher-attaining students write at good length and vary tenses in accounts and descriptions, for example of work experience and school uniform. Lower-attaining students lack knowledge of sentence structure and frequently fail to communicate successfully. Oral work remains weak, and many students' pronunciation is still approximate. However, students reach high standards in all skills in German. They contribute well in oral work, and produce complex sentences in extended writing. Students generally achieve satisfactorily in French, and most achieve well in German, especially in Year 11.
108. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. This is beginning to have an impact on improving standards. Teachers have good knowledge of examination requirements and of the languages they teach, which supports learning well. In French, some teachers tend to translate into English too often, which reduces the impact of their expertise. Expectations are much higher in German, where it is essential to cover topics at great pace. Students learn well because teachers provide stimulating tasks, use German consistently and guide students towards independent research for their written tasks. A Year 11 German group made splendid contributions in a vibrant and excellent lesson on environmental issues, which extended their linguistic and factual knowledge. Teaching methods are generally well varied, with some pair work and occasional use of ICT. However, a shortage of time means that some desirable activities, such as independent reading and use of video, are rarely attempted. Classroom management and relationships are good, and students have positive attitudes and behave well. A lower-attaining Year 11 French group made good progress in learning to talk about illnesses because they listened attentively and were prepared to try. Teachers target questions fairly, to include both boys and girls and the range of ability and background. Though planning is sound, there is a weakness in failing to provide regular creative speaking opportunities, and in tailoring work to meet the needs of the full range of students. In a Year 9 German lesson, able girls finished tasks quickly but wasted their time as they waited for others to finish. Marking is generally good, with helpful comments provided on how to improve. Homework is set regularly and provides effective extension to classwork.
109. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Literacy skills, especially awareness of language structure, are taught through the development of the four communication skills. Students improve numeracy skills through calculating bills. ICT skills are used largely in word-processing and redrafting. The library provides too little support for learning in the subject.
110. Good leadership and management have helped the department to cope with reorganisation and integrate young teachers alongside more experienced staff. Monitoring of lessons and of students' written work provides a good basis for improving standards. Good assessment procedures are in place, and are beginning to provide data, which can be used to amend learning programmes. Accommodation is very good, providing opportunities for varied activities and for independent study in soundproofed studios. A shortage of textbooks in French affects the range of homework tasks. Minutes of meetings show that the team works well together, sharing good practice and responsibility for curricular development. This suggests that improvement in standards can be sustained.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- All teachers have very good subject knowledge and apply it well.
- Students work well because of their very good relationships with teachers.
- There are many opportunities for students to make music together.
- Leadership and management are very good, and teachers work as a team.

Areas for improvement

- ICT opportunities are being missed through lack of equipment.
- This popular department is outgrowing its accommodation.

111. Standards are average overall in Year 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. Many students learn instruments and take music at GCSE. While some students join the school with good standards in music, the skills of others are underdeveloped, and the overall standard among students joining Year 9 is below average. Good and often very good teaching is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. Boys appear to be achieving a little better than girls, though as yet there are no examination results to confirm this. Gifted and talented students make good progress. They play instruments and sing to a high standard in the many extra-curricular departmental activities. Work is carefully adapted to allow students with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons, for example, by giving them instruments they can manage easily. As a result, these students make very good progress and are expected to achieve GCSE grades. The department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
112. Year 9 work shows good achievement and progress across all areas of the National Curriculum. Song writing is being developed, with creative ideas and lyrics that work. Because the work matches students' interests this raises commitment and moves composing forward. However, much emphasis is placed on musical elements because of lack of learning in earlier years. Students learn to perform together, with good use of expression. Those with high levels of skill take more difficult parts or act as soloists, while all are involved in playing at an appropriate level. Higher-attaining students understand musical terminology and use technical language well, although lower-attaining students are insecure when describing musical elements. Teachers' assessments for 2002 indicate that standards among Year 9 students were below average, but inspection evidence indicates that they are now average.
113. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average due to a combination of effective teaching and a well-designed programme of work. Students in both years play a wide selection of instruments: others are confident vocalists. Good understanding of musical conventions allows them to compose in a variety of styles. This is less successful when group performances lack co-ordination and get out of time, and students need more practice in singing. Many higher attaining and talented students compose with flare and imagination and reach a high standard of performance. Their work encompasses a broad range of styles, from reggae to the classical Western tradition, and they study all in good detail. The wide range of this work makes a very good contribution to students' cultural development.
114. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Year 9 with some very good features including the teachers' subject knowledge. Students work on mood and effect and improvise vocally on the Israeli song 'Shalom Haverim'. Other students demonstrate a variety of interpretations by adding a wide selection of instruments that bring the music to life. Students of all abilities are well catered for and enjoy their music lessons. Homework is set regularly and generally supports the work done in the lesson. Students have limited access to ICT, and this is holding back standards particularly in composition techniques. Work is assessed regularly and

performances are recorded. There is good use of musical language in lessons, and key words are used and displayed on notice boards.

115. Very good teaching and learning takes place in Years 10 and 11 due to the high expectations of teachers and a commitment from students of all abilities. Year 10 students experiment with contrast and repetition by composing a ground bass with variations that illustrate a good knowledge of the style. Year 11 students know about musical conventions and develop minimalist compositions that show much learning has taken place. Students are keen and talk confidently about their work. Instrumental and singing lessons help them achieve well and make good progress. The system of assessment in Years 10 and 11 is done effectively but as yet there is little regular access to ICT.
116. Very good leadership encourages positive attitudes so that most students are creatively involved in making music. Activities outside lessons include rock bands, African drumming and steel pans. Concerts and shows take place regularly. There are good working relationships between teachers, who have regular meetings to moderate and assess students' work. All policy documents are in place and the schemes of work are effective. There is a shortage of computers which restricts the curriculum. The accommodation is cramped but the musical resources are very good and there is an adequate selection of library books on music

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is particularly good teaching and learning in GCSE courses.
- Students' attitudes and interest are good, and they make good progress.
- There is a very good range of learning activities outside lessons.
- Teachers are strongly committed to the department, and work very well as a team.

Weaknesses

- Teachers' planning does not always match the full range of students' needs.
- Timetabling in Years 10 and 11 is leading to some overcrowding of classes.
- Teaching and learning could be more closely monitored.

117. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average, and represent satisfactory achievement. Standards in Year 11 are above average among students taking the GCSE course, and broadly average for others. Students with special educational needs make good progress, and gifted and talented students have good scope for achievement, mostly through additional opportunities for learning outside lessons. Standards and learning benefit greatly from students' positive attitudes to the subject. Overall, students' achievements are good.
118. A considerable majority of students in Year 9, including those having special educational needs, are reaching expected standards in their activities. In games, boys and girls take part enthusiastically and show good understanding of the principles of play. They are developing sound skills in basketball and tennis, though they need more time to practise them. In gymnastics, girls in Year 9 are able to perform a variety of vaults on apparatus with reasonable control, and the more able show good body tension in their work on flight, although their overall standards are average. In dance, however, standards are below average because the level of the work is undemanding. Most students understand the effects of exercise on the body. They prepare well for their work, although more opportunity should be given for boys and girls to lead this preparation.
119. The course is a popular option for both boys and girls, and standards are above average, particularly in Year 11. Work on the theoretical elements of the course is well structured and, as a result, both boys and girls in Year 11 have a good understanding of health and fitness and secure knowledge of the circulatory system. Their practical standards in football, netball, and basketball are also above average. Standards in physical education for students not taking the GCSE course

are broadly average. Major games are strengths – boys in Years 10 and 11 perform skilfully in basketball with good ball control and footwork; in Year 10, girls are developing secure foundation skills and basic tactical awareness in badminton.

120. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, where the impact of knowledgeable teaching combines with strong motivation from students taking the GCSE course. Important strengths of teaching are good relationships and effective class management. Expectations of behaviour and response are usually high and discipline is non-confrontational. As a result, in most lessons, there is a co-operative atmosphere for learning, and students respond well. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the activities they teach, and so students learn correct techniques and develop their knowledge and understanding well. In a very good Year 11 lesson, for example, GCSE students developed very clear understanding of the circulatory system and the involvement of the heart and lungs in the process of blood oxygenation.
121. In the most effective lessons, teachers establish clear learning goals that they share with the students, and regularly review progress against them. This approach helped girls in Year 10 to improve their badminton skills, and to recognise the tactical importance of the short service. Areas for development in teaching include the wider promotion of opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning, and also to be involved in planning, evaluation and problem-solving. Whilst planning has many good features, a wider variety of tasks and resources is required to ensure optimum progress for the wide ability range in some lessons. There is limited provision for the use of ICT and for literacy skills, where key words and technical language are identified, but their use is not promoted systematically. In a very small minority of lessons, work is not planned effectively to enable students to make satisfactory progress.
122. Leadership and management are good. The school has established a coherent team of hardworking teachers with strong commitment to promoting lesson in and out of lessons. Secure schemes of work are in place linked to good assessment procedures. However, consistency in teaching would benefit from more consistent monitoring. Some weaknesses in time-tabling for students not taking GCSE in Years 10-11 limit progress, and lead to some over-crowding. Nevertheless, there is a strong momentum of progress in the department, despite barely adequate resources and limited indoor teaching areas. The extensive range of additional learning and sporting activities, including house competitions, is very popular with boys and girls. It is helping to raise standards, and provides good opportunities for many students to do well, both individually and in their teams.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and at best very good.
- RE makes an excellent contribution to personal development and citizenship.
- Leadership and management are good, and teachers are highly committed.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to extend the range of tasks and learning activities.
- Higher-attaining students need to be more consistently challenged.
- There is too little teaching time for the GCSE short course.

123. Above average standards in Year 9 represent good achievement in relation to students' broadly average standards when they join the school. Standards in Years 11 and 10 are average overall, but a shortage of teaching time is holding back standards in the GCSE short course. There are no significant differences in standards reached by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the support given to them by teachers and learning support staff when present. However, gifted and talented students do not do as well as they should because they are not challenged enough.

124. Year 9 students have good knowledge of Buddhism through progressive study of the origins, teaching and practice of this religion. Many show a secure understanding of the Noble Eightfold Path and what it means to Buddhists in their daily lives. In one lesson, two students demonstrated the lotus position and were able to explain the symbolism of the lotus flower. Students are able to evaluate some of the moral dilemmas faced by believers in living according to the rules of their traditions. For example, in considering spiritual and moral issues relating to death and dying, students designed a booklet on the hospice movement that showed good cultural awareness of Christianity and Buddhism.
125. Year 11 students show good knowledge and understanding of issues such as prejudice, racism, and abortion. They can give reasons for and against euthanasia with relevant supportive references from the Bible. Through the study of fair trade, students can distinguish between long and short-term aid, giving examples of each. Students are able to outline the place of women in society generally and churches specifically.
126. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge, prepare lessons well and sustain a good pace of work. Good use is made of humour, and of praise, when deserved. In the best lessons, learning aims are shared with students, teachers' expectations are high and they use a wide variety of resources. However, the shortage of time for the GCSE short course has restricted teachers' opportunities to vary teaching methods. Very good classroom management results in attitudes and behaviour that are often exemplary, and relationships are excellent. Students know that each one of them is valued and consequently they, in turn, value their achievements. Teachers ensure that all students participate fully, and lessons often provide opportunities for pupils to develop the understanding and skills necessary to become responsible members of society.
127. Close attention to improving literacy skills helps students extend their religious education vocabulary and gives them the confidence to develop their written work. Skills in numeracy are used well where appropriate. For example, Year 9 students used bar graphs and pie charts in presenting the results of surveys to ascertain attitudes towards death. Teachers and students have, however, too little access to computers, too few textbooks, and too inadequate library resources.
128. Leadership and management are good, and have created a strong ethos within the department that ensures that it plays a central part in the development of the school community. The department makes a major contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students through extensive opportunities to reflect on attitudes and values, inspiration, aspiration and motivation. The four non-specialist teachers are well supported. However, the curriculum leader needs more opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching, and assessment needs to be developed. The excellent accommodation provides a stimulating environment, and colourful displays in and around classrooms celebrate achievement. There is shared commitment to further improvement of the subject and the capacity to succeed is high.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Excellent leadership and management provides a clear vision for development.
- Teachers are committed to the subject, and provision is well organised.
- The school council is well organised, purposeful and effective in involving all students.
- There is a workable system for assessing, recording and reporting achievements.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant weaknesses.

129. The introduction of citizenship as a subject is being managed very well to build on the schools strengths in care, personal, social and health education, careers guidance and religious education. The school is committed to the subject, which the leadership group sees as central to its aims. This view reflects the school's very good provision for engaging and involving all students in its work. An audit of the current curriculum has ascertained where the strands of knowledge and understanding, enquiry and communication are being taught, and has identified only minor gaps that still need to be addressed.
130. Provision for students' participation and responsibility is well established. For example, on the annual sports day the afternoon is given over to activities for all students, whatever standard they have reached. When speaking about the house system, all students said they were encouraged to join in. Students have a strong sense of responsibility, both within the school and in the wider community. The school council plays an important part in the school and Year 9 students spoke with pride at achieving improvements in the school as a result of suggestions put to the school council. There was a very good response to recent elections for representatives to join the Redditch student council, in which Kingsley College had the highest turnout of voters. All students have opportunities to help others through charity work and community service. Sixth-form students make an exceptionally good contribution to the school's work with students of their own age who have special educational needs.
131. Students in Year 9 have a broad and mature understanding of citizenship. Analysis of their work shows that they understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and have good understanding of issues such as the implications of capital punishment, which they have researched well using the Internet. Overall, students have above average understanding of the issues surrounding current world events and the media.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and at times very good. Teachers are confident, plan lessons well and have high expectations. They provide rich and interesting activities, well matched to the differing needs of most students. The very good relationships between teachers and between teachers and students, which are fostered by the citizenship co-ordinator, ensure mutual respect and trust. They also account for the very good behaviour and high motivation of students, who enjoy citizenship. Excellent booklets for Year 9 and 10 students have been produced by the citizenship co-ordinator. The opportunities provided by this subject to reflect on rights and responsibilities, consider social, political and global issues, and take part in discussions, make an important contribution to students' personal development.
133. The citizenship co-ordinator gives very good support to teachers and, in turn, receives excellent support from the senior management team and teachers with pastoral responsibility. Effective systems have been established to co-ordinate the school's work with that of local middle schools. Procedures for assessing standards and progress from Year 9 onwards are in place, and all students have the grading system in their books. The eight teachers delivering citizenship through the PSCE programme meet regularly to share ideas and ensure consistency. The co-ordinator, in consultation with colleagues, is building up a very good range of books and resources. The management of citizenship within the school is based on clear educational direction, with appropriate priorities for the future such as students keeping a portfolio of work, including a record of participation events and responsibilities undertaken. Citizenship is enriching education in the college.

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

134. 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. At the time of the inspection, no students had taken A-level examinations, and there were no national comparative data for the small numbers of students who took AS examinations in 2002.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

135. Mathematics was inspected at AS, A-level and GCSE, where the subject is combined with key skills provision. Biology was inspected at AS and A-level, and chemistry was sampled. Standards in chemistry were broadly average, but students were learning very well as a result of challenging and well-directed teaching.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their very good knowledge of mathematics effectively.
- Students work hard, and are encouraged to think for themselves.
- Assessment provides clear and accurate information.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Accommodation is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Below average teaching time limits progress in Year 12.
- Provision for GCSE mathematics is not organised effectively.
- Information from assessment is not used consistently enough.
- ICT is under-used.

136. Too few students took AS mathematics in 2002 to enable a judgement to be made on the results. There are also some very small teaching groups in Year 13, resulting from the need to preserve continuity in provision following re-organisation. Current standards are above average, and students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Their files are well organised, and provide a good record for revision. Students in Year 12 make good use of past GCSE work to move on into new areas, and are well into the course. For example, when studying the graphs of the sine, cosine and tangent functions using the graphical calculator, students confidently apply their knowledge of trigonometry to this new area of study. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In one lesson, for example, students working independently integrating a variety of differential equations made good use of known identities.

137. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, and they plan well, with a clear purpose for each lesson. As a result, students are highly motivated, work hard and are prepared to think for themselves. Teachers keep up a brisk pace and set challenges that are intellectually demanding and deepen understanding. A variety of teaching methods are used. In some lessons, students contribute a great deal, through discussion and demonstrating their work at the whiteboard. Students make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. However, this is hampered by the lower than usual amount of teaching time in Year 12, which restricts the treatment of some topics and opportunities to practise newly acquired skills. Too little use is made of ICT. Students' work is regularly marked, but the marking offers them too little guidance. Teaching is satisfactory in the GCSE re-take course, which is integrated with the key skills course

on the application of number. However, the timetable prevents almost half of the students from attending one or other of the two lessons each week, and this seriously hampers the course's effectiveness.

138. Leadership and management are good. Monitoring and assessment procedures are well established. Planning is effective with a range of courses that will meet the needs of all the students in the future. Student numbers have increased in Year 12, and there is a shared commitment to establish high standards with realistic and challenging targets. Accommodation is excellent. Teachers are approachable and use much of their time outside lessons to support the students.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers know the subject very well, and give clear explanations of key concepts.
- Students take good care with their coursework.
- Technical terms and notations are applied rigorously throughout lessons.
- Students' work is regularly and accurately assessed.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little use of resources outside the school, such as field study centres.
- Students sometimes copy instead of making their own notes.
- Guidance is not matched closely enough to students' needs and target grades.
- There are too few resources in the library.

139. In 2002, all of the four students entered for AS-level modules passed. Standards seen during the inspection are in line with those nationally for the subject. All Year 13 students are meeting the requirements of their examinations, with about a quarter attaining higher grades A or B. In Year 12, almost all students are on line to pass their AS-modules this year, with a significant proportion working towards higher grades. Students in both years are reaching at least the standards expected from their GCSE results. Most are acquiring a good grasp of key principles, and their use of technical vocabulary and notation in the subject is a strength. A few lower-attaining students struggle to grasp ideas in discussions where the more able tend to dominate responses to teachers' questions.
140. In Year 13, most build on their prior knowledge well and show good understanding of key concepts and facts. They explain the probability of inheriting sex-linked diseases such as haemophilia, use appropriate terms and notations accurately, and understand the relevance of a Barr body in the process. They have a good grasp of key features of organs such as the eye and ear, and most can explain the mechanisms associated with hearing and its amplification. Students in Year 12 build on their work at GCSE. For example, in ecology, they gain a more thorough understanding of the relationships between pyramids of numbers and biomass and the energy flows through them. Most calculate the efficiency of transfer between trophic levels without assistance and explain why there are no more than four or five trophic levels within a food chain. Almost all explain clearly the effect of temperature on enzyme activity in terms of the bonds involved in their structures.
141. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and often good in individual lessons. Lessons are planned and structured well. Teachers' very good subject knowledge underpins some very clear explanations of key ideas, for example, the mechanisms involved in hearing sound, its amplification and methods of protection from high sound levels in Year 12. A strong feature is the good use of questioning to check understanding in the early part of lessons, sometimes with each student showing their written response with a whiteboard. Teachers pay careful attention to the correct use of terms and notations, for example, when discussing genetics. In the better lessons there is some lively discussion between students and their teacher, particularly in Year 12 where groups are larger.

However, in some lessons the pace is slowed unnecessarily by students copying extensively from the board.

142. Learning is satisfactory and there are some good features. Students are very interested and most engage well in discussions and questioning sessions. Occasionally, the weaker students are quiet and less involved as the more confident dominate discussions. Teachers are aware of these students and follow up their difficulties outside lessons, but more support is also needed within lessons. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. They feel they can discuss difficulties at any time and receive valuable verbal and written feedback on the wide ranging assessments of their work.
143. Students in both years keep personal files very well ordered, especially in Year 13. They receive valuable and often very complete handouts from teachers and supplement their learning using the ICT suite to access useful Internet sites. However, resources in the library to support their studies are unsatisfactory and there is little access to scientific journals other than articles provided by teachers. While students receive some guidance and suggestions for their independent study, these are not yet specific enough or nor take sufficient account of students' target grades, particularly for those aiming for very high grades.
144. The department has made a good start in developing the curriculum and teaching resources, and leadership of the subject is sound. ICT is used well, but its scope is currently hindered by technical problems. Resources outside the school are underused at present, although there are plans to improve this. Teamwork is improving, but the quality of learning is disrupted by sharing sixth-form teaching among too many staff.

BUSINESS

145. Business studies at AS and A level was inspected.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average across a wide range of skills and topics.
- Lessons and coursework are interesting, varied and challenging.
- All students take pride in their work and achieve well.
- Students know how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve.
- Management and leadership are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little access to ICT in the classroom.
- Links with business and industry are not yet fully developed.

146. Students reach good standards in their work. There was a very high pass rate in AS examinations in 2002, with a third of passes at grades A and B. This represents good achievement from these students' GCSE results, and male and female students achieve equally well.
147. Students in Year 12 have above average skills in business planning and use analytical techniques well. They apply basic calculation techniques well, for example to calculate profit margins. They use business terminology with confidence, although initially lower-attaining students are unsure of terms such as 'debtors' and 'creditors'. Higher attaining students can provide very clear examples of shareholders' expectations of a company. Their interest is effectively sustained by case studies that relate to well known multi national companies.
148. In Year 13, all students understand key aspects of ethical business practice and can apply this well, for example in relation to genetically modified foods. Higher-attaining students can evaluate

possible motives for an ethical standpoint and can give examples of environmental costs. They understand the activities of environmental charities and their influence on some major companies. Students' files are very well-organised and show their knowledge of a broad range of issues, including critical path analysis, personnel management and marketing. Their overall standard is above average, and there are examples of very good achievement from lower-attaining students leading to a higher than expected grade.

149. The approach in lessons challenges and interests the highest-attaining students while supporting those who encounter problems with some aspects of learning. There is real pace and challenge. Teachers have a wide range of business skills, and use a very good range of teaching techniques, including relevant examples that require students to show their understanding of business theory by applying it to case studies. They have developed an interesting range of resources, which they use well. However, they are hindered by a lack of access to computers in lessons. Classrooms do not provide the facilities to be expected in a modern business environment.
150. The department is very well led and the introduction of new courses has been very well managed. Planning is good and documentation is being developed well, although students do not yet have subject handbooks. Information from assessment is fully shared with students and as a result they are clear about their strengths and weaknesses. Students have sufficient access to textbooks, they understand the examination criteria and the department provides good quality resources. Teachers were working under difficult conditions when they had to work on two sites during the college's first year and because of this they have yet to develop a full range of contacts with local businesses. High standards have been maintained despite these challenges. The department is in a very good position to make further progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

A-level and AS courses in ICT were inspected.

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

Strengths

- Teachers know the subject very well, and match work well to students' needs.
- Students' work and progress are assessed well, with good targets for improvement.
- Students are interested and work hard. They are making good progress.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average.
- There are too few books in the library.

151. Standards among students joining the sixth form are below average, and results in AS examinations in 2002 were low. However, very recent changes in the department have resulted in a period of stability and rapidly improving provision. The current good quality of provision in the sixth form ensures that students are now progressing well and developing both their own knowledge and their ICT skills.
152. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons thoroughly. They set high expectations by encouraging students to develop their own strategies. Through effective monitoring and support, teachers ensure that students progress at a good pace. Teachers provide detailed explanations of lesson and course requirements, and students are clear about what is required of them to improve grades. Effective use is made of interactive whiteboards as teaching aids. Work is set at an appropriate level and includes progressive tasks which allow the students to continually extend their knowledge and skills. Homework is set as appropriate to support teaching and learning in lessons.

153. The work of students undertaking the AS and A-level courses shows good achievement, with an understanding of the role and nature of ICT. Students are highly motivated and confident about the tasks they undertake. They can explain their work and why they use certain facilities in the software. In Year 13, students have a wide range of skills and knowledge that they apply to real problems, including a major project where they design a more efficient computerised solution to replace a paper-based system. Students understand both the facilities and limitations of software they use, and use the Internet with precision and purpose. Work is at an appropriate level for the students' age and stage of progress, and gives them opportunities to obtain the highest grades of which they are capable. Students work independently with enthusiasm and, when given the opportunity collaborate well and assist each other. Teachers create a good rapport with the students and an atmosphere in which students can develop their own skills and knowledge.
154. There have been significant improvements in provision since September. Two new specialist teachers have been appointed, and in January a new head of department was appointed. These teachers form an enthusiastic, committed and dynamic team. In four weeks, new outline schemes of work have been produced. There is now a formal monitoring structure based upon criteria set by the examination boards and teachers regularly discuss individual progress with each student during lessons so that they can set their own targets and timescales. The school has recently invested significantly in ICT and now provides full and extensive resources for the ICT courses. However, there are still inadequate resources in the library. The department is well aware of issues to address in order to further expand what is already good sixth-form provision.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

155. The new AVCE course in leisure and recreation was inspected. A-level physical education and the AVCE in health and social care were sampled. Teaching and learning in both subjects sampled were good. The health and social care course is very well designed to meet the needs of students with below average GCSE results. It makes a very good contribution to these students' skills in literacy, number work and ICT, and provides good access to advanced work to those who complete it successfully.

Leisure and recreation

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- Students are interested in the course, and it meets their needs well.
- There are good relationships and support for students.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities for discussion and debate in some lessons.
- Some students depend too heavily on the teacher in their work.

156. Standards in Year 12 are below average, but students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results, which in some cases are much lower than usual for sixth-form study. They are making sound progress in developing their portfolios on the social and economic importance of the leisure and recreation industry. They have used the Internet well in researching relevant statistical data and are able to illustrate links between leisure and recreation and health, employment, and economic growth. However, some of their work is basic and lacks depth of analysis.
157. Standards for Year 13 students are broadly average, and their achievement is good given their relatively modest GCSE starting points. Their portfolios are well presented, with particularly good understanding of funding arrangements for leisure and recreation, and comparisons between the public and private sectors. They have researched well and, despite difficulties of access, they make good use of ICT to illustrate their work and their confident analyses of career opportunities and training requirements.

158. Teaching and learning are good and support students' achievements well. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and often illustrated well from first-hand experience. They provide clear guidance for students whilst trying to ensure they develop responsibility for their own learning. Relationships are very good, and students appreciate teachers' support. The most effective lessons challenge students to develop their understanding directly through active involvement. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, effective progress was made in understanding the importance of customer services through role-play, linked well to earlier input from business links and students' own practical work experiences. This generated a dynamic focus to the work and a good level of engagement and discussion. However, more emphasis should be given to discussion and debate in some lessons.
159. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the course specification and requirements. However, some depend too heavily on their teacher and lack confidence, particularly in Year 12. Assessment procedures are good, and most students are clear about what they need to do to be successful. Work is regularly marked, although teachers give stronger guidance on improvement in discussion with students than in their marking. Students' attitudes are good, they work diligently, enjoy their lessons, and are keen to do well.
160. Good leadership and management have successfully established the course, and it is developing well. The course is meeting the needs of its students well, and is providing a clear pathway for achievement and access to higher education and employment.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

161. The new AVCE course in performing arts was inspected, and music, music technology and art and design were sampled. Standards in the subjects sampled were broadly average overall, but teaching during the inspection was very good. It was based on extensive and detailed subject knowledge, close and effective guidance to students, and very effective use of assessment and target grades.

Performing arts

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

Strengths

- Standards in practical work and performance are above average.
- Teachers match work very well to the wide range of talents among the students.
- Students are committed, confident and work very hard.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some students need more practice in sight-reading in music.
- The standard of some written work needs to be improved.
- Facilities for dance are limited.

162. The advanced vocational course in performing arts is new, although some students in Year 13 had already made a start on the work in Year 12. Year 12 students during the inspection were concentrating on practical work in music and dance. Year 13 students are developing their skills in music technology. There is no significant difference between the work of male and female students.
163. Year 12 students began with above average standards at GCSE. The standard of practical work is high and this shows good achievement over time. In music, students use the recording desk with confidence and set sound levels for their own performances, though some need prompting about the effect when an audience is present. Creative dance includes good improvisation and progression from one movement to another, catching a strong sense of mood. However, spacing is

not always correct when students are on stage with others. All students are very positive about the course. In discussions, they enjoy the variety of work and would recommend the course to others. They have started to apply their knowledge to the world of work and hope to have a career in the arts. Examination of students' work showed good research skills in analysing and contrasting theatrical venues, but some other written work was not up to the standard of practical work.

164. Year 13 students achieve well and make good progress in building up their knowledge, skills and understanding. All three students show a high degree of self-sufficiency when working on sequencing and recording but some lack confidence in their research and written work. Students play instruments confidently and well, although some have weaknesses in reading music at sight due to lack of practice. Students reach high standards in using music technology to record and sequence their work, and to prepare music for performances.
165. Teaching is very good and students learn well because they are exposed to a rich and varied diet in the performing arts curriculum that is carefully matched to their needs and interests. Very good teaching and careful planning ensure that the needs of students are met by the tasks that are set. Because of the teacher's searching questions about microphone techniques, overdub and mixdown music technology, students improved their multi-track recording of a live rock band. Well-planned warm-up exercises effectively prepared dance students for a choreography session in which they improvise an eight-count phrase.
166. Leadership and management are based on very good organisation and a strong sense of the importance of teamwork among teachers from different subjects. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment strategies are detailed and used to set demanding targets. Accommodation is adequate overall, but facilities for dance are limited.

HUMANITIES

167. History was inspected, and AS and A-level courses in geography, law, psychology, religious education were sampled. Compulsory religious education was inspected. The overall quality of work in subjects sampled was good. Teaching is well informed and well adapted to the needs of the students, who reach broadly average overall standards. Teaching in the religious education required for all sixth-form students is very good, and it makes an important contribution to their personal development.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching is well informed, meticulously planned and challenging.
- Students are inspired by the teaching they receive and work hard.
- Assessment and target setting for students are very effective.
- Strong leadership and management are raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- There are inadequate resources for learning in the library.
- Opportunities for learning outside lessons could be expanded.

168. Standards are a little below average in Year 13, but above average in Year 12, where students reached better standards at GCSE. Students of all abilities achieve well, and teaching is well adapted to the needs of both very able and lower-attaining students. There are no significant differences between the performances of male and female students.
169. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, can interpret and evaluate a range of historical sources, and are developing their capacity for critical thinking. In a lesson on the crises facing the Liberal Government in 1912, for example, students

undertook a critical examination of complex source material in preparation for individual extended essay assignments. These students' coursework showed significantly above average historical understanding, combined with very good notes and well written essays. Higher-attaining students are already reaching standards more often seen in Year 13.

170. Students in Year 13 are now achieving well, despite gaps in their earlier course knowledge and understanding because of staffing problems in Year 12. They are developing a wider range of written skills but still have weaknesses in their ability to construct analytical arguments and write extended prose. Discussion skills are inhibited by limitations in their overall historical knowledge. In a lesson on appeasement, for example, gaps in their grasp of the detail of the Hoare -Laval Pact restricted their ability to discuss the weaknesses of that agreement. Nevertheless, these students' coursework shows good progress from the standards they had reached in Year 12, and include good work on timed essays.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Year 12 and good in Year 13. This teaching is raising standards for all students in both year groups. Teaching is based on very good knowledge of the subject, meticulous planning and a high level of challenge for all students. Students have responded very positively. Year 12 students are willing to engage in discussion and take risks when expressing new ideas. In a lesson on Home Rule in Ireland, for example, students delivered talks of high quality based on their own research. Students are all encouraged to undertake their own research enquiries into a wide range of historical issues. This prepares them for further study after they leave school. In lessons there is a collaborative ethos. These excellent relationships, together with very good teaching and high quality assessment, have helped to raise students' understanding of what they can achieve.
172. Very good leadership and management are a major factor in promoting high standards. Monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are strengths of the subject, and students are fully aware of how to reach their learning targets. The students have access to a comprehensive range of resources, but there is too little support for their study in the library, and there are relatively few opportunities for learning outside lessons. Overall, the quality of work in history is improving rapidly, and the subject is set to become a strength of the school.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

173. English literature and the combined GCSE and key skills course in English were inspected. German was inspected at AS and A level, and French was sampled. Small numbers of students take foreign languages, and all at the time of the inspection were female. Standards, teaching and learning in French are satisfactory, but individual students' work ranges from above average to well below average.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge, understanding and experience of sixth-form work.
- Teaching methods are varied and interesting.
- Students have a positive attitude to their work and achieve well.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more guidance on how to organise their work and meet targets.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- There are too few up-to-date books and learning resources in the library.

174. Year 13 students' AS results were better than those that might have been expected from their GCSE performance. They are currently working at standards that are in line with the national average for A-level work. The Year 12 students, whose GCSE results were above average, are attaining higher standards. All sixth-form students, however, are making good progress and have positive attitudes to their studies. Students re-taking GCSE English are learning well in response to well-focused teaching that provides good encouragement for independent work. This course is effectively integrated with key skills provision for communication.

175. Year 12 students write with confidence and participate well in class discussions. In a lesson on *Snow Falling on Cedars*, they adopted the roles of major characters in the novel in a courtroom setting, showing very good understanding of the characters and the issues. In another lesson, they worked very well in groups exploring themes in *The Tempest*. Most of these students are capable of at least C grades in A-level examinations. The Year 13 students are more diffident about speaking in class, but they have produced some written work of a high standard and all look likely to succeed this summer; one or two of them are capable of A grades. Initially, their responses to new material can be slow, as seen in a lesson where they were presented with previously unseen pieces of verse and prose, but where they have been able to engage with a text over several weeks, as in the case of their lessons on Blake's poems, their diligence results in thoughtful work.

176. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. There are four experienced A-level teachers who share the classes. They relate well to their students and have very good subject knowledge and understanding. In a Year 13 lesson on *Othello*, it was clear that the teacher had read very widely and provided a very knowledgeable background to the text. Another teacher organised students into groups that were each given questions in sealed envelopes to consider before presenting findings to the whole class. A variety of methods are clearly used in sixth-form lessons – whether discussions in small groups or as a whole class, role-play, teacher presentations or work on posters. Good opportunities are provided for students to learn independently. Their folders show that they make and keep good notes, although some of them would benefit from better organisation of their work. Handouts and extracts of texts are well annotated. They do research on the Internet and use computers to type up coursework, but ICT is not used as much as it might be as an aid to learning. There are good resources for teaching in classrooms, but the selection of books for A-level use in the learning resource centre needs updating.

177. Teachers provide good support for their students, including effective support for those with special educational needs, who are enabled to participate well and succeed in their work. Students' work is well marked, but they need more help in meeting specific learning targets if they are to reach the grades of which they are capable. This apart, the subject is well led and managed, and is becoming increasingly popular, as the numbers in Year 12 indicate. There is good capacity for further improvement.

German

Overall, the quality of provision in German is **good**, with some excellent features.

Strengths

- Teaching is based on outstanding knowledge of German and German society.
- Dynamic teaching and management create a powerful climate for learning.
- Students work hard, have very positive attitudes and make good progress.
- Study of authentic resources promotes independent learning skills.
- Marking and individual reviews of work are of very high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Students receive less teaching time than they need.
- A minority of students have weak understanding of basic grammar.
- There are too few books and other resources for private study in the library.
- There are too few male students.

178. Results at AS-level in 2002 were broadly average, and showed good achievement since GCSE. Standards in Year 13 during the inspection were similar. Reading skills are better developed than listening skills, because students have the time to make good use of reference resources, whereas they sometimes struggle to pick up shades of meaning in challenging spoken passages. Their speaking skills are sound. They offer opinions and have sufficient factual knowledge to discuss a range of topics, because they spend time accessing information from the Internet. Pronunciation and intonation are pleasingly accurate. Written work on literary texts shows good progress from Year 12. Students know the content of both books very well, and construct arguments successfully in work which benefits from regular redrafting. They include a good range of structures and tenses, but there is a considerable difference in the accuracy of language used, with some poor application of basic grammatical rules, such as gender, number and capital letters. Occasionally this detracts from the impact of good content.
179. Work seen in Year 12 lessons and files shows that most of the five students are achieving well, and reaching above average standards. However, basic weaknesses in knowledge of vocabulary and understanding of basic grammar mean that not all students are working at this level, despite well-directed teaching. Students readily accept the expectation that only German will be used in lessons. Most of them answer coherently, using increasingly sophisticated terms and verb structures, often picked up from their own study of articles downloaded from Internet. Where there is hesitancy, this is often due to weak comprehension of questions. They are capable, with suitable guidance, of preparing oral presentations on a wide range of interesting topics. They take notes well, and use these effectively to improve the content and range of their writing. Most written work shows considerable maturation since GCSE, though word order is an ongoing problem in some cases.
180. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and sometimes excellent. Teachers' very good knowledge of German is supplemented by unusually good factual knowledge of social, political and cultural issues and trends. This strongly engages students' interest, and has a very positive impact on learning. Very good planning to cover course requirements features excellent use of authentic resources, such as newspapers, magazines, and downloads and recordings from the Internet and satellite. Students are encouraged to make further use of these in private study time, which considerably extends the depth of their learning. Management of lessons is excellent, with different styles being used. Collaborative and individual work improves confidence and competence, whilst teachers' enthusiasm, energy and humour enliven routine classwork and stimulate willing response. Marking is very good, providing considerable assistance for future learning, especially in diagnosis of what is missing and what to revise. Consequently students make good progress in developing techniques for answering examination questions. Homework provides a regular emphasis on independent learning.
181. Students work hard and express positive views about the subject. They appreciate teachers' efforts on their behalf, and the guidance they receive in individual review sessions within lessons. The subject benefits from excellent leadership and management, which provide very good support for students' individual learning needs. Schemes of work for new courses are well developed. In view of the low allocation of lesson time in Years 9 to 11, it is important for students to have more contact with teachers than is currently provided in the sixth form, especially for those students who have not gained very high GCSE grades. It is equally desirable to redress the gender imbalance, especially for the quality of discussion. Though teachers provide high quality authentic resources to support learning, students do not benefit from structured opportunities for contact with German-speaking youngsters of their own age, through exchanges or e-mail contacts. Teachers have built up a good stock of resources for use in private study time, for which very good accommodation is available within the subject area. However, there is little in the school library or the sixth-form study area to help students.