

INSPECTION REPORT

LANGLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 110101

Headteacher: Miss Hilda Clarke

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield
3569

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 March 2003

Inspection number: 249823

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Reddington Drive
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Slough
Berkshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Ken Richardson

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
13481	Douglas Binfield	Lay Inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents</p>
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
7428	Ray Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
18638	Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30136	Dennis Johnson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Citizenship	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History	
8672	Michael Roberts	Team inspector	Geography	
31865	Val Girling	Team inspector	Art and design	
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Music Psychology Educational inclusion	

20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious Education	
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	Drama English as an additional language Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Langley Grammar is a mixed selective foundation school for pupils aged 11 – 18, situated in Langley, east of Slough. The school draws its pupils from a wide area, including neighbouring boroughs, and most, although not all, pupils come from socially and economically advantaged homes. The school is very popular with parents and is oversubscribed. The school selects its pupils on entry in Year 7 strictly by ability. There are more boys than girls on roll. There are currently 948 pupils on roll, with 209 in the sixth form, and the school has been expanding in recent years. At around three per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Attainment on entry is well above that of schools nationally. However, tests on entry indicate that attainment is not as high as in some grammar schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below average, with just seven pupils with identified needs. Most of these pupils have identified learning needs. No pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The school is ethnically mixed with significant proportions of pupils from Asian (Indian) and white British communities, although there are smaller minorities from Asian (Pakistani and other), Chinese and mixed heritages. There are 380 pupils with English as an additional language. Most of these are confident English speakers, and none is at an early stage of English language acquisition.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. High standards are promoted by very good, and often outstanding, teaching. All pupils make very good progress. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, supported by the senior management team, teachers and all other staff, has created a climate of excellent relationships and very good behaviour. Pupils have the confidence to achieve well. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English and mathematics and most other subjects are very high in relation to national averages.
- Very good, and sometimes inspirational, teaching ensures that pupils make very good progress.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by her governors, senior team and all other staff, has created a community that values learning and is racially harmonious.
- Excellent attitudes and behaviour, a pride in the school, a sense of responsibility and the personal maturity of pupils, make a very good contribution to learning.
- The excellent personal development of pupils and relationships within the whole school community are the result of the very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the very good pastoral and tutorial system.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum.

What could be improved

- The effectiveness with which teaching and learning are evaluated and best practice shared.
- The provision for citizenship.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, improvement since the last inspection in February 1997 has been very good. Test and examination results in Year 9, GCSE and A level have all improved. The quality of teaching has improved and, in particular, the percentage of very good and better teaching is higher than at the time of the last inspection. The quality of leadership and management in particular is now much better. Key issues from the previous inspection regarding management, the curriculum and its assessment, the use of the library and information and communication technology have all been well tackled, although meeting the requirements for collective worship remains an issue.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	D**
A-levels/AS-levels	2001			
	Male	Female	All	
	A*	A*	A*	

Key

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

A indicates that the school's results were very high and within the top 5 per cent of schools nationally.*

*** Comparisons with other grammar schools should be treated with caution as the ability profile on entry varies.*

In 2002, the school's test results at the end of Year 9 were very high in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with other grammar schools, results were average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science. While results in both English and mathematics have improved over the last few years, science results have held steady. The improving trend overall has been above the national trend. Both boys and girls do well.

Ninety-four per cent of pupils gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2002. This performance maintains the high standards of previous years, and is very high in comparison with schools nationally. Results since the last inspection have improved. Comparisons against all national measures were very high, but are less favourable when compared with other grammar schools. However, inspectors found only isolated instances of underachievement. Most pupils in 2002 exceeded the targets set for them by the school, but a few did not and, as a result, the overall school target was not met. Those set for 2003 are both challenging and achievable.

In 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, the average A-level points score was very high in relation to maintained secondary schools. Both boys and girls did equally well. Pupils did particularly well in biology, business studies, theatre studies, geography, history, mathematics, and religious education. They did less well in French. A-level results in 2002 maintained the high standards of previous years.

In work seen, the standards of pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and several other subjects are very high at the end of Year 9 and in Year 11. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above average, but less high than in previous years and the current Year 12. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school and very good in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are keen to learn and have very positive attitudes, which make a powerful contribution to their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils demonstrate helpful, respectful and sensitive behaviour both in and outside classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The quality of relationships amongst the whole-school community is a strength. Senior pupils act with maturity and take their

	responsibilities seriously.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance levels are well above average and there has been no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good; much teaching is outstanding with just less than one half of the lessons observed being judged very good or excellent. There have been marked improvements in the quality of most teaching since the last inspection. Teaching in English and mathematics is very good; in science it is good.

High expectations, excellent relationships, good pace of learning and effective classroom management characterise much of the good teaching. Planning is mostly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is very good, although there are a few pupils with English as an additional language who need more focused support with their writing. The quality of marking is mostly very good, and pupils are clear about their progress and what they should do to improve. In almost all cases, the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching, helped by pupils' excellent attitudes in lessons. Pupils increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and work independently of the teacher.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school offers a broad and well-balanced curriculum. Careers advice and guidance are strengths. The school's very good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport, is well supported.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. For the very few pupils identified, support is well planned and managed. Most pupils make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Although most pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress, there are a small number whose language needs are not fully met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Moral development is excellent and a strong moral ethic underpins the work of the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to take initiative and responsibility, and the school actively encourages social development. Spiritual issues are addressed very effectively in religious education and a number of other subjects. Cultural development and the celebration of cultural diversity are provided very well through good opportunities in the arts and other subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Child protection and welfare procedures are very good, as is the comprehensive pastoral support provided by tutors, heads of year and heads of school. Assessment procedures are good and are being used satisfactorily to monitor progress and set targets.

Parents are very supportive of the school and their children's learning. The school's partnership with parents is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The clarity of the headteacher's vision is ensuring a strong sense of shared values and common purpose. She is driving the school forward with both energy and humanity, and has very good support from senior managers. They are well supported by staff at all levels, and all are committed to maintain and improve standards and provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed and hardworking and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. Relationships with staff are very good. They have a good knowledge of the school's work and are confident in their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school monitors its examination performance carefully. Line management and monitoring procedures are in place, but not systematically applied. While teachers are increasingly confident in reviewing their practice, evaluation is not sharp enough to enable best practice to be shared.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is prudently managed, and best value principles are applied whenever possible.

Overall levels and quality of staffing and resources are good. The accommodation is only just adequate to meet the expanding needs of the school, although much has been done to ensure that staff and pupils work in a welcoming learning environment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children like school and are expected to work hard • Behaviour is good • Their children make good progress because of the quality of the teaching • The school is well led and managed • Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents felt that they were not given enough information about their children's progress • A minority would like to see the school working more closely with them • A greater range of activities outside lessons

Parents are very supportive of the school and their children's learning. Inspectors agree with parents' views by and large, although they consider that, through written reports and consultation evenings, there are enough opportunities for parents to learn of their children's progress. The range of activities outside lessons is very good; some pupils have difficulty attending after-school activities because of the distance they travel home. The school is aware that it needs to improve communication with parents and is seeking ways to provide improved access to information and to provide more formal avenues of feedback for parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 209 students in the sixth form; 108 boys and 101 girls. This is larger than most sixth forms nationally. There is a good ethnic mix with significant numbers of students from Asian (Indian) and British (white) backgrounds, and smaller minorities from other heritages. All speak English confidently. The school provides a good range of AS and A-level courses. A high proportion of pupils from Year 11 stay on into the sixth form, joined by a small number of external students. The minimum entry requirements of at least five good GCSE passes are strictly adhered to.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall quality of provision in the sixth form is very good, and is cost-effective. Standards are very high in comparison with national figures, and students achieve well. Very good teaching and mature and responsible attitudes by students have ensured these standards have been maintained at this level in recent years. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The main strengths and areas that could be improved are:

Strengths

- High standards promoted by very good and sometimes outstanding teaching
- The maturity and confidence of the students and their very good attitudes to their studies contribute strongly to their very good progress
- The commitment of teachers to the support and guidance of students
- Very good relationships amongst the students themselves and between staff and students

What could be improved

- The effectiveness with which teaching and learning are evaluated and best practice shared

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. High standards are promoted by very good and sometimes excellent teaching. Results have improved considerably in recent years.
Biology	Very good. Students achieve well because teaching is good and some very good. Students' work is closely assessed and effective guidance given, but information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in the subject.
Design and technology	Very good. Excellent management of the course ensures that students achieve very well. Both AS and A-level results have been very high.
Business studies	Very good. Results in 2001 and 2002 were very high and business studies courses are increasingly popular. Standards are very high because teaching is very good. The department lacks some of the

	facilities found in other schools.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Very good. Students make good use of the high level of skills and knowledge gained earlier in the school.
Sports studies	Very good. Students achieve well and standards are high. Good teaching and excellent attitudes to work ensure that good learning takes place.
Art and design	Good. Results are very high. Teaching and progress are good, and there are good opportunities to visit galleries here and abroad. Group sizes have increased.
Theatre studies	Very good. Results are well above average. Very good teaching leads to high standards of performance.
Geography	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and standards are well above the national average. Specialist teaching promotes high levels of independence and experience through fieldwork. A very good team spirit has been established within the department.
Religious studies	Very good. A-level results have been very high. Students achieve very well as a result of committed and very good teaching.
Psychology	Very good, Teaching is very good, founded on a very good subject knowledge that is very effective in guiding students' learning and progress. Standards overall are above average.
English	Good. Above average results have been achieved as a result of good teaching and very positive attitudes to learning.
French	Good. Results have been lower than average, but are improving. Although numbers taking French are small, the students make good progress as a result of good teaching.

In other subjects, work was sampled. In chemistry, physics, economics, music, history and sociology, very good teaching was observed and students are achieving high standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students benefit from the very good relationships with their teachers and tutors, and most feel well supported. Academic performance is closely monitored. Students are well informed about subject and higher education options and careers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The school's ethos and expectations of both academic success and personal development are clearly shared and understood. Examination results are carefully analysed and effective steps taken to maintain high standards.

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">• Information and advice about sixth form courses• The very good quality of teaching and support for independent study and research• Advice on careers and higher education opportunities• Sixth form life is enjoyable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for more involvement in activities outside their main subject courses• The space available for private study

The majority of pupils are very pleased with life in the sixth form, particularly with the support provided for their studies. Inspectors endorse the positive views expressed by pupils.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are well above average, although the ability range overall is wider than is found in many grammar schools. The school selects its pupils strictly in terms of their ability in 11-plus tests taken at the end of the pupils' primary schools. However, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or better is less high in English than in either mathematics or science. This is confirmed by the cognitive ability tests taken by pupils on entry to the school, which indicates that pupils score less well on verbal tests than on those that measure non-verbal and quantitative skills.
2. Although the overall attainment on entry has been consistently well above average over the last few years, the gap between the quantitative and verbal reasoning scores has been widening. This reflects the increasing proportions of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) attending the school. The attainment on entry of a very small proportion of pupils with EAL is below average in English, particularly in writing. They have difficulties with spelling, vocabulary, sentence construction and the use of verb tenses. They are also less secure in applying appropriate forms of written expression, and a few continue to have difficulties throughout Years 7 and 8.
3. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science was very high in comparison with all schools nationally. Comparisons with other grammar schools – similar schools - should be treated with caution as the range of ability in Langley Grammar is wider than that found in some grammar schools. In comparison with other grammar schools, performance in mathematics was above average; in English it was average and in science it was below average. Results in English and mathematics have improved over the last few years, but science results have remained steady. The improving school trend overall has been above the rising national trend.
4. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2002 was 94 per cent; very high in relation to all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades, and the average points score, were also very high. Results have been consistently very high over the last three years and the improving trend has been broadly in line with the improving national trend.
5. While comparisons against all national measures were very high in 2002, they are less favourable when compared with other grammar schools. However, inspectors found only isolated instances of underachievement. Comparisons with other grammar schools should be treated with caution as the ability profile on entry varies considerably between different grammar schools.
6. Pupils taking GCSE in 2002 achieved satisfactorily, although the school's ambitious targets were not met. Progress through the two years of the course as measured from the pupils' attainment in Year 9 tests in Year 2000, was average in comparison with schools whose pupils attained similar results in Year 9. Pupils did significantly better than nationally in all subjects. Performance in mathematics was particularly impressive in 2002 with over one half of pupils gaining an A or A* grade. There were also high proportions of pupils gaining A or A* grades in English literature, biology, chemistry, physics and design and technology.
7. The most significant factor in these high standards is the very good quality of teaching, which has a strong focus on maximising achievement for all pupils. In addition, the excellent attitudes of most pupils to their learning, supported by the overall ethos for learning, promote very good progress.
8. Overall, in work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards are very high, in line with recent tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results. Most pupils' achievements are very good given their prior attainment on entry, and very good progress is made in all years in the school.

9. The achievement of the very few pupils with special educational needs is in line with that of other pupils. The majority make very good progress and are removed from the special educational needs register after one or two terms.
10. Three hundred and eighty pupils have EAL, but none of these is at an early stage of language acquisition. The school's analysis of the achievements of pupils with EAL indicates that, in English, both boys and girls are achieving higher than expectations. While girls with EAL are performing better than other pupils, boys with EAL are not performing as well. In mathematics, both boys and girls with EAL are achieving above expectations.
11. In GCSE examinations the achievement of pupils with EAL is very good. They attain a slightly higher average points score than other pupils and a higher percentage attain five or more A* to C grades. Analysis based on ethnicity indicates that Asian (Indian) girls are the highest attaining group in the school and Asian (Pakistani) boys the lowest.
12. Inspectors found no significant variation in the progress of boys and girls. In this respect all pupils are making very good progress.
13. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were very high in both Years 9 and 11. Given their attainment on entry, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well through Years 7 to 11.
14. Standards of literacy throughout the main school are high and, in the sixth form, students' communication skills are well developed. Most pupils write fluently and accurately and are able to adapt their writing to the demands of different subjects. In geography, for example, the more competent pupils are set questions that extend their understanding of technical terms. They are also given opportunities to present their work in different mediums and this was seen when they gave presentations on recent holidays to share their knowledge of distant places. There are some pupils in all years whose writing is marred by errors in sentence grammar and who sometimes use quite common words incorrectly. The school is addressing this as a priority through its literacy policy.
15. Reading skills are highly developed and in all subjects pupils make good use of a wide range of increasingly difficult texts. Year 11 pupils in information and communication technology (ICT), for example, were quick to understand the concept of data verification and validation because of their impressive reading and comprehension skills. Standards of speaking and listening are also well above average and contribute significantly to how well pupils learn. Listening, in particular, is highly developed and pupils are able to make inferences. All are confident and articulate when speaking in groups and to the teacher. There were occasions in whole-class discussions, however, when pupils were less assured and they, therefore, need to develop their debating skills.
16. In work seen in mathematics, standards are very high at the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are good through Years 7 to 9. Progress is more marked in Years 10 and 11, when there is a sharper focus on examination work and planning is more clearly related to individual learning needs. Standards of numeracy are very good, although pupils are not always as flexible as they should be in choosing the most appropriate method for working out problems, and too many use their calculators too readily. Good applications of mathematics are found in many areas of the curriculum; for example, in science, where pupils confidently use algebraic manipulation in work in physics, and statistical methods in all areas of study. In drama, a management plan for organising seating and planning financial implications involved the use of mathematical formulae. In geography, statistical methods were well used to help the pupils to understand data on population changes. In physical education (PE), mathematical language and terminology was precisely applied.
17. Standards in science are also very high in both Years 9 and 11. Pupils are making satisfactory progress throughout Years 7 to 11. They have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts. However, there is some underachievement in Years 7 to 9, and pupils are not developing their scientific investigative skills with sufficient depth. As in

mathematics, where there is underachievement it is largely because the planning of work is not related closely enough to the individual pupil's needs.

18. In other subjects, standards in work seen in Year 9 are very high in design and technology (particularly food technology), ICT, geography and religious education (RE); they are well above average in history, above average in modern foreign languages, music and PE, and average in art and design. In most subjects pupils are achieving very well through Years 7 to 9, although achievement in modern foreign languages is satisfactory, and there is some underachievement in art and design.
19. In Year 11, standards are very high in design and technology, ICT, and RE, and well above average in history and PE. In geography, modern foreign languages, art and design and music, standards are above average. Most pupils' achievements are good or very good in all these subjects through the GCSE courses.

Sixth form

20. In 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, the results of students entered for AS and A-level examinations were very high. The average points score of candidates entered was 24.4 compared with the national average of 17.4. Results in most subjects have been consistently above or well above average over the last four years. In 2002, results were maintained at this high level. Evidence from the inspection indicates that this improvement has been sustained and standards in the current Year 13 are well above average. This is not quite as high as previous years, but students remain in line to achieve very well.
21. Boys and girls do equally well. In 2001 students did particularly well in business studies, computing, food studies and RE, where results were very high, and in biology, theatre studies, geography, history and mathematics, where results were well above the national average for these subjects. Only in French have A-level standards been consistently below average.
22. The school adopts strict entry requirements to the sixth form. Potential A-level students must have five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, with at least a B grade in the subjects to be studied. A high proportion of students from Year 11 stay on into the sixth form. A few students each year join the sixth form from other schools. Overall, attainment on entry is well above average. Over recent years, A-level performance relative to the students' GCSE results has been very good, particularly for the higher and lower attaining students.
23. Inspectors judge the achievements of most students in the current sixth form to be very good. Standards are improving as a consequence of increasingly very good teaching, which offers high levels of challenge. Retention rates through courses are good with almost 100 per cent of students successfully completing the course. Students rarely embark on courses to which they are not suited.
24. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. Of those who were, standards observed in mathematics and food studies are very high, while in biology, geography, art and design and psychology, they are well above average. In English, French, sports studies and business studies, standards are above average. In RE, attainment in work seen was broadly in line with the average in Year 13, but higher in Year 12. For most students on these courses, their achievements and progress through the course, given their attainment at GCSE, are good, and very good in mathematics, food studies, geography, RE and psychology. In subjects sampled some work of a very high standard was seen in economics and history, while work in chemistry, physics, music and sociology was well above average. Both boys and girls do well, and students from ethnic minority groups achieve at least as well as others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

25. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and make a significant contribution to the high standards of achievement. This represents an improvement on the already commendable position at the time

of the last inspection. Pupils are very keen to learn and enjoy taking on challenging work. During lessons they listen carefully, ask probing questions and make confident contributions to discussions. Written and practical tasks are undertaken in a careful and determined manner with a strong emphasis on high quality and good presentation. Pupils are very effective when working in small groups as they share knowledge and ideas. An excellent example of this occurred in Year 7 when groups of four pupils prepared and delivered impressive presentations about the advantages of healthy eating. The diligent approach to learning is also a strong feature during independent study at school and of the extensive work undertaken at home.

26. Standards of behaviour are excellent and have improved since the last inspection. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school day. Exemplary behaviour in lessons ensures that time is extremely well used for new learning. Pupils are courteous to others as they move around the school between lessons. They are very well behaved in the school grounds and in the busy dining area. A high level of respect is shown to adults and other pupils. The friendly approach of pupils from all backgrounds contributes significantly to the high degree of racial harmony that prevails. Serious misbehaviour, including bullying, rarely occurs but any such incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly. The incidence of detentions is very low. Last year there were no permanent exclusions and four pupils were excluded for fixed periods. Pupils and their parents rightly feel that the behaviour standards are a very impressive feature of the school. The exemplary standards achieved have an extremely positive impact on learning.
27. The provision for personal development and relationships throughout the school is excellent, reflecting improvements since the last inspection. Teachers and staff act as very good role models and maintain very good relationships with the pupils. An impressive feature is that pupils from all age groups mix freely and show respect for the views of others. There are many opportunities that help to develop pupils' special interests and their self-esteem. A full range of lunchtime and after-school clubs are very popular giving pupils the opportunity to develop skills; for example, in art and design, music, drama, information and communication technology and many sports. Pupils provide extensive support for charities and enjoy participating in school concerts and sporting fixtures. Extensive use is made of the school's computer facilities and library for personal study outside programmed lesson times. The many educational visits to venues in this country and Europe and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme provide new experiences for pupils. Inspection evidence does not support the views of a minority of parents that the provision for activities outside lessons is insufficient. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as monitoring duties, house captains and by assisting with the organisation of special events. The recently instituted school and year group councils are enabling pupils' views and concerns to be taken into account.
28. Attendance is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Overall, levels are very high compared to the national average for secondary schools. There was no unauthorised absence last year. Pupils arrive punctually. They move quickly between lessons so that maximum use is made of time throughout the school day. All these factors contribute to pupils' learning.

Sixth form

29. The attitudes of students are very good. Students transferring from Year 11 and those joining from other secondary schools soon adapt to the sixth form's high expectations. Students demonstrate a conscientious and hardworking approach during lessons, when undertaking personal study or research, and with work undertaken at home. They respond well to opportunities to engage in discussions and to ask searching questions arising from the coursework. Students produce work in a timely manner and try as hard as possible to meet performance targets, in close co-operation with their subject tutors.
30. The provision for students' personal development and relationships is very good. Students adopt a confident and well-motivated approach that sets a very good example to the rest of the school. Students enjoy opportunities to take on a range of responsibilities with the head boy and girl providing a very effective link between senior managers and the sixth form. The sixth form prefects have a prominent role, including the supervision of preset work in Years 7 to 11 classes during the early morning tutor period each Wednesday. Students' views are taken into account through the school and

sixth form councils. Each Year 12 student is linked with a Year 7 pupil under a very successful 'buddy' scheme. This arrangement is extremely popular and enables the younger pupil to gain from the knowledge, experience and advice of the student. As part of the community service programme, students provide a mentoring service to 40, Year 9 pupils from the nearby Langleywood Secondary School. Students enjoy organising social functions and enthusiastically support activities to raise funds for charities. Relationships between students, staff and with younger pupils are very good.

31. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students make very effective use of non-lesson time. Such factors have a positive impact on the standards achieved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

32. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Year 11. No teaching was observed in Year 10 because of internal examinations during the inspection week. There is much teaching that is of an outstanding quality. Teaching has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. In this inspection, two out of three lessons in Years 7 to 9 were judged to be good or better, while this proportion rises to nearly four out of five judged good or better in Year 11. Around one lesson in three was very good or excellent. However, a very small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching remains, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
33. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good. In science teaching is good. Characteristics of the teaching in all three subjects are the good relationships between pupils and teachers, and the teachers' own subject knowledge and understanding, which enable them to explain things with clarity and confidence. In both mathematics and science, the quality of teaching is not so consistently effective in Years 7 to 9. This is largely because of two factors. The work does not build successfully on work achieved in primary schools, and the planning of work does not always match the learning needs of individual pupils in the class.
34. In other subjects, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and very good in some subjects. Teaching in all years is very good in home economics, ICT, history and RE. When teaching is good, expectations are high, probing questions seek to make the pupils think more deeply and consider issues more widely, activities are planned to stimulate and involve the pupils actively and there is pace and rigour in the learning. Where teaching is less effective, it is usually because the teaching fails to allow pupils to take responsibility for their learning, either through making their own notes or for seeking to solve problems independently and without an over-reliance on the teacher.
35. The teaching of literacy is very good. There is a commitment from all teachers to address literacy issues in their teaching and marking. In PE, for example, teachers spend time explaining new terms and, as a result, pupils have a very good command of the technical language of the subject. Such good practice was also seen in science, where attention is given to note taking and the accurate recording of experimental findings. Teachers regularly encourage speaking and listening skills through the effective use of questions and an insistence that pupils give extended responses. Reading is also encouraged widely. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write for different purposes, and are given effective support in structuring and expressing their ideas in subjects such as history and geography. In a few lessons key vocabulary and concepts are not discussed and reinforced sufficiently and teachers do not engage pupils, particularly those with EAL, to ensure that they have fully understood.
36. The teaching of numeracy is also very good. Teachers have adopted common approaches to methods of calculation, and in science, geography and design and technology pupils are consolidating their skills and learning to apply them in different contexts.
37. It is the high expectations of what pupils can achieve that characterises the most effective teaching. In one excellent Year 7 English lesson on myths and legends, the pupils responded confidently to the teacher's high levels of challenge and expectation. Using 'Beowulf' as their starting point, the pupils made excellent progress and produced exciting and imaginative work. The pupils' own evaluations of each other's work were skilfully used to extend the learning by the teacher. Pupils worked avidly in groups demonstrating high levels of concentration and an ability to work collaboratively. Pupils'

comments on each other's translations were expressed with clarity and insight. Pupils responded to the teacher's high expectations and clearly relished the challenge.

38. The teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding lead to assured and confident teaching. Teachers have a good understanding of connections and progression in their subject, and they quickly understand pupils' perceptions and misconceptions from their questions and responses. In one excellent food studies lesson in Year 8, the pupils were designing products for commercial production. Using ICT to analyse the nutritional content of the dishes they had planned, pupils made excellent progress. It was the teacher's skilled explanations and questions that enabled the pupils to apply the diet analysis software effectively. An excellent summary of the learning ensured that progress was consolidated.
39. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to ensure excellent attitudes. Typical of the friendly and respectful relationships observed was a Year 11 history lesson on post war superpower relationships. The teacher's high expectations, effective questioning and high levels of care for all pupils ensuring that they were all involved, led to excellent progress. Above all, it was the good quality of relationships between teacher and the pupils that enabled the learning to proceed in a challenging, but relaxed atmosphere.
40. Planning of lessons is very good and is usually effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. Teachers take considerable care in ensuring that work is planned at an appropriate level of challenge. In some mathematics, science and modern foreign language classes in Years 7 and 8 the planning is less effective in meeting the needs of the sometimes quite wide spread of prior attainment in the class. However, in most lessons, planning is characterised by clear learning intentions shared with the class, and appropriately chosen tasks.
41. The use of assessment to plan work that builds on prior learning is usually very good. Marking of work by most teachers is thorough and comprehensive, and teachers' comments are often supportive and encouraging, without missing opportunities for challenging the pupils to improve. Much of the marking in English, science, geography, ICT and music is exemplary. However, the quality in some other subjects is more variable, and in some cases, marking fails to give the pupils clear signals as to how to improve. In a few cases, comments made are insensitive and demoralising, particularly for pupils struggling to keep up. The pupils' knowledge of their own progress is very good, although better in Year 11 than in earlier years. As they move through the school, pupils increasingly know the level at which they are working and the target for which they are aiming.
42. Generally where teaching is effective because pupils' differing needs are being met the teaching of pupils with EAL is also effective. In English lessons pupils with language difficulties are identified and taught in small groups in Years 7 and 8 to boost their progress. There are examples of good practice in RE lessons where pupils with EAL are seen as experts in aspects of their community, languages and cultures. They are encouraged to collaborate in planned, ethnically diverse groups and to present their knowledge and experience to others.
43. Where teaching and learning are less effective teachers are not giving enough consideration to the needs of developing bilingual learners. While most teachers offer very good guidance on how to structure different types of writing, others do not, and at these times, pupils with EAL in particular, sometimes have difficulty.
44. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in terms of the organisation of their learning and additional help with homework. Where teachers do not plan to meet differing needs, pupils learn less effectively. Each pupil has an individual education plan, but some of these are not specific enough about the pupils' language needs and possible action.
45. Homework is set regularly and used effectively to consolidate learning. The setting of homework in English and science is particularly effective. In other subjects, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage pupils to develop research and enquiry skills independently of the teacher. Even in English, opportunities for pupils to question each other and develop ideas of their own are sometimes missed.

Inspectors found little evidence to support the small minority of parents who felt that their child did not get the right amount of work to do at home.

46. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT to support learning. Most are now incorporating ICT into their teaching. Some good use of computers was observed in geography, but in other subjects there are problems of access and use, which are restricting the potential from being realised.
47. The quality of learning in lessons and the rate at which the pupils progress are very good. The overwhelming majority of lessons are characterised by positive approaches to learning and the good behaviour of the pupils. In general, pupils work and try hard, concentrating and listening well.

Sixth form

48. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. During the inspection over nine out of ten lessons were judged to be good and nearly one half were very good or excellent. Less than two per cent were judged less than satisfactory. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was judged good in English, biology, ICT, French, art and design and PE; it was very good in mathematics, food studies, geography, religious studies, business studies and psychology.
49. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, which enable them to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions that challenge the students' thinking, and plan lessons and schemes of work that successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way. Expectations of what students can achieve are high. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level was characteristic of the teaching observed in most subjects and is a key factor in students' good achievement.
50. In an excellent Year 12 mathematics lesson the teacher's subject confidence was demonstrated not only in his detailed questioning of the students' understanding, but also in the stimulating and exciting links made with the practical application of the topic. An interesting digression into Zeno's paradox further enhanced the vitality of the learning.
51. Similarly effective questioning skills were observed in another excellent lesson. In a Year 13 food studies lesson, the students were using ICT to search a database. The teacher's very high expectations and probing questions challenged the students' thinking, leading to high levels of concentrated research and very high standards of work.
52. Teachers often link their very good subject knowledge with a detailed knowledge of the examination grade criteria. This leads to well-focused teaching and a confident approach to the examination by the students. In a very good Year 13 geography lesson on the factors contributing to the growth of recreation and tourism, excellent relationships with the group encouraged high levels of active participation in the learning. The teacher's expectations were high, and questions, mainly open-ended, were used to provoke deeper thinking and greater application. The lesson was both stimulating and demanding leading to very good progress.
53. Students are generous with their praise for the quality of most of the teaching. Four out of five students responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they were taught well and challenged to do their best. In discussion, students reported how much they value the time given by teachers in supporting them when they had difficulties. Teachers will go out of their way to advise and support individual students. However, they are not uncritical, particularly when they feel that the standards of teaching are not consistently good.
54. The teaching of key skills is very good. In one lesson observed, students learned how to conduct a formal meeting, turn notes into minutes and explore the vocabulary used. All were able to produce high quality, word-processed minutes. Students said that they found the key skills course very valuable.
55. Marking in a number of subjects is detailed and thorough, pinpointing areas for improvement. The marking in mathematics, biology, business studies, ICT, geography, and psychology is often a model of good practice. Comments are developmental and challenge the students to justify and exemplify their

opinions. This process, alongside the ongoing assessment during lessons and the discussions and feedback held regularly with each student, enables them to have a very good sense of their own progress. Encouraging comments build confidence and self-esteem. However, not all subjects mark the students' work with the same level of care and attention to detail. In sports studies, although marking is satisfactory, the quality varies. Students reported to inspectors that they did not always feel well informed about their progress or that their work was always thoroughly assessed in order to see how it might be improved.

56. It is the variability in the quality of teaching that is the key issue for further improvement of standards in the sixth form. Very high standards observed in much of the teaching were not always matched by similarly very high standards elsewhere, sometimes even between teachers of the same subject. This is particularly the case in English, but is also evident in some other subjects. Although the school has done much to raise the quality of both teaching and learning, there is more to be done to ensure that best practice is shared.
57. Many teachers adopt effective strategies to promote students' independent learning and perseverance in solving problems and overcoming difficulties themselves. In biology and sports studies in particular, teachers adopt good strategies to encourage students themselves to take responsibility for managing their own learning. Students are encouraged to develop ideas of their own and to research and investigate work independently of the teacher.
58. Not all subjects are as effective in promoting these skills. In food studies, psychology and English, for example, students are sometimes over-dependent on a high level of teacher support and structure. At times there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct the learning, and not allow students to pursue their own thinking and ideas. Where notes are dictated, the students' learning is often passive. Establishing a balance between directed and active learning by the students remains a challenge for some sixth form teachers.
59. In discussion with the students themselves, it was clear that they have a mature and sensible view of what makes for effective teaching. They reported that one of the key factors in the most successful teaching was the fact that the teacher made the learning relevant to everyday events and to contemporary issues. Students were led to understand the real life application of their learning. In this respect, teaching in mathematics, food studies, ICT, business studies and sports studies was judged to be successful.
60. Other students indicated that teaching that encouraged active learning was most helpful, and that too much note taking was considered dull. Some students reported that they find the teachers intimidating and are afraid to ask questions. Students also reported that lessons in which their own views and ideas were valued were effective.
61. A key factor in the very good progress made by most students is their very good attitudes. They respond very positively to the teaching. Although some lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a very committed and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. Many take a pragmatic approach, seeing the acquiring of good grades as a passport to future success. This enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on the progress they make.
62. Students' learning skills are good. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. Much work is undertaken independently of the teachers, and in general, students' skills in self-study and research are good.

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

63. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good overall. The school provides a broad and sensibly balanced curriculum that meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of most pupils. Concerns at the last inspection about the range of activities available to boys in physical education in Years 7 to 9 have been addressed. Sport is given extra time as a counterbalance in the curriculum and pupils benefit from opportunities in expressive arts subjects such as drama, which is offered as a subject in its own right. There is interesting and effective collaborative work between art, music and drama and cross-curricular initiatives; for example, between history and drama. Timetable arrangements enable all pupils in Years 7 to 9 to experience units of work in music, resistant materials, food technology and textiles, but not on a continuous, regular basis.
64. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are given very effective guidance on subject and examination options and virtually all follow the courses of their choice. Disapplication from design and technology allows pupils to specialise in an area of strength. Information and communication technology is effectively co-ordinated and taught in most subjects, and is monitored by departmental audit and pupil tracker booklets. Work experience is well planned and offered as part of the Year 11 curriculum. Pupils' interests and views on the curriculum are taken into account through pupil evaluations in different subjects and through year and school councils. As a result, the curriculum is very responsive to pupils' needs.
65. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Support for pupils with sensory impairment and support for those with behavioural difficulties is good or better. There is effective early identification when pupils enter the school and they are given good support within the curriculum and with homework. Their progress is monitored and regularly reviewed and most make good progress spending a relatively short amount of time on the special educational needs register. Each has an individual education plan to which subject teachers contribute. However, the majority of pupils identified currently as having special educational needs speak English as an additional language and have quite specific linguistic needs that are not being clearly enough diagnosed or met.
66. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. The majority of these pupils make very good progress, but there are a very small number of pupils whose language needs are not being fully met. There is no clear policy or guidance on supporting bilingual learners and recent whole-school literacy training has not been combined with training on the teaching and learning of pupils with EAL. Consequently, there are a few pupils who have continuing difficulties with spelling, vocabulary, sentence construction and adapting their writing for different purposes. They are not receiving consistent and effective support across all subjects.
67. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, and is a priority in the school's improvement plan. A working party has drawn up a whole-school policy that gives guidance on the identification of pupils, the monitoring of their progress, strategies and sample lessons. These strategies are due to be implemented in the summer term of 2003. Pupils already benefit from early entry in GCSE examinations and extra-curricular opportunities.
68. Strategies for the teaching of both literacy and numeracy are very effective. Pupils enter the school with good levels of literacy, but improve further because of the school's very good provision. Subject areas have taken account of the school's literacy policy when developing their schemes of work. The school has organised training for all staff on developing literacy skills and this will be ongoing. The strategy is well led and effectively overseen by the head of the English department who has done much to raise the profile of literacy throughout the school.
69. The school has established a comprehensive policy for teaching numeracy across the curriculum, which is beginning to raise awareness in different subjects. Members of the mathematics department provide useful guidance on standard methods of calculation so that the pupils meet similar methods in areas of the curriculum outside mathematics.
70. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The school places a very high priority on this programme, which is delivered by skilled staff with help from specialist external advisers.

The overall impact contributes significantly to pupils' personal development including areas such as relationships, health and safety, and study skills. Provision for sex and drugs education meets statutory requirements. Implementation of the relatively new requirements relating to citizenship is less strong as there are weaknesses in the coverage of the curriculum aspects by subject departments. Planning for the teaching of citizenship is not yet incorporated in all subjects' schemes of work. As a result, there is less awareness of the citizenship curriculum amongst pupils.

71. The arrangements for careers education are very good. This service is provided by the school's specialist staff and on a part-time basis by a careers consultant. Pupils in Year 9 receive detailed guidance about GCSE course options. Year 11 pupils are carefully prepared for a week's work experience. The provision for advice about employment and opportunities in higher and further education includes extensive library and information and communication technology resources. The school has received an Enhanced Quality Award in recognition of the work in careers education.
72. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities and pupil participation is high. Within school there are wide opportunities for involvement in sport, music, drama, art, modern foreign languages, science, technology, house competitions, and computers. Pupils are able to participate in exhibitions, the Young Enterprise Scheme, drama productions, concerts and workshops with outside groups and specialists coming into school. Outside school there are opportunities for trips and residential visits, conferences for pupils, inter-school competitions and sports matches, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and concerts in such venues as St George's Chapel, Windsor.
73. The school's links with the community make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Many local businesses and specialist groups support work in curriculum areas such as science, music and the arts. Many employers are very co-operative in providing opportunities for work experience. There are helpful links with representatives of local faiths and charitable organisations. Businesses are providing financial support to help to fund the school's bid for specialist college status in mathematics and information and communication technology.
74. There are very good links with partner institutions. The school works very closely with the feeder primary schools regarding the induction of pupils into Year 7. The four grammar schools in Slough have an effective working partnership, whilst helpful support is provided to the Langleywood Secondary School. Contacts with Educational Business Partnerships, the Young Enterprise Scheme, career specialists and the education authority's advisers enhance learning opportunities.
75. The school provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the previous inspection, and is very good overall. Its provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school creates a secure ethos, in which pupils from different faiths can grow together in the search for personal identity, purpose and meaning. They can celebrate and share the distinctive insights of their own religious traditions into the spiritual, and their personal experience of them, because they know that their teachers and peers will value and respect their contributions.
76. Year assemblies have very good religious and spiritual content, and celebrate the teachings and festivals of Christianity and the other major faiths of the school community. The school fails to meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship because of missed opportunities in tutor time.
77. A number of subjects do much to promote pupils' spiritual development in lessons. Religious education makes an excellent contribution, challenging pupils to explore, evaluate and make a personal response to the spiritual insights of the major world faiths. History challenges pupils with the transcendental world-view of medieval man. Geography confronts them with the power and mystery of the physical universe through the study of natural phenomena and disasters. Art and design uses the beauty of the natural world as a stimulus for creative work.
78. The school makes excellent provision for the moral development of pupils. It has clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, that inform all aspects of its daily life and work. It has clear behaviour, anti-bullying and anti-racist policies, and effective strategies for encouraging moral behaviour. Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils. Pupils know right from wrong, and can exercise self-

discipline. Their behaviour is excellent, and they enjoy excellent relationships with each other and their teachers.

79. Pupils give practical expression to the values of caring in very good support for a wide range of charities. A very well planned personal, social and health education programme gives pupils very good opportunities to explore a wide range of ethical issues, including those relating to health, substance abuse, prejudice and relationships, in a clear moral framework. Pupils are challenged with moral issues in a wide range of other subjects in the classroom. For example, religious education explores the ethical issues surrounding the concept of the sanctity of life, history the morality of war, and geography, environmental ethics.
80. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. It does much to raise pupils' sense of self-esteem through celebration of their achievements in all areas of its life; for example, through the very well planned merits system, assemblies and prize days. There is a culture of praise. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills, through the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, sports clubs and teams, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, field trips, and educational and recreational visits at home and abroad.
81. Most subjects provide pupils with very good opportunities for developing the skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups. The school affords pupils sound opportunities to learn to take responsibility and show initiative; for example, as form captains, and through the year and school councils. Older pupils feel, however, that their voice does not carry sufficient weight on the school council, and would welcome more opportunities for taking responsibility in the school's daily life and work.
82. Social issues are very well addressed through the PSHE programme, and in a number of other subjects in the classroom. For example, religious education explores rites of passage in different cultures, history gender issues, and the civil rights movement in the USA, and geography, the social factors behind population migration.
83. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. It affords pupils excellent opportunities for developing skills in the creative and expressive arts. Pupils can develop skills in instrumental and choral music, drama and dance. They learn performance skills through regular productions and concerts both within school and at public venues.
84. The school promotes pupils' awareness of their own cultural heritage through an extensive programme of visits to theatres, museums and galleries. It develops their appreciation of other European cultures through a wide range of study and recreational visits abroad, such as art visits to Paris and Barcelona, and history visits to the battlefields of France and Belgium.
85. The school does more than at the previous inspection to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of 21st century civilisation, and their appreciation of the multicultural richness and diversity of contemporary British society. Assemblies have multicultural themes. A number of subjects have a strong multicultural dimension. For example, religious education introduces pupils to the cultural traditions of the major world faiths. Geography celebrates cultural diversity. Art and music host a three-day multicultural event for Year 8 pupils.

Sixth form

86. The quality and range of opportunities for learning in the sixth form are very good. A good range of AS and A2 options is available and virtually all students can follow the courses of their choice. In addition to the more common subjects, business studies, ethics, psychology, philosophy and sociology are also available.
87. All students are offered a core of physical education and general studies, which ensures that all students are given experience of citizenship, religious education, personal and social education, an

introduction to higher education and key skills elements. In addition, key skills are taught as a separate course for those students needing to enhance particular skills in association with AS and A2 courses.

88. Students with English as an additional language achieve very well in the sixth form, but the school is anxious to ensure that all students reach their full potential. The school has received a grant from the Learning Skills Council to compare the achievement and possible learning needs of students with EAL and other students.
89. The vast majority of the students in the sixth form have more than adequate skills in the use of number, communication and information technology to deal with the demands of their A-level courses. Subject teachers help students to develop skills further where these are required; for instance, in English, mathematics or science. The school also provides a well-planned key skills course for students in Year 12 for whom skills are not sufficiently developed for their needs. The many contacts with higher and further education establishments help Year 13 students to make informed choices about future study.
90. The school makes very good provision overall for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It makes very good provision for students' spiritual development, through their participation in the spiritual ethos and life of the main school, enriched by their own assemblies. The core general studies programme provides them with very good opportunities to explore questions of belief and meaning.
91. The school makes excellent provision for students' moral development, well evidenced in their excellent conduct, and the mature and harmonious relationships they enjoy with their teachers and peers. They are excellent role models for main school pupils. A number of subjects provide students with excellent opportunities to explore moral questions; for example, through the study of applied ethics in religious studies, medical ethics in science, business ethics in business studies and relationships in English.
92. The school makes excellent provision for students' social development. It provides them with excellent opportunities to learn to show initiative, take responsibility and exercise leadership skills, both within the sixth form, and in work with main school students. Senior students take responsibility for running the sixth form centre. They organise their own accounts, the Young Enterprise Scheme, and charitable and social events. The elected prefects help with the organisation and supervision of main school forms, House activities, assemblies and the careers room. Year 12 students mentor Year 7 pupils. Students help with games and sports practices. Some work with local primary school pupils, and with children in a special school.
93. The school's provision for students' cultural development is very good. Students benefit from, and often take the lead in, the main school's provision for the creative and expressive arts. This provision is enhanced by dedicated subject activities; for example, visits to the Royal Shakespeare's Company productions, European visits and conferences, such as on genetics in science.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

94. Very good provision is made for pupils' support, guidance and welfare. The successful class tutor system enables each pupil to have ready access to advice about academic and personal issues. Tutors are well trained and highly committed to the role. Heads of year and heads of school ensure that high quality pastoral support is provided on a consistent basis throughout the school. They also deal effectively with any special difficulties that arise. Concerns mentioned in the previous report about an inconsistent approach by year tutors no longer apply.
95. A strong emphasis is placed on health and safety issues. Buildings and equipment are regularly inspected and risk assessments undertaken. The governors receive a full report on such matters. Health education is provided through the well-planned curriculum programmes. The school has recently received a 'Healthy School Award' for successful work in this area. The last report referred to a shortage of staff holding first aid qualifications, but this position has since been rectified. Illness and accidents are normally dealt with by the welfare office. As this accommodation is small and sparsely furnished there is a need for better treatment facilities. The school is unable to provide access facilities for children with physical disabilities. Consultations about this are taking place with the education authority

arising from recent legislative requirements. Appropriate arrangements are in place for dealing with child protection, including effective staff training.

96. The procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour are very good. The school's expectations are set out in the code of conduct, school rules and the detailed policy documents. There is a strong emphasis on rewarding good behaviour by celebrating success through praise, the merit system for Years 7 to 9 and prize giving. Sanctions for misbehaviour, including bullying, are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner through the tutor system. This helps to ensure that the number of serious incidents that arise are kept to a very low level.
97. Very good arrangements are made for promoting high levels of attendance and punctuality. Attendance registers are well maintained and helpful systems are in place to follow up the few unexplained absences. The school works closely with the education welfare officer in connection with the isolated cases when concerns about attendance arise. Attendance records are shortly to be transferred to a computerised system. This aims to improve efficiency and provide more timely and relevant data for the pastoral staff who undertake the monitoring work.
98. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Form tutors carefully monitor the individual performance of each pupil and encourage them to discuss any personal concerns or worries. Pupils are extremely pleased with the support they receive. They feel confident that any problems are handled in a sympathetic and confidential manner. Helpful information on their child's personal development is provided to parents at consultation meetings and in the written reports.
99. The school's support and guidance for special educational needs pupils is well intentioned. Although information received from the large number of primary schools varies, early identification of special educational needs pupils is effective and their progress is monitored and reviewed regularly. However, the school needs to make a clearer distinction between pupils who speak English as an additional language and who have specific language needs and pupils with other learning needs. At present the individual education plans and pupil targets are not specific enough about language needs, or on suggested strategies and resources that teachers could adopt across subjects.
100. The school's procedures for assessing attainment in Years 7 to 11 is very good, and is now seeking to streamline its use of information technology to process the assessment data. Standardised test scores are used as a basis for initial target setting and for monitoring progress towards the targets. The resultant monitoring in Years 7 to 9 is by tutor group, gender and ethnicity and enables the revision of targets based on continuing performance and the speedy identification of underperformance. Reporting in Years 7 to 9 is in National Curriculum Levels to each subject's attainment targets. The setting of targets in Years 10 and 11 is now based on the same initial tests.
101. The use of assessment to inform planning and to effect curriculum development is good. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of assessment data to set targets, and pupils are clear about their progress. In most subjects, effective use of assessment is made to plan for the next learning step.

Sixth form

Assessment

102. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. There is clear understanding of the performance of individual students, and value added procedures are used to predict performance based on GCSE scores. Self-assessment is a feature of tutorial activity in Years 12 and 13, with students reviewing their work critically, calculating their points potential and comparing it with their current progress.
103. The use of assessment data by different subjects to guide and inform curriculum planning is good, although in some subjects there are different systems in use. However, procedures are effectively supporting pupils' achievements by providing them with a clear picture of how well they are attaining and what they need to do to improve.

Advice, support and guidance

104. Very good arrangements are in place for ensuring pupils' welfare and guidance. The comprehensive sixth form prospectus and the detailed advice about the suitability of the sixth form courses are particularly helpful. Pupils have daily contact with the teacher in charge of their tutor group who provides a supportive and understanding approach to any pastoral concerns. There are very good systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. The school operates effective health and safety procedures.
105. Good quality information and guidance are provided to pupils about progress in their coursework. These include frequent discussions with subject tutors as well as in more formal assessments undertaken as part of the twice-yearly performance reviews. Each pupil maintains a sixth form record book that includes details about the learning programme, targets for performance and estimated examination grades.
106. The quality of careers advice and support for applications for higher education is very good. Students receive comprehensive advice about employment opportunities, and extensive information is provided for those wishing to consider continuing their education at colleges or universities. This includes guidance on completing application forms and ready access to the comprehensive information available in the library and on the computer. Individual interviews with advisers place special emphasis on each pupil's aspirations and abilities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

107. Parents are very pleased with the school. The school has the confidence of the community it serves. Parents state that their children like school, are expected to work hard and that behaviour is good. They feel that children make good progress because of the quality of teaching. Parents consider that the school is well led and managed. They feel that pupils are helped to become more mature and responsible. About one fifth of parents responding to the questionnaire express concerns about information on their child's progress, insufficient activities outside lessons and feel the school does not work closely enough with parents.
108. Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive views. Inspection evidence is that very good information is provided to parents about pupils' progress at consultation meetings and in the annual written reports. There are many opportunities to pursue special interests outside lessons including school clubs and educational visits in this country and Europe. The school wishes to develop the partnership arrangements with parents and is seeking parents' views on how this can be achieved.
109. High quality information is given to parents. Special meetings are held to advise parents about induction into Year 7, subject option choices in Year 9, sixth form courses, careers and opportunities for pupils in further and higher education. Helpful newsletters are sent to parents about school events and activities. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report contain relevant and helpful information about the school and its achievements. There is, however, a need for the information on examination results to include the latest national comparative data and full details on the school's targets to the end of Year 9. The annual written reports and the mid-year pastoral reports are of a high quality. They provide extensive information about progress in all subjects, targets for improvement and comments on the pupil's personal development.
110. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is very good. They show a keen interest in their child's performance. Attendance at consultation evenings, school concerts and other special events are usually very high. Parents' interest in progress is reflected in the full co-operation they provide by monitoring homework through the diary system. The parents' association organises a full programme of fund-raising events. Proceeds are used to provide amenities and support the school's work. The most recent decision was to donate £10,000 to help to finance the school's application for specialist college status. Individual parents also donated £5,000.
111. Communication between the school and parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. Parents are informed when pupils are put on the register and are encouraged to share concerns. Individual education plans are shared with parents.

112. Students have positive views and enjoy the life of the sixth form. They are very impressed with the information and advice given about sixth form courses. Pupils praise the very good quality of teaching and the support for independent study and research. Advice on careers and higher education opportunities is regarded as particularly helpful. Some students would like more involvement in activities outside the main subject courses. Others feel that insufficient space is available in school for private study and research. Inspectors endorse the positive views expressed by pupils. They consider that the community programme and the many social events provide a reasonable range of activities outside coursework.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

113. Leadership and management are very good overall. The school aims to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential and achieve high standards within an academic and friendly environment that stimulates and challenges them. These aims provide a touchstone for the school's ethos and purpose and are very well met. In addition, there are high expectations of what pupils can achieve and a strong commitment to improve further.
114. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. Since her arrival two years prior to the inspection, she has been driving the school forward with both energy and humanity. She has inspired the loyalty and commitment of the whole staff, and leads with a clear sense of purpose and direction. She has the committed support of both governors and her senior staff and her vision is widely shared.
115. The senior management team are an experienced, thoughtful and committed group who work well together, providing a strong core of good management practice. Their pragmatic approach to getting things done works well. The school, consequently, operates smoothly and efficiently. Individual members of the senior team are reflective and analytical, confident in their roles and responsibilities. They work effectively together, continually evaluating the school's practice and seeking ways to secure further improvements. They are strongly supportive of staff, but prepared to tackle weaknesses where necessary.
116. The headteacher has done much to promote a more open and consultative management style. Consultation and decision making are now transparent, and all views are valued. The senior team is now empowered to think strategically, while middle managers are held to account for the work of their teams. Management practice, criticised at the time of the last inspection, is now much more rigorous and is focused on the regular monitoring of systems and procedures.
117. Most heads of faculty, subject leaders and heads of year are providing effective leadership of their teams, working hard to maintain high standards and secure improvements in teaching and learning. They work conscientiously and have a good grasp of their responsibilities. The monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out by both senior staff and heads of subject. Performance management has been introduced effectively and in a non-threatening manner. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic or focused on providing clear evaluation of what works and what is less effective. As a consequence, the procedures for spreading best practice are not well established. This is an increasingly reflective school in which all members of the school community are involved in monitoring and reviewing practice and seeking ways to improve standards. However, if the school is to be more confident in its approach to self-evaluation, all managers should be involved in a systematic way in monitoring the work of their teams, of spreading best practice and in taking action to address weaknesses.
118. Line management systems are clear, but meetings are not regular. Some do not take place formally at all. As the school has expanded in recent years the need for more formal management systems has become more pressing. Middle managers reported that they would welcome a more formal structure to their meetings with senior staff, as they provide useful opportunities to raise issues and to review the work of teams.
119. The school makes an impressive commitment to educational inclusion. The school accommodates excluded pupils from other schools and provides facilities for them to study. The school does much to

encourage tolerance of its multicultural and multifaith communities. Muslims have a quiet room for prayer, and support is given to both Muslims during Ramadan and Sikhs during Divali. The equal opportunities and racial equality policy is reviewed annually by governors.

120. However, the school has no policy on teaching English as an additional language and no guidance on meeting the needs of bilingual or multilingual learners. There is an effective literacy policy and all teachers have received in-service training on the use of literacy across the curriculum, but the opportunity has not yet been taken to combine these differing aspects of language learning and use. Consequently, understanding and practice are inconsistent.
121. Management of the provision for the very few pupils with special educational needs is good. There is a clear special educational needs policy and all teachers understand the systems for identification and referral of pupils. All teachers have received in-service training in the new Code of Practice, as have governors. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises well with class teachers, pastoral heads of year and appropriate agencies. The special educational needs governor is well informed and is aware of the access difficulties there would be for any pupil with physical disabilities, although so far this problem has not arisen. There has been improvement since the last inspection because the school does now meet the requirements of the Code of Practice.
122. The school improvement plan is a one-year plan in which agreed whole-school priorities are set within the context of the school aims. Targets are grouped within whole-school plans as well as individual subject plans. All plans are clear about who is responsible, the target date, resources needed and the success criteria. The process, criticised at the time of the last inspection, is now much more coherent and is based on a thorough review of last year's plan alongside an audit of current needs and consultation with the whole school. The plan addresses important priorities. Governors are involved in school improvement planning through their committees. Overall, the improvement planning process is sharply focused and provides a good framework for improving standards.
123. The governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. The Chair of Governors has a good knowledge of the school and is involved in both strategic planning and monitoring. Governors' contributions are both thoughtful and effective. They are kept well informed, and comprehensive performance and financial data are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions. They are consulted on strategic and school improvement planning, and are increasingly confident in their monitoring role. Statutory requirements are largely met, although requirements in respect of collective worship are not fully met.
124. The school's budget is very well managed. An experienced financial manager has an assured grasp of financial procedures and budget planning. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. Budget priorities are made in the light of the school's educational priorities, and best value principles are applied wherever possible. The school, for example, tenders grounds maintenance contracts, consults stakeholders about major spending decisions, such as the proposed selling of some of the sports fields to pay for new building work, and challenges current spending on energy suppliers. The budget is subject to an annual audit by external auditors and the last audit dated judged the financial systems and controls to be secure. The school is efficiently administered and it makes good use of information systems to process data, ensuring that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the school effectively.
125. There is a good match of staff to suit the demands of the curriculum with all teachers being well-qualified subject specialists. Technicians are well deployed across subjects, but there is not enough support in ICT and science in particular. The induction programme is very good and supports teachers in training and those new to the school very well. Strategies are very good for the continuing professional development of all staff, including support staff, and training needs are met wherever possible.
126. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Impressive features include the modern design and technology facilities, the purpose-built drama studio, the well-equipped library and the very large playing field. Space constraints and the location of available rooms cause difficulties in some subject areas. For instance, in science certain lessons take place some distance away from the laboratories and equipment storage facilities. In music, several lessons have to take place outside the music studio and

noise disturbs pupils' concentration in nearby rooms. The gymnasium is small for the total number of pupils now in school, and the changing facilities are inadequate. The accommodation for the administrative staff is tight and there are pressures on space for private study. The buildings are generally well maintained and cleaned, although one science laboratory is in need of refurbishment. The school has recently submitted an application for planning consent for substantial extensions and improvements to the buildings.

127. Resources for learning are good overall and have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Although the amount spent on resources, in proportion to the number of pupils, is above average the school has made improvements to its provision since the last inspection. For instance, the investment in information technology has enabled the broadening of the curriculum and most subject departments use computers to enhance learning. The interactive white boards are employed particularly well in science, geography, design and technology and ICT where they enliven lessons by drawing powerful visual resources together. New developments such as the wireless network of portable computers in science, are just beginning to have an impact. Some subjects, such as business studies, music, RE and modern foreign languages, still find access to computers difficult, however, further investment in information technology is planned. Other resources, such as books, are good in physical education and English. However, despite improvements since the last inspection, there are still not enough textbooks in RE and geography. In music the narrow range of musical instruments is limiting learning.
128. The library is a very good resource, always very busy, and very well run and maintained. Books are up to date and the number is average for a school of this size. A wide range of newspapers and magazines is available. The library is used extensively as a teaching resource affecting the opportunities sixth-formers have for private study. The computer network in the library is used extensively for homework and research. In one lunchtime during the inspection, every workstation was occupied by Year 9 pupils exploring careers options! Books and resources that reflect the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the pupils are less evident.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The headteacher offers a clear sense of direction and purpose to the whole school and takes an active part in ensuring that the sixth form provision is coherent and adds value to other aspects of the school's activities. Management of the sixth form is the responsibility of the head of sixth who brings a conscientious and committed approach to her role. Systems are well organised and thorough. The head of sixth attends meetings of the senior management team when appropriate, and is effectively involved at a senior level in the school's management. She is careful to ensure that students in the sixth form act as excellent role models for younger students. The success of the sixth form contributes to the very strong school ethos of hard work and achievement. Students in the sixth form are treated differently from their younger contemporaries. They have both more responsibility and more freedom, yet the sixth form is very much connected to and integral to the success and good reputation of the school.
130. The sixth form aims to promote both academic excellence and personal development. These aims are understood by all, and expectations are high. Students are expected to make a positive contribution to the school community and take part in a range of activities outside the academic curriculum. Students spend time acting as 'buddies' to Year 7 pupils. A number of Year 12 students are elected as prefects to help in the organisation of the school. A number of sixth form students have been trained to act as learning mentors for pupils at a neighbouring comprehensive school. This emphasis on taking responsibility and setting an example is readily accepted by students. The highly visible and successful presence of sixth form students contributes to the ethos and reputation of the school as a whole.
131. The school has been successful in attracting a high proportion of its Year 11 pupils to stay on into the sixth form, as well as recruiting a small number of students from other schools in the area. Around 80 per cent of Year 11 pupils stay on. Retention rates on courses are excellent with almost all students completing the courses that they started. The sixth form is now very well placed to sustain and build on its considerable successes.

132. The monitoring of examination results is thorough, reflecting the sharp focus on improving examination success. This is carried out by the headteacher and head of sixth, with each head of subject. The head of sixth is involved in following up issues that are raised. The monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching are less systematic, and opportunities for teachers to share best practice are not provided on a regular basis.
133. The governing body is well informed of the performance of the sixth form, although there is no single governor with responsibility for sixth form matters. Governors play an active role in contributing to the constant drive to raise standards of achievement still further.
134. The sixth form is cost effective and resources for the sixth form are well managed.

Resources

135. There are good staffing levels in the sixth form. Resources for learning are good and effectively used to enhance teaching and learning. All pupils have the books and equipment to meet their needs. Where there are shortages of books in the main school, the sixth form benefits from an appropriate supply. Sixth-formers can also use a computer when needed, as they can be accommodated in other lessons or in the library or key skills room.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

136. In order to maintain and further improve standards, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

1. improve the effectiveness with which teaching and learning are evaluated and best practice shared by:
 - embedding a more systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure a clear evaluation of what works and what is less effective;
 - introducing a more formal structure to line management meetings.(paragraphs 33, 34, 35, 40, 41, 43, 45, 117, 118)

2. improve the provision for citizenship by:
 - ensuring that citizenship is an entitlement for all pupils in Years 7 to 11, in all three of its elements: knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry and communication and skills of participation and responsible action;
 - ensuring that planning is included in the schemes of work of contributing subjects;
 - informing pupils how citizenship will be covered and assessed;
 - establishing procedures for reporting to parents and at the end of Year 9, on their attainment based on the end-of-key-stage description.(paragraphs 70, 172-177)

In addition to the key issues above, the following minor weaknesses should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the progress of a small number of pupils in science, French and art and design in Years 7 to 9.
- (paragraphs 3, 5 17, 18, 158, 166, 200)

Sixth form

1. improve the effectiveness with which teaching and learning are evaluated and best practice shared by:
 - embedding a more systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure a clear evaluation of what works and what is less effective;
 - introducing a more formal structure to line management meetings.(paragraphs 55, 56, 58, 60, 132)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	129
	Sixth form	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		83

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	12	34	44	32	4	0	0
Percentage	9.3	26.3	34.1	24.8	3.1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	4	26	29	4	0	1	0
Percentage	6.2	40.6	45.3	6.2	0	1.5	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 here as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	739	209
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	19	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	380

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	93	64	157

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	93	92
	Girls	64	63	63
	Total	155	156	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	99 (100)	99 (99)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	96 (95)	99 (100)	91 (93)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	93	79
	Girls	63	64	56
	Total	151	157	135
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	96 (98)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	69 (69)	99 (100)	93 (86)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	68	50	118

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	67	67
	Girls	48	50	50
	Total	111	117	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	94 (94)	99 (98)	99 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	61.5
	National	39.8

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	56	44	100

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	56	44	100
	Average point score per candidate	23.8	25.1	24.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	56	44	100	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	23.8	25.1	24.4	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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	336	3	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	18	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	21	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	416	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	35	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	39	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	9	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	18	0	0
Any other ethnic group	18	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	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: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.99
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	285

Deployment of teachers Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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Average teaching group size: Y7 - Y11

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	23.6

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,855,651
Total expenditure	2,931,354
Expenditure per student	3,250
Balance brought forward from previous year	253,248
Balance carried forward to next year	177,545

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	25.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.15
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	948
Number of questionnaires returned	459

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	50	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	55	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	54	10	3	2
The teaching is good.	37	56	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	52	17	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	45	12	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	52	19	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	41	50	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	52	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	48	14	4	10

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- The standards attained in national tests and examinations are very high.
- Pupils attain well because of the very good teaching that is rigorous and stimulating.
- Pupils' levels of achievement are very good because of their positive attitudes to the subject and their exemplary behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- The language needs of some of the pupils for whom English is an additional language are not being met.
- There are insufficient opportunities in lesson time for pupils to have access to computers to improve the quality of their work.

137. The proportion of pupils obtaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2002, GCSE English Language examinations was very high in comparison with national averages. The girls did better than the boys and attained particularly well at the top A*, A and B grades. Overall, however, the difference was similar to that seen nationally. The results represent very good achievement in terms of the progress made over the two years of the course. They were also an improvement on the standards attained at the previous inspection when attainment at the highest grades was below average when compared to other grammar schools. Pupils performed equally well in the English Literature examinations, attaining very high standards and making very good progress. Girls did extremely well at the highest A* and A grades, exceeding the performance of the boys by a greater margin than that seen nationally.
138. Attainment in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 was very high, as it had been over the previous three years. Such levels of achievement are very good and represent a significant improvement on the standards attained at the previous inspection. At that time just over one half the pupils in the year were attaining at above national expectations. Now nearly all do so and over one half reach Level 7 or above. There was no difference in the performance of boys and girls. The results overall, were similar to those obtained in mathematics and science.
139. Standards of work seen in both Years 9 and 11 are very high. The high standards of work seen during the course of the inspection reflect the high standards attained in national tests and examinations. Pupils make significant learning gains and their levels of achievement in the subject throughout the main school are very good, including those for whom English is an additional language. There has been an improvement since the previous inspection in the quality of the work of the most competent pupils and they also make very good progress.
140. The teaching of literacy in English and in other subjects is very good. Standards of writing are very high. Pupils are able to write in a range of styles for varied purposes and their extended writing is well organised, fluent and accurate. There are a small number of younger pupils who need help with basic literacy skills and their needs are being addressed in small classes where they receive more individual help. There are also a small number of pupils in all years for whom English is an additional language who have difficulties with sentence grammar and word constructions. The department is aware of this and is seeking ways to address the problem. By the end of Year 11 pupils' analytical skills are well developed and this is reflected in their work on the set texts. Pupils displayed an impressive knowledge and understanding of William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', for example, and could talk with sensitivity about the descent into savagery.
141. Pupils are able to make good use of computers for research purposes and to improve the quality of writing by drafting and revising work before presenting it in varied forms. Access to such

technology in school, however, is a problem for the department and so restricts the work teachers can do on developing pupils' computer skills.

142. Pupils have very good reading skills that are advanced beyond the levels expected nationally. They are quick to understand and can infer meaning from what they read. When reading aloud they do so fluently and with good expression, and they enjoy the challenge of the increasingly difficult range of texts they encounter. Standards of speaking and listening are also very high. Pupils have a good command of standard English and know when to use it. Virtually all pupils are confident and articulate speakers and can discuss a range of topics with perception and good regard for the opinions of others. Their moral and spiritual awareness is evident in the respect they show for the values and beliefs of others. The nature of the issues they encounter in their reading affords many opportunities for them to develop socially and culturally. Pupils have an understanding of basic drama techniques and use them well as an aid to learning. Their attitude to the subject is very good and their behaviour exemplary. The progress pupils make throughout the main school in developing the skills of reading, speaking and listening is, therefore, very good.
143. The standard of teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils learn well. All teachers have a secure command of their subject, and classes are managed to high standards of discipline. The lessons seen during the course of the inspection were well planned and sequenced and relevant homework was set at appropriate times. Marking is regular and supportive and clear guidance is given to pupils on how to improve the standard of their written work. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and present them with challenging work. This was the case in an enjoyable Year 7 lesson on Anglo-Saxon English where pupils were excited by the strangeness of the text and responded well to working with the origins of their language. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' understanding and they encourage them to reflect and comment on each other's work. They also vary their teaching approaches to maintain the pace and rigour of learning and to sustain interest. The teaching of 'Twelfth Night' to Year 9 pupils exemplified this because of the use of role play to give them insight into the complex relationships of the principal characters and the use of peer evaluation to extend their understanding of the text. Pupils also learn well because the teachers have established very good working relationships in the classroom. The one area for teachers to address in their work is their approach to stimulating the exchange of ideas and engaging pupils in whole-class discussion. Pupils are not asking enough questions of each other and the teacher and they do not take the initiative to advance their own views and challenge those of others.
144. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The newly appointed head of department has achieved a great deal in a short time. There is now greater consistency in teaching the curriculum because she has developed schemes of work for all teachers to use. Pupils' progress is monitored more rigorously with the introduction of assessments every term in place of the annual reviews. The recently developed self-assessment procedures mean that pupils take greater responsibility for evaluating their own progress. The monitoring of teaching has improved significantly because she visits her colleagues' lessons each term and provides written feedback on the quality of their work. She also monitors performance on a regular basis by sampling pupils' work. These developments are an improvement since the previous inspection. There has been a thorough review of the department's resources with dated material removed and more contemporary texts bought. The subject is now well resourced. Accommodation is good, but the lack of a departmental base creates administrative problems. Procedures for accountability to the senior management team do not operate effectively. The lines of communication and accountability need to be formalised and followed to ensure further improvement.
145. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The capacity of the department to improve on the already very good provision is dependent on the acceptance by all teachers of the need to build a more corporate approach to the work of the subject.

Drama

146. Standards in drama are very good. Attainment by Year 9 is well above average. All pupils are able to express emotions and character through gesture, posture and movement. In their journals they

are writing detailed, thoughtful evaluations of different performances showing a good understanding of a range of genres, traditions and techniques. Attainment in GCSE examinations is well above the national average. Achievement of both boys and girls is very good. There are no marked differences, and in Year 11 more boys than girls have chosen the subject. By Year 11 pupils' movement is well controlled, disciplined and very expressive. In a Year 11 lesson exploring the theme of misanthropy, all pupils worked purposefully and interpreted a musical stimulus very inventively. They demonstrate a high degree of creativity and support each other very well. Pupils' self-evaluation in their journals and in discussion is perceptive and articulate. A strong feature of their work is the variety and individuality of response evident in performances based on the same stimulus.

147. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from very good to excellent. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour, performance skills and research and evaluation. Pupils are encouraged to take risks, experiment and to enjoy lessons and they respond very positively to the challenge. The teacher gives very clear instructions and very effective demonstrations of technique; for example, of stock characters in 'commedia dell'arte'. Key vocabulary, concepts and techniques are very effectively reinforced through discussion and display. Lessons are very well planned and structured and well resourced; for example, with musical stimulus or masks.

148. The subject is very well led and managed. The effectiveness of assessment methods, including the integral function of pupil self-assessment, and detailed schemes of work that ensure clear progression have done much to establish the subject's academic credibility among pupils. Drama makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development and social skills and there are many opportunities for extra-curricular involvement in productions and theatre visits. The subject is well resourced and benefits from appropriate accommodation, although if the numbers opting for examination courses continue to increase there will be a need for another suitable drama space. There is a clear improvement plan for the subject. The head of department is currently reviewing schemes of work so that they reflect better the differing cultural experiences of pupils in the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are high
- The pupils have a very good attitude to work in all years, and make very good progress
- The quality of teaching is very good

Areas for improvement

- Develop a stronger sense of mathematics as a problem solving activity

149. Standards on entry to the school are well above average. Standards in work seen are well above average in Years 8 and 9 and very high in Year 9. Pupils' achievements are good through Years 7 to 9. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportion of the pupils attaining at least the expected Level 5 or above was very high. The proportion of those achieving the higher levels up to Level 8 is also high. Compared with schools whose pupils started secondary education with similar levels of attainment, the proportion of the pupils attaining Level 5 was well above average. Standards have improved steadily over the last five years compared to national norms. Overall, the boys perform better than the girls relative to national norms.

150. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also very high. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the proportions of pupils gaining a grade A* to C, was very high in relation to the national average, and was just short of 100 per cent. An outstanding figure of 55 per cent scored grade A or A*. A higher proportion of boys scored A*, but the girls scored better at grade A and in the range A* to C. Standards have risen steadily over the last five years.

151. The improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards of attainment have risen considerably in recent years. In 1999 at the end of Year 9, 12 per cent of the pupils attained Level 8; in 2002 it was 40 per cent. At GCSE in 1999, 69 per cent attained grades A or B; in 2002 it was 88 per cent. The pupils' achievement, which is the progress they make in the long term, has improved in all years. The attitude and behaviour of the pupils have improved in all years. The quality of the teaching has improved.
152. The achievement of the pupils from entry to Year 11 is very good, although it is better in Years 9, 10 and 11 than in the earlier years, in part because of the more appropriate setting arrangements in the last three years. The level of achievement is a product of both good teaching, and of an exceptionally good attitude to learning on the part of the pupils. In most lessons the pupils make good or very good progress, and in the few where they do not, it is usually because some of them have not fully understood the teachers' explanation, and they spend some time waiting for help. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make very good progress overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils whose mother tongue is other than English also achieve as well as the other pupils.
153. Pupils cover all areas of the curriculum at an appropriate level, and the teaching of numeracy both in mathematics and in other subjects is very good. Standards in algebra are very good. Pupils show considerable confidence manipulating algebraic formula and solving equations. Standards of graphical representation and geometrical drawing are very good. Pupils can combine techniques to find solutions to complex problems. For example, in an average attaining Year 11 class pupils calculated the volumes of circular frustums, confidently using intermediate calculations involving similar triangles. Standards of numeracy are very good overall, but pupils are more confident working with decimals and using calculators, than in looking for the most appropriate method in particular cases; for example, the use of fractions. As a general rule most pupils are more comfortable when applying standard processes to routine questions, and are much less happy tackling unusual problems. Pupils can use ICT well to enhance their learning.
154. The pupils' attitudes to the subject, and their behaviour in the classroom are very good in all years. They are very respectful towards their teachers and their peers, and listen very attentively whenever the teacher is explaining something to the whole class. They all work hard during the lesson, and when doing individual tasks, support each other and maintain a high level of concentration on the task in hand. Standards of presentation in exercise books are very good; most pupils take a considerable pride in the quality of their work, and try to be precise and accurate. Much of the pupils' work is exemplary. Many pupils seem more comfortable as relatively passive receivers of knowledge and understanding, and only a minority actively contribute in most lessons. This affects their rate of progress.
155. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and it is better in Years 9, 10 and 11 than in Years 7 and 8. This is because teaching in Year 7 does not always match the standards already achieved in primary school, and because the Key Stage 3 Strategy is not yet effectively or consistently applied. However, the high standards are based on the excellent classroom atmosphere that exists in all years, in which the teachers can concentrate on teaching. They are all good mathematicians, and they explain the mathematical processes very carefully to the pupils and make sure they understand the meaning of key words. They ensure that the pupils organise their work well in their notebooks and their exercise books, so that the pupils have an excellent source of reference material for revision. There are well-developed systems to assess the progress of the pupils in periodic tests. The best teaching occurs when the teachers use ICT presentations to give pupils dynamic visual images, which help them to understand key concepts, and when they are given opportunities to discuss alternative ways of solving problems, using language to extend their own, and their peers' understanding. However, ICT is not yet consistently used by all the teachers as a routine tool to enhance teaching and learning. In lessons where there are weaknesses, these often arise because the pupils' mistakes or misconceptions are not quickly identified, or the course of the lesson is not adapted to rectify these problems. Mathematics in some lessons is still taught as an activity where pupils learn processes for answering routine questions, rather than as an active problem solving activity. As a result, pupils' understanding of the underlying mathematical concepts is not as thorough as it might be.

156. The department is very well led and organised. The teachers work well as a team, providing mutual support and sharing good practice in planning and teaching. Resources are well managed. The department is fully staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. This is a strength of the department. The curriculum fulfils national requirements, but there should be greater emphasis on the role of mathematics as a problem solving activity.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils acquire a very good understanding of key facts and concepts in biology, chemistry and physics and higher attainers achieve well in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that underpins their clear explanations of key ideas and probing questions.
- Homework is used effectively to extend the learning from lessons.
- Pupils enjoy science, they work very well in shared tasks and relationships are very good throughout.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils in Years 7 to 9 underachieve, particularly in their scientific enquiry skills.
- Pupils' use of ICT varies considerably between parallel classes
- Assessments are not collated and analysed, or teaching monitored and evaluated sufficiently to guide the focus of improvements, and there is no science development plan.

157. Results in the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9 show that standards were high in relation to those nationally, but below average compared to other grammar schools. They were also lower than standards in either English or mathematics at the school. At GCSE, over one third of pupils took three separate sciences in 2002 and the remainder took the dual science award. Standards were high compared to those nationally. The proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving at least one GCSE at A* to C grade was in line with schools nationally that have similar prior attainment. However, a very good proportion of pupils achieved high grades in the three separate sciences. There was no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.

158. Inspection findings show a similar pattern of achievement. Pupils' attainment is very high at the end of both Years 9 and 11. Although Year 9 pupils achieve high standards in their knowledge and understanding of key facts and principles, their scientific enquiry skills are not quite as good. Most achieve appropriately for their capabilities, but there is some underachievement that particularly affects higher attaining pupils. There are a number of causes, but chiefly it is that teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of pupils' capabilities when planning lessons for mixed-ability classes in Years 7 to 9. At GCSE, pupils attain high standards compared to those nationally throughout all aspects of their science. Most pupils, including those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, but higher attaining pupils achieve well, as work is more carefully planned to challenge them at their own level.

159. By Year 9 many pupils have a very good grasp of key principles covering all the main disciplines of science; for example, most pupils confidently describe chemical changes they have observed using formulae and equations to represent them. Many understand pressure in liquids and gases and can calculate and explain their effects in everyday situations. They apply a very secure knowledge of kinetic theory to explain phenomena such as pressure, diffusion and changes of state in materials. However, pupils in Year 7 sometimes underachieve where teachers do not build sufficiently on their prior learning from primary experience; for example, when learning about how animals and plants are classified into their main groups. Pupils also underachieve where tasks and activities are not adapted for their different capabilities, as when Year 9 pupils heating limestone all carried out similar tasks. Opportunities for higher attaining pupils to draw on their knowledge to predict and explain as they investigated were missed.

160. By Year 11, pupils acquire a very good grasp of scientific concepts such as respiration and photosynthesis and use both to explain the balance of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. They apply the principles of electromagnetic induction to explain how devices such as transformers, electric motors and generators work. Higher attaining and gifted pupils in top sets learn effectively because teachers bring key ideas to life through well-chosen examples and probe pupils' understanding through challenging questions. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils quickly acquired a good understanding of the dynamics of reversible chemical reactions as a result of exploring carefully chosen practical examples, discussing them with their teacher and deducing what was happening.
161. Throughout the school, pupils acquire very good practical skills as they carry out tasks and investigations. By Year 9, most pupils can plan fair tests that take account of the need to be accurate and they explain their conclusions. However, teachers in Years 7 to 9 sometimes miss good opportunities to practise some scientific enquiry skills such as speculating, predicting and evaluating, and this affects higher attaining pupils in particular. The acquisition of scientific enquiry skills is less emphasised than other aspects of science in Years 7 to 9.
162. Pupils assimilate technical vocabulary in the subject very well, including those with English as an additional language. Teachers use homework effectively to extend learning from lessons, often setting challenging tasks to research and present arguments through extended written tasks. Pupils' excellent numeracy skills are evident when they solve quantitative problems using formulae and explore patterns in data graphically, such as facts about planets in the solar system. The range of applications and use of ICT has improved substantially because activities are now built into curriculum plans and an enthusiastic member of staff is leading these developments. However, teachers' expertise and confidence varies considerably within the faculty, resulting in substantial variations in the experiences of pupils in parallel classes.
163. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan stimulating lessons that pupils enjoy. Pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds work productively on shared tasks, and relationships throughout are very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and questioning skills are particular strengths, especially in Year 11 where pupils acquire a very good grasp of key concepts as a result of teachers' clear exposition and probing questions that challenge their thinking. In most lessons, teachers remind pupils of their previous learning and develop key themes through well-chosen activities and tasks, but few lessons close with an effective summary of what has been learned. Marking is regular and provides correction and some feedback on how to improve. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not use their assessments to adapt work to pupils' capabilities and pupils sometimes copy notes extensively. Where teaching is less effective, teachers' expectations are too low and the pace and demand of the work insufficient to enable pupils to learn effectively.
164. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. Subject leaders for physics, chemistry and biology work hard and manage their subjects effectively. However, there are some weaknesses. There is no clear direction for the faculty as a whole and no overall science development plan. This adversely affects developments in key areas such as science in Years 7 to 9 where the curriculum is too fragmented and initiatives such as the science strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are not being co-ordinated. Systems for self-review and improvement are also underdeveloped. Although pupils' progress is monitored in relation to their targets in each subject area, assessments are not yet collated and analysed to help guide the focus of improvements for the faculty, and teaching is not monitored and evaluated sufficiently. There are too few laboratories to meet curriculum demands. Technicians are very well qualified, dedicated and work very hard, but they are at the limits of their capacity for the number of classes taught.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The good attitudes of pupils contribute a great deal to their learning.
- Good quality individual attention from teachers enables pupils taking GCSE to develop personal responses to themes.
- Pupils are encouraged to use a wide variety of media including the use of computer technology.

Areas for improvement

- Improve schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 ensuring that planning caters for the differing needs of pupils and includes literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral and social aspects.
- Improve the quality of drawing and painting in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure the consistency of experience for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Improve the quality of the working environment in the ground floor art and design room.

165. In the 2002 art examinations the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average, with a much higher proportion of A* and A grades than nationally. Girls made up two-thirds of the group and they achieved well.
166. In work seen in Year 9 pupils are working at levels broadly in line with the national average. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 8 draw sensitively in their research on dragons, inspired by designs from China and Japan, and interpret their ideas effectively in clay. Most pupils show limited understanding of tone and form. Painting is not done in any depth, and knowledge and understanding about the work of artists is much less developed than expected. For example, in a Year 9 class no pupil could explain the ideas behind surrealism or explain the link between artists' work and their own. The use of specialist computer software is not adequately challenging and its development in this project fails to enable pupils to understand more about surrealism. Pupils are underachieving during the first three years.
167. In work seen in Year 11, pupils are working at above average standards. Strengths lie in the personal, individual responses to themes and the extent of experimental work using a wide variety of media. For example, one higher attaining pupil in Year 11 has created several multimedia compositions exploring pink, with a visit to the Tate Modern informing her work on artists. Sketchbooks are well used to collect and collate ideas and information. However, one weakness common to most pupils is the poor quality of drawing, especially the use of tone, and another is the lack of skilful painting. This is because of a lack of focus in these early years on these basic skills. Two higher attaining pupils in Year 11 do use paint skilfully to explore the colour green and create detailed compositions.
168. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory bearing in mind their standard of work on entry to the school. This is due to a number of contributory factors. Schemes of work introduced by the current head of department are insufficient to promote the gradual acquisition of technical skills and knowledge and understanding of artists' work. There is too little emphasis, particularly in Year 7, on teaching the basic skills of colour theory, drawing and painting. There is inconsistent delivery of units in Years 7, 8 and 9 leading to patchy progress hindered to some degree by interruptions and frequent changes of teacher as a result of the carousel system. Pupils who have English as an additional language make similar progress to others in the class.
169. Achievement through Years 10 and 11 is good. This is due to the very good and often excellent attitudes of higher attaining pupils who have chosen to take art at GCSE. They work extremely hard and respond very well to the tendency of the department to concentrate on their strengths. The quality of assessment is good and linked clearly to examination criteria, with good personal feedback to pupils, helping them to improve. There is a tendency to neglect the areas of the course that present the most challenge; good quality objective drawing, skilful painting and perceptive extended writing about artists. Pupils who have English as an additional language make the same progress as their classmates.
170. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in lessons seen this week in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is better in the use of clay in Years 7 to 9 where there is clear focus on learning objectives, good explanation of key words and good quality attention to individuals, ensuring that skills are developed. Where teaching is less strong there is too little

transfer of knowledge and a tendency to allow pupils to get on with work when teacher instruction or intervention would have had a positive effect. For example, the use of visual aids and practical demonstration in a Year 9 lesson and two Year 8 lessons would have enabled all pupils to make better gains in learning. Lesson planning lacks the focus necessary to promote good learning in Years 7 to 9, with unclear objectives and missed opportunities to evaluate learning at the end of any lesson. Long-term planning needs due consideration to be taken of the needs of every pupil and include literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral and social aspects.

171. The art department makes a good contribution to the cultural development of pupils, with trips to major galleries both here and abroad. There have been three heads of department since the last inspection, but staffing has been stable for the last two years with new schemes of work put in place throughout Years 7 to 11. Leadership is good. Teachers in the department feel well led and supported. Pupils feel more enthusiastic about the subject nowadays. Involvement in the Creative Partnerships has raised the department's profile both within the school and Slough. However, management of the department is not so strong. The development plan is inadequate to secure the very high standards at GCSE achieved in the past and to move the department forward. Teachers and the curriculum are not monitored effectively enough to provide consistent progress through Years 7 to 9. The standard of the working environment in room 117 is such that it affects learning. The technician should be used more strategically to move things forward rather than to do tasks that should not be necessary. Overall, therefore, the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress since the last inspection has been made because of an increase in the proportion of the highest grades at GCSE and improved access to computers with specialist software.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- A thorough audit of the provision for citizenship in all subjects has been carried out.
- There is good teaching of citizenship; for example, in geography, information and communication technology, personal, social and health education and science lessons.
- Good opportunities exist for pupil participation, through the newly formed school and year councils.
- The staff responsible for the development and organisation of citizenship have the experience and seniority necessary to bring about the required improvements.
- There is good provision for personal, social and health education that, in collaboration with other subjects, offers the potential to ensure that statutory requirements in citizenship are met.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that citizenship is an entitlement for all pupils in Years 7 to 11, in all three of its elements; knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry and communication and skills of participation and responsible action.
- Ensure planning for the teaching of the full Programme of Study, with clear references to citizenship in the schemes of work in contributing subjects.
- Inform pupils that citizenship is a new subject that they are required to study and how it will be covered and assessed.
- Establish procedures for reporting annually to parents on pupils' achievement in citizenship and, at the end of Year 9, on their attainment based on the end-of-key-stage description.
- Establish procedures and responsibilities for monitoring the quality of provision of citizenship.

172. Citizenship is a new subject and the school has not yet put in place the necessary elements of statutory provision. Pupils from different year groups interviewed during the inspection did not know that this was a required subject and were not aware that citizenship was being taught in the school through subjects other than personal, social and health education. The school has conducted a thorough audit of all subject areas and has identified the extent to which subjects already contribute to one or more of the three elements of citizenship. However, planning has not yet been put into place to ensure that the full Programme of Study for citizenship is covered and

that all pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive their statutory entitlement to the subject. The school relies heavily on the personal, social and health education programme and some humanities subjects to meet its obligations, but there is no guarantee that these arrangements make the necessary provision for all pupils.

173. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards are above average in both Years 9 and 11, and their achievements are satisfactory. Citizenship is taught principally through the school's personal, social and health education lessons. The programme gives pupils a number of opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. For example, pupils learn about the cultural diversity of Britain in Year 7, public services and the financing of government in Year 8, the justice system in Year 9, the role of the media in Year 10 and the responsibilities of the citizen in Year 11. In personal, social and health education lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made very good progress in discussing ideas in small groups and presenting them to the class. They learnt important lessons in negotiation skills and the challenges of collective decision making. In one Year 7 personal, social and health education lesson, excellent learning took place when pupils prepared presentations to the class on healthy eating. Groups worked imaginatively and responsibly to present and defend their opinions and pupils made good progress in their communication skills related to citizenship. There is no discernible difference in the progress made by gifted and talented pupils or pupils with English as an additional language. The overall quality of teaching and learning of citizenship are good.
174. Lessons in other subjects that made an explicit contribution to citizenship education at the school were also seen during the inspection. These included lessons in geography, ICT and science. The lessons were well taught and some focused on developing pupils' skills of enquiry and communication. Pupils were given opportunities to participate in group discussions and debates, and to formulate opinions on a range of issues. In one Year 7 geography lesson, pupils took part in a simulated planning enquiry on the proposed move of a football club, in which they formulated and negotiated their views as interest groups. They spoke confidently and sometimes passionately in debate, and made good progress in understanding the need for formal procedures in public events of this kind. In another geography lesson, groups of Year 8 pupils took roles as people in a community facing a flood disaster. They analysed information and reflected very well on the moral and social obligations on concerned citizens faced with emergencies of this kind. In other lessons observed, teachers provided opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. In a Year 10 ICT class, pupils learnt about data protection legislation and explored issues of privacy and crime prevention and the need for citizens to take responsible action. In science lessons, teachers gave pupils information on subjects such as global warming, environmentally friendly energy sources and the nitrogen and carbon cycles. This information helped pupils to understand the environmental implications of the world being a global community. Extra-curricular activities at the school also make a contribution to citizenship for some pupils. In one after-school activity observed, a group of Year 9 pupils participated in a practise for a local magistrates' court mock trial competition. They were given very good advice on court procedures and gained a very good understanding of the workings of the justice system.
175. Pupils' personal development is good in those lessons that contribute to the school's provision for citizenship, and notably in personal, social and health education and in geography. Their moral development is encouraged by their reflection and discussion on ethical issues, and their social development by their practise of the skills of negotiation, discussion and decision making. Extra-curricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, mock trials and their involvement in the work of the year councils also promote the social development of some pupils. Although there are opportunities for pupils to reflect on cultural differences in marriage and family arrangements in personal, social and health education and religious education, the school needs to improve the provision within citizenship for pupils' cultural development.
176. The school has begun to address the development of pupils' citizenship skills of participation and responsible action within the school through the establishment of a school council and year councils at the beginning of the academic year. The councils have conducted regular meetings and have given all pupils opportunities to participate in the organisation of the school. Issues discussed have included charity work, litter, school uniform and reports from the Slough Youth

Parliament. Pupils interviewed during the inspection were positive about the work of the councils because their establishment had already brought about genuine improvements in the school. The entitlement of pupils to participation and responsible action in the community outside the school was much less evident. Some pupils have participated in a discussion forum relating to the local Youth Parliament and others have engaged in community service as part of their work in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

177. Although much has already been achieved, the leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory as the school has yet to put the necessary arrangements in place to secure the full implementation of citizenship and the monitoring of the quality of the provision. There is insufficient detailed planning of the teaching of the subject. There is a need for an overall plan for the teaching of the full Programme of Study, and for explicit references to citizenship in the schemes of work in contributing subjects. With regard to the assessment of citizenship, there is some good practice in the current Year 11 where pupils have written impressive self-evaluations of their own sense of progress towards good citizenship. However, the school has yet to establish procedures for reporting annually to parents on pupils' achievement in citizenship and, at the end of Year 9, on their attainment based on the end-of-key-stage description. A number of teachers in the school already have good subject knowledge of citizenship through their work in personal, social and health education, but there is a need for this expertise to be widened through a programme of in-service training for teachers of other subjects. Although there is a good provision of appropriate materials for citizenship in the school library, the school has not yet made decisions on the type and range of resources to support the full Programme of Study for the subject for all pupils. The staff responsible for the development and organisation of citizenship within the school have the experience and seniority necessary to bring about the required improvements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in design and technology are very high and pupils achieve very well.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Teachers provide very good individual support for all pupils.
- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers create a good climate for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the range of strategies used in resistant materials and graphics to improve the achievement of boys.
- Increase the rigour of marking and monitoring pupils' progress in resistant materials and graphics to ensure a faster pace of work, particularly with examination coursework.

178. Standards at the end of Year 9 are very high when compared to the national average. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 broadly match the standards seen during the inspection. When they join the school in Year 7, pupils have above average skills in the subject and their achievement overall in design and technology by the end of Year 9 is very good. Pupils attain better in food and textiles than in other specialist areas within the subject.
179. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils develop a good range of skills including designing and making products in food, resistant materials, textiles, graphics, and electronics. They respond very well to interesting projects in lessons and are self-motivated to follow the guidance provided by the teachers. Pupils are taught to use the design process very well, which supports them in showing the stages of how the products they design have been developed. However, the quality and depth of writing and drawing skills of some boys are underdeveloped in resistant materials and graphics, which lowers the standard of their work. Boys perform better in food and textiles where the application of the design process is stronger and teachers use a wider range of strategies as well as ICT to help boys to achieve as well as the girls.

180. GCSE results in 2001 show that the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades is very high compared to the national average. The results improved further in 2002. Results were better in food and textiles. Achievement is very good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and pupils who are gifted and talented. In work seen pupils in Years 10 and 11 maintain the very high standards they reach at the end of Year 9. Overall, in the subject girls achieve better than the boys. Boys and girls achieve equally well in food. Pupils design good quality products and develop a good range of practical skills in resistant materials and graphics, although the standard of their design portfolio work is often of a lesser standard for them to achieve higher grades overall. In the subject as a whole, pupils in design and technology refine their design and make skills in Year 11 and show greater awareness of industrial processes. In food, pupils work to very high standards and they show a higher level of detail and depth in both the designing and making stages of their coursework. The vast majority of pupils use ICT well to research information, handle data and to increase the presentation of their final coursework. Pupils use computer aided designing well in resistant materials and graphics and this helps to improve the accuracy and quality of their work. However, lack of resources, limits the opportunities for pupils to experience sufficient work in computer aided manufacture.
181. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Three excellent lessons were seen during the inspection week. In lessons graded very good, teachers structure the work very well and provide clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their tasks. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and this provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop a very good range of skills in all material areas. In food and textiles, pupils benefit from very good guidance both in Years 7 to 9 and particularly with examination coursework in Years 10 and 11. The interactive white board and data projector are well used by teachers in food to underpin the knowledge covered with imaginative and well-constructed teaching resources to enhance learning. Similar resources would be of benefit to the further development of teaching and learning in resistant materials and graphics. In examination groups, teachers create opportunities for pupils to discuss their work as a group as well as individually with the teacher, and this provides very good support for pupils at all attainment levels. As a result, all pupils make very good progress. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and this creates a very good climate for learning. In lessons pupils are confident in asking questions and for help when they need it. However, in resistant materials and graphics, pupils are not monitored rigorously enough; for example, to meet GCSE coursework deadlines, or do they receive sufficiently detailed written feedback on how well they have completed sections of their coursework. As a result, many pupils work at a slower pace and do not follow the design process in as much detail as pupils in food. Very good monitoring of pupil progress was seen in a Year 11 food lesson where pupils planned the use of their time effectively in their own time plans and the teacher monitored their progress rigorously during the lesson. This level of monitoring is also evident in the pupils' folders where teacher comments are helpful in setting the pace for pupils and to help them make improvements at various stages of the work. Teachers encourage pupils to use ICT and effective use includes desktop publishing to present information and use of spreadsheets to handle data and analyse the nutritional content of food. Pupils respond very well in lessons and are very keen to do well. They show very good attitudes to their work.
182. The design and technology faculty benefits from the excellent leadership and management of the head of faculty. She sets exceptionally high standards of planning and her management and organisation of the department is outstanding. She maintains good working relationships, and all staff work very hard to maintain high levels of efficiency. Results in the subject are very high. Monitoring of both teaching and learning is in place and this has had a good impact on raising standards. There is a strategic development plan linked to the school development plan and priorities for development for the faculty have been identified. However, some further work is necessary to link the plan more closely to funding. This has not been possible as the head of faculty does not have a full information of the funding allocated to each specialist area within the faculty. The department shares a desire for all pupils to do well. Further work on the achievement of pupils and the performance of boys in resistant materials and graphics is a priority for the faculty. There is very good technician support, and technician staff make a very positive contribution to the levels of efficiency maintained in the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management.
- The rigorous monitoring of the department's teaching.
- The very good relationships established with the pupils.
- The high level of fieldwork experience organised to complement school-based teaching and learning.
- The integrated use of ICT in teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- To improve assessment procedures to facilitate their use in planning.
- To plan future developments in more specific detail.

183. Pupils' standards on entry are below the level of national expectations, but by the end of Year 9 they are significantly above those expectations with a substantial number of pupils gaining very high results. Those standards are part of an improving trend and indicate a very high level of achievement. By the end of Year 11 standards observed are above average. Achievement is good, but could be better. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. This is an improvement on the last report. The results were better than in 2001 with boys doing better than girls at A* to C, but less well at the higher grades.

184. Pupils apply themselves very well and sustain a high level of concentration. They work at a good pace, often self-generated, and the higher attaining pupils are becoming more independent in their learning. Behaviour is very good and attitudes very positive as pupils respond very well to the very good relationships established with them by their teachers. Pupils have very good ICT skills and use them effectively to support and enhance their work in geography. A feature of almost every lesson is the valuable use of atlases. Year 9 pupils in particular used data maps of Brazil to make a positive link between the country's physical characteristics and its human and economic activity. Year 8 pupils studying the effects of a hurricane in the Caribbean, related an Internet image of 'Hurricane Mitch' effectively to a map of the Caribbean Sea area to estimate the size of the hurricane. They are interested in their work in geography and engaged by it and, as a result, progress made by pupils in lessons is very good, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

185. The quality of teaching is very good. This is an improvement on the last report. As teachers have a very high level of subject expertise, they teach with confidence and encourage pupils' further development. Consequently, individual guidance is very strong and inclusive of those for whom English is an additional language, as a result of which they make very good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, which enable them to stimulate positive responses. They use questions effectively to promote discussion and thinking more deeply about issues. This elicits some very perceptive views that suggest a very high standard of interpretative thinking, particularly by the more gifted and talented. Teachers have produced very good resources to support their teaching and to compensate for the lack of sufficient textbooks to issue to pupils in Years 7 to 10 for independent use at home. The use of ICT resources is an integral part of teaching and learning and teachers have a high level of ICT skills to support that. Such resources were used particularly well during 'Literacy Week' to help Year 7 pupils to develop their extended writing skills. Written work and assignments are marked thoroughly. Assessment procedures are very good. They include a substantial measure of self-assessment and lesson evaluation and are used to keep pupils informed of their standards and progress and how to meet their targets. It also informs teachers of their own effectiveness.

186. Leadership and management are very good. The result has been the improving and very high standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9, which should have an impact on future performance in GCSE examinations. The Programmes of Study, although incomplete, are detailed and provide a broad and challenging curriculum. Assessment procedures are very good and are the basis of

target setting and improving pupils' levels of performance, but assessment data needs to be stored on computer for ease of access and application, and assignments need to be more formally moderated with exemplars kept for reference. Teaching in the department is monitored rigorously and pupils' work is sampled regularly to monitor progress and content. The head of department has come a long way in a short time and has established clear priorities and made considerable progress towards their fulfilment. Forward planning is good, but needs a sharper degree of detail and focus. There are good working relationships within the department and support from the head of faculty has been both strong and effective. Teachers work well together as a supportive team and are taking the department forward and, as a result, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are very high and attainment is consistently well above the national average.
- Leadership is excellent and the department is very well managed.
- Pupils work very hard and have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching of the skills required for the study of history is outstanding.
- The subject makes a very valuable contribution to skills in literacy and to the development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

Areas for improvement

- The department has only two rooms where work can be displayed; some classes are taught in non-specialist rooms.
- Computers are not available in the classrooms.

187. Attainment at the end of Year 9, in both teacher assessments in 2002 and as observed in the inspection is well above average. Pupils in Year 9 show a level of knowledge and understanding well above that seen in other schools and many have excellent skills in using varied sources of evidence. Most pupils can write about history very well and at length when required, and individuals who find written work more difficult show their knowledge in discussion and drama. Standards are very high and pupils achieve very well, particularly as many are using English as an additional language. More girls than boys reach the higher levels and this trend continues at GCSE. Gifted and talented pupils are really challenged by the approach to the subject and they achieve very well.

188. Standards were very high in the full course GCSE in 2002 and good in the short course that is now no longer offered. The results of boys are good in comparison with national trends. Work observed during the inspection indicates that standards in the present Year 11 are at least as high as in 2002. The trend is one of a noticeable improvement in standards since the last inspection. Standards are high because of the quality of teaching within the department and because most pupils have excellent attitudes to their work in class. They achieve very well. Standards at GCSE have been slightly lower than in some other subjects because of the adverse effects of staffing difficulties last year and the challenges faced by pupils using English as an additional language in a subject that requires high levels of reading comprehension and the ability to express complex ideas in formal English. Results at GCSE in the last two years were also affected by the short course provision.

189. In Year 9 pupils are all able to understand the events that led to war in 1914 and to examine factors that made it a world war that lasted longer than the original six weeks envisaged in the German plans. Many have an excellent ability to use written sources and to show how events link together. Teachers encourage discussion of many issues and the approach and content contributes very well to the understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

190. In Year 10 pupils swiftly acquire the skills required at GCSE because of the secure foundation of

work in the lower school. Their written work shows that they appreciate the economic impact of war and that they can understand the reasons for major development in the USA including the struggle for civil rights and the domestic implications of the Cold War. Study of Russia includes some exceptionally challenging and interesting examination of images of the revolution from the work of Eisenstein. In Year 11 pupils have a very good knowledge of the topics that they have studied and the standard of coursework is often excellent. The highest attaining pupils show clear understanding of why the USA and the USSR could not sustain an alliance after the defeat of Germany in 1945, and they can talk about conflicting ideologies with real maturity. Some pupils have difficulty in expressing their ideas and in using complex sources of evidence, although they show good levels of understanding in oral work. The majority of pupils have the ability to link cause and effect and to use varied sources of evidence very well. They have the skills, knowledge and understanding to reach the highest grades at GCSE.

191. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils learn very well because they enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. Boys often contribute particularly well; for example, in a drama about The Armada. Learning is very well managed and teaching of skills is particularly good. Teaching and learning are very good in GCSE classes because there is a consistent focus on the higher-level skills and on the production of high quality coursework. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Questioning is very effectively used to assess understanding and to encourage pupils to think carefully and evaluate evidence. There is a consistent focus on providing the opportunity for the improvement of skills in literacy. The identification of key words, good variety of tasks and writing frames help all pupils, including those who are using English as an additional language. Computers are used by all pupils in studying specific topics and in the production of high quality coursework. However they are not yet used as an integral part of learning in lessons, although overhead projectors and video are used well. Displays are very effective and contribute to learning in the main history classrooms. Not all lessons are taught in specialist classrooms and this affects the quality and range of learning activities available for some pupils. Lessons are very well planned and have clear objectives. Learning is very good because pupils have the opportunity to develop skills in history as they progress through the school and tasks set for homework link very well with work in class. Lessons in Year 7 show that there is a clear focus on the skills used by the historian. This approach to learning provides a very good link between work in primary and secondary school, and pupils clearly enjoyed the challenge of studying Imperial China. Paired and group work is used very effectively in all year groups. Pupils are assessed effectively, ensuring that progress is carefully monitored, but although marking is thorough it sometimes fails to indicate strategies for improvement.
192. Leadership is excellent and the department is very well managed, particularly in the development of new schemes of work and new approaches to teaching and learning. Newly qualified and trainee teachers are supported exceptionally well and their contribution to the work of the department is clearly valued. Monitoring ensures that resources and assessment procedures are being effectively used to promote progression and continuity and to ensure that all pupils have an exciting experience in studying history so that more will choose to study it at GCSE and beyond. Improvement since the last inspection has clearly been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards very high overall; pupils make very good progress.
- The marking and assessment of work is very good and motivates pupils to work hard.
- Teaching is very good overall and sometimes excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Some departments find difficulty in booking computers.

193. Standards in teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high in comparison with the national average. The standards in the GCSE ICT examination in 2002 were also very high when compared with the national average. Three-quarters of the pupils gained an A* or an A grade. Most pupils did better than they did in other subjects. The performance of girls and boys was similar. Standards throughout Years 7 to 11 have improved considerably since the last inspection.
194. Pupils at the end of Year 9 reach very high standards. This is for most pupils a very good achievement, since they enter the school with only above average knowledge and skills in ICT. Nearly all pupils become sophisticated users of ICT, able to select and use appropriate software to carry out tasks. For example, pupils design and implement a school confectionery invoicing system or a sports club membership database. Higher attainers introduce automated features using short sequences of computer program. These skills are put to very good use in other subject areas, such as geography, where pupils effortlessly create documents and presentations or search the Internet for information. By the end of Year 11, standards continue to be high. Pupils in the GCSE examination classes extend their skills into specialised areas such as relational database design or stationery products for a local night club. Pupils on the new GCSE business and communications systems course are also doing well and standards are also very high. Pupils not studying for GCSE ICT keep their skills fresh by employing them in, say, business studies or English, or for doing their homework. Pupils often e-mail work started in class, to their home to finish off. Overall achievement at this stage is also very good. At all levels, pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils. The department's statistics show that, in some instances in GCSE, these pupils do better.
195. Teaching is very good overall, and sometimes excellent. Learning is also very good and progress is considerably enhanced by the commitment and competitiveness of the pupils. They are intensely keen to do well and demonstrate their skills at every opportunity. In one very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher used the white board very effectively to demonstrate new techniques in searching a database. When it was evident that that most pupils had got the hang of this after a short while, the teacher introduced even more challenging ideas. Although the demonstrations were by no means exhaustive, by the end of the lesson the higher attaining pupils had mastered these techniques also. Even their task answer sheets were models of clarity and design, with relevant examples cut and pasted into colourful documents. Teachers nearly always strive to make lessons lively and interesting. There are some less successful lessons where the teacher is not careful enough to plan for the few lower attaining pupils in the class and can move along too quickly. Pupils can be shy in admitting that they do not understand and, in big classes especially, the teacher has to be vigilant in ensuring that pupils keep up. In some instances, the teachers are working at the limits of their own knowledge, which makes for some 'awkward moments'. At these times, the teachers are rewarded by the patience and understanding of the pupils.
196. The pupils' progress is also helped by careful marking. Teachers give pupils a very clear idea of how well they are doing in relation to national standards, and the mark schemes give a good indication of when a pupil is approaching or going beyond their target. Pupils are proud of their success and the teachers' comments are a spur to further improvement. At exam level, pupils clearly understand what is expected of them and know what they have to do to gain their expected

grade. The teachers make good use of the information that regular assessments provide to inform both lesson planning and long-term developments. In one excellent lesson, the teacher carefully set tasks at different levels so that when pupils presented their findings to the whole group, all were successful.

197. The school has made good improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have specialist ICT lessons. GCSE ICT continues and the new business communications course provides a very good alternative for those pupils who do not wish to specialise in ICT. The breadth and balance are now good. All subject areas enhance teaching and learning using ICT. In a Year 8 geography lesson, for example, pupils were amazed to see how huge a hurricane can be when pictures from a web site were combined with maps from the school network on a large data display. The school's Intranet provides fast access to coursework in several departments as well as lists of useful links to the outside world. Another improvement since the last inspection is that the network is now managed and maintained by expert technicians.
198. There are still areas that need to be developed. In departments such as mathematics and science, work using ICT is dependant on one or two teachers so that not all pupils get the same opportunities. Whilst the number of computers available is above average for a school of this size, not all departments can gain access easily because of the pressure on rooms. The ICT department itself takes up a high proportion of the available capacity. Plans in the pipeline include more wireless linked notebook computers and a new information and communication technology suite.
199. The leadership and management of ICT are very good. The curriculum leader is dedicated to improving the already high standards. At the same time he is creating demands for more access to resources by demonstrating the powerful effects they can have on teaching and learning. Computers are available at break and lunchtime for all pupils, including the suite in the library. There is a popular after-school club for girls to encourage them to take an interest in an otherwise male-dominated subject. The school has made very good improvements in ICT since the last inspection. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers, the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers are very able linguists.
- GCSE results at grades A* to C in French and German are very high in comparison with the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good.
- Curriculum innovation has improved the provision for lower attainers in GCSE German.
- Materials have been developed for independent learning and for higher attaining GCSE pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of French in Years 7 to 9 needs to be improved, and more time is needed for the study of individual languages.
- Pupils need better access to ICT in their study of languages.
- The monitoring of standards of teaching and learning, and spreading of good practice, needs development.
- More detailed guidance to staff is needed in schemes of work on how to meet the differing needs of pupils.

200. From work seen in the inspection, the attainment of both boys and girls by the end of Year 9 is above national expectations. Although the majority make satisfactory progress, a significant number of pupils do not achieve well in French because of some weaknesses in the teaching and

the insufficient time allocated to the subject. In particular, boys make notably less progress than girls. All pupils make good progress in German, however, in response to good teaching. There is no discernible difference in the progress made by gifted and talented pupils and those pupils for whom English is an additional language. In French lessons, most pupils can understand basic classroom instructions in the foreign language and can understand the principal points when listening to recordings of spoken language at near natural pace. They make less progress in speaking, however, because they are given insufficient opportunities to practise in class. As a result, some pupils have significant weaknesses in accent and intonation, and their pronunciation is often distorted by the printed language in textbooks. They make better progress in writing and most pupils can write simple letters in French referring to past, present and future events and expressing their opinions. Higher attaining pupils can write imaginatively about their future ambitions and some use computers very effectively for their written work. In one lesson, a pupil used text and computer graphics very creatively to produce a striking poster illustrating the need for environmental improvement.

201. In 2002, GCSE results at grades A* to C in French and German were very high in comparison with the national average. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A* and A has also increased considerably. Pupils' overall standards at GCSE are, however, significantly lower than in their other subjects, when compared with differences found nationally. From work seen in the inspection, the attainment of both boys and girls in French by the end of Year 11 is above national expectations. Although the majority of pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 reading and writing, many pupils experience difficulties with listening, and speaking with correct pronunciation. Lower attaining pupils and boys make less progress at this level. Higher attaining pupils respond well to the opportunities for independent learning made available in the subject. Pupils with English as an additional language make comparable progress with other pupils in their classes. The highest attaining pupils are able to read a variety of texts in French, including material from the Internet, and show good understanding of complex passages including some unfamiliar language. At this stage they are also able to write French with reasonable accuracy for a wider range of purposes including formal letters, film reviews and creative writing. In one lesson, for example, pupils wrote imaginatively and humorously about a day in their life when everything went wrong. They can understand naturally paced language in class and higher attaining pupils make good progress in understanding the detail of authentic items such as news broadcasts in the foreign language. Pupils make satisfactory progress in speaking, but are prevented from making better progress by their uncertain grasp of grammar and by gaps in their vocabulary. Some pupils still have very poor accents when speaking French.
202. The standard of teaching overall is satisfactory. It is good in German and improves in both languages in GCSE classes. The teachers are able linguists and their teaching is most effective when they plan lessons that build on pupils' prior learning and offer pupils active learning experiences in class. They prepare effective materials and generally maintain good pace in their lessons. In German lessons, expectations are high, pupils are well managed and the marking of pupils' work is exemplary. In Years 7 to 9, however, there are some serious weaknesses in the teaching of French. At this level pupils are not making the progress they should because expectations are sometimes insufficiently clear and the management of pupils is less effective. The marking of their work is inconsistent and individual pupils are not given a clear enough indication of their attainment or constructive advice on how to improve their progress. As a result of this teaching, many pupils make less progress than they should because they lose motivation and do not apply themselves sufficiently to their work in class and in homework. The need to improve the monitoring of individual pupils' progress was highlighted in the last inspection report and has still to be addressed by the subject. GCSE pupils in both French and German lessons are given good guidance on preparation for examinations. Their lessons have more pace, and the planning of lessons is also much better with this age group. Across the department, teachers need to use the target language more consistently in class, give pupils more opportunities to practise speaking and reduce the current over-reliance on textbooks.
203. In most modern languages lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are noticeably better in German lessons and improve in both languages as pupils get older. High attaining pupils show initiative and will readily support their own learning by using reference sources and

collaborating effectively with one another. They have a general culture of respect for their teachers and for one another, showing a readiness to listen when others are speaking. Although some pupils – particularly boys - lack motivation in languages, they invariably respond well to teaching where expectations are high and they are given clear goals to achieve.

204. The leadership and management of modern languages are sound, given the significant staff changes that have impeded recent development. There is now a clear vision and drive for improvement, and the clear direction of the recently appointed head of department has already secured significant improvements. Important work has begun in the subject on self-review, and provision has been improved for lower attaining pupils in German and for higher attainers in both French and German. There is good support for newly qualified staff, but procedures for monitoring standards of teaching and learning need to be more systematic, in order to enable the sharing of good practice and to address weaknesses in teaching. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because the time allocated to individual languages is insufficient to cover the National Curriculum Programme of Study. Schemes of work in both languages need further development so that more detailed guidance is given to staff on meeting the differing needs of pupils and on the appropriate use of computers to assist language learning. Assessment procedures according to National Curriculum criteria have been improved since the last inspection, but the subject has yet to find ways of using the assessment information systematically to guide its planning. Other issues raised at the last inspection also still need to be addressed. There is unsatisfactory access to computers for modern languages pupils, an insufficient stock of fiction reading and video resources in the library for independent use by senior pupils and insufficient planned provision for speakers of ethnic heritage languages. The subject has the necessary leadership and support of the senior staff of the school to bring about further improvements.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Subject knowledge and understanding are very good and supports pupils' progress.
- High expectations and challenge encourage independent learning.
- Good assessment procedures impact positively on learning.

Areas for improvement

- Provision in the timetable for Years 7, 8, and 9 is unsatisfactory and this lowers the standard that pupils can attain.
- Accommodation is unsuitable and resources are inadequate.

205. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment. By the end of Year 9 the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels is above the national average, although it is lower compared to other subjects in the school. The percentage of pupils attaining higher levels, however, is below average. This reflects in part the unsatisfactory time allocation for music in Years 7 to 9. In the recent past only a handful of pupils have taken the GCSE examination, because of previous staffing problems. Results have been very variable. In 2002 five pupils entered and gained three A* and two B grades.

206. Pupils in Year 7 are able to compose simple rhythms and melodies; for example, using a harmonic scale and taking part in group and solo performances, and are able to talk about speed, mood and dynamics in different pieces of music. By Year 8 they can use various notations and take an increasing role in ensemble work. They are able to describe instruments and voices in more detail. A number of pupils, however, have not yet acquired the basic skill of keeping in time; for instance, in clapping exercises. In Year 9 they are producing more complex compositions, performing with increasing expression, sensitivity and technical competence as well as beginning to evaluate music and identify styles and traditions. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language, are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7.

207. The standard of the work scrutinised in Year 10 was above average. There were good examples of two-part writing as well as compositions showing a confident understanding of structure; for example, writing in sonata form. A 'New Carol for Christmas' exercise produced some original, attractive settings and four-part harmony. Year 11 work is of an excellent standard with many examples of compositions idiomatic in style and in a variety of genres. Pupils are achieving well at this level both in their growing knowledge and understanding of music and their confidence in performing in front an audience.
208. The quality of teaching is good with some excellent practice observed. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good and this is helpful, particularly for GCSE pupils where good assessment and marking identifies weak areas and challenges pupils to improve on their achievements. Where teaching is very good or excellent, the pace of the lesson is brisk, the teachers' expectations of the pupils are high and they are challenged by probing questions to further intellectual efforts, so achieving much in a short time. Less effective teaching is characterised by low expectations and slow pace of learning. Most lessons have a good mix of listening and performing, solo and group work. The emphasis on developing literacy skills and technical vocabulary in particular is a good feature of all lessons. It is helping to raise standards because the pupils become more confident and accurate in their use of musical terminology. There is a very good rapport between teacher and pupils and the vast majority of pupils respond well in lessons and work hard.
209. Music makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. There is a flourishing extra-curricular programme that includes inter-house music competitions, a band and choir. The choir has sung in St. George's Chapel, Windsor and is preparing for a concert in the Albert Hall in the near future. Seven specialist instrumental teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn instruments with specialist teachers.
210. Leadership and management of the department are very good, with a clear vision for the future and a commitment to improvement. The profile of the department is growing and standards are being driven up through effective monitoring of pupils' progress across all years. Parents and pupils can access the department's web site for information on syllabi or musical events taking place. Further improvement, however, is being hampered by the unsatisfactory provision for music on the timetable in Years 7 to 9, which militates against pupils achieving the highest standards. There is currently a lack of consistency in the approach to teaching of all members of the department, which includes two part-time teachers.
211. Accommodation is a major concern. There is only one specialist room, with the result that many classes are taught elsewhere in the school. Pupils themselves, particularly those in examination years, have voiced their concern about the lack of proper facilities to advance their studies. The specialist room itself suffers from sound leakage from practice rooms nearby as well as constant interruptions by pupils going to and from instrumental tuition. Resources are also unsatisfactory with a narrow choice of instruments. ICT is used effectively for composition. Improvement overall since the last inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching leading to very good learning.
- Very good achievement by pupils in lessons in all years, and in GCSE examinations in Year 11.
- Excellent attitudes of pupils in lessons.
- Excellent range of extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- The efficiency of measuring and noting the progress pupils are making is affected by not being directly related to National Curriculum Levels.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently focused on the quality of learning being achieved in lessons.

212. Standards achieved in GCSE physical education in 2002 at the higher grades A* to C were well above the national average. This reflects a consistent trend over time. The number of pupils gaining a grade A* to G was above average. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. There are no differences in the achievement of girls and boys, or other groups of pupils.
213. Pupils' achievement over time is very good, but with more demanding teaching it could be even better. Pupils learn very well in the large majority of lessons; more rapidly in Years 7 to 9, than in Years 10 to 11. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills, and an appreciation of the subtleties of higher order games play. They have a good understanding of health-related fitness, and of the effects of exercise on the body. They are confident to express their views when asked. The very few pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and are able to make appropriate progress. The very highest attaining pupils are challenged in a range of ways, including demonstrating for, and supporting and guiding, their peers. Observing and evaluating performance against set criteria is common in the best lessons and this lets pupils recognise and appreciate the progress they have made.
214. Many pupils achieve significant success both in teams and individually, gaining local, regional and national recognition. The school provides for pupils with exceptional ability and has international performers on its roll. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including many competitive fixtures both internally and with other schools, provides an impressive range of opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills.
215. The quality of learning and teaching is very good. One excellent lesson was seen. Pupils generally learn very well because the depth of teachers' subject knowledge, and clarity of their explanations ensures that they all have a clear picture of what they are trying to grasp. When learning is at its very best, levels of understanding, knowledge and skill improve rapidly because teachers challenge pupils with evermore demanding tasks and practices, and maintain a very brisk pace. The pupils respond in an excellent manner to these challenges, and make very strong physical and intellectual efforts to learn at a very high pace.
216. Lessons are well planned and structured, with clear learning objectives. When allied to clear explanations and good demonstrations, this ensures that very good learning takes place. Teachers pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, the pupils listen carefully, and can thus learn new skills, confident in the knowledge that they are safe and secure.
217. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent, and contribute significantly to the progress they make over time. By the end of Year 9, in soccer, girls are able to pass and control the ball with confidence, and they can execute offensive and defensive headers effectively. They can evaluate their own and others' performances, and can offer suggestions for improvement. In an excellent Year 8 handball lesson, boys were able to exploit and develop space offensively. Defensively, they were able to deny space and intercept using fronting and man-to-man marking. By Year 11, girls can play a high paced game of hockey, and control the ball easily using reverse and lay down stick techniques. In Year 11 soccer, boys can control and pass with first touch on the volley, and show high order skills in playing a strictly conditioned two touch game in limited space.
218. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons, they are attentive, and listen closely to the guidance and instruction given by their teachers. Their capacity to sustain concentration is very good. They work hard at tasks that are well matched to their abilities and needs. They respond best when the level of challenge is highest. Excellent participation rates mean that all pupils make the most of the opportunities for learning presented to them. The department makes good use of ICT to support learning.
219. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good, and pupils are encouraged and trusted to work independently and collaboratively, often not under close supervision. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, and to undertake supportive and advisory roles with their peers are

a common feature of the best lessons. The very positive sense of fairness and the recognition and celebration of success at all levels underpins the strong moral, social and cultural ethos of the department.

220. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The all-specialist teaching staff are a hard working, dedicated and complementary team who support each other well. They are carefully deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum, and have a shared commitment to continuous improvement. The staff team has the capacity to carry this commitment forward. Assessments of pupils' work are made continuously, and link directly to the detailed and up-to-date schemes of work. However, the assessments are not made in terms of National Curriculum Levels and this makes the statutory teacher assessments inefficient and unnecessarily time consuming. The subject development plan has vision and clarity. Regular monitoring of teaching is carried out, although it is not overtly or primarily focused on learning outcomes. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Areas identified for improvement have largely been addressed over the last two years.
221. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. There is only a single, dedicated indoor space. There are satisfactory outdoor grassed areas and hard surface areas. The changing rooms do not have sufficient capacity for all the pupils who are timetabled to use them. There is very little flexibility for sharing space when the weather is inclement. This issue will be addressed when the new sports hall facility is built. The department is well resourced with learning materials and equipment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching and the very good attitudes they bring to their work.
- Pupils reach very high levels of attainment.
- An excellent contribution is made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is sometimes overly directive, and does not always give pupils enough responsibility for their own learning.
- Marking does not always do enough to help pupils to understand how to raise the level of their attainment.

222. In 2001, when the school entered pupils for the GCSE short course examination for the first time, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was very high in relation to national norms for the subject. In the 2002 GCSE short course examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was significantly higher than in 2001. The improving trend exceeded the national trend.
223. There are no national standards for religious education at the end of Year 9. However, in work seen during the inspection, standards are very high in relation to the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country and of their origins and distinctive features. They have a very good grasp of religious language, concepts and ideas. They have a mature understanding of why the beliefs of practicing members of faith communities are important to them, and how they shape their lives. Their evaluative skills, and their skills in making a personal response to religious questions, are particularly well developed.
224. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 11 is very high in relation both to the expectations of the agreed syllabus, and the GCSE short course syllabus. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of Christian perspectives on moral and social issues, and of the historical origins of Judaism, and contemporary Jewish belief and practice. The subject

makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all years.

225. Both boys and girls of all levels of prior attainment achieve very well throughout the school. This is because they are taught very well, and because of the very good attitudes they bring to their work. Boys progress as well as girls because they are given clear short-term targets in closely planned lessons. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well because teachers create a secure ethos in the classroom in which they feel valued and able to take risks in their learning. Pupils are challenged with work of increasing depth and complexity as they move through the school.
226. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and excellent in nearly one third of lessons. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn, and routinely share their aims with them. They plan their lessons very well to achieve their aims, and catch and hold pupils' interest through a very good variety of stimulating and challenging activities that are well matched to their individual needs.
227. For example, Year 8 pupils made excellent gains in understanding the importance of the mind in Buddhism, because the teacher made sensitive use of guided meditation in the classroom, to bring the subject alive. By the end of the lesson, they had a very good grasp of the Buddhist distinction between 'thought' and 'action'. Year 9 pupils made excellent gains in understanding Sikh teaching on the role of women, because the teacher drew on Sikh boys and girls to present homework research findings on the topic, sharing their insights and debating them with the whole class. Challenging homework extends the learning in class. For example, Year 11 pupils understanding of the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur was extended through using ICT to set up a database on festivals in Judaism. This very good teaching is underpinned by the excellent relationships teachers engender with and between their pupils, based on very high expectations, and mutual respect and caring.
228. Where teaching is less secure, it is sometimes overly teacher-directive in style, and does not give pupils enough responsibility for their own learning. A shortage of textbooks in all years hinders the development of pupils' skills of independent learning, research and enquiry. Marking, although highly conscientious and supportive, does not always do enough to help pupils to understand how to raise the levels of their attainment.
229. The department is led and managed very well by a recently appointed teacher, who has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised. She has moved the subject on in a short space of time. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' levels of attainment are now much higher in Year 11. This is because of significant improvements to the quality of teaching, schemes of work, assessment procedures and leadership and management.

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses in 2001

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	96	100	46	9.0	6.6
Biology	33	91	88	45	34	6.0	5.2
Business studies	11	100	92	82	32	8.7	5.5
Chemistry	24	100	90	50	43	6.7	5.9
Computer studies	18	100	86	67	23	7.6	4.6
Drama	10	100	99	80	38	8.0	6.6
Economics	14	93	89	43	36	6.3	5.5
English	29	100	95	31	37	6.6	5.9
French	8	88	89	13	38	4.0	5.6
Design and technology	4	100	91	25	30	5.5	5.4
Geography	7	100	92	57	38	6.8	5.7
German	9	89	91	44	40	6.7	5.8
History	17	100	88	47	35	6.6	5.4
Food studies	5	100	83	80	28	9.2	4.7
Mathematics	39	95	87	46	43	6.7	5.8
Music	1	100	93	-	35	2.0	5.7
Other social studies	10	100	87	50	34	7.6	5.3
Physics	20	95	88	25	40	5.0	5.7
Religious studies	7	100	92	86	38	8.6	5.8
Sociology	11	91	86	27	35	5.6	5.3
Sports studies	11	100	92	18	25	5.1	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The main focus was on mathematics and biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. The quality of provision in both chemistry and physics is good.

In 2001, A-Level chemistry results were above those nationally for the subject. All 24 students passed and one half achieved higher grades. In 2002 standards improved with all 23 students passing and almost three-quarters achieving higher grades. In the Year 12 lesson observed students successfully devised their own strategies for calculating the energy released when a range of alcohols are burned, as a result of good teaching, guidance and support. Most identified the main errors in their experiments and

their impact on the values obtained, and higher attaining students suggested appropriate reasons for patterns in the values they calculated.

In physics, standards at A Level in 2001 were in line with those nationally with all but one of the 20 students entered passing, and one quarter achieving higher grades. In 2002, the entry was smaller, but standards improved; the pass rate was similar, but just over one half of the 14 students achieved higher grades. In the Year 12 lesson observed about light refraction, very good teaching and use of information and communication technology enabled all students to explore a mathematical model and the assumptions underpinning it, leading to a thorough understanding of the relationships involved.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are high, and the 2002 A-level results were very high.
- The students make very good progress.
- There is some excellent teaching; overall, it is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the consistency with which mathematics is taught as a challenging problem solving activity.

230. Mathematics is a popular subject at AS and A2 levels, with numbers taking A2 sustained at around 40 for some years. In the last two years over 50 have started the AS course. The majority of students who sit the AS course go on to take A2. There has been a tendency for a greater number of boys to choose mathematics, but recently there are signs of an increase in the numbers of girls. Attainment overall in the 2001 A2 examinations was well above the national average. Results in 2002 were even better, with 74 per cent obtaining grades A or B, up from 52 per cent the year before. Nearly one half of the students scored grade A, double the proportion in the previous year. In the AS examination in 2001, 65 per cent of the students obtained a pass grade, which is in line with the national average, but in 2002 this improved to 80 per cent.

231. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards of attainment have risen considerably in recent years. At A level in 1999, 46 per cent of students obtained A or B; in 2002 it was 74 per cent. The students' achievement, that is the progress they make in the long term, has improved. Standards of work seen in the AS and A2-level courses are high in relation to national expectations. The students have a good choice of courses, enabling them to choose between specialising in statistics or mechanics, or studying both. Lesson time provision for the courses is adequate. There is no specific provision for further mathematics, although a number of students prepare for this through additional individual work. In pure mathematics the algebraic capability of the majority of the students meets the needs of the other parts of the curriculum. In Year 13, students were confident using partial fractions to integrate appropriate functions, although their recall of the algebra of logarithms was less secure. In mechanics lessons in Year 13 students could solve momentum calculations in colliding particles, and energy conservation in moving bodies. They showed easy facility with the definitions and processes involved. In all the courses offered, the students cover the syllabus requirements comprehensively.

232. The students' progress over the period of the course is very good. They are very well motivated to succeed, and use the time available in lessons. They use the precise processes modelled for them by the teachers confidently. They keep very clear notes of the topics they are studying, with plenty of worked examples by way of illustration, giving them a good basis for revision. Their work is generally well presented, accurate and of a good standard. However, they are more comfortable learning standard processes and applying formulas, and rely too much on memory recall rather than on their ability to work out solutions to problems from first principles. Many students are fairly passive in lessons, and only a few ask challenging questions or request further clarification, affecting their rate of progress and understanding.

233. The teaching in the AS and A2-level course is very good overall; all the lessons are at least satisfactory and nearly one half of the lessons are very good or excellent. The teachers have a good understanding of the key requirements of the course and are good mathematicians. Lessons are well organised, and the students' work and periodic tests are well marked. In the best lessons, the mathematics is taught in the context of real problems, and solutions are interrogated to extract their underlying meaning and check that they make sense, before proceeding to further problems. In other lessons, there is a greater emphasis on providing students with a clear and precise model of the processes and the language required to deal with the range of problems that they encounter. In some of these lessons there is insufficient time spent discussing the fundamental concepts to give the students a more secure basis on which to build their knowledge and understanding.
234. The course is well planned and managed. Leadership is very good. Resources are adequate, although ICT is not yet confidently used by all members of the department to enhance learning. The students are very appreciative of the quality of the teaching, and the personal support and encouragement that they receive.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that underpins clear explanations of key concepts.
- Students acquire a very good understanding of technical vocabulary, notations and key principles throughout the subject and achieve well.
- Students are regularly assessed in a variety of ways and receive effective feedback and guidance on how to achieve their target grades.
- The subject is led well by an experienced and knowledgeable subject leader.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used effectively to enhance teaching or practical and investigative work.

235. In 2001, results at A Level were well above average for the subject. All 33 students passed with almost one half achieving higher grades A or B. All but one of the eight students taking AS Level passed in 2001. In 2002 A-Level results also show that all 49 students passed, although the proportion achieving higher grades A and B was a little lower than the previous year. The number of students taking the subject has risen substantially in recent years and currently, there are 66 students in Year 12 studying at AS Level.
236. The standards of work seen are very good in both Years 12 and 13. Most students, including higher attaining students, achieve well. The great majority acquire a very good knowledge and understanding of facts and principles covering all the elements of the course and many are likely to attain higher grades, especially those in Year 12. Those with English as an additional language learn as well as others in their groups. By the end of Year 13, students relate learning from different units of the course well to explain, for example, ideas such as glucose regulation in the blood. They understand homeostatic mechanisms for maintaining blood sugar levels and use them to explain the relationship between changing glucose concentrations and insulin concentrations. Students demonstrate a good grasp of the structure and function of organ systems such as the kidney and can describe the processes taking place; for example, within Bowman's Capsule and the Loop of Henli, which enable nitrogenous waste to be expelled and levels of water and dissolved substances in the blood to be regulated.
237. In Year 12, students explore moral and ethical questions surrounding the testing of new vaccines as they study the nature of contrasting diseases such as malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis. Most can describe critical features of each that make effective treatments difficult to produce. They draw on their understanding of the human respiratory system to deduce and explain, in detail, some physiological effects of smoking on the lungs, blood circulatory system and on long-term health;

for example, the causes of emphysema. Students learn to interpret statistical evidence such as those from studies of the effects of smoking on health.

238. Teaching is at least good and some, very good. Lessons are well planned around very clear objectives. Lessons are stimulating and challenging and teachers' excellent subject knowledge underpins their very clear explanations of new ideas. Technical vocabulary and notations in the subject are introduced and applied rigorously so that students assimilate and apply these effectively. However, teachers' hand-written projections of illustrations and diagrams that accompany their exposition are sometimes unclear and difficult to read. In this respect, ICT is not being used effectively to enhance direct teaching. Neither is equipment such as data-loggers and sensors being used in students' investigative work sufficiently. There is close teamwork between the two teachers of each group and this helps students to relate ideas from different elements of the syllabus well. Students take their own notes of key points, often supplemented by useful handouts on which they can annotate further information.
239. Teachers use questioning at the start of lessons effectively to remind students of their prior learning and in the best lessons, students' learning is regularly checked by questioning and short tasks throughout, and difficulties are resolved. In some, however, checks on students' understanding are rather limited and the needs of those who are unsure can be overlooked. However, marking is very good and so weaknesses and misunderstandings are quickly identified. Students receive very good written and oral feedback on their work through a variety of assessments that reflect those in the examinations.
240. Students' learning is good and sometimes, very good. They are very interested and fully engaged by the stimulating lessons teachers plan for them so that they acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills well. In one lesson about the effects of smoking on health, students were completely absorbed as their teacher very clearly explained some physiological effects of tar and carbon monoxide and skilfully challenged individual students to deduce some mechanisms by which disease occurs.
241. Teachers know each student very well and relationships are very good. Students understand how well they are achieving in relation to their target grades and are provided with very clear guidance on what is needed to achieve their goals. As a result, independent study time is used effectively to research information from the Internet, books and journals to supplement learning from lessons. Students' files are monitored closely and guidance given, especially in the early part of Year 12 and, as a result, they manage them effectively. Note taking skills are generally very good.
242. The subject leader is very experienced, knowledgeable and leads developments in the subject well. Students' progress is monitored and reviewed regularly throughout the course and action is taken where necessary. Results are analysed carefully for patterns in achievement; for example, of those students who do not do sciences other than biology, of ethnic minority groups and those of different capabilities. There is an effective development plan that includes appropriate priorities.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Food science was inspected in detail, but the resistant materials course was sampled. Standards in the lesson seen were average. Good teaching was ensuring good progress.

Nutrition and food science

Overall, the quality of provision in nutrition and food science is **very good**.

Strengths

- The achievement of students doing the AS and A-level courses is very good as a result of the very good teaching and support they receive.
- Very good relationships between staff and students lead to very good attitudes and very good conditions for learning.
- The management of the course is excellent, leading to work that is well structured and meets the needs and aspirations of individual students.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the opportunities for students to contribute more to their own learning in lessons.

243. The AS and A-level results in 2001 were very high and they improved further in 2002. This reflects the very high standards of Years 12 and 13 work seen during the inspection, and represents very good achievement. Students maintain the very high standards they achieve by the end of their GCSE work in Year 11.

244. In work seen during the inspection, students show a very good understanding of the issues relating to health, nutrition, food preparation and food production systems. They also acquire very good knowledge of maintaining good health and well-being within the community. It is evident from their examination coursework that students take the opportunity to build their knowledge base to a good level through structuring their essays. The opportunity to do this is underpinned by structured lessons, discussions, reading and researching the topics being studied in the teaching. Students use and apply the information well when they produce their final coursework. They follow the guidance provided by the teachers very well and structure their work closely to match the examination requirements. Through this process of building their knowledge before starting the coursework projects, students are beginning to show a greater level of independence. They make very good use of opportunities to broaden their experience and knowledge of the work by reading widely and making full use of the additional health and nutrition publications and journals provided in the department. Their work is enhanced further through very good links with the university, outside speakers and work experience with a nationally published food magazine.

245. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well planned and teaching is very well organised. The teacher has very good knowledge of the subject and, as a result, teaching is well focused on the most relevant and worthwhile experiences for the students. Both AS and A-level students benefit from the very specific guidance and support that is very well matched to the needs of individuals. Clear objectives are set in lessons to guide students with their coursework. There is very good coverage of basic knowledge, and teaching incorporates the development of more advanced food preparation skills with the use of practical workshop lessons to cover methods and processes. Students apply their knowledge to very good depth and explain the information they use very well. Teachers use a very good range of resources to consolidate learning. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson on 'product development'. The teacher used a range of video clips, the work of the Food Standards Agency and book resources to gain a good overview of the issues facing food product development and maintaining high standards of food handling, health and safety. The majority of students demonstrate very good skills in numeracy to cover work on analysing and using statistical data. They gain a good understanding of the concepts of using data in preparing their own work; for example, in their coursework on nutrition and special diets students used the results of national surveys and statistics very well to support the points they made. Students apply well above average literacy skills and complete work to a very high level within their coursework. Students generally use ICT very well. There is a wide range of books and specialist learning resources within the department and, along with the use of the Internet, it is well used to support learning. Teachers establish very good relationships with the students, which create a very good learning ethos in which there is mutual respect. Teachers are sensitive and very supportive of the needs of individual students on the course.

246. Management of the subject is excellent. The course is now well established, is becoming popular amongst students and standards are now very high. Teachers work very well together as a team

and very good relationships have created very good conditions for learning. The improving standards mean that progress in the subject is very good. There is good monitoring of the work of students as well as teaching and learning overall.

BUSINESS

The focus during the inspection was on business studies. Economics was sampled. Results in 2001 were very high, reflecting the standards seen in the lesson observed where confident and very good teaching enabled the students to make very good progress.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are very high.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teaching is very good.
- The management of the department is good.
- Assessment information is used very effectively.
- Young Enterprise activities are very successful and the links with local business are very well developed.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not available in the rooms used for teaching.
- The department does not have a business studies teaching base.
- Individual students require more support with literacy and there is a need to adjust teaching and learning styles to the now wider range of students choosing to study business.

247. In 2001 results were very high and standards were equally high in 2002. The department has a record of outstanding levels of attainment in recent years. Students have clearly achieved very well. The present Year 12 has many higher attaining students and standards are clearly well above the national average. Standards in Year 13 are lower because attitudes are not always as positive as the department would like them to be. Standards are still above the national average and students' achievement is good in relation to results in previous tests or examinations. Male and female students succeed equally well, although there are more of the former in business studies classes. Students who are using English as an additional language achieve very well. Achievement is very good because of the high quality of teaching and student response, although some lower attaining students in the present Year 13 are not working consistently and this is adversely affecting their potential grades.

248. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are very skilled at questioning both to assess understanding and to encourage students to think for themselves. Students in a Year 12 lesson showed a very good level of understanding of market segmentation because they had been carefully taught the theory and then had the opportunity to develop their skills in a practical task related to promotional material. This approach suited the wide range of attainment in the class. In another lesson they were able to use and develop skills in studying demographic trends because of the quality of available data and the carefully managed development of learning.

249. In Year 13 students learned very well in lessons on the implications of changes in taxation because of the use of clear examples of what is meant by elasticity, and the effective use of diagrams on the overhead projector. These lessons clearly challenge the highest attaining students and make very effective use of numeracy skills. However, in one lesson students were not able to cope with a difficult article on the advantages and disadvantages of corporate social responsibility and ethical approaches to business. It is clear that some students are encountering difficulties with vocabulary and complex arguments because their reading comprehension is insufficiently well developed and they struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. Written

work shows similar problems, although work of higher attaining students shows real confidence and flair for the subject.

250. Learning is usually very effective because of the pace and challenge that encourages students to apply their numeracy and communication skills. Due to this the majority of students work very well on tasks set in class and they show a very good knowledge of business theory and its applications. Students are skilled in using computers as part of their learning, particularly in using the Intranet sites. However, teachers and students are not using computer-based software as an integral part of learning in the classroom. All students benefit from good links with local industry and potential entrepreneurs value the opportunity to take part in Young Enterprise activities in which the school has been very successful.
251. The department is managed well. The two teachers work together as a team and there is a clear emphasis on maintaining high standards. Assessment is rigorous and managed well to ensure that students are clear about their strengths and how they can raise the standards of their written work. Improvement has clearly been good in the maintenance of high standards, introduction of new courses and the consistently high quality of teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology was inspected in detail.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Students find the course stimulating and challenging; students take the course along with a wide range of other subjects.
- The use of assessment to help students to progress is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The class teaching sometimes lacks provision for individual needs.

252. In the 2001 computing examination, results were very high compared with the national average. In 2002, the school entered students for a new examination, A-level information and communication technology, where standards were also high. There are no national figures with which to compare these results.
253. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average. All students are able to develop professional quality ICT applications to meet the needs of a commercial customer. The higher attaining students achieve a high level of sophistication, requiring programming skills as well as sensitivity to the users' needs. Overall, achievement is good as students enter the course with a range of previous experience and knowledge. One student, for instance, had not previously taken an ICT examination at GCSE Level, but was doing very well and aiming for a grade C at A-level.
254. Teaching is good overall and often very good. The teachers' expectations are high and the well-planned lessons enable students to build effectively on previously gained knowledge and understanding. Learning is also good and progress is considerably enhanced by the commitment and interest of the students. Teachers make use of very good online resources so that students can plan their work carefully and know well in advance what is expected of them. In a very good Year 13 lesson the teachers used both the electronic white board and the 'old-fashioned' white board to explore entity relationships in relational databases. The lively presentations enabled students to grasp the key concepts very quickly so that higher attaining students were able to spot potential problems and suggest the use of a 'composite' key to help to solve them. There are

some areas for development. The course requires a high degree of analytical skill and not all students have this facility to begin with. The teaching does not always make explicit what students should do to develop these skills. For example, in one lesson, the teacher did not show Year 12 students how to plan their research and organise their findings before embarking on a presentation. As a result, students concentrated on what they could do, which was to use the snazzy effects of the presentation package.

255. As in the main school, the leadership and management of ICT are very good. The department has embraced the new and demanding course with enthusiasm and commitment. It has attracted a range of students because it has wide appeal, being very much concerned with everyday life and commerce. Both arts and science students say how much they enjoy the course and find it relevant.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies was inspected in detail.

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- Good teaching leading to good achievement in lessons and examinations.
- Very good leadership and management ensuring that the needs and aspirations of all students are met.
- Excellent attitudes and motivation of students.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency and regularity in the marking of work to inform students how to improve.

256. Standards overall are above the national expectation. In 2002, 31 per cent of students achieved grades A-B at AS level, and 40 per cent grades A-B at A level. All students who took the examination passed. The average point score per student was higher than the average for all students in the school in all other subjects. These results were as predicted. Retention rates could not be better, with 100 per cent of the students who started AS level completing A level.

257. The department has a flexible entry policy based on both academic and personal criteria, and numbers enrolled vary between eight and 15 yearly. About twice as many males as females take the course. Enrolment reflects the ethnic mix of the whole school. Attainment on entry is average, because some students have no previous history of studying physical education. Standards of work seen in the inspection are above average. This indicates that achievement over time is good. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students.

258. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All teachers have a secure professional knowledge. Detailed lesson plans are used to support well laid out and comprehensive schemes of work and teachers work hard to raise standards of key skills. Class management is very good, and gives all students opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Teachers challenge students to work hard and produce high quality outcomes. They have consistently high expectations that students will succeed. Students regularly meet these expectations. Year 12 students make strong intellectual efforts to improve their knowledge and understanding of the theory of processing information and its impact on the quality of performance, in both theory and practical lessons. Year 13 students are inspired to research the organisation of sporting organisations in Great Britain, and present their work to their peers in a comprehensively detailed and mature manner. The use of ICT to support learning is good.

259. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent, and they respond very well to the interesting and challenging environment created by purposeful and stimulating teaching. Attendance in lessons is

very high. Students pay close attention to teacher guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm to explore, challenge and develop their own ideas. They are able and willing to offer cogent responses to searching questions. They are very tolerant of different views, and are prepared to modify their opinions and views in the light of argument and experience. Relationships are excellent, and this contributes strongly to good overall progress in lessons. Students agree minimum target grades with teachers, and they know how well they are progressing to meet these targets.

260. Leadership and management are very good. The department has a clear and shared vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach these standards. Relationships within the staff group are excellent, and they make a well-balanced team. They communicate and moderate work in progress very well, and they have total commitment to the students and the subject. Teachers are consistent in their challenge and support, and contribute significantly to maintaining the ethical values espoused by the school. There is a clear imperative to improve on previous best. Courses closely match the aspirations of the students and many go on to higher-level study in related disciplines. Assessment and reporting arrangements give accurate information on student performance. Teachers are provided with objective data for planning and adapting teaching to improve learning. Careful staff deployment ensures even coverage across all areas of the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular activities ensures many opportunities for both competitive and personal interest activities. This allows students to refine, develop and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding. School timetabling arrangements this year are inefficient, and result in a significant cumulative loss of teaching time. The marking of work is not systematic, and varies in quality from teacher to teacher. It does not always give students consistent information on how to raise the quality of their work. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design and theatre studies were inspected in detail, but music was also sampled. In music, numbers taking the subject at A level have been very small. There was just one candidate in 2001. In the lesson observed, very good teaching was leading to above average standards.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The very good attitudes of students contribute a great deal to their learning.
- Good quality of individual attention from teachers ensures a personal approach to themes.
- Students are able to use a wide variety of media including the use of computer technology.
- Trips to galleries both here and abroad enrich students' experiences of art.

Areas for improvement

- Formalise procedures for monitoring and recording progress.
- Formalise lesson planning.
- Reinstate the sixth form studio area.

261. Standards in both Years 12 and 13 have been very high in recent years. Group sizes have been small, varying from two to six. In 2002 all students gained grades A and B at AS and A2, achieving much as expected.
262. Standards of work seen in Year 12 on the AS course are above the standard normally expected and represent good achievement in relation to their GCSE grades. The quality of independent research is good and visits to art galleries in London, Paris and Barcelona increase the students' knowledge and understanding of artists' work. At the same time, students develop a clear relationship between their own work and that of other artists. However, there is not enough writing in depth to explain the relationship. Higher attaining students discuss the aims of their work

enthusiastically, but lower attaining students are often less clear. Standards of experimental and multimedia work are higher than those of observational work in pencil and skilful work in paint. ICT is used inventively by higher attaining students who create interesting and unusual compositions by scanning in original digital images that have been developed with traditional materials.

263. Standards of work seen in Year 13 on the A2 course are well above average and represent good achievement in relation to their grades at AS. Higher attaining students show examples of very good drawing, particularly of the nude model in the life drawing class. Another higher attaining student shows painting skill in work from observation. Some higher attaining students talk articulately about their aims and objectives and how their work relates to that of artists. For example, one girl in Year 13 is exploring perceptions of female sexuality in the past and present, and refers to works by Titian and Georgia O'Keeffe. Sketchbooks are very well used to collect, collate and develop ideas and information.
264. Teaching is consistently good and students learn well as a result. Their attitudes are very good and often excellent, leading to a high degree of motivation and independence in research and development of work. Teachers have high expectations and favour the collegiate approach, sharing teaching and giving students the benefit of varying viewpoints and specialisms. Students benefit from good quality personal discussion with teachers and receive advice closely linked to exam criteria, but some lower attaining students remain unsure about their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers know students well, but procedures to formalise the monitoring and recording of progress are necessary to ensure that each student makes as much progress as possible, especially with increased group sizes in Year 12.
265. The quality of leadership and management of sixth form courses is good. Recruitment onto AS has increased to 13 this year. The use of computer technology has improved recently with the acquisition of the large printer. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching resulting in high standards of performance.
- The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in the students' very positive attitudes and commitment.
- Students benefit both within lessons and beyond from the wide range of opportunities to see the work of theatre practitioners.

Areas for improvement

- Tighter time management ensuring that on occasions, despite evident student enjoyment, they move on more rapidly to the next activity.

266. Attainment in examinations at both AS and A2 levels is well above the national average. Achievement by both male and female students is very good. Although in the past more female students have opted for the subject, in the current Year 12 there is an even balance between male and female.
267. Standards of performance by all students are very good. Movement is controlled, expressive and inventive. Year 12 students exploring Dario Fo's 'Mistero Buffo' make very good use of voice, gesture and posture in a variety of ingenious interpretations of the text. Year 13 students show very good understanding of how to manipulate audience response. They are very willing to experiment and to take risks. They have also learned a range of physical theatre techniques that they demonstrated very effectively in their interpretation of parts of Wedekind's 'Spring Awakening'.
268. In their written work high attaining students express themselves lucidly and argue a coherent point of view showing excellent skills of analysis and synthesis of ideas. They evaluate their own

performance and that seen in other productions very perceptively and are very capable of making links with dramatic theory and conventions they have learned. Devised work, for example, using Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels' as a stimulus, draws on excellent research into historical and literary background. Lower attaining students tend not to develop their ideas in as much depth, to express themselves as precisely or relate theory and practice as explicitly. Nevertheless, they also show good understanding of theatrical concepts and clear evidence of very good progress in their work. All students show competence in the use of ICT both through the use of sound and lighting and the use of the Internet to research theatre background and traditions.

269. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students are highly motivated by the teacher's infectious enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject. Teaching is very supportive and students are given very good guidance on how to improve, related closely to the examination assessment objectives. There are high expectations of the students both in reading widely around the subject and in the levels of dramatic challenge. Students' learning is clearly informed by the opportunities they receive both in lessons and outside lessons to see a range of theatre practitioners in full-scale productions and through workshops. A particular strength of teaching is the teacher's recognition and encouragement of students' differing strengths and talents. As a result, groups benefit from individual's differing perspectives on acting, direction, design, costume and dance. Occasionally, during a double lesson, despite the obvious student engagement and enjoyment, a teaching point had already been well made and understood and students could move on more rapidly. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support learning.
270. The subject is very well led and managed. There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular involvement in productions and theatre visits. The subject is well resourced and the numbers opting for examination courses are increasing. The subject improvement plan is well considered.

HUMANITIES

The focus during the inspection was on geography, psychology and religious studies, but history and sociology were also sampled. Standards in history are well above average. The subject is popular, it is very well taught and provision is very good. More students are now choosing to study history at degree level. In sociology, examination results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Two very good lessons were observed. The teacher's skilful questioning challenged the students to make excellent intellectual effort. This led students to a more secure understanding through their own independent learning.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management.
- The assessment and development of students' written work.
- The integrated use of ICT in fieldwork to complement teaching and learning.
- The excellent relationships established with the students.

Areas for improvement

- To raise attainment further by a more focused use of examination board services.
- To improve the quality of students' higher order reading and writing skills.

271. Standards observed by the end of Year 13 are well above average, and students achieve very well. Results at A level in 2001 overall were well above the national average and improved upon the previous year's performance. The proportion of students passing at grades A to E was 100 per cent and at the higher A/B grades was well above average. Boys' results at these higher grades were lower than girls'. This is an improvement on the last report. In 2002, although the proportion of students passing at grades A to E was again 100 per cent, the proportion passing at the higher grades went down especially for boys, and that lowered the average points score quite

considerably. In both 2001 and 2002 the number of candidates entered was low, which makes statistical analysis unreliable.

272. Students' attitudes are very positive and they respond very well to the excellent relationships established with them by their teachers. They enjoy advanced geography and their teachers' enthusiasm for it is motivating. Consequently, they participate well in all the activities, working well together and listening to each other's views with respect, albeit they may then discuss them critically. Fieldwork skills are strong. A coursework investigation into stream flow patterns on the River Test showed a very good application of high quality research skills linking practical and theoretical knowledge very effectively. Using information obtained through general reading and Internet web sites, students are also developing very competent independent learning skills, which help them to cope with the analytical nature of many of their assignments. A very well-written assignment by a Year 13 student had well-researched examples of tsunamis and their effects to support the high quality theoretical content of the writing. Students are generally very articulate, but there are some general problems with literacy and a number of students, for whom English is an additional language, have higher order writing problems, which is disadvantageous at higher levels. The department is working to overcome these problems.
273. The quality of the teaching is very good. Lessons are planned very well to develop students' reading and thinking through a seminar approach. They are very well organised to make use of the school's very good ICT resources. Year 12 students used Internet web sites to research the characteristics of different soil types as a preliminary to preparing a 'PowerPoint' presentation on a comparison of their horizons and other characteristics. Teachers' ICT skills are very strong and they can support students competently with that if required. Teachers have high expectations and use a blend of open and focused questions to challenge their students' thinking, develop their analytical skills and elicit some very perceptive responses, particularly from the higher attainers. This was evident in a written assignment on flooding in Bangladesh, with some very incisive comments on the interaction of physical, human and political factors, most of which were outside the borders and, therefore, the control of the Government of Bangladesh and its people. The assignments are demanding and lessons are conducted at a sharp pace that stimulates students' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of examination technique is very strong and has an impact on students' interest and application. This high level of subject expertise has enabled teachers to develop a variety of teaching styles designed to motivate students to achieve the high level of work expected of them. Learning is very good and achievement very good.
274. Leadership and management are very good. The Programmes of Study, although incomplete, are detailed and provide a broad and challenging curriculum. Assessment procedures are very good and are the basis of target setting and improving students' levels of performance. The evaluation sheets used in the regular checking of students' notes and, more importantly, in assessing their written assignments, are diagnostic and developmental. The students find them very helpful, particularly as they are followed up by thorough feedback in lessons. Students are also very appreciative of the high level of group and individual support they receive. Assessment data needs to be stored on computer for ease of access and application, and assignments need to be more formally moderated with exemplars kept for reference. Teaching in the department is monitored well and evaluated effectively to improve the content and style of lessons. The head of department has come a long way in a short time, but has established clear priorities and made considerable progress towards their fulfilment. Forward planning is good, but needs a greater degree of detail and focus. There are good working relationships within the department and support from the head of faculty has been both strong and effective. Teachers work well together as a supportive team and are taking the department forward positively.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Very good subject knowledge and assessment maximise opportunities for learning and progress.

- Very good relationships between teacher and students create a positive learning atmosphere.
- The teacher's expectation of students' intellectual effort is high.

Areas for improvement

- More variation in teaching strategies to encourage involvement of students in their own learning.

275. Results at A level have fluctuated over the last three years, but standards are above average. In 2001 nine out of the ten students gained grades A to C, with five of these at grade A. Results in 2002 were slightly lower, but still above average with very good results at AS level. Male and female students did equally well.
276. The standards of work of current students are above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their AS results. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of the very good relationship with the teacher and their response to their high expectations. The strategies employed focused the students and helped them to relate theory to real life. In one lesson, for instance, a newspaper article was used to revisit psychological perspectives, the students working well in groups analysing and evaluating. They were able to identify examples of the sociobiological approach and in their discussions used psychological terminology with understanding. The students' written work is of a high standard, with some examples of the excellent use of research and a confident use of statistical tests, set out in spreadsheet form with appropriate use of graphs. On occasions, the work of some students has detail, but little evaluation or conversely evaluation with little supportive evidence.
277. Students in Year 12 are achieving well in a subject new to them. They already have a grasp of basic terminology and understand the methodology of a psychological investigation. They make good use of corroborative examples, and higher attaining students show evidence of wider reading; for example, in good introductions and review of the literature. On occasions, important aspects of a case are missed when expounding theories and some students are slow to develop criticism.
278. Teaching is very good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and probing use of questions allows the students to come up with answers through their own efforts. The pace of lessons is steady and purposeful and students are absorbed in their learning. At times the learning is more teacher-led and opportunities to allow the students to bring the results of their own research to contribute to the lesson were missed. Some effective use of outside resources is made with, for example, a visiting police officer speaking on eyewitness accounts, so reinforcing the module on theory of memory with real examples. ICT is used effectively to support learning.
279. The monitoring of students' progress is very good and has a considerable impact on students' learning. Marking is frequent and thorough so that areas of weakness are identified and corrected, and students are challenged to improve their work. As a result, students learn well. They are attentive in lessons and work productively particularly in smaller groups. All students are given the chance to express their opinions. Students with English as an additional language are given individual help where necessary to refine their written expression. Students work well together and discuss topics with thoughtfulness and maturity. The subject makes a good contribution to their personal development.
280. The good teaching and learning result from the good leadership and planning in the department, which since September has become an autonomous social science department. There is clear vision for the future and a strong commitment to improve. There is a very good range of textbooks and reference works to support learning and research, particularly for the higher attaining students. No judgement on improvement since the last inspection can be made as psychology was not offered at that time.

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well and reach very high levels of attainment because of very good teaching.
- The subject is increasingly popular as an A-level option.
- Excellent leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- A shortage of textbooks hinders the development of students' skills of independent learning, research and enquiry.

281. In the 2001 A-Level examinations, all students entered gained pass grades, and the proportion who gained grades A and B passes was very high in relation to national norms for the subject. Their average point score was also very high in relation to the national average point score. In the 2002 examinations, all students again obtained pass grades. The proportion gaining grades A and B passes was slightly lower than in 2001. This did not reflect a decline in standards, but rather the wider spread of ability amongst the significantly greater number of students entered for the examination in 2002.

282. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of Year 12 students following the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics AS syllabuses is very high in relation to expectations for their age. They are achieving very well, because of very good teaching and the very good attitudes they bring to their work.

283. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of Year 13 students is broadly in line with expectations for their age. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. Their attainment and achievement are lower than in the cohorts who sat the 2001/02 examinations. This is because, under previous teachers, they were somewhat behind in their study of the Ethics syllabus at the end of Year 12. They had to adapt to newly appointed teachers at the start of Year 13, while catching up on the syllabus.

284. However, for too long a significant minority of students have used past issues as an excuse for not taking responsibility for their own learning, and working hard enough. Very much improved recent AS results show that they are now adopting a more mature attitude, and beginning to achieve more highly. More highly motivated students are attaining and achieving very well.

285. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and excellent on occasions. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject, very high expectations and challenge students with work that fully stretches them. Teachers are highly skilled in stretching students' understanding through the insights of modern scholarship. Their expositional and questioning skills are very highly developed. For example, Year 12 students made excellent gains in understanding Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics, because the teacher planned very well to lead them by logical steps to grasp the key concepts, reinforcing their understanding by applying the principles to real life case studies. Where teaching and learning are less secure, it is because a shortage of textbooks inhibits the development of students' skills of independent learning, research and enquiry. Very good use is made of ICT to support learning.

286. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. There has been very good improvement overall since the previous inspection, well evidenced in the number of students opting to study the subject having increased from one in 1997 to 33 in the current sixth form. Students' views of the subject are very positive. They value the transferable skills they develop through it, and feel that they are taught very well by caring and supportive staff.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail, but German was also sampled. Standards were well above average in the lesson seen as a result of very good teaching.

English

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

Strengths

- The standards attained at A level are above average.
- Students make good progress because of the predominantly good teaching.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject are a significant contributory factor in how well they learn.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching styles do not always encourage initiative and interaction, and students are often too passive in lessons.
- Some sixth form teaching lacks the rigour and challenge of the best.

287. Standards attained in the 2001 A-level examinations were above national expectations, but the proportion of students attaining at the higher A and B grades was average. There was no significant difference in the performance of male and female students. Achievement was good in terms of the progress made over the two years of the course. In 2002 there was a significant improvement in the proportion of students obtaining the higher grades. This was an improvement on what was attained at the previous inspection, and the publication of national performance information is likely to show that standards remain above average. Students' performance at AS level in 2001 and in 2002 was in line with expectations and they, therefore, made good progress in adapting to the demands of Post-16 study.

288. The above average standard of work seen during the course of the inspection reflects students' levels of attainment in A-level examinations. Levels of achievement are, therefore, good for all students, including those for whom English is an additional language, and standards have risen since the previous inspection. All students have good analytical skills and in Year 12 they are beginning to develop an independent view of what they read with many making good use of critical works to help to shape their judgements. This was seen in the ability of such students to analyse the effect of war neuroses on the principal characters in Pat Barker's novel 'Regeneration' and then to offer their own interpretation of the effects of such disorders. They displayed a maturity of understanding of complex issues. Students in Year 12 also read widely beyond the set texts in preparation for their coursework and so are developing a more independent approach to their work outside the classroom. In Year 13, however, many students are passive in their approach to learning and they expect to be provided with information and to be guided to enlightenment by the teacher. They fail to question and challenge and argue in order to gain understanding and there was a lack of active student participation in the Year 13 lessons that were observed. All students make good use of the language of literary criticism and the more competent produce well-structured critical writing, which is informed by detailed textual references. Less competent students still need help with the structuring of their extended writing because they cannot sequence their arguments in a logical way and they fail to support their assertions with appropriate quotations. The department is aware of these weaknesses and is developing strategies to address them.

289. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good because the teachers get across their own enthusiasm for literature and convey their respect for the young men and women before them. Students work with effort and concentration and in Year 12 are beginning to make good use of their own time to develop independent study skills. They would be helped in this within school if they had regular and ready access to computers for research and presentational purposes.

290. The quality of teaching overall is good. The strengths in the teaching are the depth of the teachers' subject knowledge, their careful preparation of lessons with close reference to the demands of the examination and the detailed and helpful written feedback seen in students' files. Teachers have established very good working relationships and are rewarded with students' commitment to the subject. Teachers also offer help and guidance outside lessons and this inclusive approach is appreciated by those students who need additional support. Teaching was very good when it challenged students' thinking. This happened in a lesson on Chaucer's 'The Merchant's Tale' when

students had to analyse the way love was portrayed in the poetry of Donne, Keats and Whitman, and draw comparisons with the Chaucerian work. They made good progress in doing this because the work made demands on their critical faculties. There were occasions, however, when lessons lacked intellectual rigour and opportunities were missed to extend students' understanding of literature. This was because the teacher's questioning was restricted to testing recall and failed to challenge and stimulate, and because few opportunities were provided for students to evaluate their own and each other's work. Opportunities were missed to develop Year 13 students' understanding of D H Lawrence's prose technique in the novel 'The Rainbow'. The questioning was vague and lacked purpose and the students could not understand how well they were learning because the teacher failed to define the aims of the lesson. The gap between such poor teaching and the best is pronounced.

291. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The newly appointed head of department has identified the developments needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning and is working to secure a unity of purpose to bring about change. She has already achieved a great deal in promoting a more independent approach to learning amongst students in Year 12. The new schemes of work introducing students to the demands of A-level study have resulted in greater understanding of the terminology of literary criticism and the context in which writers work. She has improved the subject's assessment procedures and, as a result of the introduction of self-assessment and target setting, students are more aware of how well they learn. She is increasing students' understanding and enjoyment of the subject by encouraging them to read widely beyond the set texts, but knows that more needs to be done to extend learning opportunities outside the classroom. The review and development of teaching methods need to be undertaken more rigorously by all teachers to ensure that their approach enables the young men and women to become independent and critical students.

292. The department has the capacity to improve on the already good provision if there is an acceptance by all staff of the need to be open and self-critical, but mutually supportive in their approach to teaching.

French

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

Strengths

- Teachers are able linguists who have high expectations of the use of French as the principal means of communication in teaching and learning.
- Teaching is good and is enhanced by the imaginative use of high quality teacher-prepared resources, both textual and audio-visual.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.

Areas for improvement

- In 2001, the results of Year 13 students were below the national average in A-level French.
- The 35-minute periods are often eroded and are sometimes too short to ensure adequate student progress.
- Schemes of work are too brief to provide sufficient guidance on meeting the differing needs of students.

293. Results in A-level examinations in French over the last four years have been lower than those achieved nationally. Numbers taking the subject have, however, been fairly small, making comparison with national averages difficult. The school has substantially improved the percentage of students gaining grades A to E since the last inspection and the school's achievement is now fully in line with national expectations. Unfortunately, less than one half of the candidates who completed the French AS-level course in 2001 continued to the full A-level course in 2002.

294. From work seen in the inspection, the attainment of students in A-level French is above the national average. Students achieve well. Classes are conducted largely in French and students have become practised at listening to everyday speech at a natural pace and gaining a good understanding of what is being said. They can also understand more specialist factual language from recorded materials, summarising the content in detail and explaining extracts in both speech and writing. Most students speak French confidently and with a good deal of fluency on a range of topics. They have good pronunciation and are able to vary their intonation according to the context in which they are working. On occasion, they make serious mistakes of grammar when speaking and the range of topics on which they can speak is sometimes limited by weaknesses in their vocabulary. They enjoy using language creatively and, in one class, students presented a very accomplished parody of a television documentary on urban social issues, using recorded video clips they had made and a live script. Their reading is largely confined to textbooks and printed materials provided by their teachers. They can read complex texts with good understanding and, in Year 13, are able to demonstrate their understanding by identifying the principal points or through paraphrase. They can read contemporary French magazines, but there is little evidence that they read French fiction for pleasure. They can write for a number of different purposes in French, in both a familiar and a formal style, on factual subjects and on more creative themes. They make good progress in the very difficult transition from GCSE to A-level work, but their writing still contains a number of basic grammar mistakes and features some anglicised sentence structures. Particular weaknesses are the application of appropriate tenses and the correct use of the subjunctive. Students show very positive attitudes to the subject. They are conscientious, collaborate well together and are very supportive of one another in class.

295. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers are native speakers and have high expectations that the French language will be the principal medium of their teaching. They also draw effectively on their own experiences of life in France, providing students with valuable insights into French culture. They make good use of questioning in class to challenge students and to probe their understanding. As a result, students' linguistic abilities are stretched and they make good progress. Teachers provide students with some helpful verbal feedback on their work in class and mark their written work very attentively. They make good use of resources in addition to the standard textbooks, providing appropriate printed texts and imaginative audio-visual materials, and guiding students towards languages resources available outside school. In one lesson, the teacher played students a song by an Algerian group, which caught their imagination and provided a vivid sound picture of the lifestyle of immigrant traders in Paris. This motivated students enormously and provoked a debate in French on some of the serious underlying social issues. Grammar and specialist vocabulary are well taught, in the appropriate thematic context, and students' understanding is checked through regular tests. Students are also given very good preparation for public examinations, both in terms of advice on examination technique and through practise in using textual evidence to support assertions. To improve A-level teaching further the subject needs to ensure that planning is co-ordinated more effectively between teachers sharing the same class. The planning should be designed to meet students' differing individual needs and would be more effective if its principal elements were communicated to the students.

296. The leadership and management of modern languages are sound, and the clear direction of the head of department has already secured significant improvements. Important work has begun in the subject on self-review and there is good support for newly qualified staff. However, procedures for monitoring standards of teaching and learning need to be more systematic, in order to enable the sharing of good practice and to address weaknesses in planning. The organisation of the timetable poses problems for A-level students and teachers because of the erosion of the 35-minute periods by student movement. The resultant teaching time is sometimes insufficient to enable students to make appropriate progress in their language learning. The subject has yet to find ways of providing students with a clear sense of their own progress as the course proceeds, and a means of using the assessment information systematically to guide planning. Schemes of work need further development so that more detailed guidance is given to staff on meeting the differing needs of students and, for example, on the appropriate use of computers and other resources to assist language learning. Some issues raised at the last inspection also still need to be addressed. There is unsatisfactory access to computers for modern languages students, an insufficient stock of fiction reading and video resources in the library for independent use and insufficient planned provision for speakers of ethnic heritage languages. The subject has the necessary leadership and support of the senior staff of the school to bring about the necessary improvements.