

INSPECTION REPORT

THE FERRERS SCHOOL

Higham Ferrers

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122090

Headteacher: Dr R Litawski

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 25th to 29th November 2002

Inspection number: 249832

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Queensway
Higham Ferrers
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Northamptonshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body.

Name of chair of governors: Councillor D Lawson

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	The school's results and students' achievements How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion, including race equality.	Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English Drama (sixth form)	
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
18638	Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design	
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology	
22590	Bob Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
4773	Peter Gilliatt	Team inspector	History	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Special educational needs Music	
4676	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education	
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Citizenship	

13122	Staphanie Matthews	Team inspector	Law	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ferrers School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. It is of average size, with 1038 students, including 149 in the sixth form. There is an even balance of boys and girls. Almost all students are white, with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds, though these students do not have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, but an average number have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Standards among students joining the school, and most students' backgrounds, are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ferrers is a successful school that provides good education for its students. They advance from average standards in Year 7 to above-average standards at GCSE. The school builds students' confidence, broadens their horizons and opens opportunities for achievement to all. Very effective leadership and management have created a strong pattern of improvement that increasingly reflects the school's motto, "Aspire, achieve, acclaim". The school is a force for good in the local community, and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching leads to effective learning and good long-term achievement.
- Very good leadership and management are driving the school forward.
- Most students enjoy school, work hard and are keen to succeed.
- Support, guidance and careers advice are good.
- There are many opportunities for sport, for learning outside lessons and for creative work.
- There is a good partnership with parents, other schools and the community.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school.

What could be improved

- Teaching in some lessons in Years 7 to 9 could be better matched to students' needs.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) could be used more consistently to support learning in most subjects.
- Weaknesses in timetabling and a lack of teaching time are hindering progress in some subjects.
- Learning in some classes, mostly in Year 8, is held back by misbehaviour.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in November 1996, all areas of its work were good. GCSE results fell sharply in 1999, but have now recovered. Leadership and management have established a strong pattern of improvement in the main school and in the sixth form, and there is a strong sense of teamwork among the staff. The range of learning opportunities has been extended, and the quality of teaching has improved. On the other hand, there is more misbehaviour than at the time of the last inspection and some younger students could achieve more than they do. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. However, the current rate of improvement in the school is very good, and it is very well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Overall GCSE performance was above average in 2002, both nationally and in comparison with similar schools. Standards in Year 11 are particularly good in French, dance and physical education, but below average in religious education. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also above average overall. Standards in national tests in Year 9 have been broadly average in recent years, and were similar in English, mathematics and science in 2002. Students reached average standards in English and mathematics during the inspection, but were doing better in science. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were also above average in Information and communication technology (ICT) and in design and technology. The school's A-level results showed good improvement in 2002.

Results at GCSE and in Year 9 national tests fell sharply in 1999, but have been recovering since then. The trend of improvement in results is now broadly average at GCSE. The school sets suitable targets for raising standards. It narrowly missed its 2002 GCSE target for students achieving 5 A*-C grades, but good teaching led to strengths in other aspects of its GCSE work, including a high pass rate among lower-attaining students.

Overall, achievement among students with special educational needs is good. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds also do well. Gifted and talented students achieve well by Year 11, though they could achieve more by Year 9. Achievement among all students is satisfactory by Year 9, and good by Year 11. The above-average standards in the sixth form represent good achievement.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The vast majority of students work hard, want to take part in school activities, and are happy to accept responsibility.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most students behave very well, but a minority do not behave as they should in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students develop self-confidence and a sense of responsibility. They form positive relationships with teachers and with each other.
Attendance	Above average, with low unauthorised absence

Students are extensively involved in charitable work, and develop good understanding of major world issues. There is very little oppressive behaviour, and racial harmony is very good. Students with physical disabilities receive excellent support. Sixth form students support other students very well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English and science is good throughout the school. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, and literacy skills are well taught across the school. Almost all teaching in the sixth form is good to very good, and pays good attention to study and learning skills.

Teachers know their subjects well and plan interesting and engaging lessons. Marking and homework are good. Teaching and learning in just under a third of lessons are very good or excellent, with very challenging work and outstanding pace that brings the very best out of the students. Computers are, however, under-used in most subjects, and teaching in a small minority of lessons does not provide students with sufficient challenge.

Students' learning reflects the quality of teaching, and is good overall. It accelerates when the teaching is very good or better, but suffers in some classes from misbehaviour. Learning benefits greatly from activities outside the classroom. These provide particularly good opportunities for gifted and talented students and prepare students well for the sixth form. Teaching meets the needs of all groups of students well over the course of their school career.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Many imaginative opportunities for learning, but some weaknesses in timetabling. Very good activities outside lessons.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Good specialist teaching, with good support for learning in most lessons. Good learning opportunities for older students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good for cultural and spiritual development, with wide-ranging opportunities for students to learn about other cultures. Good provision for moral and social development, including an effective school council and opportunities for service to the community.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. The school takes good care of students' health, safety and welfare, and provides good guidance on their academic work.

The school has a good working partnership with parents. Activities outside lessons include many opportunities for creative and artistic work, for sport, active computer clubs, an additional course in law and an outstanding programme of visits. Over a hundred students learn Mandarin Chinese. The school holds Artsmark and Sportsmark gold awards. Legal requirements for religious education and collective worship are not met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and all staff with management responsibilities plan and work very effectively to raise standards and extend opportunities for all students.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and of areas that need to be developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school uses all available sources of information, and tracks the standards reached by all students in great detail.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Astute financial planning and management is enabling the school to extend its facilities and the range of opportunities for students.

The school has good accommodation. Staffing and learning resources are adequate, but there are too few specialist religious education teachers, and some classes in key subjects are taught by more than one teacher. Teachers in some subjects need better access to computers.

Leadership and management are based on clear planning and policy development, followed by decisive action that ensures that they are followed through. Management takes care to provide for the needs of all students in the school. The leadership group is well organised, and the overall quality of subject management is very good. The school makes good use of the principles of giving best value in its services, and obtaining value for money in purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is approachable. • Children make good progress in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of information. • The school's co-operation with parents. • Homework. • Behaviour.

A large majority of parents expressed positive views of the school, and overall inspectors agree with them. The inspection team do not share the concerns of a minority of parents about the quality of information, or of the school's co-operation with parents. Their evidence shows that the overall quality of homework is good, though some mathematics homework for higher-attaining students is too easy. Inspection evidence confirms parents' concerns about behaviour in some classes.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 149 students. It is of average size, and has similar numbers of male and female students. It is part of a consortium of four local schools. Most students follow A-level, Vocational A-level, and Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses; a smaller number take intermediate vocational courses. The range of courses is broad, and planned in relation to other local provision. It meets students' needs very well. Roughly half of the students from the main school join the sixth form each year. Numbers are similar to those at the time of the last inspection, but have recently begun to rise. In 2002, seven students joined the sixth form from other schools. Almost all students are white, with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no entrance requirements, and standards among students joining Year 12 are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form. Students reach good standards in their courses, and have very good opportunities to develop responsibility and to take a lead in the school community. There is a very good learning atmosphere, sustained by very good teaching, good learning and effective personal support for students. Management is based on very good organisation, with a strong personal lead from the head of the sixth form, and the school plays a leading role in the management of the consortium. The sixth form has developed the range of its courses very well since the last inspection, and many of the new courses attract substantial numbers of students. The range and consistency of sixth form work have improved significantly since the last inspection, and standards have improved significantly in science. The sixth form meets the needs of its students well, and provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Teaching is very well matched to the needs of the students.
- Leadership and management create a climate of achievement.
- Students receive very good personal support
- Students work hard in and out of lessons, and take a leading role in the school community.
- The school plays a leading part in the local sixth form consortium.

What could be improved

- The quality of some students' independent work could be improved.
- Students need more opportunities to use ICT in and out of lessons.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Results are above average. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good.
Chemistry	Good. Students make good progress in practical and theoretical work, and reach above-average standards.
English	Good. Students make good progress from their GCSE results to reach broadly average standards. Teaching is good, and often very good.
German	Good. Standards are above average in response to very effective teaching that encourages all students to work and think in German.

Drama and Theatre Studies	Good. Students make good progress in practical work and theory. Their average overall standards represent good progress from GCSE.
Physical education	Very good. Very good teaching and learning lead to above-average standards. Students make an excellent contribution to the community.
Graphic Design	Good. Students are making good progress in the early stages of this new course, and are reaching broadly average standards.
Computer Studies	Good. Standards on this popular course range from average to above average. Teaching is well informed and very good. Learning is good overall, but some students need to work harder outside lessons.
Law	Very good. Standards are above average, and sometimes very high. Teaching and learning are very good.

Sixth form enrichment and general studies programmes make a good contribution to students' key learning and study skills, and a very effective contribution to their personal development. There is, however, too little provision for ICT. There is good provision for students wishing to improve their GCSE grades in English, mathematics and science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students receive thoughtful and well-informed personal guidance and encouragement from their teachers and all senior staff. They are encouraged to aim high in higher education and careers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Management creates a culture of achievement for all students, leading to rising standards. The school takes continuous and effective action to improve teaching, learning and 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"> • There is good access to teachers, who give effective personal support. • Arrangements for students joining the sixth form are good. • Students are treated as responsible young adults. • Students enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on progress. • Advice on personal problems. • Careers advice. • Advice on choice of courses.

There were many more positive than negative comments. Inspectors agree with students' positive views. They found that most of the concerns expressed by students in Year 12 were addressed during the two years students spend in the sixth form, but that they would benefit from more feedback on progress in the early stages of Year 12.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Students joining the school have reached broadly average test results in their primary schools over recent years. GCSE results, and the quality of work seen during the inspection in Year 11, represent good achievement from this starting point. Standards fell significantly following the last inspection, but a strong and improving trend of recovery has been established over the past three years. Nevertheless, achievement could be improved further in Year 9. This is partly because strengths in teaching in these years need to be made more consistent, and partly because some higher-attaining students are not fully challenged from the time they join the school in Year 7. Overall, achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory.
2. Above-average standards in literacy by Year 11 are chiefly the result of clearly-focused teaching in English lessons, with particularly well-planned writing activities. Literacy standards benefit from good work in other subjects, notably science, religious education, design and technology and history. Number skills across the school are broadly average overall. There are some good examples of number work, such as use of probability theory in genetics, and the collection of data in physical education. However, the school has not yet completed an analysis of students' number skills, and numeracy is not embedded in the culture of the school, or supported by good books in the library. Progress is also held up by some inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics in Years 7 to 9.
3. The proportion of students achieving 5 A*-C grades in 2002 was broadly average and there were significant strengths in all other measurements of its performance. The proportion of students passing English, mathematics and science with grades A* to C was above average in each subject. The proportion of lower-attaining students completing their courses and achieving graded results was well above average, and the school's overall performance, taking account of all graded results, was above average. Standards seen during the inspection were very similar to these good GCSE results in English and mathematics, and just slightly lower in science. Standards were average to above average in all other subjects, with strengths in design and technology, music, physical education and modern languages as a result of particularly good teaching. Standards were below average in religious education, chiefly because too little time is given to the subject, and in history, which is a popular GCSE choice with lower-attaining students. In Year 9, the results of national tests were very similar to the standard of work during the inspection, which was broadly average overall. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were, however, above average in science and design and technology as a result of consistently good teaching.
4. Students of all abilities do well over the course of their school career, in response to provision that is planned to meet all students' needs. Higher-attaining students, for example, do very well in French, and talented students achieve outstanding standards in dance and music. Students of all abilities do very well in physical education, where the school is very successful in engaging the interest of girls as well as boys. Students with special educational needs achieve well in the long term in relation to their learning and behavioural difficulties, and do well on the alternative vocational programme in Years 10 and 11. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve good overall standards. Boys do slightly less well than girls overall, but the school's close tracking of individual students' progress, and good target-setting in Years 10 and 11, are helping to raise the standards reached by boys.
5. The headteacher and her senior colleagues work closely with subject leaders to monitor teaching, to track progress and standards, and to set targets for each subject. This gives them a clear understanding of the factors leading to good standards in each subject, and informs development planning, for example, by identifying which subjects are already well managed, and where advanced skills teachers are needed. This close analysis of what is already being achieved, with

clear identification of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and management that lead to the current pattern of achievement, is driving up standards.

Sixth form

6. Students join the sixth form with average overall standards for their courses. They make good progress. Results in 2001, the most recent year for which national comparisons are available, were above average overall for students taking A-level and advanced vocational courses. Results for 2002 showed further improvement. The standard of work seen during the inspection, which took place in the first term of the school year, was average overall, but above average in a significant number of subjects, including law, foreign languages, physical education, sciences and mathematics. Students are well placed to repeat the good achievement of earlier years. Across the sixth form, a high proportion of students complete their courses, and higher-attaining students achieve high grades.
7. Most students across the school are also achieving well in the key skills of communication and literacy and number work. However, some are held back in these areas by weaknesses in their independent learning, particularly where written work is required as part of a subject seen as largely practical, such as physical education or theatre studies. A larger proportion of students have underdeveloped skills in ICT, partly because of a lack of systematic use in lessons and for personal research. Developing provision in the main school will, however, ensure that all students entering the sixth form from September 2003 have had an opportunity to obtain a GCSE qualification in ICT.
8. In most recent years, female students have started with higher standards in their GCSEs than male students, and have achieved better results at A level. More recently, male students' standards have improved, and they did better than female students at AS level in 2002. There were no significant differences between the quality of male and female students' work during the inspection, although there was evidence that some students who have to take on too much part-time work do not do as well as they otherwise might. The range and quality of achievement in the sixth form has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in the sciences and in the new courses that have been introduced, including physical education and law.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. At the time of the last inspection, the students' attitudes and behaviour were very good. Most students still have very good attitudes and behave well, but a significant minority, mostly in Year 8, do not behave as they should in lessons and around the school. Overall, students' attitudes to school are now good, and their behaviour is satisfactory.
10. Most students enjoy school. They value their good relationships with staff, and the teaching they receive. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, attitudes rise to meet it, and many students show strong commitment to their work. They complete homework regularly, and sometimes do more than is asked. The students said they also particularly enjoy the extra-curricular activities, expressive arts and the sports facilities. However, attitudes vary from class to class, depending on the approach of the teacher. In some lessons, the teachers promote the students' spiritual awareness well and are skilful at developing the students' self-esteem. In a Year 10 community service lesson, for example, the teacher had built up very good relationships with the students and he valued their opinions. The students settled to work very quickly, listened to their teacher and were confident to share their ideas within their group. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not pay the same amount of attention to reinforcing positive attitudes, and this leads to a deterioration in behaviour. The school has considerable success in building positive attitudes among older, lower-attaining students following its alternative vocational programme.
11. Most students behave well in lessons, in assemblies and around the school. When the teaching is very good or excellent, for example, in physical education at GCSE, their behaviour is exemplary. Behaviour is, however, unsatisfactory in a tenth of lessons, and occasionally poor. A minority of students, mostly lower-attaining boys, are rude, and disrupt learning by talking out of turn and

shouting out. In one lesson, the teacher spent nine minutes settling the class down before a discussion could begin. Students taking part in lunchtime clubs behave well, but others, who are not effectively supervised, spoil the generally good atmosphere by roaming around the building and misbehaving. There are very few recorded racial and bullying incidents and the students say that any anti-social behaviour is dealt with swiftly.

12. The rate of exclusion in the last year was low when compared with similar schools, but has risen during the current term. This is partly because of interruptions to the vocational programme for older lower-attaining students, caused by staffing difficulties outside the school's control. These students tend to behave significantly better when working on the vocational programme, which is very well matched to their needs, than in normal lessons. The behaviour of older higher-attaining students, boys as well as girls, is often excellent. The general improvement in behaviour as students move through the school indicates the effectiveness of the school's provision for moral and social development.
13. Students' personal development and relationships are good. Students work well together in groups and pairs. Their relationships with staff are good and the students say that they can turn to adults working in school if they have problems. The year councils and school council bring about practical improvements in school life, such as increasing the number of lockers and reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy. They are also active in raising funds for charities. The students enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities and school productions. They benefit from the strengths in the school's provision for cultural development and citizenship. For example, higher-attaining students in Year 9 showed an above-average understanding of current world issues, and an older, lower-attaining student, who had worked with senior citizens, said *'I won't put old people down again – what they can do is amazing'*.
14. Attendance is above average, but has declined slightly since the last inspection, when it was well above average. Nevertheless, all year groups had an attendance rate over 92 per cent in the last school year, and the rate of unauthorised absence is low. The continuing pattern of good attendance among older students is partly due to the success of the alternative programmes offered to lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11. The vast majority of students are punctual and the school day starts promptly.

Sixth Form

15. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes to school. They work hard in lessons, and form very good working relationships with their teachers. In almost all courses, students also complete their independent work very well, but a minority have some weaknesses in study and learning skills that prevent them from reaching the highest possible standards. Relatively few sixth form students are highly committed to reading widely around their subjects.
16. Very good provision for students' personal development enables them to develop a strong sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Many take a leading role in the life of the school and community, and the best of this work is of exceptional quality. Sixth form students' work as mentors to younger students in the main school is appreciated, though more female than male students tend to do this. Attendance in the sixth form is above average, but there were some problems with punctuality during the inspection when students had to travel between schools.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Good teaching throughout the main school is based on good professional knowledge of subjects, thorough planning and preparation, good relationships and management of students in lessons, a generally brisk pace of work, and good marking and homework. These qualities were predominant in two-thirds of the lessons seen across the school. They help students develop good patterns of learning across subjects, leading to increasingly consistent and effective learning as they move towards GCSE. The habit of completing homework in Years 7 to 9, for example, prepares students for the rigours of GCSE coursework. There have been considerable improvements in the

consistency of teaching since the last inspection. The proportion of good and better teaching has risen significantly, while the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen by half.

18. Where the teaching is excellent, teachers have high levels of understanding of their subject and of patterns of learning in the classes they teach. They use these to design varied and challenging work that is very closely adapted to the needs of the students. In some subjects, such as basketball and French, this leads to very high standards from higher-attaining students. In others, such as an English lesson for older students, it engages the interest of lower-attaining students, extends their understanding of topics they are interested in, and inspires them to work very hard. In German, excellent teaching in Year 7 enabled all students to gain quick and effective command of a broad range of vocabulary. In all lessons where teaching was excellent, the pace of work was an outstanding feature, particularly in the second half of the lesson and at the end of the afternoon. The very good teaching has many of the outstanding qualities seen in excellent lessons, but tends to use a narrower range of learning activities. There is much very good and excellent teaching in activities outside lessons.
19. Teaching in a little over a quarter of lessons across the school is satisfactory. These lessons are effectively planned, with suitable tasks that enable students to make acceptable progress in the subject. In most, particularly in Years 7 to 9, work could be more closely tuned to the range of learning needs in the class, and in some, notably religious education, teachers do not have sufficiently advanced knowledge of the subject to teach to a good standard. Learning in several subjects, including English and mathematics, is held up by the need for teachers to share classes and by other timetabling problems. Together, these factors contribute to a weaker pattern of learning and achievement in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. There is also a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in individual lessons, caused by limited knowledge of the subject matter, planning that sets work at too low a level, and weak application of the school's behaviour policy.
20. Within subjects, teaching is good throughout the school in English, science, history, art and design and modern foreign languages. In music and physical education, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, where it benefits from particularly high levels of professional understanding and experience. Teaching in mathematics and geography is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in ICT is good overall, but better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In design and technology, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in religious education is satisfactory overall, with a limited amount of very good specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11.
21. Literacy skills are well taught across the school in most subjects, with a very strong and effective lead from the English department. Numeracy skills are taught to a satisfactory standard, but are limited by the lack of opportunities to investigate data in detail. There is very good use of ICT to promote learning in English, art and design, and design and technology, but computers are under-used in some subjects, including mathematics.
22. Students with special educational needs receive good specialist teaching and effective support in most lessons, both from teachers and teaching assistants. Older students with behavioural difficulties receive good teaching in the alternative programme, but the learning of a significant minority of students is sometimes held back by unsatisfactory behaviour, mostly, but not always, in Year 8. The needs of gifted and talented students are met during the course of their school career, but more consistently in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where some work, particularly in classes containing a broad range of abilities and learning needs, is too easy for them. Teachers in most subjects provide equally well for boys and girls. The school monitors the progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds exceptionally closely, and their learning and achievement are good.

Sixth form

23. Teaching in the sixth form has the same strengths as in the main school, and is more consistent. Very nearly all teaching in sixth form lessons is good or better, and just under half is very good or excellent. Teachers have advanced knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and design interesting and sometimes innovative work that helps students to aim for high standards. The quality of practical work is particularly good, for example, in visits to a range of law courts and in experimental work in science. Teachers promote an effective working partnership with students. They provide effectively for key skills in literacy, communication and number work, though learning could be accelerated in most subjects by better use of ICT. Teachers place strong emphasis on the need for students to work outside lessons, and provide good guidance on this. Good teaching in the general studies and enrichment programmes helps students broaden their interests and their view of the world. This makes an important contribution to citizenship. Experienced teachers provide very effective support that enables newly and recently-qualified teachers to teach very well in the sixth form.
24. Students respond well to the very good quality of teaching they receive, and learn very well in lessons. Outside lessons, the quality of learning is good rather than very good. Most students' learning benefits from their good attitudes and willingness to work independently. In subjects where students do this consistently, such as law, learning is very good. However, in other subjects, a significant minority, mostly of lower-attaining students, do not work consistently enough outside lessons, for example by taking action on points raised by teachers when their work is marked, by completing work to a consistently good standard, and by reading widely. In some cases, students' ability to reach the highest standards of which they are capable is limited by the need to take part-time employment, sometimes for more hours than the school recommends.

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

25. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities, and has been extended effectively since the last inspection. Students have particularly good opportunities to develop their skills and interests in physical education and the expressive arts. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, students in Years 7 to 9 are given enhanced opportunities through the provision of dance and drama. In Years 10 and 11 students have a good choice of options in National Curriculum subjects and can also choose courses in law, media studies, dance and drama. A newly-introduced, certificated scheme makes good provision for lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 to develop key skills. An above-average allocation of time for physical education contributes to personal development as well as to standards. Girls are much more involved in the subject than in most schools, and often do well at GCSE.
26. Weaknesses remain in the provision for religious education, and statutory requirements are not fully met. Insufficient time in Year 9 reduces students' opportunities to develop their work in the subject, and timetabling arrangements in Year 11 place half of the students at a disadvantage when preparing for the GCSE short course examination. Good provision is made for teaching ICT skills but their use in subjects is not yet consistent or fully effective. In some subjects timetabling does not always make for consistent learning, particularly where classes are split between two teachers and where the spacing of lessons during the week makes continuity of teaching and learning difficult. Literacy skills are developed well in most subjects, and other aspects of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 are being introduced steadily.
27. The school's programme for personal, social and health education has improved since the last inspection and provision is now good. The curriculum is very carefully planned and the sequence of topics is well matched to students' learning needs. The programme includes sex and relationship education, issues of drugs misuse, aspects of citizenship and careers education. It is supported by good resources and makes extensive use of outside agencies. The school is managing the introduction of the new subject of citizenship very well, though it accepts the need to ensure consistency in the work.

28. The school makes good arrangements to provide equal opportunities for all students. Students with special needs have a broad and balanced curriculum, with effective additional teaching for basic skills. There is effective support for older students with behavioural difficulties through the alternative vocational provision. Standards reached by students with minority ethnic backgrounds are monitored very closely, and this helps to maintain good levels of achievement for these students. The school monitors the standards reached by boys and girls, but does not yet analyse differences in the standards reached by boys and girls when they join the school.
29. Provision for careers educational and guidance is very good. There are good links with the Connexions, the careers advisory service and with local employers, who co-operate generously with work experience. Year 10 students greatly value the workshops with a management consultant on confidence-building and improving memory. The recent extension of careers guidance to Years 7 to 9 is working well in some lessons, but some tutors require more training in order to teach the programme effectively.
30. The school has a very good partnership with the community and with other schools. There is a very wide range of visitors, and students are encouraged to think of others, for example by organising entertainment for senior citizens. Links with primary schools are strong, and are developing further, though they are not yet used effectively to match learning in Year 7 to the work students have done in primary schools. Very good arrangements to support the transfer of students joining the school ensure a good start in Year 7. Links with the local further education college play a crucial part in the alternative vocational programme; the learning and behaviour of students involved in this suffered considerably when they were interrupted by staffing problems at the beginning of the term of the inspection.
31. Learning opportunities outside the classroom are wide-ranging and very well organised. Students can study Mandarin, or extend their skills in the art and media club. There are many sporting and musical opportunities, in which teachers and students take part with high levels of skill and commitment. Two clubs have successfully encouraged boys to participate in dance and singing. Sixth form students work with Year 7 students each day in the indoor games club, and the learning centre is open at lunchtime and after school for research and reading. Residential visits include outdoor activities trips to Cornwall and a study trip to China. Helpful learning sessions are offered out of school hours to help students with coursework and preparation for examinations. The law course for students in Years 10 and 11 prepares students very well for the sixth form. A teacher co-ordinates all activities and produces a useful booklet for parents and students.

Sixth form

32. The school's consortium arrangements with three other schools in the area provide almost thirty subjects at AS and A level, as well as to advanced vocational courses in business, and in health and social care. Intermediate and foundation vocational courses are also offered, and effective provision is made for students who want to re-sit GCSE examinations in English, science and mathematics. The range and variety of courses, such as the recent introduction of A-level courses in PE and ICT, have been very well thought-out to meet local needs.
33. A very good programme of enrichment studies, including provision for religious education and general studies, extends learning and contributes very effectively to students' personal development. Provision for students to develop key skills is made through the individual subject courses, although provision for ICT skills is not systematic. Many students, staff and inspectors were moved by the assembly led by sixth formers after their visit to Auschwitz. Schemes such as the Bar mock trials, the Youth Council and Youth Against Racism develop students' understanding of citizenship. Sixth form students receive good advice on careers and higher education. The community leadership scheme encourages students to develop valuable social skills through helping younger students in the classroom, organising sports activities and producing the school newsletter.

Personal development

34. Provision for students' personal development is a strong feature of the school. It is consistent with the school's key values of tolerance, mutual respect, and positive relationships where students can flourish. An audit of social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision was undertaken in summer 2001, and an excellent handbook compiled, covering all subjects at some point in the students' education.
35. Spiritual development is very good. There are many opportunities for reflection both in and out of lessons. Positive posters and banners are found throughout the school on every available wall space, and students expressed appreciation of this feature. While assemblies do not provide a daily act of collective worship, their overall quality is very good. A powerful and moving assembly called 'Holocaust memorial lesson from Auschwitz' was presented by the two sixth form students who had visited Auschwitz, and followed a visit from a Holocaust survivor. Spiritual development is promoted across the school by a well-chosen 'thought for the week', and there is a contribution to it in the work of each department. There are particular strengths in art and design, science work on embryos, dance, music and religious education.
36. Provision for moral development is good and the behaviour policy sets out clearly what is expected of students. Teachers give a strong lead in encouraging good relationships and in distinguishing right from wrong behaviour. Opportunities within the curriculum, in particular religious education, are fully used to explore and discuss moral issues. The thought for the week during the inspection, 'All the world is full of suffering. It is also full of overcoming it,' gave a clear focus of thinking about others in Year 11 assembly. The kind word, the helping hand were used to illustrate what one can do. A wide range of charitable and fundraising activities occur at school. Local hospitals and others benefit from the long-standing tradition of the Christmas hamper competition.
37. Students develop their social skills through discussion and planning work in lessons, activities outside lessons, visits and residential trips. They regularly work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. Team fixtures and theatrical and musical productions help them to learn to work together in larger groups, as does the school council. A special activities day, at the end of each year, enables students to develop social skills in a variety of situations. Sixth formers have a very good range of responsibilities, carefully thought out to ensure they have adequate support. For example, students acting as 'buddies' to younger students work closely with form tutors.
38. Provision for cultural development runs throughout the curriculum, and establishes a strong sense of respect for others, their traditions and beliefs. A very good range of cultures is represented in the personal development handbook. The school celebrates the richness of other cultures through exchanges, visits to European countries, and theatre and gallery visits. Positive posters reflect the range of cultures in modern British society, and students' awareness is raised through special events such as Black History Month, which took place immediately before the inspection. Students study art and music from a broad range of cultures, including patterns and designs based on Maori tattoos, African and Celtic patterns, Japanese and African masks and Islamic symmetry. Students have particularly good opportunities to learn about Chinese culture through their study of Mandarin.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

39. The school has maintained the high standard of personal care for students seen during the last inspection. Tutors and heads of year know students well, and provide very good support for their personal development. Students appreciate this, and told inspectors that they could rely on teachers and teaching assistants to help them. As one put it, 'Our form tutor sees a problem and sorts it out'. The sixth form buddies and 'Student services' staff provide extra dimensions to this work. The school works hard to identify and support students with particular difficulties, including problems with behaviour, and provides excellent support for students with physical disabilities.
40. The school has good procedures to ensure the students' welfare, health and safety. Child protection arrangements meet local requirements and are well understood. There are suitable

arrangements to support students in public care. A suitable number of staff are qualified in first aid, and there is a well-equipped medical room. Good records are kept of accidents. Some inconsistencies in administering medication were swiftly rectified during the inspection. Health and safety checks, including inspections and risk assessments, are regularly undertaken. There are satisfactory arrangements to protect students from unsuitable material on the Internet.

41. There are good arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance, including effective use of computers and close attention to patterns in absence. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer, rewards students with good attendance, and discourages holidays during term time. Attendance in Years 10 and 11 is boosted by the alternative vocational programme. One student said, 'If it wasn't for the programme, I wouldn't be here'.
42. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Clear systems of rewards and sanctions are in place and are used successfully by the most teachers. In a few lessons, teachers struggle to maintain discipline, and the school has a planned programme of support to help these teachers. Parents and students appreciate the system of 'well done' cards which are sent home by post. Younger students enjoy receiving rewards in the form of credits, although this is not effective for some older students. The school has plans to address this issue. Students are trusted to use the building properly at lunchtime. Most respond well, but a minority do not, and arrangements to promote good behaviour at lunchtime are not fully effective. Lunchtime arrangements for Year 7 students are inadequate in wet weather.
43. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and keeps good records of any incidents, including those of a racist nature. Bullying is discussed in the personal, social and health education programmes and the school council has undertaken a comprehensive study of bullying within the school. As a result a valuable leaflet was devised by the council and sent to all parents. Students say that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.
44. Overall, arrangements to assess students' progress and to use the information from assessment to plan future work are good. Individual guidance and targets are very effective in Years 10 and 11 in keeping students focused and in helping some to raise their sights. Assessment is very good in science, and good in most other subjects, though there is too little assessment in religious education. The progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is monitored particularly closely, and they achieve well. There are, on the other hand, areas in which assessment could be made more consistent. Gifted and talented students, for example, are identified early, but the school does not yet have monitoring arrangements to ensure that they are fully challenged in all of their work. The use of information from assessment to plan work and give individual guidance is not always consistent in Years 7 to 9. It particularly needs improvement at the beginning of Year 7, where the school has not yet made enough progress towards the point for improvement raised in the last inspection report. The assessment of students with special educational needs is carried out to a good standard, and students and parents are fully involved in annual reviews. Work in most lessons meets these students' needs.

Sixth form

Assessment

45. There are good arrangements across the sixth form to assess standards, set targets and track progress. Assessment is used well, and sometimes very well, to match work to students' learning needs. In a very good Year 13 English lesson, for example, the teacher used information from assessing students' essays to target questions to build on strengths and develop areas where they were less confident. Students joining the school have realistic minimum target grades for each subject. They receive regular feedback on their progress towards these, though the first formal feedback takes place rather late in the autumn term. Most students make good use of feedback and other comments from teachers in marking, but a minority need to do this more systematically.

Advice, support and guidance

46. All sixth form teachers, especially the head of sixth form, provide very good advice and guidance, and encourage students to apply to study at top universities. Students are encouraged to develop their independent study skills and those who succeed are rewarded with periods of home study. The sixth form programme for careers education and guidance is very good. The staff have drawn up a well-planned careers policy, which ensures that the students have access to relevant and timely advice about life after school. Students say that that staff are very approachable and they feel well supported academically and in their personal development. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good throughout the consortium.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The school has maintained its good relationships with parents since the last inspection. It has improved the quality of information for parents, and has strengthened its links with them. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They are pleased that their children like school and value the way in which staff are willing to discuss the parents' concerns. They feel that the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.
48. The school's links with parents are very good. Families of Year 6 students joining the school are invited to individual meetings with senior members of staff so that concerns and problems can be fully discussed. Many parents attend and enjoy the sports tournaments organised for primary schools. The home-school agreement is comprehensive and gives clear details of what is expected from parents, students and the school. Parents feel that staff are very approachable and the staff contact home not only if there is a problem, but also to celebrate success. The system of sending home 'well done' cards is well established throughout the main school and sixth form, and is appreciated by students of all ages and their parents. The school is constantly striving to improve its links with parents and frequently seeks their views through questionnaires, for example on parent-teacher consultations and the needs of gifted students. Staff follow up any concerns raised.
49. The school provides good information for parents, and it has some outstanding features. The prospectus is produced to an excellent professional standard, and accurately reflects the aims and spirit of the school. The governors' annual report to parents also paints a very detailed picture of school life. Both documents contain all the information they should. High quality newsletters, published by sixth form students, keep parents well informed about future events, celebrate the school's successes and include a selection of students' work. The options booklet and consortium prospectus give parents appropriate information about the choices their children have at the end of Years 9 and 11.
50. The school has recently invited parents to valuable information sessions on work experience and revision techniques. The school council produced a beneficial leaflet for parents on the school's approach to bullying. The school has carefully reviewed its reporting systems, taking into consideration the views of staff, parents and students. Students' annual reports are generally good. They contain detailed information about the students' attitudes and how well they are doing. In most subjects the teachers give good advice about how the students can improve their work, but some targets are too vague, especially in mathematics. Due to staffing problems, the school did not produce religious education reports for students in Years 7 to 9, which are required by law. The school has recently introduced interim assessment sheets which give parents useful 'snap-shots' of their children's current National Curriculum levels or grades. They do not, however, say whether the student is doing as well as he or she could. The Year 7 tutor evening and annual consultations with subject teachers offer good opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress, and parents said that staff were readily available for individual consultation.
51. Parents play an important part in the life and work of the school. Parent governors are very supportive of the school and help to shape its future. Members of the School Society organise

fund-raising and social events. Parents contribute extensively to their children's learning, and attend consultation evenings and special events in large numbers. Parents of students with special educational needs attend annual reviews and make a good contribution to the review process.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. When the headteacher was appointed, two years before the inspection, there had been a fall from the high standards recorded in the last inspection report. She and the governors have worked closely and effectively to reverse this trend, and to provide clear long-term direction for the school. The headteacher and her senior colleagues monitor teaching closely, and use the results of this very effectively to recognise and promote talent among the staff, as well as to take action to improve teaching where this is needed. They have made important changes to the leadership group, strengthening its skills, for example, in behavioural management and in provision for older, lower-attaining students. Appointments to middle management positions have been carefully thought out, and teachers joining the school as subject leaders have made an immediate impact on standards, particularly in English. The overall quality of leadership of subjects, departments and pastoral staff is very good, and the school has very clear plans to strengthen it further, for example, by training and appointing advanced skills teachers. In several subjects, and in the management of the sixth form, the school's identification of teachers' talents and skills, followed by very effective training and support, has enabled it to fill management positions from within its own resources. This very good leadership and management has been a major factor in reaching the national trend for GCSE results in 2002, and provides a good basis for improving standards in Year 9.
53. The headteacher, her senior colleagues and governors use data analysis very effectively to track the school's performance, and to monitor the standards and progress closely in all subjects. The school development plan is a very clear and effective working document, with a good balance between the school's drive to improve standards and provision for the personal development of all students. Commitment to equal opportunities for all students, including those with physical and behavioural disabilities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, is backed up by practical action. The standards reached by students from minority ethnic backgrounds, for example, are tracked in great detail as part of the race equality policy, and the alternative vocational programme for older students at risk of exclusion has been very clearly thought out to meet these students' needs. Governors are well informed, very well organised, and fully involved in the direction of the school. Financial management and control are very good, and the school uses funds very well to develop new educational opportunities for all students, for example, by developing the site and establishing new courses. These have included the allocation of experienced, senior staff to work with lower-attaining students who are unlikely to do well at GCSE. At the same time, the headteacher has shown determination to raise the sights of high-attaining students, encouraging them to believe in their ability to succeed at the highest level.
54. The school has adequate numbers of teachers, and they are well qualified in almost all subjects. It has, on the other hand, had a large turnover of staff over the last two years, and its timetabling problems stem chiefly from the need to rely on part-time teachers in some subjects. Arrangements for the professional development of all teachers are very good, and the headteacher and her senior colleagues take a close personal interest in the career development of all teachers. Support for newly-qualified teachers is excellent, enabling them quickly to assume responsibility within the school and to teach in the sixth form. The school is also prepared to invest in advanced courses for senior staff, several of whom have been successful in the National Professional Qualification for Headship, and are studying for advanced degrees in educational leadership and management.
55. Resources for learning are adequate overall, both in departments and in the library, although teachers in several subjects do not have enough access to computers. The library is used well to promote reading and study, and includes a good careers library. Accommodation in the main school is good, and is kept in good condition by the site manager and his staff. There is good access for wheelchair users. A sports hall has been added since the last inspection, and there are extensive plans to develop the site further.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

56. Very good leadership and management of the sixth form lead to good standards of work, and enable it to contribute well to the working atmosphere of the whole school. The headteacher and head of the sixth form work closely with the consortium manager to ensure that students have a broad range of courses that match their needs and interests. They identify the need for new courses within the context of other local provision, and develop them very well, with support from courses in the main school where possible. The development of sixth form courses takes close account of demand and of the need to provide good value for money.
57. The sixth form is effectively committed to equal opportunities for all students, including lower-attaining students and the small minority who have special educational needs. Teaching, learning and the progress of all students are closely monitored, and a culture of high expectations is established, with close personal guidance to encourage students to apply for prestigious universities. This has resulted in a successful and happy sixth form, in which standards at A level are rising.

Resources

58. Resources for learning in the sixth form are adequate overall, good for theatre studies and very good for physical education. The library provides adequate overall support for learning, with good features in collections for some subjects, such as design and technology. Students studying ICT have good resources, but students taking other subjects have too little access to computers and other modern communication systems in their lessons. Sixth form accommodation is adequate, but very cramped, both in classrooms and in social areas. There are sufficient teachers to teach sixth form courses, and they are very well qualified. In several subjects, notably law, teachers have very good and relevant practical experience.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. To develop further the climate of improvement and achievement they have established in the school, the headteacher and governors should give priority to the following points. Some aspects of each point are included in the school's current development planning:-

- a. Refine the match of teaching to students' learning needs in Years 7 to 9, by:
- Ensuring that students in all lessons receive a good balance of challenge and support;
 - Using assessment procedures to set consistently demanding work from the start of Year 7;
 - Providing challenging homework for the highest-attaining students in all subjects.

Paragraphs 1, 2, 19, 22, 28, 44, 70, 92, 111.

- b. Improve the use of ICT to promote learning, by:
- Establishing clearly what ICT can contribute to work in each subject;
 - Setting up and monitoring an effective programme for the use of ICT across the school;
 - Ensuring that all teachers have adequate access to computers.

Paragraphs 21, 26, 55, 70, 75, 93, 99, 117, 129.

- c. Improve timetabling, by:
- Ensuring that classes have a balanced timetable, with adequate time for each subject;
 - Reducing the number of classes that are taught by more than one teacher for a subject;
 - Providing sufficient time to meet legal requirements for religious education.

Paragraphs 19, 26, 67, 61, 106, 113, 117, 125-6.

- d. Improve arrangements to promote good behaviour, by:
- Ensuring that school policies and procedures are used consistently, particularly in Year 8;
 - Monitoring behaviour more closely, both in lessons and at lunchtime;
 - Improving the learning opportunities of students with behavioural difficulties in all subjects.

Paragraphs 10-12, 19, 22, 42, 87, 102, 108, 111, 128.

Sixth form

- a. Improve independent learning, by:
- Building carefully-planned independent learning into the early stages of courses;
 - Developing facilities and resources for independent learning, particularly where it is weak;
 - Assessing independent learning, setting targets and giving students early feedback.

Paragraphs 7, 15, 24, 149, 153, 159, 161, 166.

- b. Extend the use of ICT to promote learning, by:
- Improving access to equipment for teachers and students in all subjects;
 - Establishing clearly the potential benefits of ICT in each subject;
 - Monitoring the use of ICT, and any specific benefits it brings.

Paragraphs 7, 23, 58, 146, 148, 172, 182.

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

- i. Extend training for all teachers working outside their main subject.

Paragraphs 13, 27, 29, 132.

- ii. Ensure that annual reports to parents cover all subjects.

Paragraph 50.

- iii. Provide a daily act of collective worship.

Paragraph 35.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	141
	Sixth form	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	4	36	55	37	8	0	1
Percentage	3	26	39	26	6	0	1

Sixth form

Number	3	13	14	3	0	0	0
Percentage	9	39	42	9	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	889	149
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	57	5

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	28	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	156	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	82	99	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	61	62
	Girls	76	66	70
	Total	123	123	132
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (66)	70 (66)	73 (73)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (28)	50 (38)	33 (28)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	58	58
	Girls	75	69	70
	Total	123	127	128
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (n/a)	70 (n/a)	71 (n/a)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (n/a)	46 (n/a)	33 (n/a)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	202	94	78	172

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	47	93	94
	Girls	41	75	77
	Total	88	168	171
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	51 (49)	98 (93)	99 (99)
	National	51 (48)	87 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.9 (38.9)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	11	64
	National		*

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	29	27	56
	Average point score per candidate	15.9	19	17.4
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		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	29	23	52	5	8	13
	Average point score per candidate	14.2	17.8	15.8	9.6	12.8	11.5

National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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	987	18	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	19	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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)	69.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	14.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	624

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 4	23.2
Key Stage 3	19.8
Sixth form	17

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	3,026,497
Total expenditure	3,051,029
Expenditure per pupil	2,905
Balance brought forward from previous year	50,000
Balance carried forward to next year	25,446

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.2
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	1038
Number of questionnaires returned	290

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	52	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	58	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	58	13	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	59	18	4	2
The teaching is good.	20	64	7	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	48	22	4	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	50	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	20	50	17	7	7
The school is well led and managed.	25	53	9	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	61	6	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	41	2	0	3

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Very strong leadership of the department is driving up standards.
- Reading and writing are improving because of the concentrated teaching of literacy.
- Teaching is good; there is some very good and excellent teaching.
- Good relationships between students and teachers contribute to learning.

Areas for improvement.

- Inattention and lack of focus affect the learning of a small minority of students.
- Students make slower progress when they have English twice in one day.
- The department needs more resources to meet the needs of new courses.

60. Standards are broadly average in Year 9, but above average in Year 11 in English and English Literature. On the whole, girls do better than boys, but the school is narrowing the gap. GCSE results, and the quality of students' work in Year 11, are higher than would be expected from the standards reached by students joining the school, and represent good achievement. Overall, standards in Year 9 represent satisfactory achievement, but there is an upward trend. Students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students make good progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and its pace is accelerating.
61. The work of the English department is making a particularly strong impact on students' literacy skills in Years 7 to 9. The National Literacy Strategy is used effectively in English and in several other subjects, and higher standards in reading and writing are emerging. Students' speaking and listening skills are developing well in classroom discussion, and they are keen speakers in informal situations. A writing assignment, in a Year 9 lesson, was planned so that the students could develop creative writing and understand emotive language. One student wrote, "He is a rake, pulling people away from what they like." Writing standards are average; students have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is generally well presented. Higher-attaining students write successfully in an historical context. Lower-attaining students tend to do less extended writing, and a small minority do not present their work well. Recent initiatives to improve boys' standards include a sensitive choice of texts and rigorous teaching focused on test criteria and high expectations. These are beginning to have a positive impact. The standards of all students are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing assignments and increasing use of ICT to aid the presentation of work. In some classes, learning suffers when students have more than one English lesson on the same day.
62. Students in Year 11 write with understanding of Shakespearean texts and a range of poetry. They read a wide variety of texts and understand when meaning is not stated explicitly. A key feature in the students' work is their ability to place texts in a social context and then compare them with modern society. This stems from very good lesson planning that uses current events, and from teaching that challenges and informs the students. They are able to talk, read and write animatedly on injustice, inequality and race. They evaluate characters and themes, and produce detailed writing assignments. Overall, presentation of work is careful, and students take pride in it. Students can examine media texts and research references. Higher-attaining students analyse text to a very high standard, but lower-attaining students sometimes mix formal and non-standard English. A minority rely too heavily on the teacher and their work is brief, lacking detailed understanding and insight.
63. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and the best teaching is inspirational. In the very good and excellent lessons there is a brisk pace; students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher

in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. They respond well to their teachers' care for their achievement, and this helps develop good relationships throughout the department. In a Year 11 lesson on persuasive writing, students thoroughly appreciated working to produce a structured well-informed assignment. They consciously shaped language for a purpose and presented their findings with confidence. The teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and rigorously targeted grades A and A*. In a Year 9 lesson, lower-attaining students worked at maximum speed to draft and polish their work, and spoke meaningfully about writing styles. They produced a large amount of work and enjoyed it immensely; the teacher's enthusiasm infected the students, whose careful and sensitive analysis encouraged and developed their love of the subject. In a small minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, students learn less because the pace is too slow, it is the second time they have studied English in one day and successful classroom management strategies are lacking. Students' work is marked regularly and the department makes good use of assessment information.

64. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires teachers and students. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the students. They observe each other's lessons, and share their best work to improve teaching styles, classroom management and learning. Procedures for assessment are clear and are generally used well to plan work, though not always in setting individual students' targets. Students' work is cross-checked for progress, standards and capability. Library resources are satisfactory and the induction course for the learning centre is effective. However, the department does not yet have the full range of books it needs to teach new courses effectively.
65. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Literacy teaching has been used effectively to target improvements in English language. There is increased access to the computers, so students' opportunities to improve their skills of drafting and re-drafting work are improved. Standards are beginning to rise, and, with the shared commitment to sharing good practice and attention to identified areas for improvement, the department has the capacity to succeed even further.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Lessons are well structured so that students can build on their skills.
- Students have good attitudes and work hard.
- Marking is thorough.
- Leadership, management and documentation are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment needs to be improved, particularly in Year 7.
- Progress is limited in some classes by weak timetabling.
- Students have too few opportunities to use ICT.

66. Standards are broadly average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11. This represents good achievement in Year 11 from the standards reached by students joining the school, and an increasing proportion of students reach high grades at GCSE. Achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory, although some higher-attaining students could achieve more. Boys tend to do better than girls, but by a narrow margin. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress overall, with better learning in Years 10 and 11. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed, and improvement is satisfactory.
67. The work of higher-attaining students in Year 9 is well organised, with many worked examples and extended exercises. Graphical work on geometry rapidly extends to the use of algebra and the

solution of simultaneous equations. Overall, standards in algebra, knowledge and understanding of shape and number work are broadly average, but average and lower-attaining students lack confidence and rely too heavily on calculators. There is, however, evidence of good progress in number work. For example, Year 7 students were able to calculate and discuss the various representative values including the range for data collected in a tuck shop survey. This showed good use of number and a clear understanding of statistics. Standards in Years 7 to 9 in some classes are held back by the timetable, and particularly by the number of classes that have more than one teacher.

68. Higher-attaining students in Year 10 can identify the n^{th} term for a variety of numerical sequences leading to a general rule. Lower-attaining students can apply transformation geometry to simple figures and make good use of algebra to describe the transformations correctly. In Year 11, higher-attaining students established from first principles the formula for the area of any triangle using a variety of previously-taught skills to compute their solution. Lower-attaining students demonstrated good use of the 'power' and 'root' keys on the calculator, extending their knowledge of number and the range of problems that could be answered, although some basic mental operations such as division are not entirely secure. Average and lower-attaining students often find it difficult to analyse the wording of a problem in order to identify the best method of solving it. Overall, students in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate good computational and learning skills, record work accurately and take care with its appearance and layout.
69. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The vast majority of lessons are well prepared, with questions that challenge students' thinking. Pace is brisk and a variety of teaching methods are employed. Teachers' expectations are high in terms of what is to be taught and lesson objectives are generally shared with the students. As a consequence, interest and engagement levels are high, and students learn well. Students' attitude to the subject is good, although the misbehaviour of a small minority of students occasionally undermines progress. There is a good balance between theory and practice, with opportunities for students to exercise new skills. Marking is up-to-date, with diagnostic comments to support learning. Where teaching is very good, the work is intellectually demanding, deepening students' understanding and making clear links between topics.
70. In a minority of lessons, teaching techniques are less varied, and take too little account of what students already know. Work in mathematics is still in the early stages of introducing the National Numeracy Strategy. There have been improvements through 'mental warm-up sessions' in students' ability to do mental computation and to look for different calculating strategies, but the planning and lesson structures of the strategy are not yet fully incorporated, and assessment is not ensuring that students in Year 7 do not repeat work they have done in their primary schools. Gifted and talented students are often not challenged sufficiently in homework. Work in other subjects makes a satisfactory contribution to students' numeracy skills overall, but more could be achieved with consistent planning. Students do not make consistent use of ICT to improve and apply their skills in mathematics.
71. Very good leadership and management have enabled the department to sustain and improve standards despite a recent high staff turnover and a significant number of part-time and newly-qualified teachers. The strategic match of teachers to the demands of the subject is good, and the department works well together. The head of department is well informed, and evaluates work clearly. This provides clear educational direction and stability. There is good support and personal development for newly-qualified teachers. Documentation and the scheme of work are thorough and supportive. Targets for further improvement are realistic and achievable.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good planning of lessons ensures that all students are involved in their own learning.
- Assessment is used very well to monitor progress and to set individual learning targets.
- Good working relationships give students confidence to ask and answer questions.
- Leadership and management create an atmosphere of achievement and teamwork.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers to enhance teaching and learning is not fully developed.
- Students do not always base predictions on research or their previous understanding.

72. Standards are clearly above average in Year 9, and a little above average in Year 11. Results over the past three years show a rising trend, though they are improving at a faster rate in Year 9 tests than at GCSE. Boys and girls achieve similar standards in Year 9, but girls' GCSE results are slightly lower than those of boys. All students make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11 and all obtain a GCSE grade. Achievement in science is good in Years 9 and 11, and standards have improved well since the last inspection.
73. Observations in class and analysis of students' work confirm these good standards in Years 7 to 9. The improvement in standards is mainly due to the leadership of the department and the introduction of a new curriculum and programme of assessment. Assessment is used very effectively to monitor and inform students of their strengths and weaknesses. There is consistency in planning good lessons. Lessons contain a variety of learning strategies so that all students are fully involved in the learning process. There is good emphasis on practical investigations to deepen understanding of scientific principles. Higher-attaining students are now reaching the highest levels and make good progress. For example, they can explain how environmental changes can alter populations and affect ecosystems. Lower-attaining students can apply the fair test principle in terms of a scientific investigation. They make good progress through the key stage. Numeracy skills are good. Students make good use of their writing and oral skills in the many opportunities for discussions and making their own conclusions.
74. In Years 10 and 11, improvements in attitudes, instilled in the lower school, are just beginning to take effect. Observations in class and analysis of a wide sample of students' work show good standards. Students are more involved in their own assessment and so are more willing to improve in their weaker areas. Students use their literacy skills effectively to explain their understanding. Numeracy skills are good and help students to record, display and interpret experimental data. On the other hand, when preparing for investigations, students do not make enough use of their previous understanding or research to justify their predictions. All students make good gains in understanding during Years 10 and 11. This is mainly due to well-planned lessons that are designed to engage them in their own learning. Students of similar learning needs are grouped together, and the needs of individuals within these groups are planned for. For example, lower-attaining students are given activities and worksheets that make scientific principles easier to understand and learn, so that they make good progress. Higher-attaining students are given extension work and are questioned in a more demanding way.
75. Teaching and learning are good, and have improved since the last inspection. Good relationships with their teachers give students confidence to ask questions and join in discussions. Learning objectives are kept clear, and lessons have variety and pace. There are frequent checks of learning with a final check always present to ensure that learning has taken place. These strengths were demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson. Students clearly developed their thinking and discussion skills through class discussions, group discussions, a memory game on distance time calculations, a practical exercise and a final feedback to the whole class. All students were thoroughly engrossed in their learning. In the few lessons that were not as dynamic, learning was not managed well and students took the opportunity to slow down the pace of their learning by talking off task. Books are

regularly marked and graded, so that students know the levels or grades at which they are working. Literacy and numeracy skills are strongly emphasised and used to enhance learning. Computers are used effectively by some older students, but overall their contribution to science teaching is underdeveloped, and teachers in some classes do not have easy access to them.

76. Leadership and management are very good. The head of science has a clear vision for learning and ensures that the development of the individual pupil is the main focus of the department. There is a very good spirit of teamwork and collective responsibility for development. The documentation is excellent and provides clear examples of how to apply policies and procedures. Assessment is very good and is used effectively to monitor students' progress and to modify curriculum planning. Teaching is closely monitored to ensure consistency and the spread of good practice. The two hard-working technicians are fully involved as part of the science team.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good across the department.
- Relationships and support for students are very good.
- Leadership and management are clearly focused and effective.
- Standards are rising, and represent good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Timetabling does not promote learning effectively in Years 7 to 9.
- Boys do less well than girls, though the gap is narrowing.

77. Standards are broadly average in Years 9 and 11. This is reflected in average GCSE results in 2002, which showed significant improvement on results for the previous two years, which had fallen significantly following the last inspection. Girls do better than boys, and in 2001 the gap was larger than in most schools. The school has taken steps to address this problem. There was some improvement in 2002, but the gap in achievement remains significant. Standards among students joining the school are below average, and the quality of work throughout the department represents good overall achievement. Standards are once again similar to those when at the time of the last inspection, and the recent improvement puts the school in a good position to raise them further.
78. Students in Year 9 express a range of ideas and feelings in different media including painting and sculpture. Higher-attaining students show that they can find out how other artists work and develop the methods and imagery in their own work. This represents good achievement, as students started in Year 7 with below-average knowledge and skills in art. Most students conduct effective research, for instance finding out about Impressionism or Surrealism. Students' sketchbooks show that they practise and record key ideas with interest. Drawing from observation is less well developed than at the time of the last inspection, however, and students do too much copying from secondary sources, such as photographs. This limits their ability to show form in a variety of ways. On the other hand, experiments in three-dimensional media lead to imaginative sculptures and constructions.
79. Teaching is good overall, and often very good. All teachers provide challenging and exciting work to which the students respond with enthusiasm and commitment. Careful planning and preparation shows in the way that teachers share the lesson and homework objectives with the students. These are written up at the front and often illustrated with diagrams and cartoons. Relationships with students are very good. In a very good Year 8 lesson, a lively demonstration by the teacher held the students spellbound. The help sheets and extension activities provided, left the students in no doubt what was expected of them. They threw themselves into the exercise with enthusiasm and produced lively drawings of each other.

80. Teachers take care to include all students, giving help and support to lower-attaining students or those with special needs. In some lessons, students have the support of a special needs assistant, and this enables them to make faster progress, and to reach similar standards to others in the class. Teachers help students to work independently by giving them research projects and allowing them to make decisions on the direction of their work. This begins in Year 9 and is developed further in the GCSE class. Students are expected to take care of their work. This shows in students' pride in their journals and the good level of homework and coursework completion. Students are also keen to take advantage of the fact that the art department is open at lunchtime and after school for homework or personal study. Occasionally, in an attempt to cover a lot of work, teachers sometimes give out too much information at once. This slows the progress of lower-attaining students.
81. Students make good use of digital photography and image manipulation, and have good access to books, reproductions and the Internet. Together, these resources provide a valuable source of ideas and enrichment to the students' visual vocabulary. Paintings and sculptures are imaginative. Journals and drawings are annotated by the students, adding to the development of literacy skills.
82. The management and leadership of the department are very good, leading to the recent improvements in standards. The assessment of students' work enables students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, teachers tend to over-estimate students' progress in terms of the National Curriculum levels, chiefly by not taking all factors into account. In Years 10 and 11, the regular discussions that the teachers hold with the GCSE students complement the extensive notes that they make in the students' journals and are having a positive effect on attitudes and standards. As with other creative arts subjects, learning in Years 7 to 9 is impeded by timetabling which does not allow a consistent pattern of lessons across the year. There are exciting and stimulating displays of art work around the school building.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- There is very good development of students' basic skills, especially in ICT.
- Teachers have high levels of professional skill and understanding.
- Work is very well matched to students' learning needs.

Areas for development.

- The use of design procedures could be made more consistent across all subjects.
- Poor behaviour sometimes affects learning in classes in resistant materials and electronics.

83. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were broadly average, and showed improvement from recent teachers' assessments. Improved assessment, modified schemes of work and strengthening links with primary schools contribute to this improvement. GCSE examination results were above average overall in 2001 and 2002, particularly in graphics and food technology. Overall, standards were also above average during the inspection. Girls' performance is better than boys', because they give greater attention to their design work. Standards are lower in electronics, where there is a significant number of lower-attaining students. Students with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds reach similar standards to other students because teachers plan work to meet needs. Those students identified as gifted and talented have extension work in class and benefit from opportunities for curriculum enrichment in their trips to Wickstead Park.
84. The department's very good overall provision enables all students to achieve well across a broad range of courses. Since the last inspection, the department has introduced new schemes of work to tackle weaknesses in students' design skills. Students understand teachers' very good use of

National Curriculum levels, to plan and grade work. Examination results have risen. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

85. In Years 7 to 9 careful planning and integration of the design process across the department ensure that techniques are learned and reinforced. For example, flow planning is taught in food technology to emphasise decision-making and choice, and is underpinned in electronics. Students used a flow plan to check their circuit design at each stage, and modified their design in response to the feedback from testing their circuits. Students use their assessment to help to set new targets such as improving their primary research. They reach good overall standards in technical drawing, though some students do not present their work well. In Years 10 and 11 students learn to make good use of tools, and to adapt designs so that items can be produced in batches. Research develops well, and students learn to meet the requirements of a brief, for example, when designing a savoury dish that includes specific dietary requirements. Students exchange ideas effectively, for example on what makes a well-designed uniform. However, some lower-attaining students have weak skills in note-taking, and do not record changes in their designs on working drawings.
86. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is skilfully transmitted through lively explanations and demonstrations that inspire progress. Effective lesson planning that uses revised schemes of work is giving students a strong bank of skills knowledge and understanding, and teachers take care to plan to meet the needs of all students. Assessment is very good. In the best lessons, students are involved in assessing their work using teamwork and feedback to the group to establish understanding. Teachers engage students as partners in their learning and challenge their creativity through exciting group work and presentation.
87. Students respond very well in most lessons, but a small minority of lower-attaining students in Year 10 during the inspection did not take sufficient responsibility for their work, and behaved poorly. This contrasted with excellent behaviour and attitudes from another Year 10 group in response to excellent graphics teaching. As well as making excellent progress in their understanding of techniques, students in this group showed great maturity and insight into the social consequences of posters promoting films targeted at particular age groups. Teachers integrate basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and ICT well into learning. Rooms have clear displays of technical word banks and in some cases students are immersed in high quality wall display that is used in teaching to underpin the standard expected in design and technology.
88. Management is very good. It is very well organised to take account of individual teachers' strengths, and professional relationships are very good. This results in strong teamwork, and enables the department to respond very well to the needs of all students and the school. Rooms are grouped together, and there are very good ICT facilities. There were times during the inspection when the quality of materials and room layout hindered good teaching and learning. Data is used very well to identify need. The technical team is ever present and supports the smooth running of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good marking gives students effective guidance on learning.
- Teachers have good knowledge of geography.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to further extend the range of tasks and learning activities.
- There is too little first-hand experience through fieldwork.
- The time allocation in Year 9 restricts the depth of the geography curriculum.
- Improved tracking of GCSE candidates is needed to improve examination results.

89. GCSE results have remained at average levels over the past four years, and students in Years 9 and 11 were reaching broadly average standards during the inspection. There are no significant differences between boys and girls. The learning of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, though gifted and talented students could achieve more if they were given more consistently challenging work. Overall, achievement and progress are satisfactory, and good among students taking the GCSE course. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
90. By the end of Year 9, students understand the main issues surrounding topics they have studied. For example, most have a secure understanding of the Italian culture, and successfully compare the physical geography of Northern and Southern Italy. They show average standards in their work on physical geography, such as the formation of waterfalls, and understand moral issues related to the conservation of the environment. Most students reach average standards in written work, although higher-attaining students are not achieving distinctly better standards than others in their classes, particularly in annotating their work. Some lower-attaining students have still to establish basic geographical skills. Standards in Year 9 are held back by a lack of time for some classes.
91. Standards are still broadly average by Year 11, but teaching and learning are better, and standards represent good achievement for students taking the GCSE course. Students reach average overall standards in most topics they have studied, including the advantages of various energy sources, though they have better knowledge of human than of physical geography. Year 10 students show a good knowledge of services in the local community. They compare the services provided for a range of users, like teenagers and the elderly. However, they have difficulty analyzing the data successfully in order to make unbiased comparisons. Year 11 students show a good understanding of a recent government initiative, City Challenge, following good fieldwork in Leicester; this enhances their understanding about inner city re-generation. However, students do not analyse the impact of such projects upon human and economic geography in enough detail to reach high standards. Presentation is good, and students use successful strategies for note-taking, including bullet points and spider diagrams.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a good knowledge of geography. Where the teaching is good, they apply this well to develop students' understanding of issues they observe at first hand, such as urban regeneration in Leicester, or the organisation of local services in Higham Ferrers. Teachers manage classes well and in most lessons use good, probing questions to stimulate students' thinking. Most teachers expect students to work hard and provide interesting work, such as modelling hills to illustrate contours in Year 7. Teaching assistants provide good support, and teachers provide good flexible support to students with special educational needs where there is no learning support assistant present. However, some work is not planned to meet the needs of all students in the class, particularly the higher attainers, and this hinders learning, particularly in the development of analytical skills. The range of learning activities in lessons is also too narrow to engage and stretch students fully. Marking, on the other hand, is consistently very good; teachers give very good attention to spelling and punctuation and targets are successfully set.
93. There is satisfactory development of literacy is developed through the correct use of technical words, such as meander and erosion when studying river courses in Year 9. Numeracy is not planned consistently. Students make adequate use of graphs and charts, but do not analyse data in enough detail. This aspect of the work is hindered by limited access to ICT. The department has a very limited range of atlases.
94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good development plan, and some aspects of the subject make a good contribution to personal development and to citizenship. On

the other hand fieldwork is underdeveloped, and there is limited monitoring of teaching and sharing of effective teaching techniques. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but progress in GCSE classes could usefully be tracked more closely.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning.
- Very good marking helps students improve their work.
- Students respond well in lessons and enjoy the subject.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for development

- Teaching is not consistent enough to ensure the highest standards.
- Students are not given enough opportunities to use ICT.

95. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average. Students taking history in Year 11 started the GCSE course at the beginning of Year 10 with very low standards in the subject, and overall standards in Year 11 are below average. Recent GCSE results range from above to below average, depending on the standards reached in Year 9 by the students choosing history. Boys and girls reach similar standards overall. Students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented make similar progress to other students. Overall, achievement and improvement since the last inspection are good.
96. In Years 7 to 9, most students show a sound grasp of the topics they are studying. In Year 9, they can describe and explain historical events and changes. In work on the Black Peoples of America, Year 9 students understood many of the issues connected with discrimination, segregation and civil rights. Students use historical sources well, and can select and organise material to produce successful written work. Higher-attaining students in Year 9, for example, produced thoughtful analytical writing on aspects of slavery, including accurate and moving diary accounts written from the viewpoint of slaves. However, many students find it difficult to write structured historical accounts; they tend to concentrate on the details without using evidence to draw out general conclusions.
97. In Years 10 and 11, students develop a generally sound knowledge of the content of the GCSE course. Year 11 students, for example, understand the importance of different individuals such as Hippocrates, Galen and Harvey in the history of medicine. However, they have more difficulty in explaining medical changes and developments through time. The written work of the best students is fluent and persuasive but at the moment the work of many has insufficient detail and analysis to gain the higher grades at GCSE.
98. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject are used successfully to engage students' interests and extend their learning. In a Year 11 lesson on the medical discoveries of Ambroise Paré, for example, a very good dramatisation by the teacher ensured memorable and very effective learning. Lessons are usually well planned so that students make good progress. However, learning aims are sometimes not clear enough to give sufficient direction to students' work and this slows down their progress. Teachers use a good variety of methods, which helps students tackle new topics successfully. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, very skilful use of contemporary examples and brisk, probing questioning enabled students to make rapid progress in understanding the impact of the Wall Street Crash on the German economy. In less successful lessons an insufficient range of tasks and learning activities means that students' interest is not fully sustained for the whole period. Marking is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers manage students well, which ensures good behaviour and positive attitudes. Students enjoy their history lessons.

99. Teachers use effective methods to improve literacy levels, such as highlighting key words and giving students help in structuring their writing. Good use is made of the library in encouraging students to undertake independent work. The use of ICT is well planned but at the moment students have too little access to computers during lessons.
100. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department has brought a very clear sense of direction to developing the subject in the school. Curriculum changes and a wider range of teaching methods, including an excellent programme of educational visits, have brought a renewed popularity to studying history, as demonstrated by the very high numbers of students opting for history in Year 10. Very good assessment procedures ensure that students are given helpful guidance as to how they can improve their work. The department is in a very good position to develop its practice and raise standards of attainment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Teachers give generously of their time to support learning in computer clubs.
- There is strong commitment to succeed within the department.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is not co-ordinated effectively across subjects.
- Learning in Year 8 is affected by misbehaviour.
- Some aspects of assessment need to be made more systematic.

101. Students join the school with below-average ICT skills. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards by Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average, and have shown recent improvement. While the number of students reaching higher grades at GCSE is below average, it showed significant improvement in 2002, and the pass rate is high. Students with special needs and those with minority ethnic backgrounds are supported to match the progress of other students. Gifted and talented students have extension work, and are able to complete a full GCSE. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Overall, achievement and improvement since the last inspection are satisfactory.
102. Students in Years 7 to 9 initially need high levels of support from the teacher. However, most are keen to learn, and make good progress over these three years across a range of computer applications, including word processing, spread sheets, databases and the Internet. Learning in Year 8, however, was significantly held back during the inspection by the misbehaviour of a significant number of students. Students make good progress in specialist lessons in Years 10 and 11 in activities such as building web pages and desk-top publishing. They build effectively on the skills developed in Years 7 to 9, for example working on more advanced, formatted spreadsheets. Students gain confidence and capability in building up their coursework because of the clear feedback from assessment and strategies for personal target setting in each lesson.
103. Some subjects, notably English, design and technology and art and design, make effective use of computers, but this is not consistent. The lack of co-ordination of this work limits the overall development of students' ICT skills. Many students do not have effective keyboard skills, and some do not sit properly when working at computers.
104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good features, in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers are self-motivated enthusiasts with a wealth of expertise, which they use to give everyday relevance to their teaching. In a typical Year 9 lesson, the teacher used students' personal ICT skills to discuss modifications to a menu they had designed. Students suggested adding colour and changing fonts. In pairs, they cut and pasted, imported clip art, referred to the Internet and experimented with fonts. They worked well together and produced polished work. All ICT teachers give tirelessly of their time to ensure

students are reaching their potential. Planning is very good, and learning has been enhanced in Years 7 to 9 by the improvement in schemes of work. Teachers assess work accurately, but do not share all assessment information with students, and students' own assessment, through 'can-do' statements, is not recorded systematically. Homework is regularly given but not always completed.

105. Teachers provide good opportunities to introduce technical language to aid understanding, but students do not pay enough attention to detail in literacy, for example through checking spelling. There is a good contribution to numeracy skills in the use of formulae in spreadsheets. Teachers provide much additional learning support through thriving computer clubs.
106. Management of the subject is satisfactory, and the school has extended its provision since the last inspection, for example, through a short GCSE course and the new vocational course. Good work has started with six primary schools under the Networked Learning Community scheme. The network manager provides teachers with rapid and effective support. There are, however, some weaknesses in timetabling and organisation in Years 10 and 11 that make learning more difficult. Accommodation is generally good, but there has been some vandalism where students have had unsupervised access to computers. The strong teamwork among ICT teachers puts the school in a good position to improve its work further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- By Year 11, standards are very high in French and above average in German.
- Teaching is good overall, and a significant proportion is outstanding.
- New leadership is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- A new team of teachers is working cohesively for further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 need to be made more consistent.
- Students need more opportunities for independent work, especially in speaking.
- Learning is held back by timetabling, and by some students' negative attitudes.

107. All students study German, and higher-attaining students add French from Year 9 onwards. The standard of work in Year 9 is broadly average. Some higher-attaining students reach above-average standards in German, and are making a very good start in the second language, French. Most students achieve well in Years 7 to 9, and the progress of some lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11, students reach very high standards in French. In German, overall standards are slightly above average. These standards are an improvement on GCSE results for 2002, which were close to average. Overall, students do better than expected in Years 10 and 11. Girls do better than boys, but less so than nationally. Gifted students, and those with special educational needs and from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well. The department has recovered from a fall in standards following the last inspection, and standards are now rising.
108. Students in Year 7 are enthusiastic about learning German, and acquire knowledge steadily. By Year 9, higher-attaining students have good comprehension skills. They write descriptive paragraphs about friends and school uniform and are beginning to write accounts as they learn past tenses. However, they do not volunteer to speak, and rarely sustain exchanges. In the early stages of learning French, they learn and apply language rules at a good pace. Average students studying German do less creative writing and more practice exercises. They make more errors in speaking and writing, but convey messages successfully. Lower-attaining students, including students with special educational needs, respond very briefly, often in single words, but understand key details in what they read and hear. In some cases, however, negative attitudes make them difficult to teach. Overall, students lack confidence in oral work, though pronunciation

is good when they do speak. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls, though boys participate more actively in many lessons.

109. In Year 11, higher-attaining students produce very good work in both languages, learning and applying unusually complex structures. This is reflected in a high standard of speaking, especially in French, and in extended written holiday accounts. They write letters of complaint and cover a range of topics, including international terrorism, in impressive written preparation for oral presentations. They use tenses accurately and have well-developed vocabulary. Average and lower-attaining students produce briefer holiday accounts, and more of their work is in the present tense. It is more prone to careless and technical errors, such as omitting capital letters for nouns, but they communicate effectively. They show some reluctance to participate orally, but convey and understand messages at foundation tier level.
110. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is mostly very good in Years 10 and 11, particularly in French, and there were examples of excellent teaching in both languages. Teachers have very good command of the languages they teach and of examination requirements. They demonstrate high expectations by conducting whole lessons in the foreign language, which improves listening skills and provides good models for students to imitate. In general they plan and deliver brisk and varied activities, which engage students well and make them easy to manage. A Year 7 German class enjoyed an excellent lesson as they participated in numerous oral activities and games based on visual stimuli. By the end of the lesson, they knew words for school subjects and pronounced them accurately. Work is usually challenging, as teachers make students think, rather than simply imparting information. A Year 11 French class used sophisticated expressions, and could describe the thinking processes which led them to be accurate.
111. Though teaching methods are largely effective, students do not benefit from regular opportunities to use German creatively in speaking and listening, and this affects their confidence. Students of differing learning needs within teaching groups usually undertake the same work, but questions are well targeted, so that all are involved. Very good relationships underpin learning in many lessons. Where there is unacceptable behaviour or attention, teachers usually have strategies to ensure that the progress of the class is not affected. There was, however, one unsatisfactory lesson, in which pace was poor, and higher-attaining students were insufficiently challenged. Most marking is helpful, providing reference for future work. Homework complements classwork well, and sometimes offers opportunities for students to do more on their own account.
112. Literacy skills are taught effectively, through developing communication skills, display of key words, and increasing focus on language rules. Though there is little planning for numeracy, ICT skills are practised through word-processing and PowerPoint presentations. The library supports learning well.
113. New leadership provides clear direction for raising standards in the subject. A comparatively new team of teachers is collaborating well to share good practice, help each other through lesson observation and support, and to identify areas for professional development. Improvements included in development planning involve assessment procedures, the introduction of written coursework, and implementing mock speaking tests, all designed to raise standards further. Accommodation and display are good, supporting learning. There is a shortage of textbooks for German, affecting the range of homework, and a lack of screens for overhead projectors limits the impact of very good materials prepared by teachers. Timetabling is a problem, with too many shared classes, and inadequate spacing and frequency of contacts for some students. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to develop students' learning.
- There are very good opportunities for gifted and talented students.
- Standards at GCSE are above average.
- There are very good opportunities for learning outside lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT.
- Learning in Years 7 to 9 is held back by timetabling arrangements.

114. Standards are broadly average in Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average, and all candidates passed in GCSE music in 2002. As all students, including those with special educational needs, are accepted for GCSE music, this represents good achievement. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection, but a high standard has been maintained for the past two years. Students across the school enjoy music, and are very committed to their work on GCSE courses. Gifted and talented students make good progress. Some gain A* grades a year early in GCSE, while others direct section rehearsals and play instruments to a high standard in the swing band. Overall, achievement in music is good, and provision has been effectively developed and sustained since the last inspection.
115. Teachers set clear learning aims for classes in Years 7 to 9, so that students know what they have to do. As a result, learning is good, and sometimes better. In the most successful lessons varied activities and confident teaching ensure that students are kept working and remain interested. In a Year 7 class, for example, students organised group performances of pulse patterns that showed careful listening and counting of beats. A good range of action songs brought interest and variety in Year 8, and students performed them with accuracy and enthusiasm. In Year 9, more capable students improve their knowledge of jazz forms and work out chord patterns and melodies, though lower-attaining students find it more difficult to experiment with music. Homework is set regularly and supports the work that has been done in the lesson.
116. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have high expectations and students' commitment ensures that all make steady progress, whatever their ability. Students reach high overall standards across a broad range of music. In Year 10, for example, they used their good knowledge of Indian Raga music to improvise in groups, and Year 11 students had good understanding of Gamelan. Students use a good range of instruments, and talk confidently about their work. Higher-attaining students reach particularly high standards in instrumental work, often obtaining distinctions in graded examinations.
117. There is good use of musical language in lessons, and key words are used and displayed on notice boards. Accommodation is very good, and there is a wide selection of resources for learning including an adequate number of library books. However, there are too few facilities for ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The timetable for expressive arts in Years 7 to 9 makes it difficult to achieve continuity in learning, and is holding back further improvements in standards. Students' work is assessed adequately in Years 7 to 9, and well in GCSE courses.
118. The head of department has provided good leadership and management during her two terms in the post. Teaching is monitored, and the department is now well staffed. The scheme of work is comprehensive, and the development plan has targets that can be achieved. This framework puts the school in a very good position to build on its strengths. There are now 118 students learning instruments and having singing lessons, and numbers in the choir, orchestra and swing band are increasing. The quality of music-making outside lessons is an important strength, and students and teachers showed high levels of commitment in rehearsals during the inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good or better throughout the school, and the best is excellent.
- The department is very strongly led and managed.
- Students enjoy a broad and varied range of learning activities and courses.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good, with excellent links to primary schools.
- Relationships are very good, and girls and boys are equally involved.

Areas for improvement

- Specific planning for students with special educational needs could be improved.

119. Standards in physical education are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Both boys and girls are enthusiastic about their work and achieve well. Students with special educational needs make good progress and show good understanding of basic skills. They are well included and are often able to compete on equal terms due to sensitive support from teachers. Students with particular talents develop higher-order skills due to appropriate grouping and levels of challenge. Students' achievements are very good and are reflected in the very good improvement since the last inspection. Students have greater knowledge and understanding of the rules of games they play, and their attitudes have greatly improved. Safety is a strong feature of all activities, and reports for parents are more informative. Monitoring of teaching is now a strong feature of the department. Improved indoor facilities are having a positive effect on students' learning.

120. By Year 9, students are developing secure knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques to be applied in a game. They understand the need to warm up before an activity. In football, most girls can dribble a ball with control and pass accurately from static and a moving position. However, they find it difficult to keep their heads over the ball. Volleyball skills are relatively new to them, and students have not yet acquired the soft touch required for volleying. They can carry out an underarm pass in lacrosse but many are still unable to catch a ball cleanly and find it hard to pick up a ball on the run. By careful planning, repetition and analysis they can improve their performance and help others to do the same. This is a regular feature of all lessons but is particularly evident in gymnastics where students are able to compose sequences of movement with a partner to show a variety of balances.

121. Students are achieving very good standards in GCSE examinations. Students in Year 11 during the inspection consistently applied advanced skills and techniques in the practical aspects of basketball and netball. Boys and girls use this knowledge in competitive games on equal terms, although a few girls are occasionally intimidated by the physical strength of some boys. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress due to the provision of open-ended tasks, which enable them to achieve success. In some lessons, however, their needs could usefully be planned for more specifically. All students clearly understand the importance of fitness in relation to the quality of their performance. They often lead their own warm up sessions and organise health-related fitness tests. They analyse their work well.

122. Teaching is good. It is sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers foster good relationships, creating a positive ethos for learning and enjoyment. This is a major strength, and a key reason for rising standards. Teachers seldom have problems with behaviour because their management of students is very good. The challenge and pace of lessons motivates students to learn and to improve their performance. Very good knowledge and understanding of a broad range of disciplines within the subject enables teachers to plan for progression across a series of lessons. Clear demonstrations and explanations help students to understand what is required of them. Good on-going assessment clearly informs students how well they are doing and how they might improve. Teachers have high expectations and work hard to meet the needs of all students.

123. Physical education contributes effectively to students' literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the subject there is a strong focus on students using specialised vocabulary and understanding its meaning. Students consistently use mathematical calculations when timing, measuring and converting figures as part of their fitness tests. The use of video equipment is a regular feature of both theory and practical lessons, but there is little access to computers. Recording of students' performance is used for demonstration as well as assessment purposes. Provision of library books is satisfactory. Although some material is dated it is wide-ranging and most is used on a regular basis.
124. Leadership and management are very good. There have been very good developments in the use of assessment and in the monitoring of teaching. The high quality of leadership is reflected in the time and commitment that everyone gives to the school, including the establishment of excellent links with primary schools. The exemplary sportsmanship shown in the primary football tournament during the inspection provided an excellent demonstration of the standards expected at Ferrers School. Teachers work well as a team and are well deployed to meet the requirements of the varied curriculum as well as a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The provision of a sports hall has had a positive impact on standards. Resources are very good and are used well.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

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

Strengths

- Standards, teaching and learning in the full GCSE course are good.
- The school is committed to improving provision.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average because there is too little time for the subject.
- There is no head of department, and schemes of work are not fully in place.
- Legal requirements are not met.

125. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11 because of weaknesses in staffing, a lack of teaching time, and limited management arrangements in the absence of a head of department. These factors affect the work of all groups of students, although teachers ensure that students with special educational needs are given adequate support, and their learning is satisfactory. Positive points include good standards in the full GCSE course, taught by a specialist, and shared commitment in the school to improving provision, so that teaching by the large number of non-specialists was satisfactory. Nevertheless, overall provision for the subject is unsatisfactory, and weaknesses from the time of the last inspection have not been fully addressed.
126. No Year 9 lessons took place during the inspection, and the lack of continuity in the timetable is affecting standards. Coverage of Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism is broad, but there is too little time to enable students to study issues in depth. For example, in work on Passover, most students can recall special foods but not their significance. Most students take pride in their work and standards of presentation are usually good. Work in books includes use of pie charts on the world population at the time of Jesus, varied note-taking techniques, and some good creative homework research on Judaism.
127. Year 11 students taking the full GCSE course show good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and of social and moral issues related to religion, and produce well-argued written work. The GCSE short course in philosophy and ethics contains some religious education, but not enough to meet legal requirements. The final lesson for Year 11 students took place at the end of November, for an examination next summer. Written work is often minimal and unsupported by reasoned arguments.
128. Teaching and learning in lessons is satisfactory, with very good teaching to full GCSE students. In the best lessons learning aims are shared with students, teachers' expectations are high, and

resources are well chosen and stimulating. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. This increases student motivation and aids learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers use their general professional skills and understanding to provide satisfactory learning opportunities and to plan lessons effectively. Most students have good attitudes to their work, particularly in Year 7, but learning in Year 8 is held back by some poor behaviour.

129. Literacy is developed through the use of correct terminology, insistence on accurate spelling and sentence construction. Students make good oral contributions and generally speak clearly. Statistics are used effectively to illustrate the causes of poverty and a representative from Christian Aid demonstrated uneven distribution of the world's resources through the use of number. There is little use of ICT in lessons, but homework often includes useful website references.
130. The newly-appointed head of the humanities faculty is working to sustain the subject with effective support from colleagues and senior management. Developments have included the writing and introduction of two new units of work, but students' work is still not regularly assessed. Religious education makes an important contribution to students' personal development through the range of social and moral issues treated. An appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures is a prominent feature. Lessons include the understanding and skills needed to become responsible members of society.

Citizenship

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

Strengths

- Citizenship is central to the schools work and values.
- A rigorous audit has identified strengths and weaknesses in provision.
- The recent appointment of a co-ordinator for citizenship has provided good direction and enhanced the importance of the subject.
- There are outstanding contributions to citizenship in some assemblies.

Areas for development

- Citizenship is not taught consistently across the school.
- Relevant issues are not always clearly linked to citizenship.
- Most students' awareness of citizenship needs further development.
- Parents have not yet been informed of the school's provision for citizenship.

131. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are similar to those in most schools, and there are outstanding features in some aspects of the school's work. Higher-attaining students, for example, are often involved personally in charitable work related to animals, and the best assemblies provide outstanding opportunities for students to reflect on society, including what happens when things go seriously wrong. Students taking part in local initiatives in citizenship do very well, and over a hundred students are widening their understanding of the world community by studying Mandarin.
132. In most lessons seen during the inspection, on the other hand, issues related to citizenship were touched on rather than fully explored, and links to citizenship were not brought out and explained. In a Year 9 history lesson, for example, students developed their knowledge and understanding of how people respond to conflict by identity through discussing contemporary conflicts, including racial conflicts in the USA. There was, however, no link made to citizenship and students were not given the opportunity to discuss peaceful and non-violent protest. Similarly, in a Year 8 careers lesson, the potential contribution to the community students might make in a profession was not discussed. In some other subjects, including modern foreign languages and music, the strands of citizenship have been identified but are not yet specifically taught as citizenship. This makes it very difficult to assess the contribution to citizenship of work in these subjects.
133. As a result of this, some students' overall understanding of citizenship is limited. Some Year 9 students, for example, suggested that citizenship is simply helping other people less fortunate

than themselves. A group of Year 11 students suggested that if their teachers had told them, then they would recognise what citizenship provision was. When prompted, they recognised that the work of the school council (which they value), opportunities to work in the local community and opportunities to discuss contemporary issues were part and parcel of citizenship provision.

134. During the last academic year, the school's audit of citizenship coverage clearly identified where coverage was taking place in lessons as well as identifying gaps. As a result of this, extra provision through personal, social and health education lessons has been planned, and a citizenship day is to be held in May 2003. The recent appointment of a member of the leadership group as co-ordinator has provided good direction for the provision of citizenship. Resources are being developed, and assessment and recording procedures are being planned with other local schools. Monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of citizenship will take place as part of whole-school procedures. Parents and carers have not yet been fully informed as to the school's policy for provision of citizenship. The school's provision for students' personal development gives it an excellent platform for further development of the subject.

Dance

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Lessons are challenging and the pace is rigorous.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure.

Areas for improvement

- Some students in Year 9 could improve the quality of their movement.

135. Dance is very effectively integrated with physical education, and is a strength of the school. In three of the last four years, GCSE examination results have been well above average. More girls than boys opt for dance but boys participating achieve as well as girls. However, they are sometimes self-conscious and prefer to work with other boys. Students with special educational needs make good progress, partly because the variety of tasks offers success that does not depend on their literacy and numeracy skills. Students who show exceptional ability are encouraged to develop their talents to the full. Very good extra-curricular provision enables individual support and tuition to be given. The fact that high standards have been maintained since the last inspection indicates that students' achievements are very good.
136. By Year 9 students understand the muscle groups they are using. They are capable of using each other's body well to create the desired effect in a fight scene. Occasionally there is not sufficient contrast between the shapes they make and the speed at which they travel. Students are beginning to acquire a greater understanding of dance styles, performance skills and the exploration of choreographic ideas. However, in lessons where learning is satisfactory, work could be improved if students concentrated harder, particularly on the quality of movement.
137. By Year 11 students have learnt to move sensitively with a partner, working at different levels and speeds. They have developed good-quality movement and control. Students use single props, such as a hat or a chair, to create an individual motif, which has fluidity of movement and good use of levels. They share ideas and evaluate their own work and that of others. Even students who sit out have a positive contribution to make as they analyse and constructively comment on each individual's performance.
138. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers circulate well and offer praise and encouragement. They use their very good knowledge of the subject to give good demonstrations and practical support, and to make students aware of their capabilities. Guided discussion with carefully-directed questions enhances speaking and listening skills as students evaluate each other's work. Good opportunities are planned for students to plan, perform and evaluate their own choreographed

movement. Lessons are well structured and well paced, encouraging students to concentrate and work hard.

139. Dance makes a positive contribution to literacy skills. A word bank of dance vocabulary, which is frequently tested, is in students' workbooks. Very good use is made of video clips to reinforce concepts, and sound systems are of good quality.
140. The teacher in charge of dance is presently on maternity leave. A recently-appointed, newly-qualified teacher is managing the subject very well in the meantime, under the overall leadership of the head of expressive arts. Standards reflect very good use of the very limited teaching time for dance in Years 7 to 9.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	25	62	0	15	0.3	1.6
Music	1	100	84	0	29	2.0	2.4
Other social studies	1	0	74	0	11	*	*

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	100	96	0	46	3.5	6.6
Biology	8	100	88	13	34	5.5	5.3
Chemistry	2	100	90	50	43	7.0	5.9
Computer studies	13	77	86	8	23	3.1	4.6
Dance	4	100	89	100	39	8.5	5.5
Drama	6	100	99	33	38	6.0	6.6
Economics	3	100	89	33	36	6.0	5.5
English Literature	11	82	95	27	37	4.4	5.9
French	4	100	89	50	38	6.0	5.6
Design and technology (full)	6	100	91	67	30	7.3	5.4
General studies	48	85	83	31	30	4.8	4.9
Geography	6	100	92	17	38	3.3	5.7
German	3	100	91	33	40	5.3	5.8
History	5	100	88	20	35	4.8	5.5
Law	10	100	87	40	34	6.6	5.3
Mathematics	4	75	87	75	87	5.0	5.8
Physics	5	80	88	40	40	4.8	5.7
Religious studies	3	100	92	67	38	6.7	5.8
Sociology	7	86	86	43	35	5.1	5.3
Vocational studies	3	100	76	67	26	8.7	4.4

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	20	*	0	*	0	*
Leisure & tourism	3	67	*	0	*	0	*
Art and design	2	0	*	0	*	0	*
Health and social care	4	75	*	0	*	0	*
Information technology	8	100	*	25	*	0	*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

141. Mathematics and chemistry were inspected fully, and physics and biology were sampled. Teaching, learning and A-level results are good in all of these subjects. Standards and the quality of teaching and learning in science subjects have shown good improvement from the below-average standards seen during the last inspection.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers know the subject well and use a good variety of methods.
- Relationships are very good, and students work hard.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little use of ICT.
- Students have too little information on their progress towards target grades.

142. The number of students taking mathematics to A level is generally small, but their achievement is good. A-level results were well above average in 2002, particularly at grades A and B, and showed good progress from students' GCSE results.

143. Standards in Year 13 during the inspection were above average, and sometimes better. Students' files are well organised. Students in Year 12 are only a short way into their courses, but are making good progress in moving on from their GCSE work into new areas, thus making effective use of past work. For example, they use their knowledge of transformation geometry to investigate the graphs of various trigonometrical functions.

144. In Year 13, students' recall of knowledge is good, and they apply it confidently in class and through written work. In one pure mathematics lesson, students demonstrated to the rest of the class their knowledge of mechanics and the coefficient of friction very well. Students contributed as much as the teacher to this very successful lesson. They extended their understanding the context in which algebraic equations occur at this level, and of how to solve them.

145. Teaching and learning are good, and very good in some lessons. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. Work is carefully planned, with clear learning targets. Teachers structure lessons well, so that work is intellectually demanding and deepens understanding. Good variety in teaching methods gives students many opportunities to confirm what they know, understand and can do. As a result, students are well motivated and work hard. The marking of homework is thorough, with

detailed annotation that supports learning. However, day-to-day assessment does not give students clear enough information on their progress towards examination criteria and agreed targets. The teaching of the application of number leading to a key skills qualification is satisfactory. Students retaking GCSE mathematics learn well and are on track to achieve grade C by the end of the year.

146. Leadership and management are very good, and have ensured good provision despite a significant turnover of staff. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed, but there is too little use of ICT. Standards have risen since the last inspection, and achievement has been maintained at a good level.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic, and require students to think for themselves.
- Practical investigative work is good, and students share ideas freely in groups.
- Teachers' use of assessment and target-setting is very effective.
- Teachers provide very good support and guidance to students.
- Students work hard, showing good maturity and independence.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is underused in lessons.
- Some students do not take enough action on points raised in marking.

147. Students achieve good results in relation to the standards they have reached at GCSE. Students in Year 13 carry out sophisticated investigations and demonstrate high standards in their explanations associated with organic chemistry. They apply their mathematical skills well when carrying out calculations. There is no difference in the quality and quantity of work produced by male and female students. Students in Year 12 are making slower but steady progress. Progress is slower because of the lower starting point of some students.
148. Teaching is good overall, and some is very good. Lessons are structured and well planned. A feature of the lessons is their clear focus and good pace. Teachers place a high demand on students to think for themselves. Students respond to the teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations and as a result, learning is rapid and understanding is secure. Day-to-day assessment and questioning in the classroom are of high quality and reflect teachers' good subject knowledge. ICT is underused in lessons, although students often use computers for research and presentation of their findings. Students are set demanding targets and benefit from knowing the precise learning objectives for each module. Visits to outside institutions help boost interest and learning.
149. Coursework shows that students can carry out research and independent learning. Students write most of their own notes, which greatly extends their understanding, and organise their work well. However, some do not correct or expand their work where their teachers indicate errors, and this holds back their progress towards high grades. Work is marked in depth, but not always in relation to A-level grades.
150. Good leadership ensures a clear educational direction for the subject. Students form good working relationships with each other and their teachers. This gives them the confidence to exchange ideas freely and to learn from their mistakes. Students are willing workers, show maturity in their attitudes to their work and respond readily to their teachers. Students are given good guidance and support. They are being fully prepared for the next step in their education.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

151. The new advanced course in graphic design was inspected.

Graphic design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is based on good subject knowledge, which is communicated effectively.
- Students quickly learn new concepts and techniques.
- The leader for the subject shows great commitment in developing the course.

Areas for improvement

- Planning provide more consistently for the needs of the less confident students.
- Students need to improve the organisation of their coursework.

152. This is the first term of the course, which is run jointly with another school. Standards are average overall and students are achieving well. They come from a variety of starting points, and some have no previous experience of the subject. Students are making good progress and have already established a useful understanding of a range of materials used in the manufacture of graphic products. This enables them to assess potential markets and audiences for planned designs. They can then use communications skills through drawing, word-processing and photography, but their work folders are sometimes disorganised, and show that skills in individual research and analysis are less well developed.

153. Teaching is good overall and during the inspection was very good. The teacher's careful demonstrations and well-prepared resources inspired students to learn new skills and ideas. An earlier visit to a local plastics factory enabled students to gain first-hand experience of manufacturing processes. Some of the highest-attaining students develop their skills using computer programs or art materials they have bought themselves. However, not all students show the commitment or maturity needed to tackle a demanding subject with such a wide knowledge base. Homework tasks, for instance, are not always completed satisfactorily. The teacher sometimes finds it difficult to find the correct balance for these students as they learn how to deal with an advanced course and the self-discipline it requires.

154. The teacher is leading and managing the course well under the umbrella of the design and technology department. The course was developed in response to local demand and students are happy in their choice. The teacher has extended her own understanding through a visit to a college already running the course and through consultations and training with the examinations board. Good guidance is given on careers and students are well supported through assessment. Students are able to exercise and develop key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teacher, the school is well placed for success in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

155. The A-level computer studies course was inspected, and the A-level ICT course was sampled. The school is the lead department in the consortium for these subjects, which attract substantial numbers of students. Teaching, learning and the pattern of examination results are similar in both courses.

Computer Studies

Overall the quality of provision for computer studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, and based on high levels of professional understanding.
- Students are confident and enthusiastic about the course.
- A high proportion of students complete their course.

Areas for improvement

- A significant number of students have weak independent learning skills.
- Some students in Year 12 have unsatisfactory attendance records.

156. The number of students has expanded considerably in recent years, and some students now join with below average GCSE results. In 2001, A-level results dipped to a below-average standard, but still represented satisfactory achievement in view of these students' below average GCSE results. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students. Students understand the career opportunities of computing, and a high proportion complete their courses.

157. Standards during the inspection were average in Year 12, again reflecting GCSE grades, but above average in Year 13, where a good percentage of students are forecast to achieve well in their final examinations. Most students are confident. They create complex data systems with macros and data entry screens, and can create databases using relevant contexts for solving problems such as systems within the National Health Service. Notes show an understanding of how organisations use ICT, including codes and computer languages. Through discussion students gain an understanding of the ethics that underpin the use of ICT in these contexts. Their understanding comes from very good teaching and good notes drawn together, photocopied and annotated by students.

158. Most students are interested in the subject, and many students have good personal skills and a desire to help each other. They use discussion well to develop ICT solutions to problems. Some students prefer to do much their work at home, where they have good ICT facilities, but also praised the access they had in school. The learning of some students in Year 12 was, however, held up by a casual attitude to attendance, and by late arrival when they had to travel from other schools.

159. Overall, teaching of computer studies and ICT is very good. The recent acquisition of the interactive whiteboard has enlivened teaching and enabled students to become more involved in feedback and discussion. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for the subject and make excellent use of probing questions to ensure that students understand their work clearly. Male students display more confidence in their computing but female students listen more attentively, and capitalise on advice and instructions given to the group. When students are working independently, teachers make good use of the opportunity to mentor students who are having difficulties or have missed work. Some students in Year 12 have not realised their responsibility for keeping up-to-date and reading around the subject if they wish to succeed. For this reason, the quality of learning is not always as good as that of teaching.

160. Management is very good, and regular meetings with consortium staff help to review and establish the systems to meet the needs of all students. Good facilities support learning effectively and prepare students to be lifelong learners.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The new A-level course in physical education was inspected.

Provision for physical education in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards are above average.
- Students are committed to helping other students and the community.

Areas for improvement.

- Some students do not complete all of their written work.

161. Standards in physical education are above average. The school has only recently embarked on A-level courses but already there is evidence of detailed and well-presented work. Higher-attaining students develop points at length and their ideas are well organised. They have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. Others do not always develop their ideas fully and there is evidence of work left unfinished. By debating issues concerned with drug misuse and the desire to win at all costs, students develop key skills of communication. They can formulate very good arguments for and against the use of drugs in sport. All students participate in discussion and closely question the points of view that are presented to them. Students are affable and friendly; their ICT skills are secure as are their study skills using text for research in the library.

162. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well prepared and very secure subject knowledge enables them to be structured so that key skills are developed. Teachers provide good support and guidance for students. Good-humoured relationships between them and their students help to create a good learning atmosphere. This encourages students to make good progress and to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers create good opportunities for students to explore their own values and beliefs and to express their views on personal issues.

163. Very good leadership and management ensure that students want to continue with their physical activities in the sixth form. Students are encouraged to assist younger participants and teachers during lessons and in extra-curricular activities, including very effective basketball coaching. Students worked very well with their teachers in organising a football tournament for primary schools during the inspection, and a similar netball tournament had taken place a little earlier.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

164. Theatre Studies and Dance were inspected, and music and art and design were sampled. Students in all subjects were making good progress, and individual students reach high standards, particularly in music, though the numbers of students from the school were too small to provide a basis for national comparison in art and design and music. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and often very good.

Theatre Studies

The quality of provision in theatre studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement from all students.
- Students learn to apply theories about acting to practical situations.
- Strong leadership is driving up standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students' written work and independent learning are weaker than their practical work.
- Students' involvement in their own learning needs to be developed more.

165. The number of students taking the subject is increasing and the retention rate is high. A-level results have been broadly average over the past two years. As these students entered the course with below average GCSE results, this is good achievement. Progress since the last inspection

has been satisfactory, and accommodation has been improved to meet the demands of the course.

166. Students have a very good understanding of theories about acting, particularly those of Stanislavsky and Brecht. They are able to use these theories to guide their own acting, to help them evaluate the work of others and to be self-critical. In one lesson, for example, students successfully explored how an actor's emotional memory was an important factor in expressing particular moods. In another, students showed a high level of insight as to how the contradictions in characters might be communicated. In all the practical work seen, students displayed good communication skills. The quality of their speech, their awareness of how to use the acting space to advantage and the quality of their non-verbal communication, such as facial expression, meant they held the attention of the audience well. When evaluating the performances of others, students display insight and tact. Written work is not as strong as practical work. It is well presented but does not contain the original ideas or sophisticated analysis present in practical work.
167. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students feel the course is coherent and enables them to progress. Students have a good understanding of their own learning. The teacher has very good subject knowledge, and uses it well to explain theories on acting and to guide discussion. The teacher also has an excellent understanding of the practicalities of producing and directing plays, so that students engage at a high level with what they read and act. They enjoy rigorous discussion with others. Lesson planning is good. The teacher takes into account how well students have understood what was covered in earlier lessons and is prepared to reinforce aspects that have not been fully understood. At times, the teacher says too much, and this limits the development of students' independent learning skills. Lessons include a variety of activities, give ample opportunities for students to be actively involved in the work, and are mostly conducted at a brisk pace. The department actively encourages students to broaden their interest in theatre beyond the classroom by, for example, organising visits to theatres and working with the community. Even so, students do not use their initiative to explore the subject as fully as might be expected.
168. Leadership and management are good. Resources are deployed efficiently and effectively. There are good arrangements to assess progress, and information from assessment is well used in planning work. However, a more rigorous focus for marking written assignments is needed to target improvement. Students receive good support and guidance on matters ranging from opportunities to become involved with local groups to university courses. Extra-activities are wide-ranging, and productions are presented of a professional standard.

HUMANITIES

169. Law was inspected fully, and history, geography and religious education were sampled. Among subjects sampled, teaching, learning and achievement are excellent in religious education, though for a low number of students, very good in law, good in history and satisfactory in geography. Students' independent learning skills are less well developed in geography than in other subjects.

Law

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average, and sometimes exceptionally high.
- Teaching is very good, and teachers have experience in the legal profession.
- More students are choosing to study law.
- Consortium links are managed very well.
- Students have useful handbooks to support their learning.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of computers in the classroom.
- Teaching rooms are small and only one has space for relevant displays.

170. Law is a popular subject with students from across the consortium. Standards and achievement are high, and almost all students complete their course. A-level and AS results are consistently above average or better. Many students achieve their highest examination grade in law, and one student was awarded one of the top five marks in the country in 2002. Students enjoy the subject and work hard to complete their courses. Numbers of male and female students are similar and they are achieving equally well overall. In work seen during the inspection, students were reaching above-average standards in Year 13, and broadly average standards for this relatively early stage of their course in Year 12. Only AS law was taught at the time of the last inspection, and the subject has shown very good improvement.
171. Teaching and learning are very good. Questioning is used very well to help students recall what they have learned in earlier lessons, and to challenge them to think more carefully. Students are confident in using legal language and they show a good level of knowledge about the English legal system. This makes a valuable contribution to citizenship. In Year 12 students show a clear understanding of legal aid, although individual students initially struggled with the concept of equality before the law in the context of those seeking asylum in this country. Students are confident in using web sites to research specific issues although computers are not available in the main teaching classrooms.
172. In Year 13, higher-attaining students can explain complex legal issues by using examples from case law. Presentations on varied issues such as cosmetic surgery, medical negligence and euthanasia showed their research skills and their ability to understand the issue of consent. However, the limited amount of space and lack of ICT resources limit this type of learning. Very good teaching has ensured that most students in Year 13 have the detailed knowledge and the higher levels of understanding to more than meet examination requirements.
173. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, supported by real experience in the legal or related professions. Learning is developed outside the classroom through visits, for example to the Old Bailey and to local courts. Teachers provide a very good learning environment by carefully balancing different activities in the classroom. Students benefit from their experience of law in Years 10 and 11 through additional GCSE lessons provided before and after school. Assessment is managed well and ensures that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. Students use an appropriate range of resources, many of them produced by their teachers, to ensure that they are up-to-date. The library also has a good selection of law books.
174. The departmental management is very good. Links with other schools in the consortium are managed very well, though there was some unpunctuality during the inspection because of transport problems. Students feel that provision is very good, and inspectors agree with them.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

175. English and German were inspected, and French was sampled. Teaching and learning observed in French were very good. Standards were above average, and had been boosted by recent work experience in Rouen.

English

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

Strengths

- Good to very good teaching leads to a good pattern of achievement.
- Very good relationships with students inspire respect and build confidence.
- Students of a broad range of abilities achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement.

- Pace and challenge could be improved in a small minority of lessons.
- A small minority of students need clearer targets for improvement.

176. Standards in Year 13 during the inspection were broadly average. These standards, with the 2002 A-level results, show improvement from the low A-level results in 2001. Current standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection, and represent good achievement from students' GCSE results. Girls perform slightly better than boys. The range and quality of provision has shown good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the match of work to the needs of a broad range of students.
177. Students speak confidently in class, but some falter when speaking in more formal situations. The school is addressing this issue by providing more opportunities for students to speak in public; for example, by taking part in conferences and leading assemblies. The study of a wide range of texts deepens students' understanding of literature. Students make valid and cogent observations on texts they read, and have sound command of technical vocabulary, although some find it difficult to explore meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text. Students place texts in an historical context and analyse themes and characters well. Concise and critical writing is a problem for some students, but is beginning to improve following teachers' close attention to literacy skills and to the design of writing tasks. A small minority of students, particularly in Year 12, cannot make sophisticated inferences from texts or sustain detailed textual analysis.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is good and some is very good. All staff are specialists and knowledgeable in their field. There is a brisk pace to lessons, and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Teachers foster this by building students' confidence in their own judgements, and helping them to organise their work well. In a Year 13 lesson on 'Othello' the students thoroughly enjoyed reflecting on and analysing the text because of the teacher's challenge and high expectations. Students appreciate the opportunity to receive one-to-one attention and help from their teacher, and this is particularly helpful to lower-attaining students who have not made the leap from summarising to intellectual analysis. Teachers' insistence on the use of evaluation and explanation is beginning to improve standards. In a minority of lessons, learning is satisfactory, but pace is slower, and the teacher does not ensure that all students contribute. Students' work is marked regularly, with constructive and detailed comments, although spelling and grammatical errors are occasionally ignored.
179. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students, and the development of staff. Particularly effective support for newly-qualified teachers enables them to teach A-level classes to a very good standard. Assessment procedures are clear, with specific targeting to ensure that students make progress, and that lessons meet their needs. The application of these targets could, however, be improved further, as a small minority of students' targets do not spell out clearly enough what they have to do to improve. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is respected and valued by English teachers for her care for staff and students, her expertise and contribution to their professional development. Leadership shows a clear vision, which is shared by the department because of the team spirit and loyalty inspired by the head of department. Good use is made of the learning centre for both book based and technological research.

German

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

Strengths

- Most students achieve well and exceed their predicted grades.
- Teaching is especially strong in subject knowledge and relationships.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Numbers are low, and no male students currently take German.

180. The number of students entered for A level fluctuates. In 2002, ten students gained slightly above average grades, including five grades A or B. This represented an improvement from 2001, and since the last inspection. All students starting AS level completed the A-level course. However, there is only one female student studying German in Year 13, taught elsewhere in the consortium. Five students take German in Year 12, with four students from other schools.
181. Most Year 12 students have made a good start. They consolidate previous grammatical knowledge and are rapidly learning new tenses and structures. Students with C grades at GCSE are struggling, but they try hard and make worthwhile contributions in classwork. Others are beginning to speak confidently and with good accent. In both oral and written work, they apply new knowledge and are beginning to extend answers. Their early written work on family issues such as househusbands shows good ability to construct arguments and to integrate complex structures. Comprehension skills are improving rapidly. They follow well as teachers use German consistently for instructions and explanations, and join in a discussion on drugs. They read lengthy passages of German, for example on the German transport system, and understand the general meaning and key details in what they read. They are building knowledge of contemporary German society, though their starting point is very low.
182. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. The 100-minute lesson is very long, but teachers plan well to provide a varied range of receptive and active tasks. Their subject knowledge is very good – one is a native speaker – and this helps them to raise expectations and challenge students by conducting lessons entirely in German. Students are constantly challenged to think, and to try to use German for themselves. Teachers provide them with opportunities to work individually and with partners. The foreign language assistant provides effective support to improve speaking and listening standards. Where the teaching is very good, relationships are excellent. A strong element of shared humour underpins a learning atmosphere in which students are encouraged to try their hand. Marking is helpful and well linked to AS requirements. Demanding homework is set regularly and accelerates learning. Students make good use of private study time. They are beginning to improve study skills as they research topics, for example through using the Internet, though other use of ICT is limited.
183. The subject is well managed within the consortium. There are good schemes of work and assessment procedures. There are plans to use a developing link with a school in Munich to provide much-needed opportunities for students to spend time in Germany. The key issue for the department is to develop strategies to persuade more students to choose to study German in the sixth form, especially male students. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.