

INSPECTION REPORT

WINDSOR GIRLS' SCHOOL

Windsor SL4 3RT

LEA area: Windsor and Maidenhead

Unique reference number: 110057

Headteacher: Mrs C Chevalley

Reporting inspector: Jean Head

1604

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 February 2003

Inspection number: 249837

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 pupils: 13 - 18

Gender of pupils: Female

School address: Imperial Road
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Postcode: SL4 3RT

Telephone number: 01753 795155

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs D Allen

Date of previous inspection: 26 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1604	J Head	Registered inspector		The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? Leadership and management. What sort of school is it?
9247	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. Advice support and guidance. How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art Art and design 16+	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology Product design 16+	
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English English literature 16+ English as an additional language Educational inclusion	
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship Physical education 16+	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History History 16+	
22491	L Small	Team inspector	ICT Health and social care 16+	
3643	D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics 16+	
27666	J Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4834	R Frostick	Team inspector	Music	

1606	J Murray	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students.
19267	P Gibson	Team inspector	Science Biology 16+	
1578	M Sinclair	Team inspector	Religious education Religious education 16+	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Windsor Girls' School is a comprehensive school for girls aged 13 to 18. With 704 students on roll, it is smaller than many other schools nationally. The school is situated in Windsor, but around a quarter of students come from the nearby town of Slough and from other areas outside of Windsor. The school has grown in size significantly over the past four years. Students are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, but only five per cent of families claim that they are entitled to free school meals. This is below average. About 80 per cent of students are from white families; other students are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. About 17 per cent speak English as an additional language, which is high. Overall, students' attainment on entry is broadly average. However, the school loses some of its potential students to grammar schools in Slough. Thus, although students of all levels of prior attainment join the school, previous intakes have contained fewer higher attaining students than is the 'norm' nationally. The school has identified around 16 per cent of its students as having special educational needs, which is broadly average. Just over one per cent has statements of special educational needs. Needs include specific and moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Usually, about 80 per cent of 16 year-olds move into further education. In recent years, the school has had difficulty in recruiting permanent, specialist staff. Last year there were staffing shortages in several subjects, with particular difficulties in science and in modern foreign languages. These issues have been resolved; currently, the school is fully staffed with specialist teachers

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that provides a good quality education for its students. GCSE results in 2002 were above average and were higher than might be expected given students' attainment at the start of Year 9. Current students are learning well as a result of good teaching. The school is led and managed well; its sixth form is successful and broadly cost effective. Financial resources are used effectively to support students' learning. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership by the headteacher is strong and effective. She has established amongst staff a common determination to raise standards and an ethos wherein all students are valued.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good; as a result, behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school. This helps students to learn well.
- Students receive very good support for both their academic and their personal development; assessment information is used very well to track students' attainment and progress.
- Provision for students' moral and cultural development is very good. Students from different social and ethnic backgrounds work well together, with a sense of mutual respect and friendship.

What could be improved

- Attendance is unsatisfactory due to above average levels of authorised absence; this affects standards adversely.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are not high enough by the end of Year 11.
- Statutory requirements for provision for students with special educational needs are not met sufficiently well.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in January 1997. In recent years, staffing difficulties have affected students' attainment and progress. Nevertheless, GCSE results have improved at a rate similar to that found nationally. Teaching is now significantly better than it was in

1997. Overall, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching observed has fallen from around 20 per cent to just over five per cent. Conversely, the proportion of good or better teaching seen has risen from just over 30 per cent to around 70 per cent. This improvement reflects both the school's investment in good quality staff and the comprehensive monitoring programme, implemented as a result of the last inspection. This programme has helped staff to share good practice and hence has raised the quality of teaching and learning within the school. The school has also addressed all of the other key issues identified during the last report, mostly successfully. There has been very good improvement in the use of assessment information to support students' learning and progress. All subjects now have schemes of work to guide teaching, although some need further development. The school has made huge strides in provision for ICT in terms of the level of resources and in building teachers' confidence in its use. Standards are better than at the last inspection but they are still not satisfactory for all students at the end of Year 11.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Similar schools - those with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals. The E comparison with similar schools does not give a true indicator of students' performance, since it does not take into account sufficiently well their attainment on entry to the school in Year 9. Hence, in the following paragraphs, students' performance is analysed against other national data, which takes better account of their attainment on entry and of their attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9.

The school's overall results in the 2002 end of Year 9 national tests were above average when compared with those for all students nationally. They were also above results for girls nationally. English results, which were well above average, were rather stronger than those in mathematics and science. Students achieved well, given their broadly average attainment on entry in Year 9. Results across all three core subjects have improved over the past four years; the rate of improvement is similar to that found nationally.

GCSE results overall in 2002 were above average when compared with those for all students nationally. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades was also above average; results were similar to those for girls nationally. Students from across the attainment range achieved at least as well as might be expected, given their attainment in the 2000 end of Year 9 national tests. Middle and lower attaining students did well, since results for five or more A* to G grades, and one or more A* to G grades, were well above average. National statistical information, used to determine relative overall achievement within GCSE subjects, shows that in 2002, students did better in business studies, religious education, home economics and history than in their other GCSE subjects. Students did least well in English, mathematics, science, art and French. Almost all of these subjects experienced some difficulties with staffing. The school did not meet its target for 2002 for the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, but this was unrealistically high. Results were considerably better than those predicted by standardised test scores administered when this year group entered the school in Year 9. The school is on target to meet, or nearly meet, its target for 2003.

In recent years, GCE A-level results have been below average in comparison with those for all maintained schools nationally. Students have achieved consistently well in history and English literature. Performance has been poor in mathematics. Results improved considerably in 2002; the school

improved its pass rate significantly and raised the proportion of students gaining A and B grades. There is no national information as yet for comparison purposes, but students' average points score in 2002 is broadly in line with last year's national average. Achievement was satisfactory overall, given students' GCSE scores on entry to Year 12. Some students with relatively low GCSE scores achieved well. Results of the intermediate GNVQ courses were above average in 2001.

Standards of work seen during the inspection largely reflect the school's test and examination results. Standards are above average in both Year 9 and Year 11 in English, mathematics and science. Standards of literacy and numeracy are also above average. Standards overall are average or above in all other subjects, except for ICT, where standards in Year 11 are unsatisfactory. Students are achieving well, given their attainment at the start of Year 9, due to good teaching and their own positive attitudes. In the sixth form, standards of work seen vary; on balance, they are above average, representing good overall achievement in relation to students' GCSE scores on entry.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. In general, students like the school and the activities provided for them. Sixth formers are very positive about the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is consistently very good both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students show respect for each other and work well together. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The attendance rate is below average, largely because of relatively high levels of authorised absence sanctioned by parents.

Students take on positions of responsibility willingly and with enthusiasm. There are a lot of opportunities for them to do so in the sixth form, but more limited opportunities elsewhere. Attendance improved somewhat over the last term, following extra measures taken by the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Students learn well as a result of good teaching, which meets their needs effectively. Good levels of interest and concentration, and a willingness to learn, are features of students' learning across the school. In the main school teaching is good. In Years 12 to 13, teaching is also good overall; a significant proportion is very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use skilfully to plan their lessons. In the sixth form, they also use their expertise well to promote independent learning. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations for standards of behaviour; very good relationships underpin all teaching and learning. Very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen in lessons taught by experienced, specialist staff. Teaching in the main school in English and science is good; that in mathematics is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory, although whole school approaches to the teaching of these skills are at an early stage of development.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Provision is good in Year 9. Currently, in Years 10 and 11, there is insufficient flexibility to meet all students' needs effectively.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Planned provision to meet some students' needs is not adequate. Good class teaching and good support ensures that students make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school meets the needs of such students appropriately. Students at an early stage of language acquisition receive good support
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory; that for social development is good. Provision of students' moral and cultural development is very good. The school's ethos encourages a sense of mutual care and responsibility for one another.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school has developed successful procedures to track and support both students' academic and their personal development.

A good range of extra-curricular activities, a very good careers education programme and strong links with local schools and colleges, extend curricular provision well. The school has developed a good partnership with parents; regular opportunities to meet with the headteacher, an informative monthly newsletter and the school's web-site keep parents in touch with school life effectively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has been very successful in establishing an ethos wherein all students are valued. She is supported well by an effective team of senior managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed, well organised and very supportive of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Monitoring procedures are well established, with particular strengths in the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes skilful use of its staff and of its financial resources, influenced appropriately by the principles of best value.

After shortages, the school now has sufficient specialist teachers. However, in order to recruit and retain high quality staff, the school will somewhat overspend its allocated budget in the current financial year. Accommodation and resources to support learning are satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in provision for ICT. Governors have not ensured that statutory requirements for collective worship and those for students with special educational needs are met.

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 school expects their daughters to work hard and to achieve of their best.• The school is approachable.• Their daughters make good progress.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra-curricular provision.• Some parents feel they are not sufficiently well informed about progress.• Parents have concerns about homework.• Some say their daughters do not like school.

Parents' views of the school are generally positive. The inspection team agrees with parents' favourable views as summarised above. Some of the parents who returned the questionnaire and/or attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents have concerns about the range of activities outside lessons and about the quality of information they receive on progress; some think that their daughters do not like the school. Inspectors consider that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. In their opinion, the information on progress is particularly good. The inspection team found that the majority of students do like their school, but that some of the younger ones find it hard to adjust initially. This is because transferring in Year 9 means that they have only two terms of preparation before taking the end of Year 9 examinations, and hard work must start immediately.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form currently has 171 students on roll; it is broadly average in size and growing. Typically, round 55 per cent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form; in recent years, around 15 to 20 students have joined Year 12 from a non-selective school in Slough. Just over 30 per cent of students come from ethnic minority backgrounds; about 25 per cent speak English as an additional language. The proportion claiming free school meals is higher than that in the main school at nearly seven per cent. Eight students have special educational needs. Attainment on entry is below average. Although most students have five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, the proportion of students with C and D grades is considerably higher than is usual. This reflects in part the school's open entry policy, but also some 'top-slicing' of the original intake by local grammar schools. Most students embark on a one or two-year programme leading to advanced subsidiary (AS) or advanced (A) level qualifications. About 20 students study a one-year programme leading to GNVQ intermediate level accreditation. In order to broaden the range of courses on offer, some courses are taught in collaboration with the nearby Windsor Boys' school. In 2002, about 60 per cent of students moved into higher education; almost 30 per cent went into employment, with some taking a 'gap' year before going to university.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is a lively community that makes a very positive contribution to the school as a whole. It is successful in providing a good education for its students and in meeting their needs and interests effectively. Standards are improving. A-level results in 2002 were significantly better than those in 2001. Current students are learning and achieving well because teaching is consistently good; often it is very good. The sixth form is led and managed well. It is broadly cost effective. Teachers and managers support students very well; this support is very much appreciated by students.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and often very good; teachers use their considerable expertise effectively not only to transmit knowledge but also to develop students' independent learning skills.
- Students have very good attitudes to their studies; they are mature and responsible young adults who act as good ambassadors for the school and contribute greatly to school life.
- Careers education and guidance is very good; it enables students to make informed choices about the next stage of their lives.
- Students receive very good support and very good opportunities for personal development.

What could be improved

- The school needs to agree and adopt a strategic plan to underpin the development of its sixth form, to ensure that planned provision will offer an appropriate and viable range of courses.
- Assessment data needs to be used more effectively by both managers and teachers, in order to ensure that results are as high as they should be.
- Standards in mathematics are not high enough.

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	Unsatisfactory. Although some is excellent, teaching is unsatisfactory overall. As a result, students do not achieve as well as they should.
Biology.	Good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to promote good learning. Current students are achieving well.
Product design.	Good. Standards in lessons are above average; students are learning and achieving well as result of good teaching.
Physical education	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations of students who are achieving well.
Health and social care	Very good. Teaching is very good; students are given very effective individual support, which helps them to achieve very well.
Art and design	Very good. Standards are well above average. Students are learning and achieving very well as a result of very good teaching.
History	Good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge supports good learning; students achieve well as a result.
Religious education	Good. Standards are average but students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment due to very good teaching.
English literature	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good; students achieve well, often from a low base.

Lessons were observed in a range of other subjects; in all instances, teaching was at least satisfactory; mostly it was good or very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good advice and support are provided both on entry and thereafter; students meet regularly with tutors and teachers to discuss their academic progress. Guidance on future career choices is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Day to day leadership gives a clear sense of purpose and direction. Monitoring and evaluation are good overall but the monitoring of achievement against national data is not sufficiently rigorous. Strategic action planning needs further development.

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"> • They receive good information to help them choose suitable courses. • They are helped to settle in well • They are taught well; teachers give up time to help them. • Their work is assessed thoroughly so they can see how to improve. • The quality of the advice and support they receive is very good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guidance given on career choices and the next stage of their education.

Sixth form students have very positive views of the school, which inspectors agree with. Very skilful timetabling enables most students to study the subjects they choose. Students are taught well; they are helped to acquire the research and study skills that they need. Some of the students who completed the student questionnaire were less confident about the quality of careers advice they get. This was not the opinion of students interviewed during the inspection. However, most of the careers advice is given towards the end of Year 12, so many students would not yet have known about provision when they completed the questionnaire.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Overall, standards in the main school are above average; students achieve better results than might be expected given their attainment at the start of Year 9.
2. At present, the school receives incomplete information of students' attainment in their end of Year 6 national tests. Even the information that is available gives no clear guidance on students' attainment at the start of Year 9, since two years have elapsed since the national tests. The school thus makes use of a nationally recognised standardised test to gauge attainment on entry. Scores indicate that attainment on entry in Year 9 is broadly average overall. However, there are fewer higher attaining students in all year groups than is the 'norm' nationally. In this report, the school's performance at the end of Year 11 is analysed against national information that takes account of students' attainment in their end of Year 9 national tests. Otherwise, performance is judged against attainment on entry as described above. Throughout this report, comparisons are made largely against results for all students nationally, so that comparative information can be used consistently. Where possible, and where relevant, comparison is also made against girls' performance nationally. The inspection team found that comparison with results for similar schools nationally – that is schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals - does not give a true indicator of the school's performance, since it does not take into account sufficiently well students' attainment on entry in Year 9. Thus, such comparisons are not used in this report.
3. The school's overall results in the 2002 end of Year 9 national tests were above average when compared with those for all students nationally. English results were well above average in comparison with those for all students and above national results for girls. Results in mathematics and science were above average, both in relation to all students and in relation to girls nationally. 2002 results represent good achievement, given students' broadly average attainment on entry in Year 9. They reflect the considerable efforts made by the school to maintain good curricular liaison with local middle schools. Teaching in Year 9 is good; teachers build well on work already covered and work hard to ensure that students are prepared well for national assessment after only two terms in the school. Results across all three core subjects have improved over the past four years; the rate of improvement is similar to that found nationally.
4. GCSE results overall in 2002 were above average in relation to those for all students nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was also above average; results were similar to those for girls nationally. Overall, students from across the attainment range achieved at least as well as well as might be expected, given their attainment in the 2000 end of Year 9 national tests. Middle and lower attaining students did well, since results for five or more A* to G grades, and those for one or more A* to G grades, were well above average. There was no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds. National statistical data, used to determine relative overall achievement within GCSE subjects, show that in 2002, students did better in business studies, religious education, home economics and history than in their other GCSE subjects. Students did least well in English, mathematics, science, art and French; almost all of these subjects experienced some difficulties with staffing during the year. Nevertheless, the school's overall points score in 2002 was better than that in 2001. From 1997 onwards, GCSE results overall have improved at a rate similar to that found nationally.
5. The school did not meet its target for 2002 for the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, but this was unrealistically high at 72 per cent. Performance was considerably higher than that predicted by the standardised tests administered by the school in 1999. The target for 2003, of 66 per cent, is still challenging but more realistic. Mock GCSE results indicate that the school is on target to meet, or nearly meet, this target.

6. Standards of work seen during the inspection largely confirm the picture given by the school's recent test and examination results. Standards of work seen in Years 9 and 11 are above average in English and science; students are achieving well due to good teaching. Standards are also above average in both of these year groups in mathematics. However, although many students achieve well, inconsistencies in teaching limit overall progress. Thus, achievement is satisfactory.
7. In most other subjects, standards in Year 9 are average, although in physical education, standards are below average. However, in all subjects, students are achieving at least as well as might be expected, given their attainment at the start of the year. By Year 11, standards are above average in art, design and technology, history and music. They are average in all other subjects, except for ICT where standards are below average overall. Although achievement in ICT is good for GCSE students, it is unsatisfactory for the majority of students in Year 11, due to limited ICT experience lower down the school and very limited curriculum time in which to develop their skills to an appropriate standard.
8. Thus, standards overall are above average both in Year 9 and in Year 11; current students from across the attainment profile are making good progress in lessons and are likely to achieve well over time. Staffing shortages have been resolved; the school is now virtually fully staffed with specialist teachers. As a result, teaching is good overall and almost all students are learning well. Higher attaining students, including particularly gifted and talented ones, learn and achieve as well as other students. The overall good achievement is the result of good teaching, students' own positive attitudes to their studies and the very good relationships between students and teachers that promote a good work ethic in classrooms. The school has also improved the use of its assessment data in order to monitor and support students' progress and, hence, to raise standards.
9. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Those students who receive additional support for reading achieve well, as evidenced by the improvement in their reading ages. Students also make good progress in lessons when supported by learning assistants and when teaching is good. However, in many instances, students' progress, although satisfactory, is slower than it might be because teaching is not focused well enough on their particular learning needs; individual education plans are not sufficiently clear to help students' learning.
10. In all subjects, students' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening are above average. Higher-attaining students write lively, interesting pieces in different styles. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate and they adapt their writing well for different purposes. Lower-attaining students tend to write short pieces, lacking descriptive detail and with grammatical and spelling mistakes. They can, however, express their ideas clearly. Most students speak confidently in informal situations, such as group discussions, and read aloud fluently and expressively. Listening in lessons is usually very good.
11. Standards of numeracy are above average, reflecting students' above average attainment in mathematics. Students' written calculation skills are good; so too are their geometrical and statistical skills and understanding. Algebraic skills are broadly as expected for their age and prior attainment. Students can use and apply their numerical skills when required in mathematics, but few instances were seen wherein students were required to use and apply their numerical skills in other subjects.

Sixth form

12. Results overall in the school's A-level examinations were significantly better in 2002 than in 2001. However, as national comparative data for 2002 are not yet available, the school's 2001 results must be used to compare its performance with that of all schools nationally.
13. Students take examinations leading to accreditation at AS and A-level; some follow intermediate GNVQ courses. In 2001, the school's A-level results were below average in relation to those of all maintained schools nationally, following the trend of the previous two years. The proportion of

students gaining A or B grades was significantly lower than that found nationally, reflecting to a large extent the attainment profile on entry. The pass rate was also lower than that nationally. In 2002, the proportion gaining A and B grades rose somewhat; the pass rate rose significantly to 96 per cent, which is just above last year's national average. The school's average points score per student also rose significantly; it is close to last year's national average.

14. AS-level results for Year 12 students in 2001 were broadly average; the percentage gaining A or B grades was just above the national figure of around 35 per cent; the pass rate was also above that found nationally. 2002 results are similar. Results at intermediate level GNVQ in 2001 were better than those attained nationally. All 17 students achieved a qualification, compared with just around 75 per cent nationally.
15. Results in different subjects vary from year to year, depending on the students who choose to study various courses. In 2001, A-level results were well below average in biology, physics and economics. Results for mathematics were in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. Results were average in physical education, geography and sociology. They were above average in art and design and well above average in history and English literature. Numbers taking examinations in a few other subjects – for example, French, German and home economics - were too small for reliable comparison with national results. Since 1998, results have been consistently above or well above average in history and English literature. 2002 results show improvement across a range of subjects; of the subjects inspected in depth, there were considerable gains in average points score in art, biology and physical education. History and English literature retained their good 'track-record'. Whilst results in mathematics improved, they are likely to remain well below average, reflecting overall unsatisfactory teaching.
16. The school has started to collect assessment data in order to monitor and analyse students' achievements at AS and A-level. However, this 'value-added' analysis is at an early stage of development and is inconclusive. Information received during the inspection indicates that, on balance, 2002 results were broadly as might be expected given students' attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students who entered the sixth form with fairly low GCSE scores tended to achieve well. The school has not yet set academic targets for improvement for its sixth form.
17. Retention rates are good. Virtually all those who start in Year 12 stay on to complete their studies; only three left the school during the last academic year. There are a few inevitable changes of mind at the start of Year 12 but, in such cases, students swap courses.
18. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall in the nine subjects inspected in depth. Standards are above average in English literature, biology, product design, history and physical education. They are well above average in art. Standards are broadly average in religious education; they remain unsatisfactory in mathematics. Standards in the intermediate GNVQ health and social care course are above average.
19. Inspection evidence thus indicates that standards are considerably higher than the 'below average' picture painted by the 2001 examination results. This reflects the work undertaken by the school recently to improve its sixth form provision. The school wishes to retain its open entry policy as far as is possible. However, entry requirements for mathematics and science have been applied more rigorously than in the past to ensure that students have the prerequisite knowledge to succeed in their studies. Although the school has been slow to introduce rigorous 'value-added' measures, teachers assess students' work very effectively. Individuals know what they are aiming for and how well they are doing. Teachers and tutors give very effective on-going support and guidance. Teaching has been monitored and supported very effectively; teachers have observed each other in an effort to broaden the range of strategies used for teaching at advanced level and in order to share best practice. These measures have been successful. At present, good teaching, students' very positive attitudes and very good relationships are creating a working atmosphere in which good learning is taking place. Students are achieving well. These measures are starting to be reflected in improvements in examination results as demonstrated by the rise in results in 2002. Inspection evidence suggests that the school is succeeding in its endeavours to improve standards in its sixth form further.

20. Overall, the school's results have improved as might be expected since the last inspection. The rate of improvement in GCSE results has been similar to that found nationally. Standards in the sixth form have varied, but 2002 results show a significant improvement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Attitudes to the school are good. Standards of behaviour are consistently very good. Students respond well to most aspects of provision for their personal development. Relations in the school are very good and make a significant contribution to how well students learn. Attendance is unsatisfactory and has an adverse impact on the school's efforts to raise standards further.
22. Students' attitudes to the school are positive. In lessons most are interested in and concentrate well on the tasks they are set. In a music lesson during the inspection Year 10 students were demonstrably enthusiastic and worked with a strong desire to succeed. Students take their learning seriously. They settle down to work quickly at the start of lessons, particularly when teachers explain clearly what they have to do and why they need to do it. While students learn willingly and are ready to answer direct questions, they are less likely to ask questions or raise issues of their own accord. In general, students like the school and the activities provided for them there. Some younger students commented that they had found it difficult to settle in, both academically and socially, because the move was so close to end of Year 9 national tests.
23. Students with special educational needs have very good attitudes to the school. They want to learn and appreciate the support given to them in lessons by learning support assistants. They are very appreciative of the help-line club, open at lunch times, where they can go to seek help with homework or to complete course work.
24. Standards of behaviour are very good. Almost without exception, students behave very well in lessons. They themselves consider behaviour is good throughout the school. Students also behave very well as they move around the school. They are friendly and polite, smiling and greeting visitors as they pass them. Students wait sensibly to avoid congestion on stairs, which become crowded when lessons change. All groups of students mix easily and sociably among themselves at break and at lunch times. Oppressive behaviour is rare, though sometimes disagreements occur among friendship groups. The level of exclusions is on the low side of average for a school of this size and type.
25. The way in which students respond to the school's provision for their personal development is good overall. Students from different social and ethnic backgrounds have respect for each other: they listen to one another and work well together. They react sensitively and show that they appreciate each other's efforts. Opportunities for students to take responsibility are concentrated in the sixth form, though some are available at lower levels through the school council and the house system. Students interviewed said that they would welcome more. Nevertheless, in lessons a proportion of students prefer to rely on being given information by their teachers instead of showing initiative and taking a personal responsibility to learn independently. The quality of relations is particularly strong. Very good relationships between students and their teachers were a consistent feature in many lessons observed during the inspection. Students appreciate the pleasant atmosphere and the extent of the support they are given by their teachers. It helps them to learn more effectively.
26. The attendance rate at the school for the academic year was 90.2 per cent, below the national median of 91 per cent. The amount of authorised absence was 9.6 per cent compared with 7.8 per cent nationally. Unauthorised absence was 0.2, comfortably below the national median of 1.2 per cent. Medical reasons are given for most of the authorised absence, most of which occurs during the spring and summer terms. Some is also due to holidays taken during term time. The overall rate of attendance has been falling since the previous inspection, but this was the first year it dropped below the national average. There was, however, an improvement during the autumn term, following extra measures taken by the school.

Sixth form

27. Sixth form students have very good attitudes to the school and to their studies. They enjoy life in the sixth form and want to learn. Almost all are highly motivated and prepared to work hard to achieve good results. Students are prepared to be self-critical; they accept advice eagerly and in a mature manner. They want to extend their learning skills. For example, in a media studies lesson, shared with Windsor Boys' School, students sought to look beyond the obvious visual impressions in a television documentary to analyse the motivation behind the techniques chosen to present a topic. Considered overall, students' learning skills develop well and are good. Students also support each other well while working independently. The strength of the relations between students and their teachers and tutors is a consistently very good feature in sixth form lessons, just as it is in the main part of the school. Such mutual respect encourages a partnership in learning. Very high standards of behaviour form part of students' attitudes to work. Students are expected to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. They are keen to play their part in this and to help others. Students enjoy the many opportunities offered to them to take responsibility: these include acting as prefects, running clubs and organising visits for younger students, representing the school at public functions and being active in charitable work. Their attendance is satisfactory.
28. The quality of relations in the school was considered good in the previous inspection report but has improved. The rate of attendance has fallen.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT

29. Students learn well and show an interest in their work. Most concentrate well and build on existing knowledge effectively to acquire new knowledge and skills. Good levels of interest and concentration, and a willingness to work, were features of students' learning in lessons across a range of subjects. This good quality learning is promoted by good teaching. Teaching was good or better in over six out of every ten lessons observed. Relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed; most occurred when non-specialists were teaching a subject that was new to them. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching across the year groups in the main school.
30. Teaching is good overall in English, drama, science, art, design and technology, history, music, and religious education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. Teaching of the school's personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. The good quality teaching is due to a variety of factors, but three strengths underpin much of the teaching in the main school. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they plan their lessons well and they manage students skilfully in lessons. There are no aspects of teaching which are unsatisfactory overall and no generic weaknesses across all subjects.
31. The very large majority of teachers are confident and competent in the subjects they teach. Specialist teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They give clear explanations. They are able to explain new ideas confidently and correctly at a level that is matched well to students' previous learning. This helps students to build effectively on what they already know and to understand new ideas. In a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher's detailed knowledge of Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls' helped students to learn about the characters in the play well. In drama, the teacher's very good knowledge of the subject, combined with her individual coaching and encouragement, meant that Year 11 students learned a lot about how to present ideas dramatically. Often, teachers use their expertise skilfully to give not just clear answers to students' questions, but also to challenge students to think for themselves. In English, for example, specialist teachers use questions effectively to challenge students to think deeply about what they read and write. Effective questioning in a Year 9 food technology lesson helped students to make good gains in learning about hazard analysis.
32. Another strength of teaching is the way in which lessons are planned and prepared to meet students' learning needs. Lessons are structured well; most have clear learning outcomes. Students are given clear time targets and good guidance on the purpose of the lesson; as a result, learning is often at a good pace. Lessons usually start well as, for example in history, where brisk

question and answer sessions are used effectively to remind students of their previous work. Some lessons also end well. In science for example, a strong feature of many lessons is a 'plenary' session that allows both students and their teacher to review what has been learned and what needs to be developed further. This good practice is not yet firmly established across subjects. In many instances, teachers also plan a variety of activities to promote learning. In English, teachers use group work well to make students discuss and think ideas through for themselves. In science, teachers use imaginative resources as, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on transfer of genetic information where a 'Kinder egg' was used very effectively to model a cell. In modern foreign languages, lessons are planned with a variety of activities to create interest. However, not all lessons exhibit a range of teaching and learning strategies. In geography, for example, there is a limited range of approaches. Similarly, although many teachers make effective use of ICT to support students' learning, practice is not yet consistent across subjects. In particular, its use in art and music needs further development.

33. Most teachers manage students very skilfully in lessons, so that there is good work ethic in classrooms. Teachers have high expectations for standards of behaviour. Students know what is expected of them; most respond accordingly. Teachers use a range of strategies to establish a disciplined and constructive learning environment. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good in all subjects and are central to students' good learning and achievement. For example, in religious education, mutual respect and good relationships mean that students are confident in expressing their own views.
34. The strengths of teaching described above help lower, middle and higher attaining students to learn well. The teaching of students with special educational needs is more uneven, though satisfactory overall. When students with special educational needs are supported in lessons, they learn well and make good progress. However, this support is not always available and, apart from a few students who are given additional help with reading, the only other provision is within the lowest teaching groups. Learning support assistants work well with class teachers and they provide a valuable service of adapting text and other materials to help students to learn. Most teachers know their students well and, consequently, they are able to intervene and provide appropriate support. In many lessons, good teaching provided for the whole class enables students with special educational needs to learn alongside their peers. Little one-to-one teaching is given, except for the few students who receive help with their reading. Individual education plans are not subject specific and do not give teachers clear enough guidance to ensure that needs are met.
35. The teaching of literacy across the school is satisfactory. The English department plays a major role in teaching literacy, and has started to use techniques from the national strategy in Year 9. Most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words; mathematics in particular does this well. Some departments stress the differences in writing for different purposes. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and students could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically. In lessons seen during the week, practice varied according to the teacher. Some extended students' literacy skills well by helping them to structure their writing, and by getting them to read different kinds of texts. In a Year 9 geography lesson, the teacher encouraged students to read aloud, and they read fluently, with good expression. In design and technology lessons, students write extended pieces as well as notes, and work is usually corrected for spelling and grammatical errors. However, in religious education non-examination classes in Years 10 and 11, too few opportunities are taken to reinforce key words. There is a working party that is steering the development of literacy in Year 9, but there is no overall school co-ordinator, policy or approach to support the work of the English department.
36. Similarly, the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The school has no numeracy policy that departments can turn to for enhancing standards in their subject. Plans are in hand to discuss numeracy on a whole school basis later this year. The mathematics department has its own policy, supplemented by an increased emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. This is having a positive effect on standards. Overall, opportunities are missed to enhance students' numeracy skills in other subjects. In art, students developed their use of proportion effectively through

perspective drawing. In design and technology, students understood and could use fractions and percentages appropriately. They could collect, present and interpret data, in design projects for example. They made appropriate judgements about relative size and weight and measured accurately to one degree and one millimetre. Few other instances were seen wherein students were helped to use and develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Sixth form

37. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good overall; a significant proportion is very good. Teaching was good or better in nearly nine out of every ten lessons seen; it was very good, and occasionally excellent, in very nearly one in four lessons. Teaching is at least good in all subjects inspected in depth except for mathematics, where it is unsatisfactory. Although some mathematics teaching is excellent, there is too much variation across classes; students do not achieve as well as they should. Teaching is very good in health and social care, in art, in religious education and in English. In other lessons seen, sampled from across the curriculum, teaching was mostly good or very good.
38. There are very many strengths in the teaching and no generic weaknesses. Very strong relationships between students and their teachers are evident in all lessons and contribute significantly to good quality learning. Teachers challenge, support, cajole and praise to try to get the best out of their students. Students enjoy their work with each other and with their teachers; there is a good ethos for learning. Three other strengths underpin and permeate the teaching in Years 12 and 13; these are teachers' very good subject knowledge, their expectation that students should become independent learners, and their use of their own day-to day assessment to improve students' performance.
39. Teachers' expertise results in clear, detailed and fluent explanations and in confident and competent responses to questions from students. Teachers use their subject knowledge skilfully, not just to impart information and to answer students' questions, but to challenge students and to extend their thinking. In English, for example, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to ask probing questions of students, as well as explaining the finer points of literary analysis. Confidence in what they are teaching, and very thorough planning, allows teachers to use different strategies and resources in their teaching. In religious education for example, teachers' in depth subject knowledge and the excellent use of current issues to clarify and illustrate theory, engages students and furthers their learning. Teachers make effective use of the school's above average facilities for ICT to strengthen learning in Years 12 and 13. Overall, students benefit from a variety of approaches and activities, which cater for a range of learning needs. This helps all to learn effectively. Students' learning is enhanced considerably by recognition of their teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for the subjects they teach, which is infectious.
40. Teachers' high expectations are reflected in the way many of them encourage students to think for themselves, to research and to learn independently. For example, in religious education a particular strength is the teacher's ability to stand back and ensure that students think for themselves. As a result, good research and independent learning skills are developed. Many teachers use questions well to extend students' horizons. For example, in history, skilful, supplementary questioning resulted in high standards of oral work, with students having to explain their own ideas clearly and logically. In biology, effective questioning in plenary sessions helps students to review their own learning and to identify what more they need to do to further their understanding. In most lessons, there are high levels of participation. Occasionally, in spite of teachers' efforts, students are slow to volunteer ideas and are rather passive, as in a Year 13 English lesson on 'Othello'.
41. In general, teachers make good use of their own on-going assessments, and their secure knowledge of examination requirements, to monitor students' progress and to improve performance. Teachers tend to know their students well and many set appropriately challenging targets for improvement. For example, in English, work is marked very well; teachers write helpful comments indicating what students should do to improve their work. In product design, there are

regular 'tutorial' sessions, where students and teachers discuss current work against examination criteria and agree targets for improvement. Peer and group assessment also play a significant part in improving learning in this subject. In religious education, students are appreciative of the on-going assessment and marking of their work which pinpoints difficulties and helps them to overcome areas of weakness. In biology, marking focuses on past exam questions; discussion and the use of model answers support learning and prepare students well for their examinations.

42. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last report, both in the main school and in the sixth form. This improvement reflects the considerable work undertaken by the school through classroom observation and staff training. There has been very good improvement.

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

43. Overall, curricular provision is satisfactory. There are significant strengths in provision for extra-curricular activities and careers education, together with strong community and partnership links, which extend opportunities for learning very well. The curriculum is planned well, with fore thought to breadth and balance throughout the year groups. The school provides effectively for equal opportunities. It aims to ensure that all students achieve their full potential by providing a curriculum that both meets statutory requirements and gives choice to meet learning needs. Students are grouped by prior attainment, so that course content and teaching can be suited to those students in each group. In general, this practice is working effectively and is leading to good learning and achievement.
44. In Year 9, curricular provision is good. The curriculum provides students with continuity in their learning, new experiences and gives a good grounding for 'option' choices to be made at the end of Year 9. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught. ICT is taught as a separate subject, as is drama and the personal and social education programme that includes citizenship. Timetabled tutorial time is also provided to support students in their learning. All students follow a course in French and the two top groups also follow a course in German.
45. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is satisfactory but with limited flexibility, at present, to meet all students' needs. All students follow a range of subjects that includes a core of English language and literature, mathematics, science, design and technology, a modern foreign language and physical education. Citizenship, information and communication technology and religious education are taught as a rotation through the year. Students choose four other subjects from an appropriate range of courses. For those students who have not studied German previously, a half GCSE course is available. The school is aware that this rather 'academic' provision does not meet some students' needs effectively. It is beginning to offer a greater range of courses in Years 10 and 11. For example, it has just started to offer vocational courses in conjunction with the East Berkshire College in GNVQ performing arts and GCSE health and social care and leisure and tourism. However, the school has yet to explore fully how provision that includes a wider range of vocational courses and half GCSE courses, or how studying more or less subjects, might be of benefit to different students.
46. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into all courses and activities but there is little flexibility for them to follow courses that are more suited to their learning needs. For example, there is very limited support for literacy development beyond English lessons and, in Years 10 and 11, some students find the demands of nine GCSE subjects too onerous. Students with specific learning difficulties do not benefit from specialist teaching to support their learning nor are they encouraged to use commercial computer software to improve their literacy or numeracy skills. Learning support assistants work very well with students in lessons to ensure that they take part and learn. However, the school has not planned sufficiently well to ensure that students with a statement of special educational needs, or other students with special educational needs, have their identified learning needs met in full. For this reason, provision for these students is unsatisfactory.

47. Planning to ensure that appropriate provision is made for gifted and talented students is mainly through subject provision and the Year 9 and Year 10 personal and social development course. The school is committed to meeting the needs of very able students, but identification of these students is not based on clear criteria, nor at present is provision across subjects co-ordinated.
48. The personal, social, health and citizenship course is good and supports students' learning well. The programme is very well planned, clearly focused, relevant and kept under review. It encompasses health education, including sex and drugs education, careers guidance and citizenship. Thoughtful planning has ensured that sufficient time is given to each of these elements with progression in content and learning from Year 9 to Year 11. The programme is taught by a team of teachers, under the leadership of a co-ordinator. However, at present, there is no direct link between the personal and social education programme, tutorial periods or assemblies and, as a consequence, opportunities are missed to reinforce learning across these aspects of provision. The co-ordinator has collated detailed materials to assist with the teaching of the programme but does not monitor its delivery formally.
49. Students receive very good careers guidance. Careers education is very well planned and managed to meet the needs of students as they progress through the school. The careers programme is well supported by materials and productive liaison with external agencies, in particular the local careers adviser. Very good features include the Quality Award gained for the school's provision and also the way that work experience is linked to careers education. Careers interviews are well established with very good access to the careers library; this is managed by a very knowledgeable librarian. Students with special educational needs are given careers interviews and good quality advice and support.
50. Work experience is well organised in co-operation with the local Education Business Partnership and the Millennium Volunteers Scheme and local businesses. Good preparation is given for students for their work placements and a very good system to monitor provision is in place. All students undertake a week of work experience in the autumn term of Year 11. Good follow-up procedures evaluate students' learning and outcomes are included in their personal records of achievement.
51. There is good provision of extra-curricular activities, which significantly enhances the range of learning opportunities available to students. Opportunities in English, art, music and sport are particularly strong. The participation rates in these activities, as well as the many theatre visits, geography field trips and language links with Germany, are very good. All curricular areas offer organised activities for enhancement or revision of students' studies. The English department has a very good policy that exists in practice to extend students' skills through events such as public speaking competitions, reading and magazine clubs. The physical education department runs team games as well as dance and gymnastics displays and in music, a good range of ensembles and choirs regularly take part in concerts. A help-line club is well attended by students at lunch-times seeking assistance with course work and home work.
52. The school has very good links with its partner institutions. The arrangements for transfer at the beginning of Year 9 are managed very well. Curricular liaison with colleagues in the middle schools is very good. Regular meetings are held to plan progression activities and to ensure that there is continuity in students' learning. The arrangements for transfer of information about students with statements of special educational needs, and to ensure that the induction process for these students is smooth, are very thorough. The school is beginning to work closely with the Windsor Boys' School and with the East Berkshire College to extend curricular provision; it would welcome the opportunity to develop these links further.
53. Links with the community are good. The school values the contribution made by the community to students' learning. The personal and social education programme, work experience, and careers education are well supported by local companies. The headteacher serves on the executive of the Learning Partnership and on the management committee of the Education and Business Partnership service. This affirms the school's commitment to working with outside agencies to extend students' learning opportunities.

54. Overall, provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is very good. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. In some subjects, teachers are very aware of the need to provide opportunities for students to reflect on deeper issues. A very good example is found in the work of a GCSE art student, who demonstrated great spirituality, reflection and sensitivity to the pain of others through her work on Hiroshima. Display around the school demonstrates appreciation of the beauty of nature when considering the plight of the rain forests, or when sketching 'bugs and biters'! In other subjects however, this opportunity for reflection is lacking. Assemblies, while good opportunities for raising moral issues, provide limited opportunities for quiet reflection through music, participation or silence. Religious education receives insufficient time to both deliver the syllabus and provide opportunities for spiritual growth. In many other subjects, good opportunities for reflection are missed. As a consequence, provision for spiritual development is more limited than it might be.
55. Provision for moral development is very good. The ethos of the school encourages a sense of mutual care and responsibility for one another. A display of poems and writings by students studying religious education demonstrates a sensitive appreciation of the dangers of prejudice and stereotyping. Students are encouraged to identify with people in the local community, through its support for groups such as the nearby hospice, and with people in need overseas, through fundraising and 'blanket collections' for refugees. The school's commitment to a school in Ghana provides very good opportunities for students to become aware of the problems facing people who may not have things students take for granted, such as clean water. Environmental issues are considered in different subjects and geography highlights the inequalities in world trade. Contemporary moral dilemmas are discussed through religious education and personal, social and health education and, in English and drama, students have the opportunity to consider issues such as child cruelty and loneliness. Although the school has a limited formal system of merits, teachers clearly identify positive action and have high expectations of attitudes and behaviour.
56. Provision for the social development is good. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and the atmosphere within the school is warm. Students are confident and sociable, at ease when talking to adults. Activity weeks for Years 9 and 10 provide good opportunities for team building and for students to develop confidence and acquire new skills and friends. In many lessons, teachers provide the opportunity for group and paired work, thus enabling students to work together and to develop collaborative skills. Teachers give good support to students during such activities; however, at times, too much support limits opportunities for students themselves to develop personal control and group management skills. The enthusiasm of some keen students at times results in their quieter colleagues being overwhelmed. The newly re-introduced house system provides some opportunities for students in the main school to take responsibility, as does their work on the school council. However, sixth formers have many more opportunities than do main school students to develop leadership skills, to display initiative and to take some responsibility for the smooth running of their school.
57. The school provides very good opportunities for students' cultural development. There is a good range of music and drama activities and regular visits to galleries and the theatre. Opportunities to watch professional artists and authors at work enable students to develop their own skills and encourage a wider interest in the arts. Monthly performances for parents and friends encourage students to become actively involved and to appreciate the skills of their peers. Students are encouraged to appreciate the culture of their own country through activities such as the visit to Windsor Castle, to observe the garter ceremony, and also to sing in St. George's Chapel. A competition to select the greatest British female highlighted the achievements of women from the past, as well as supporting the aspirations of women today. The limited time for religious education curtails to some extent opportunities to explore in depth the cultures of the world faiths studied, or to have first hand experience of peoples and places of worship. The school does value the ethnic diversity of its students however, and the religious requirements of its Muslim students are supported. Students from different social and ethnic backgrounds learn to work together with mutual respect and friendship.

Sixth form

58. As in the main school, the sixth form aims to be inclusive and tries hard to implement a policy of admitting students with a range of abilities and aptitudes. The curriculum is currently well matched to students' learning requirements and responds well to local circumstances. It focuses on traditional A-level courses as these reflect students' interests at the present time. To broaden the range of opportunities available, the school offers several courses in collaboration with the local boys' school. This arrangement, which is relatively new, is working well in terms of broadening curricular provision, although current differences in the timing of the school day between the two schools restrict further joint working.
59. A good range of AS and A-level courses are offered; these prepare students well for higher education, including Oxford and Cambridge entrance, and for employment. The provision with the boys' school has enabled the school to increase the choice of subjects such as food technology, government and politics, media studies and music. A very modest selection of vocational courses is provided. There are just two intermediate GNVQ courses in business education and health and social care. A vocational course is also offered in information and communication technology; however, this is not recognised by the UCAS system.
60. A key skills programme is not offered in the sixth form currently, although the school intends to do so in the next academic year. A successful pilot has been run and an audit of departments' potential contributions completed. A co-ordinator has been appointed. The school has ensured that there will be adequate time for training and the development of the courses, which will cover literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
61. A general studies course and other enrichment activities supplement the curriculum well. The general studies programme includes personal and social education and religious education and is attended by all students, some of whom have chosen to follow this as an additional examination course. Personal development is enhanced well by a physical recreation programme, the Young Enterprise scheme and community work. Timetabling difficulties impinge on some of these activities so that not all students gain the benefits from participation. However, a weekly enrichment after school session is available to deepen students' thinking and to prepare them for university; this is open to students from the boys' school.
62. The quality of provision for careers education and information on higher education and the world of work is very good. As in the main school, all Year 12 students undertake work experience; some use this to gain experience of the European parliament in Brussels. Students are given very good guidance on selecting courses that will lead them towards their future aspirations. The careers library is an excellent resource; not only is it well stocked, it is also run by an experienced member of staff. Students have very good access to ICT to research and to prepare personal statements and applications. Very good support is given by the careers service and a careers and UCAS conference is very popular and well attended. This provides excellent opportunities for students to discuss and explore careers and training routes as well as courses offered at universities.
63. The provision for extra-curricular enrichment is good. Students join with the main school in clubs and music and sporting events. They have additional opportunities for visits such as those to Peru, Australia and to Krakow. The focus is both educational and cultural; visits broaden students' awareness of the wider world well. Other activities include charity events, drama productions such as last year's 'The Love of the Nightingale' and working as millennium volunteers.
64. The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual development of its sixth formers. Students attend school and year assemblies, but although these provide good opportunities for moral development, they do not generally provide for reflection and spiritual growth. Students have some opportunity to continue their religious education through the general studies course, and sixth form students have formed a Christian Union group where they have the opportunity to discuss ultimate questions from a secular and religious standpoint. Some students have good opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth through their A level studies, for example in mathematics students

were given the lead to reflect on Fermat's theorem and the years taken to prove it. The visit to Auschwitz provided a very salutary and moving experience for the students who went.

65. Provision for the moral development of the students is very good. They are responsible for the organisation of charity fundraising in the school and take a lead in the activities to raise funds for the link school in Ghana. The extensive prefect system enables them to support the accepted codes of conduct and they take a pride in the smooth running of the school. During their enrichment time, students have the opportunity for involvement in the community through support of such groups as 'Riding for the Disabled'; they are encouraged to consider the needs of others. The desire of individual students to spend their 'gap' year in voluntary work abroad is encouraged and supported by the school. Opportunities for discussion of moral issues take place in a variety of subject areas and, as trained peer- counsellors, students are able to support younger students who may have a range of problems.
66. Provision for the social development of students is very good. The sixth form is a lively community that makes a very positive contribution to the school as a whole. In many subjects, students are encouraged to take a wider view of the world and the good relationships between students and staff support their growing confidence. Their views are respected and as a result they recognise a responsibility for the smooth running of the school and the welfare of younger students. They are encouraged to organise visits to theatres and concerts and these provide good opportunities for the development of social skills. Students are confident and self-assured and the links with the boys' school enable them to organise social and enrichment events. The annual ball is a highpoint of the year. Annual skiing trips and the biannual overseas expeditions enable students to gain confidence in travel and in dealing with unexpected situations. Activities of groups such as the Young Enterprise group and the public speaking group are well organised and provide good opportunities for personal development. There are many areas where sixth form students are encouraged to take a lead, both by example and in the organisation of clubs and teams.
67. Students have very good opportunities to develop their cultural awareness. There are regular musical gatherings organised by the sixth form where staff and students are invited to appreciate amateur performances. In addition, the students themselves organise regular trips to theatres, concerts and galleries. A recent visit to the Versace Exhibition was well documented in the school newsletter. Students are also encouraged to widen their horizons through opportunities to travel. Recent trips have taken place to Eastern Europe, South America and Australia, and the reports from students who went are testament to how much they have benefited from them. The school is about to re-visit the USA. The sixth form leadership in fundraising for the link school in Ghana has made them very aware of the richness of the culture and the different lifestyles and values that exist.
68. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in curricular development and provision throughout the school. Very good improvement has been made to careers education and to provision for students' personal and social development. Although the provision for ICT has improved significantly, there are inconsistencies in its use by departments. Religious education is now in place in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Planned provision for students with special educational needs requires improvement to ensure that they are learning as well as possible. Vocational opportunities are being introduced but this is still at an early stage. The school is keen to continue to develop links with other providers to broaden students' opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

69. There are very good procedures for the care and welfare of students in the school.
70. Monitoring of students' personal development is very good. Members of staff make sure that they know students well as individuals. They keep thorough records to complement informal contact. This knowledge is used carefully and sensitively to guide and support students. For example, because the Head of Year 9 teaches most of her year group, she is aware that some students are anxious about changing school close to examinations, and she can help to allay their concern. Record books provide an effective method of monitoring students' academic and personal

progress. This is because they allow tutors, students and their parents to follow progress during the year. Students also feel that they gain by comparing their own assessment of progress with their teachers'.

71. There are good procedures for child protection. A policy has been put in place since the previous inspection, which gives good guidance as to how they should be applied. The procedures to ensure students' health and safety are good. These are reviewed regularly both by the school and outside professionals. The school's procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour were revised in 2002 after a period of consultation. The purpose of the review was to achieve consistency and good communication and to give praise, especially among older students. The procedures work well, as the very high standards of behaviour seen during the inspection demonstrate. The school functions as a harmonious community. Recently, the overall rate of attendance dropped to a level below the national median. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance were strengthened with the introduction of first day calling and greater involvement of the education welfare officer. These procedures are currently satisfactory; attendance improved slightly during the autumn term. The school now needs to monitor more rigorously the impact of absence on students' attainment and progress and strengthen ways in which full attendance is celebrated.
72. Monitoring of students' academic performance is also very good overall; procedures are starting to impact positively on standards. There are clear requirements for regular assessment of students' performance. From the start of Year 9, teachers are expected to make a termly assessment of students' current attainment against National Curriculum or GCSE criteria. The quality of assessment practice varies across departments, but it is good overall. In Years 10 and 11, subject teachers assess students' attainment accurately against GCSE criteria. Some use the results of such assessments effectively to inform their teaching and to give targeted support to individuals. Assessment is less effective in Year 9 since, in many subjects, assessment against National Curriculum criteria is inaccurate. This means that staff and students do not have a realistic understanding of current performance against national expectations.
73. The school has developed its own ICT system to record the information from teachers' assessments in order to monitor students' progress across the school. Teachers give each student a 'working at' grade, a 'predicted grade' and a 'target' grade; the latter is what the students could achieve with maximum effort. Teachers raise concern flags if they feel that a student is under performing. Simultaneously, senior managers use the database to compare students' performance with that predicted by the standardised tests administered at the start of Year 9. Again, students who are slipping, have concern flags raised.
74. The database is starting to be used very effectively indeed to monitor and support progress made by individual students. Students with concern flags are a regular agenda item at line management meetings. Heads of department, with senior managers, discuss concerns and agree strategies for support. For example, senior managers sometimes mentor particular students. In Year 9, the database is used to identify those students who might benefit from 'booster' classes. The school is aware that the use made of the database by departments varies. However, some departments are already using the information it provides very effectively. For example, in English, students know what they are aiming for and what they must do to improve.
75. Pastoral staff are involved effectively in the process. Tutors receive all assessment data for their tutees; they monitor students' performance across a range of subjects. Parents are informed and consulted if students are underachieving to any significant extent. Another strength of the system is the feedback given to students. Students enter teachers' assessments in a special record book, after having first made their own assessment of their performance in different subjects. Students say that they find this comparison helpful. Academic mentoring days are used to set generic study targets with parents and students, and to agree which subject teachers need to be seen for more specific subject targets to be set to support learning. The school is aware that many targets are not yet specific enough and that further work is needed to ensure that they are followed up. Nevertheless, the system is starting to work very effectively to give students comprehensive

targets to help raise performance. Students' record books are used very effectively to give both students and their parents particularly detailed information on their academic progress

76. The progress of students with special educational needs is not monitored closely enough to ensure that they make sufficient progress, although a good analysis of progress in reading ages is made when students receive additional support. Monitoring of progress across the curriculum takes place through the same system as the rest of the school; this is related to effort, homework and conduct and progress towards national curriculum or GCSE target grades. No account is taken of students' learning needs or the objectives of statements of special educational needs; there is no clear record of how students have progressed compared to their specified needs. Annual reviews of statements meet statutory requirements. Reviews are well attended by students and parents. However, the objectives set in statements are not considered as fully as they should be.
77. Individual education plans are not sufficiently focused or clear enough to either provide students with targets they can understand and work towards or teachers with enough guidance on strategies for teaching. At present, teachers are aware of individual education plans, but they do not use them well to plan work for students with special educational needs. However, in some subjects such as art teachers set their own targets; this is very effective in improving students' learning.

Sixth form

Assessment

78. Overall, the assessment and monitoring of students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The assessment of students' work and current performance is good. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and effectively, as described in the teaching section of this report. Assignments are assessed regularly and rigorously against examination criteria; teachers' good understanding of their subject and of examination requirements ensures that assessments are accurate and reliable. Overall, teachers' assessments help students and their parents to have a very good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and a realistic understanding of their likely performance in examinations. They also enable teachers to prepare students well for examinations, to identify individual learning needs and to adapt their teaching effectively to address areas of weakness.
79. The monitoring of students' progress is much less secure. The same review process takes place as in the main school. Students' current attainment, as assessed by their teachers, is collated termly. Teachers' initial assessments in the autumn term of Year 12 and 13 are used to set end of year target grades for students. Progress towards these target grades is monitored and supported effectively. This process, which is relatively new, is starting to be successful in establishing a culture wherein expectations for achievement are clear to students and teachers alike from the start of Year 12. It allows some tracking of students' progress, at regular intervals, during their time in the sixth form.
80. This process relies totally on teachers' albeit good, intuitive assessment of students' academic performance. Monitoring of students' academic attainment and progress is not yet underpinned by a rigorous understanding of what students should achieve in a particular subject, given their GCSE scores at the start of the course. It is thus not as effective as it might be. The use of data to track progress, and to ensure that standards are sufficiently high, is not yet embedded in sixth form practice.

Advice, support and guidance

81. Students in the sixth form receive very good advice, support and guidance. They are well prepared before they start their studies in the sixth form. Discussions and interviews, which take place while students are in Year 11, cover other institutions in the area, not just the sixth form at Windsor Girls School. Entry to the sixth form is inclusive: the level of prior qualifications required can be

flexible where it is considered that students will be able to succeed. All prospective students are interviewed, and are encouraged to talk to current students.

82. There is very good guidance too for students during the time they spend in the sixth form. A regular programme of one-to-one tutorial interviews supports students with additional help if students have problems in their chosen courses and subjects and want to talk about progress. A three day conference at the end of Year 12 ensures that students are well briefed about whether to go to university, which courses to choose and what other options are available and would suit them. Students interviewed praised the quality of the support and guidance they received; all said they knew how well they were doing and precisely what they had to do to get the desired results. Termly reports also provide a clear, evaluative commentary on progress for students and their parents.
83. Standards of care continue to be very good across the school. The school's procedures to monitor academic progress and personal development have improved significantly since the last inspection in the main school; progress has been slower in the sixth form. There is now a formal policy and guidance on child protection procedures. The school has developed particularly successful procedures to collect and record information about students to help monitor and track their academic progress. It combines this with similar information about their personal development to help students to do as well as possible in their studies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

84. Parents' views of the school are generally favourable. Those parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school expects their daughters to work hard and that they make good progress. They also think that the school is approachable and that it is well led and managed. The inspection team agrees with these parents' favourable views. Some of the parents who returned the questionnaire and/or attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents have concerns about the range of activities outside lessons and about the quality of information they receive on progress and think that their daughters do not like the school. Inspectors consider that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. In their opinion the information on progress is particularly good. The inspection team considered that the majority of students do enjoy the school, but that some of the younger ones find it hard to adjust. This is because transferring in Year 9 means that they have only two terms preparation before taking the end of Year 9 examinations, and hard work must start immediately.
85. The school has developed good links with parents. Ease of contact is an important part of these. All prospective students and their parents have an interview with the head teacher before starting at the school. The head teacher is also available to meet parents every Monday after school. Heads of year give priority to seeing parents. This is in addition to subject consultation evenings and academic review days. Parents clearly appreciate this willingness to meet them since it received a high measure of agreement on the questionnaire. There is a home/school agreement which all parents sign. The monthly newsletter is a very good way of keeping parents in touch with the school. This is because it combines matters of routine information for parents with details of current and future events in a lively and readable manner. It also draws attention to the achievements of present and former students. In between publications, the school's web site allows parents to receive up-to date information. Parents have particularly good information about the progress that their daughters make. The record books, which students and staff fill in each term, mean parents can follow progress throughout the year, not just in a formal report. Subject consultation evenings and the academic review day provide opportunities for discussion with teachers and tutors.
86. Informal contact with parents of students with special educational needs is very good. The school has an open door policy and welcomes the interest and support that parents provide. Arrangements for students with statements of special educational needs to transfer to the school at the beginning of Year 9 are planned very thoroughly with parents to ensure that students feel secure and safe. However, the school does not involve parents enough in setting short term targets

for their children's learning or for informing them of the plans for provision to meet identified objectives.

87. On balance, the contribution which parents themselves make is satisfactory. Much is good. Attendance at review days is high. There is an active parent/teachers association. Parents use the students' diaries for messages and contact the school readily. However, not all parents ensure that their daughters come to school regularly. The level of attendance has fallen since the previous inspection and this undoubtedly has an adverse effect on overall standards and achievement.
88. Sixth form students have very positive views of the school. They consider they receive good information to help them decide on courses and are helped to settle in well. They think they are taught well and are given help to acquire the research and study skills that they need. They believe the quality of the advice and support they receive is very good. Some of the students who completed the student questionnaire were less confident about the quality of careers advice they get. This was not the opinion of students interviewed during the inspection. However, most of the careers advice is given towards the end of Year 12, so many students would not yet have known about the programme and conference.
89. The school has maintained and strengthened its links with parents; ease of contact is clearly an important factor. Parents feel that the school is approachable and particularly appreciate ready contact with the headteacher.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

90. Overall, leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership; she has a clear vision for the school, wherein students and their achievements are central. She seeks to create a truly inclusive school, where all students and staff get a 'fair deal' and where standards are high. This vision is underpinned by the school's aims, which are reflected in all aspects of its work, not least in the very good relationships that exist within the school and in good provision for staff development. The headteacher is a very visible person around the school; she gives a great deal, both in terms of commitment and support.
91. As at the last inspection, teamwork remains a strong feature of leadership and management. Roles and responsibilities for senior managers are now very clear. Collectively, the team has established a common sense of purpose and direction for the school's work and a common commitment to high standards. There is an atmosphere of 'wanting to do well' amongst most students and staff. Expectations of students are high, promoting good achievement and very good standards of behaviour throughout the school.
92. Governors are very supportive of the school. Their commitment to high achievement for all is promoted through appropriate policies, including key policies for teaching, learning and the curriculum. There is a race equality policy and any racist incidents are properly recorded. In particular, the school does a lot to recognise and celebrate the achievement of women in many walks of life and there is good recognition of the importance of having effective role models. Governors are well organised and well informed of the school's work through regular reports from the headteacher, from the bursar and from heads of department and heads of year. They use this information appropriately to monitor the school's results and provision and to help shape the future direction of the school. Governors are largely successful in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. They are aware that the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship. In addition, requirements for students with special educational needs are not met sufficiently well.
93. The last report stated that the roles of middle managers were starting to develop in respect of raising achievement. The quality of leadership of middle management is still variable, mostly ranging from satisfactory to very good. Management is unsatisfactory on a day-to-day basis in ICT where, in spite of the school's efforts, currently there is no head of department. The reverse is true in French, where day-to-day management and administration of the department's work are satisfactory, in spite of deficiencies in longer-term strategic management. However, most heads of

department give a firm steer to their department's work and, with heads of year, make an important contribution to the results achieved by students. The school has taken appropriate steps to overcome the staffing difficulties caused by ill health within the learning support department. However, at present, leadership at whole school and departmental level is unsatisfactory because there are gaps in policy, in meeting statutory requirements, in provision for students with special educational needs, in individual education plans and in resources, record keeping and the monitoring of progress and teaching.

94. Overall, the school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating its work are good. Senior managers meet formally once a term with middle managers to monitor and evaluate provision in departments and across year groups. The headteacher and most senior managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. At departmental level, such understanding is sometimes less secure.
95. Overall, the school monitors and evaluates its academic standards well. The school analyses its assessment data to see if achievement is the same for all the different groups of students in the school. This analysis is at an early stage and is not regularly reported to staff and governors in a format that is easy to understand. There is no significant difference in achievement for students from different ethnic backgrounds and the school is effective in promoting equality. Very good use is made of the school's academic monitoring system to monitor on an on-going basis not just achievement for individual students, but also that for different subjects and different classes. Heads of department, in discussion with senior managers, analyse possible reasons for any differences in performance across subjects and classes, and identify departmental actions to be taken to raise standards. However, actions to be taken to address identified underachievement are not always clear and are not followed up consistently. In addition, the school is over-reliant on its own information when analysing its performance retrospectively; this does not give a reliable picture. The school does not take sufficient account of other local and national information to ensure that standards for both the school and individual departments are as high as they should be.
96. The school also monitors the quality of its teaching effectively. There is a well-established programme of classroom observation, currently with a particular focus in Year 9 and in the sixth form, which has developed over time. Good practice is identified and shared and aspects of teaching needing improvement are addressed. For example, the Year 9 programme for observing lessons is focusing on implementing different aspects of the Key Stage 3 strategy (for example, looking at the first part of lessons) to develop consistency of approach. The school is starting to evaluate the impact of these new techniques on learning. As a result of such monitoring, the headteacher has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school. She has taken appropriate action to support individuals and departments and to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning within the school. An integral part of this process has been the training of middle managers in classroom observation and the establishment of a culture of continuing professional development. These measures have been instrumental in the significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
97. The school uses the information gained from its monitoring and evaluation of provision to identify appropriate priorities for development and actions to be taken in order to raise standards. These are detailed clearly in a three-year strategic plan, underpinned by an annual school development plan. Plans are sufficiently detailed to guide development, although a more explicit focus on intended outcomes would allow the impact on students' learning and achievements to be evaluated more rigorously. A relative weakness is that whole school planning is not underpinned sufficiently well by good quality departmental plans, which set out clearly targets for improvement and actions to be taken to secure the same.
98. The headteacher and other senior managers make skilful use of the school's resources. Teachers are deployed effectively; good use is made of their subject expertise, so that much of the teaching is good or better. The learning support assistants provide a valuable resource to the school. They are well qualified and have been trained in aspects of special educational needs. Meetings were held regularly to evaluate their deployment but, in recent months, these have been too infrequent either to monitor the support provided or to help focus support where it is needed most.

99. The school also makes good use of funding to consolidate and develop its work. The school development plan is costed and provides a good framework for ensuring that spending decisions are governed, as far as possible, by the school's educational priorities. The good quality learning seen in classrooms indicates that students are benefiting from well-targeted spending on staffing. The school has made a significant investment in recent years to improve its ICT facilities; students are just starting to reap the benefits of provision that is better than average. The last audit report identified the satisfactory management and control of resources, including the spending of specific grant. The governors' finance committee oversees financial matters and monitors spending, assisted very effectively by the bursar.
100. The school evaluates the impact of its spending decisions sensibly, influenced by the principles of best value. It works hard to ensure that provision best meets students' needs and uses many strategies to extend and support students' learning beyond its basic curriculum. For example, it has gained Artsmark Gold, and Sportsmark national awards. The school genuinely seeks to analyse what actions make a difference to standards; it enables students to achieve well by the end of Year 11 and provides very well for their personal development. The school's income is on the high side of average; however, recent staff appointments were more costly than expected so the school will overspend its budget in the current financial year. Thus, overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
101. Overall, the school has a satisfactory match of teaching and non-teaching staff for the needs of its curriculum. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good match mostly between their qualifications and the subjects they teach. There is some non-specialist teaching in geography, ICT and religious education. Although teachers are given good support for teaching in these subjects, many are new to their non-specialist work. Hence, standards are affected. In design and technology, a technician instructor teaches a very small number of lessons, supervised by a teacher, with no detriment to standards. The school functions smoothly due to its very helpful administrative and premises staff.
102. Staff development is very well organised; the school has gained the Investors in People national award for the fourth time. The present system of performance management is good and has evolved out of a well-established appraisal system. It contributes effectively to development, since it is driven by the school improvement plan. There is a detailed programme for planning, monitoring and review and a line management system operating for lesson observation, with feedback given. Targets are set and agreed for the next review, from which a training plan is identified. Non-teaching personnel are involved in a system of appraisal as opposed to performance management. The professional development of staff is supported further by a range of in-house and external provision, aimed to support whole school, departmental and individual training needs. Last year, members of staff were involved in a variety of training courses, including those for subject requirements, the Key Stage 3 strategy, ICT training and local provision. All staff are required to complete an evaluation form outlining how attending a particular course may affect classroom practice in an effort to share benefits more widely.
103. A comprehensive induction programme is in place, which involves both newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. New teachers say they are well supported by senior staff, heads of department, heads of year and departmental colleagues. Similarly non-teaching staff new to the school are well supported. The school makes excellent provision for initial teacher training. There is a well-established link with Reading University. Co-operation with other local schools enriches the provision offered. Teachers at the school are well prepared to support students. The whole programme is managed conscientiously by the school's professional tutor
104. The range and quality of resources to support learning across the whole curriculum are generally satisfactory and are an improvement on the last inspection. Provision is at least satisfactory in all subjects, except for art and history. The current lack of a kiln means that ceramics and clay sculpture cannot be taught in art. In history, there are not enough textbooks. The most significant improvement lies in provision for ICT. The ratio of students to computers is currently better than the

national average. Introduction of ICT facilities was planned well, in line with staff training. Good use is made of the school's lap top computers, shared well between departments.

105. The library provides good day-to-day provision for students, an improvement on the last inspection. It is a welcoming and attractive environment wherein students can browse, change books and use the Internet. Librarians run the library very effectively, helping students to carry out research.
106. Apart from a good number of lap top computers, the resources to support students with special educational needs are meagre. Display is not used well and there are very few books or games for staff to use with students to help them with their learning. There are no special computer packages, such as those used for numeracy and literacy, that students can use to develop their skills.
107. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. There are appropriate facilities for teaching the school's curriculum, although, as a result of the school's recent growth in size, space is tight. For example, the room allocated for special educational needs is also used as a tutorial base and classroom. It is cluttered and not conducive to providing the ambience that motivates and supports learning. The school has been creative in adapting existing space to improve facilities and proactive in seizing opportunities to improve its sporting facilities. Several improvements have taken place to address issues raised in the last inspection. Access for students with disability has been improved, although many areas of the building still do not allow for access by physically disabled students and staff; however, further improvements are planned with new building in the summer of 2003. This will also improve accommodation for administration and office staff, enhance facilities for staff and improve the accommodation for art. Further improvement to the dining area is planned. This would allow greater take-up of extra curricular provision at lunchtime; current arrangements mean that many students spend much of the lunch-time queuing.

SIXTH FORM

108. The leadership and management of the school's sixth form are good overall. The quality of leadership of the sixth form is good, due to the shared and agreed principles upon which it operates. The governing body is well informed about the sixth form and its committees work closely with school managers to keep the sixth form aims and values in close alliance with those of the main school. The flexible, open-entry policy reflects the school's commitment to inclusion. There is a clear rationale for the range of courses offered, based on students' interests and aspirations. There is also a clear intention that students' personal development should continue to be enriched. Day-to-day leadership and administration are good, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction for students and staff alike.
109. Overall, monitoring and evaluation of performance in Years 12 and 13 and the action taken to secure improvements are satisfactory. Aspects of monitoring and evaluation are good. Systems and procedures to monitor attendance, private study and students' welfare are in place and are used well to underpin the very good standards of behaviour and sense of responsibility displayed by students. As with the main school, supportive monitoring and openness to learning and development are seen as a key element in managing improvements. The quality of sixth form teaching is monitored regularly and there is a welcome attitude by teachers to identify what can be improved further.
110. The monitoring of academic results and progress by managers is not as secure. Departments undertake a detailed annual analysis of results and identify areas for improvement. However, these analyses are not underpinned by a rigorous analysis and understanding of what students should have achieved, given their GCSE results, in relation to national patterns. Managers are not able to demonstrate conclusively that students' achievements are at least as high as they should be. The school is not as aware as it should be of how students have achieved on different courses. Neither is it sufficiently aware of any differences in the performance of students with differing levels of prior attainment. This lack of focus, regarding where specific support is needed, limits the effectiveness of departments' efforts to improve examination results further.

111. There is a clear commitment by all concerned to develop and improve sixth form provision and standards. As a result of monitoring, priorities for improvement have been identified, although the school has not set an overall target for improvement for its sixth form. However, although the school's development plan makes reference to sixth form development, such reference is not sufficiently detailed to drive improvement. There is no clear strategic plan for the way forward, agreed by governors, managers and staff, nor a sufficiently detailed short-term action plan showing how priorities for improvement are to be achieved and at what cost. This clarity is necessary because, whilst the sixth form is broadly cost effective at present, it is subsidised, albeit by a relatively small amount, from income received for main school staffing. The school firmly believes that this is justifiable, given the drive to expand and improve sixth form provision. It argues justifiably that there is little evidence to show that standards in the main school suffer. The school is aware however, that new funding arrangements will necessitate a hard look at class sizes in some subjects if sixth form provision is to remain cost effective.

Resources.

112. The match of teaching staff to the demands of the sixth form curriculum is good; subject expertise is a strength. As in the main school, arrangements for the professional development of staff ensure that they receive appropriate training and are kept up to date with the requirements of vocational and AS and A-level courses.

113. Resources to support students' learning are satisfactory overall and good, for example, in mathematics, science, information technology, physical education and English. However, a shortage of textbooks in history results in an over dependence on photocopied sheets, which sometimes limits learning. As in the main school, the library provides a very good resource for learning. Its use is planned systematically to provide a secure place for independent study. Very good provision for ICT support students' learning well.

114. The accommodation for sixth form classes is satisfactory overall. The new sixth form centre is a strength, offering purpose built accommodation of a high standard. It provides well for students' socially and for the many lessons taught in the centre. In general, specialist accommodation is appropriate for the sixth form curriculum. However, current accommodation for art requires students to de-canvas after each session, wasting valuable learning time; students lack a studio space where they might work in their free lessons

115. Overall, effective leadership and management have enabled the school to make good improvement since its 1997 inspection, in relation to both main school and sixth form provision. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have led the school through a period of staff shortages without losing their clear vision for the future. GCSE results have improved at a rate similar to that found nationally; performance at A-level has fluctuated but, overall, standards have been maintained. Teaching is now significantly better than it was in 1997. The school has addressed all of the key issues identified in the last report, mostly successfully. There has been very good improvement in the use of assessment information to support students' learning and progress. All subjects now have schemes of work to guide teaching, although some need further development. The school has made huge strides in provision for ICT in terms of the level of available resources and in building teachers' confidence in its use. Although standards remain unsatisfactory at the end of Year 11, overall, they are better than at the time of the last inspection. Now that the school is fully staffed, there is good capacity for further improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

116. In order to improve standards further, governors, managers and other staff should:

- 1 *Improve attendance by:
 - maintaining and developing further actions already taken by the school to reduce the amount of authorised absence;
 - monitoring more rigorously the impact of absence on students' progress and communicating this more clearly to both students and their parents;
 - celebrating good levels of attendance more explicitly.(Paragraphs 26 and 71)
- 2 *Improve standards in ICT by:
 - improving provision for those students who do not study GCSE in Years 10 and 11;
 - using data on students' prior attainment, including information from students' previous schools, more effectively to plan work for students with differing prior attainment;
 - improving the use of National Curriculum assessment both to ascertain students' attainment at particular points in time and to set targets for individuals for improvement;
 - providing additional training for non-specialist ICT teachers and increasing opportunities for ICT teachers to observe each other in order to share good practice;
 - developing further the use of ICT across all subjects to support learning, particularly in art and music.(Paragraphs 32, 115, 146, 148, 151, 157, 162, 172, 174, 175, 180, 185 and 198)
- 3 Improve provision for students with special educational needs by:
 - agreeing and writing a whole school policy that meets statutory requirements;
 - ensuring that the objectives and requirements of statements of special educational need are met in full;
 - agreeing with students and parents a plan of action to meet students' needs based on entitlement and the support available;
 - setting short term improvement targets with students and their parents so that progress can be monitored and recorded systematically;
 - ensuring that record keeping systems give an overview of support provided, targets set and progress made by each student;
 - improving the overall leadership and management of learning support so that all students' needs are met effectively.(Paragraphs 9, 34, 46, 68, 76, 77, 92, 93 and 107)

*Identified in the school's development plan.

Further minor points that should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan can be found in paragraphs 35, 36, 45, 48, 72, 74, 95 and 97.

Sixth form

In order to improve further standards in the sixth form, governors, managers and other staff should:

- 1 Agree and adopt a strategic plan for the development of the sixth form, to ensure that planned provision will offer an appropriate and viable range of courses to meet students' changing needs and will complement other provision already available locally.
(Paragraph 111)
- 2 Ensure that senior and middle managers, and other staff, use assessment information rigorously to ensure that examination results are as high as they should be, given students' GCSE results on entry to the sixth form.
(Paragraphs 16, 79, 80, 110 and 214)
- 3 Continue to find ways to improve standards in mathematics.
(Paragraphs 37, 206, 207, 208 and 209)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9-11	103
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 9-11

Number	2	14	48	33	6	0	0
Percentage	2	14	47	31	6	0	0

Sixth form

Number	3	16	26	4	2	0	0
Percentage	6	31	51	8	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Years 9-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	533	171
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23	11

Special educational needs

	Years 9-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	57	8

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	114

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.6
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	179	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	151	147	142
	Total	151	147	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (90)	82 (79)	79 (78)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (55)	53 (57)	38 (38)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	142	141	133
	Total	142	141	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (87)	80 (83)	75 (74)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 b(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (55)	48 (55)	40 (37)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002		170	170

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys			
	Girls	97	163	170
	Total	97	163	170
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (60)	96 (93)	99 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.1 (41.1)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a
	National	N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations 2002		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates		59	59
	Average point score per candidate		213	213
National	Average point score per candidate		*	*

		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		59	59		0	0
	Average point score per candidate		213	213		N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate		*	*		N/a	N/a

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/a	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	553	20	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	5	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	38	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	68	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	1	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.17
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2

Financial year	2001-2002
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Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	431

Total income	2,195,900
Total expenditure	2,187,400
Expenditure per pupil	3,212
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,000
Balance carried forward to next year	18,500

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	23.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	704
Number of questionnaires returned	153

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	49	14	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	54	3	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	60	7	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	61	13	3	5
The teaching is good.	32	56	8	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	49	17	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	55	14	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	42	7	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	54	5	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	55	14	5	13

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Students in all years achieve well through good teaching.
- Students are introduced to the skills of literary analysis from Year 9; they develop these skills very well.
- Assessment is used very well to monitor and support students' progress.
- The department is led and managed very well.

Areas for development

- Teachers need to develop the use of resources further to enliven lessons and to extend learning.
- The department should continue to develop its use of the National Literacy Strategy techniques.

117. Results overall in the 2002 Year 9 national tests were well above the national average for all students and above that for girls. Results were better than those in mathematics and science. They were a little below results in 2001, but above those in 2000. Students achieved well in 2002, given their attainment on entry in Year 9.
118. GCSE results in 2002 were above average in comparison with those for all students nationally and close to those for girls. There was a decline from 2001, which came about partly because of staffing problems. Thus, unusually, students did less well in English in 2002 than in many of the other GCSE subjects they took. English literature results in 2002 were significantly above average, compared with girls nationally, as well as compared with all students. When compared with students' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, 2002 results represent satisfactory achievement in English and good achievement in English literature.
119. Standards of work seen in Year 9 confirm the National Curriculum test results in 2002, and are above average for girls. Higher-attaining students write lively, interesting pieces in different styles. They analyse poems and use the language of literary criticism to write successfully about what they read. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate and they adapt their writing well for different purposes. Lower-attaining students tend to write short pieces, lacking descriptive detail and with grammatical and spelling mistakes. They can, however, express their ideas clearly and comment on literary pieces in a straightforward way. Most students express their ideas orally quite confidently in informal situations and read aloud fluently and expressively. Almost all students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress during Year 9.
120. This good progress continues in Years 10 and 11, and students achieve well. The highest attaining students are on target to attain A* grades in both English and literature. For example, one student wrote a closely argued, stylish essay analysing the relationship between a mother and her son in 'The Son's Veto' by Hardy. Another essay compared the two poems, 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'My Last Duchess', with the student writing an interesting and accurate critique. Students study a range of literature, often from a multi-cultural perspective, and they get a very thorough grounding in literary analysis. Standards are above average overall, with the full spread of grades represented. Listening in lessons is usually very good, and students speak confidently in group discussions. Those with special educational needs make good progress, along with others. Students from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well.
121. Teaching and learning throughout the main school are good. Students have positive attitudes to English. They concentrate well and say that they enjoy the subject. Teachers are English specialists, and they use their knowledge to challenge students to think deeply about what they read and write. They also use group work effectively to encourage students to think for themselves

and discuss ideas with one another. In a Year 10 lesson, a low attaining group was working on Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls'. The teacher knew a lot about the play and used the time available effectively. Students read scenes aloud and discussed the play in groups. The teacher produced useful resources to help students to structure their writing. All these features enabled students to learn about the characters in the play well. In a Year 11 lesson, students were studying war poetry. The teacher had planned the lesson carefully to develop their understanding of propaganda verses written during the first world war, as well as introducing them to the poetry of Wilfred Owen. She took the opportunity to develop the students' understanding of the spiritual and moral issues raised by the texts. The teacher paid careful attention to planning tasks and providing resources which would stretch all students; as a consequence, all learnt well. Teachers plan lessons where students use computers to carry out research or draft essays, and the department's fifteen lap-tops are used well. Homework is set regularly, helping students to consolidate learning from the lesson.

122. Learning could often be improved even further if teachers planned to use a wider range of resources or teaching and learning methods, and if the timing of some lessons was quicker. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Twelfth Night, the teacher taught well and her expert subject knowledge underpinned good learning in the lesson. Students could, however, have learnt even better if there had been opportunities to engage them more actively, or if, for example, an overhead projector had been used to demonstrate how to analyse text. In a Year 10 lesson, the planned activity at the end of the lesson, where students answered questions in role, had to be squeezed because the earlier part of the lesson had been rather leisurely. As a consequence, students did not learn as much as they could have done.
123. The department uses assessment information very well to monitor how both individuals and groups of students achieve. Teachers mark students' work very thoroughly, giving helpful development points and recognising good work. National Curriculum levels are used to assess Year 9 students. Years 10 and 11 usually know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level, and targets for improvement.
124. The English department plays a major role in teaching literacy, and has started to use techniques from the national strategy in Year 9. Most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words, and some departments stress the differences in writing for different purposes. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and students could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically.
125. The department is led and managed very well. The head of department has a very well thought-out approach to identifying how well students are doing and in identifying areas for improvement. She is highly organised and produces excellent written guidance for colleagues. The department is working hard to achieve a smooth transition for students from middle schools. Monitoring and observation of lessons take place regularly and are helping to drive up standards. Teachers work well as a team. The department makes a very good contribution to students' personal development, and also to extra-curricular activities. Students have opportunities to go on theatre visits, to take part in a public speaking competition or a mock trial, and to talk to a visiting author. There is also a residential visit to Ypres in northern France for Year 10 students, where they explore some of the battlefields linked to First World War poetry.
126. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE have risen and achievement in English literature is particularly marked. A good standard of teaching has been maintained and assessment has developed very well.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good, with teachers having high expectations of what students can do and how they will behave.
- The department is well led and managed.

Area for improvement

- The school should ensure that teachers have necessary training and development opportunities to develop further their confidence in using a range of drama skills.

127. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average and broadly in line with those for girls nationally. These results represent good achievement, as most students started the course with limited experiences of drama and many were low attaining students in other subjects.
128. Standards of work in Year 9 are a little below average. Students who study two languages have one drama lesson a fortnight, whilst others have the equivalent of one drama lesson a week. Students come to the school with mixed, but usually quite limited, experiences of drama. The course is structured to give them a good grounding in dramatic skills and conventions throughout the year. Students can use gesture, facial expressions and movement to portray character reasonably effectively but, given their limited prior learning, they do not have the range of drama skills that would be expected. Higher attaining students work confidently, using space well. They concentrate and sustain a role to the end of a piece. Lower attaining students are often self-conscious; improvised work is more superficial and they find it difficult to sustain a role through to the end.
129. At GCSE, students acquire good knowledge and understanding of dramatic conventions and good performance skills. They learn how to analyse their own and others' performances. They cover an appropriate range of dramatic and theatrical techniques and conventions, such as freeze-frames, mime and physical theatre, and learn how to use computers to programme special effects. By the end of Year 11, students can portray character and sustain role convincingly, using movement, voice and gesture, aware of the audience. The use of movement and dance is a particular strength. Students achieve well throughout the main school, judged against their prior attainment.
130. Teaching in drama is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers usually have high expectations of what students will achieve and insist on high standards, including good behaviour and listening. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge enables them to challenge students appropriately and a brisk pace means that good use is made of time. They encourage students to think hard about their own and others' performances. All these features lead to good learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students were working on scenes from 'Billy Liar'. The teacher's very good knowledge of the topic, combined with her individual coaching and encouragement, resulted in students learning a lot about how to present these ideas dramatically. At times, good lessons could be improved even further if the teacher demonstrated dramatic techniques or worked in role herself. In A Year 9 lesson, where the students made good gains in understanding how to portray aspects of character, the teacher had planned a sequence of activities to extend students' skills carefully. Students might have deepened their understanding even further if the teacher had demonstrated the techniques more.
131. The head of department leads and manages the subject well. Drama is popular among students who take it, and it makes a good contribution to extra curricular activities. The department encourages self-evaluation, and students are taught to consider and assess their own and others' performances. Teachers assess students in Year 9 for effort and attainment, although there are no defined criteria. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE grade criteria are used. Students usually know how well they are doing and how they could improve.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is good; the head of department acts as an excellent role model for improving teaching and learning and monitors subject performance thoroughly.
- Assessment information is used well to ensure that teaching arrangements focus on students' needs.

Areas for improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning across the department.
- Teachers need to provide consistently for students' independent learning, particularly in preparation for further study post 16.

132. In the 2002 end of Year 9 national tests, results overall were above the national average for all students and above that for girls. Performance overall was lower than that in English, but similar to that in science. Results were similar to those in 2001, but better than those in 2000. Students achieved well, given their attainment on entry.

133. 2002 GCSE examination results at grades A* to C were above the national average for all students and just above that for girls. The proportion of students earning a grade was also above average, which is good, as nearly all students in Year 11 sat the examination. However, overall, achievement was unsatisfactory given students' attainment at the end of Year 9; results should have been higher. Results in 2002 were similar to those in 2001, but significantly better than those in 2000. Students have performed less well in this subject than in many of their other GCSE examinations for the past three years.

134. Standards of work seen in the inspection reflect test and examination results in that they are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. High attaining students in Year 9 have made a good start to their work in trigonometry. In lessons, they enjoyed the reference to mathematicians of the past and were fascinated by some of the ideas discussed. Average attaining students know the names of many geometric shapes and draw very accurate diagrams, measuring angles correctly to the nearest degree. Low attaining students do not know all their tables, but enjoy solving problems such as making 24 from the four numbers, one, two, three and four. In Year 11, students on the intermediate GCSE course consolidated their knowledge and use of trigonometrical ratios well. Students on the foundation course could explain their solution to simple percentage questions with confidence. They used calculators accurately when required. Students on the higher-level course used computers well to increase their overall knowledge of functions. They showed a confident use of vectors in the application of ratios in geometry.

135. In some lessons in all year groups, students are learning at a fast rate; standards are bordering on well above average. This improvement is due to new and good leadership of the department and to the commitment of all teachers, most of whom are new to the school since September 2001. However, currently, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Thus, overall, students make expected progress in lessons. Achievement is satisfactory in both Year 9 and 11 and better than that suggested by recent examination results. Students from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well; students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve similarly to their peers, because learning support assistants work well with teachers. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress as well.

136. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, varying from excellent to unsatisfactory. The strengths of the teaching lie in the very good management of students, the good subject expertise of the teachers and their good lesson planning. These aspects of teaching are the main impetus behind students' learning, which is often at a good rate through Years 10 and 11. Good assessment techniques encourage individuals well in their learning and the use of homework is good throughout the school. In the unsatisfactory teaching, activities do not challenge students' learning sufficiently well. Use of lesson time is unsatisfactory, so that many students do not progress as well as they should. In some lessons, students use their initiative well to select

appropriately challenging questions from those provided in the lesson. A few lessons have open-ended tasks to encourage independent learning. This good practice needs to be extended throughout the department to maintain rising standards and to prepare students better for study post-16.

137. Standards of numeracy are above average and support work in other subjects appropriately. Numeracy skills are taught well by the mathematics department, but there is no whole school policy to support their work. Mathematics teachers make an appropriate contribution to the teaching of literacy skills; key words are displayed in classrooms. Access to computers is good; teachers use ICT well, in graph work for example, to help students' understanding of basic concepts in mathematics.
138. Leadership of the department is good. The relatively new head of department is starting to achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the department and, hence, to raise standards. Subject performance is monitored well. Termly assessments of students' attainment are used effectively to provide good records and projections for students' progress. These projections give rise to departmental targets, aimed to raise standards further. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good. Resulting information is used to develop further both provision and the quality of teaching by sharing best practice. For example, algebraic skills need to be developed consistently well across all appropriate classes. Improvement since the last inspection is good, as standards and behaviour have improved, albeit recently.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Lesson planning is good; most lessons have a clear structure, including engaging starters, purposeful main parts and useful endings, which leads to successful learning.
- A well-qualified and well-motivated team of staff, including teachers and non-teachers, support students' learning well.
- Students are keen to learn; they are managed well in lessons.
- Accommodation and resources are used effectively to support good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students in Year 9 have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry.
- The use of ICT to support learning for higher attaining students needs further development.
- Teachers need to encourage students to think ideas through for themselves in order to deepen understanding of scientific ideas.
- Action planning and associated monitoring need to be strengthened so that planned improvements can be tracked through and evaluated.

139. The 2002 end of Year 9 national test results were above the national average for all students and above that for girls. Results were broadly the same as those in mathematics, but below those in English. Results have improved since 2000, broadly in line with the national trend of improvement. 2002 results represent good achievement overall, given students' attainment on entry.
140. Results in GCSE double award science for 2002 at grades A* to C were above the national average for all students and above that for girls. Results were significantly lower than those in 2001 and also below those in 2000. This drop was largely due to staffing difficulties, which affected some students' attainment and progress adversely. Thus, unusually, students did less well in science in 2002 than in many of the other GCSE subjects they took. Around 20 lower attaining students took the single award science examination in 2002. The proportion of A* to C grades obtained was below that for girls nationally; it was also lower than that in 2001. The department is currently reviewing alternative vocational courses as a possible replacement for this course, which is not offering a suitable curriculum for lower attainers. Overall, students achieved broadly as might be expected given their attainment at the end of Year 9.

141. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm that standards are above average in Year 9. For example lower attaining students were beginning to understand how genetic information contained in the nucleus of a cell is transferred through cell division and fertilisation. Higher attaining students recognised that some inherited characteristics are influenced by genetic and environmental factors and could explain this in scientific terms. Overall, students make good progress in Year 9 and achieve well. However the proportion of students achieving at the highest levels is currently lower than expected nationally and the department is working hard to identify and target students at critical levels of attainment in order to raise standards further.
142. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also above average. For instance, lower attaining students can summarise the effects of natural selection having modelled this in a game. Higher attainers discuss ideas about evolution and select key points to support or reject differing theories. Students take obvious care with their written work, which is presented well. Again, all students make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time. Students with English as an additional language and students with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers.
143. Teaching is good overall, with practice ranging from satisfactory to very good. As a consequence, and because of their own enthusiasm and commitment, students learn well. Teachers build well on work covered in middle schools and, because transfer arrangements are good, they plan and target work effectively. A strength of teaching is that most lessons most are planned well, with a variety of learning activities. Expected learning outcomes and key words are made explicit. A strong feature of many lessons is a plenary session that enables both students and teachers to review whether learning has been successful. Teaching methods support learning tasks effectively and time is used well, so that students learn at a good pace; they are helped to collaborate well in pairs and in small groups. Teachers use imaginative resources to enhance learning. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson about transfer of genetic information, a “Kinder egg” was used to model a cell. The inner plastic “egg”, containing a toy along with its assembly instructions, was used as an analogy for the nucleus and DNA. In a Year 11 lesson, a variety of resources was used to help students gain deeper understanding of geological time. This included an active session where they arranged themselves into a time line, each of them holding a card describing key steps in the earth’s history. The science technicians provide good support by ensuring that appropriate practical experiences enhance students’ learning.
144. A feature of many lessons is a narrow range of questioning, with insufficient questions to challenge students’ thinking by asking them to think ideas through for themselves, to justify their answers or to offer detailed scientific explanations. There are missed opportunities to keep all students focused by asking directed questions, rather than accepting responses from those students keen to give answers. There was limited evidence of opportunities to develop scientific enquiry in Year 9, but GCSE coursework shows good development of students’ investigative skills.
145. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has been in post for 18 months; during this time there have been improvements in standards. Teachers are assisted well in lessons by learning support assistants. Teaching is monitored and evaluated appropriately; strategies are being developed to share good practice. However, action planning and associated monitoring need to be strengthened so that planned improvements can be tracked through and evaluated.
146. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained. Good improvement in the use of ICT to support learning has been made, but this still requires further development, particularly to challenge higher attaining students. The use of assessment data to monitor students’ progress, and to ensure that standards are as high as they should be, has also improved. The department now has the capacity as a team to take forward new ideas, to share effective practice and so secure further improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average; all students achieve well.
- Teaching is good; as a result, students learn well.
- Leadership and management are very good; there is a clear vision for the future.
- Sketchbooks are used very well in Years 10 and 11 to improve learning.

Areas for improvement

- The use of sketchbooks for investigation and experimentation in Year 9 needs strengthening.
- Students need to be encouraged to criticise and evaluate their work both orally and in writing.
- ICT is used insufficiently, particularly in Year 9.
- The lack of ceramic facilities limits provision.

147. Teacher assessments for students at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average. These assessments were severe. In 2002, the proportion of students gaining an A* to C grade in the GCSE examination was close to the national average for all students but well below that for girls, reflecting difficulties recruiting staff. In 2001, results were significantly above average; students did better in art than in almost all of their other GCSE subjects.

148. Standards in Year 9 are close to average. Students quickly develop their skills of drawing from observation, beginning to use line to capture space, tone and form. They develop their drawings into paintings, folded paper compositions and three-dimensional work. However, sketchbooks are used more for homework than for investigation and experimentation. Students also develop design skills in colourful repeat patterns based on "dad's tie". Their understanding of colour is heightened when using complementary colours to reproduce paintings by Monet or Matisse, so that red in Monet's painting becomes green or Matisse's orange becomes blue. Students use texture to experiment with composition in two and three-dimensional work. They do not use computers to generate or manipulate imagery. Recognising their low prior attainment and their varied, often limited previous experiences of art when they arrive in school, their achievements by the end of Year 9 are good.

149. Standards of work at the end of Year 11 are above average. The way students use their sketchbooks as a resource is a strength of their learning. However, many have difficulty talking critically about their work and annotation tends to be descriptive rather than evaluative. Students concentrate on process, comparing European art with the art of Africa, Japan, China, India and North America, reflecting their teachers' interests and their travels abroad. They respond to the spiritual content in art, when they consider Aboriginal "Dreamtime" painting or the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and the atrocities in Auschwitz. The best students are ambitious and use drawing to investigate composition, to develop their ideas and to collect specific information. A minority is content to draw from books or postcards, reflecting a lack of ambition. Students make good links with other artists. A Year 11 student made rapid progress in portraying movement in portraiture, after looking at Leonardo's drawings of grotesque heads. Some students make use of digital photography and specialist software to produce good work in portraiture or landscape. Their open-minded attitudes and adventurous, inquisitive approaches, linked to good quality sketchbook work, leads to good achievement by the end of Year 11. Lower attainers achieve well, because the department has systems to negotiate targets for their progress, behaviour and attitudes, causing them to accept some responsibility for their own learning. Higher attaining students do particularly well in art and above average numbers of GCSE students are awarded the highest A* grades each year.

150. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good knowledge of their students, carefully designing work and planning lessons so that everyone has the opportunity to progress. For example, Year 9 students made good progress constructing sculpture based on shells, walnuts and other natural objects. The teacher's very good subject knowledge helped them in the challenging task of converting a two dimensional image into a three-dimensional object. Her enthusiasm and 'feel for her subject', generated a good working atmosphere, encouraging students to experiment with the simple materials of glue and tissue paper. Students learn to appreciate their classmates' efforts. Most make very good creative efforts in class, but less effort away from

school and their work does not progress between lessons. Students gain a clearer view of the measures they need to improve their work as they move through school. For example, Year 11 students made good progress when refining their coursework in class. Investigation and experimentation were central to their work. They were exploring movement and used dramatic photocopies of paper sculpture, string, papier maché, monoprints and conventional drawing to emphasise rhythm. The teacher managed their activities well, making suggestions to encourage creativity. She circulated effectively, broadening students' outlook, building their confidence and raising expectations.

151. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has led the subject through a period of planned building work and staff shortages without losing her clear vision for the future of her department. Teachers and the technician feature in the very strong teamwork. The curriculum in art is broadly satisfactory, although there are insufficient opportunities for Year 9 students to work with computers and specialist software. The assessment of students' work allows teachers and students to recognise progress and to set targets to improve achievement. The head of department uses the wealth of assessment data to notify parents of their daughter's progress.
152. As at the last inspection, the accommodation is in a state of flux and the lack of ceramic facilities restricts the breadth of the curriculum. Development planning needs further development in terms of detail of cost and staffing implications. However, overall, there has been good improvement. Standards have risen and students' achievements have improved to good. Teaching and learning were satisfactory but they are now good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, so that students attain above average standards, particularly in food technology and systems and control.
- Relationships between students and teachers are strong, promoting a good working atmosphere.
- There is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment procedures and practice are good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to increase the use of computer aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) in students' work.
- The department needs to develop additional material to extend and support individual students.
- Good practice should be shared across all the subject areas of the department.

153. Teachers' assessments of students work in Year 9 in 2002 were in-line with the national average for all schools. In 2002, GCSE results were significantly above the national average for all students but broadly in-line with that for girls. There was an increase in the number of students achieving A* to C grades from 2001 and 2000. Students performed particularly well in food technology and systems and control. Students taking child development also achieved results above the national average.
154. Standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection were also average. From broadly average attainment on entry, Year 9 students make satisfactory progress overall. Practical work is usually of a good standard and there are examples of well-presented design folders. Good work, including investigation of materials and simple electronic circuits, was seen in the electronic egg-timer device, where design ideas were developed well. Students made good use of colour and neat annotated drawings, when developing a range of ideas in the oven glove project in textiles. Where work was weaker, students were too dependent on commercial material for design ideas; they did not expand individual ideas in depth and, sometimes, drawings and sketches were out of proportion. On occasions, students did not use colour appropriately.

155. Overall, current standards of work seen in Year 11 reflect standards in recent examinations. During the inspection, above average standards of work were seen in all areas, with higher attainers often producing work of a very high standard. For example, good research and investigation, including circuit development, were seen in systems and control, when students were looking at a mechanical device for advertising the armed forces. Above average standards were also seen in the educational toy project in textiles, based on the theme of Indian animals, and in a food technology project, investigating baking products. In child development, students used ICT well to present evidence of research in project work. Weaker work was characterised by over reliance on existing products for research, weaker presentational skills, both written and graphical, and lack of depth in research. Most students, including those with behavioural or learning difficulties, achieve well and make good progress. Most students talk about their work confidently and enjoy their lessons.
156. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Relationships are always good and there is a positive learning ethos in the department. In the best lessons, students learned at a fast pace; teachers used their good subject knowledge effectively to develop or expand ideas and to sustain student motivation. Questions were used effectively and students were managed well. These skills were evident in a Year 9 lesson in food technology, where students increased their learning about hazard analysis and developed practical skills, working independently, to produce good quality products. In a Year 11 systems and control lesson, students made considerable gains in learning when devising electronic circuits for their projects. In a Year 11 graphics lesson, the teacher used assessment criteria well to improve learning and to raise standards. A Year 10 child development lesson used short tasks and a variety of teaching methods to stimulate and motivate students, thereby increasing learning and understanding. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features, but lack real pace and fail to engage students in challenging activities. Some lesson planning does not include materials to meet the needs of students of differing prior attainment; opportunities for extending the more able students are not always taken. Students respond well to the teaching; most come to lessons prepared for work. Attitudes and behaviour are good.
157. Leadership and management overall are good. There is no overall head of the design and technology department. There is a co-ordinator for Year 9, who implements and administers the programmes of study according to National Curriculum requirements. This is done effectively and efficiently. In Years 10 and 11, individual teachers have responsibility for various specialisms to examination level. The system works well, but can present difficulties in developing a cohesive approach to monitoring for consistency of practice. Documentation is well prepared, outlining policies and practices. Assessment procedures and practice are good and are used constructively in raising standards. Marking is carried out regularly and is usually helpful in enabling students to improve their work. A good range of courses is offered in Years 10 and 11 to examination level; a catering course has been introduced to enable mainly lower attaining students to achieve success. Students cope well with the levels of literacy and numeracy required and ICT is used appropriately, although more use needs to be made of CAD/CAM.
158. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Improvements include better delivery of modules of study in Year 9, increased use of assessment data to monitor progress, a wider range of courses in Years 10 and 11 and an increase in the number of students achieving the higher grades across the specialisms.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Specialist geography teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use it well.
- Good relationships, and a concern to involve all students, create positive attitudes.
- The department has good systems for assessing students' work.
- Planning of work is good; this ensures that teachers work to a common syllabus.

Areas for improvement

- Fieldwork needs to be extended further in order to give first hand learning experiences.
- Time allocation, and non-specialist teaching, constrains standards in Year 9.
- There is a need to update the geography documentation and development planning.
- Consistent and systematic monitoring of teaching is needed in order to share good practice.

159. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were broadly average in relation to those for all students nationally and in relation to those for girls. This was a significant increase on results from the two previous years, when standards were well below average. Students' results in geography are as good as those that they achieve in most other of their other subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 9.
160. In the work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are just average. Most students begin to understand the simple mechanics of how cyclones and hurricanes work, although lower attaining students struggle with the concept of water and high temperatures causing such features. Students understand that these physical phenomena produce different effects in a lesser economically developed country, like Bangladesh, to those produced in Florida, part of a more economically developed country. Students successfully compare the early warning systems and the impact of such weather. High attaining students understand some of the economic and human consequences of such devastation; they contrast differences between lesser and more economically developed countries successfully. Year 9 students start to show an increased understanding of the moral issues related to both human issues and the conservation of the environment. Limited fieldwork is timetabled, which constrains students' first hand experience of the subject. This could greatly enhance work on ecosystems and weather. Work seen shows secure use of titles, maps and diagram keys. Year 9 students, including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their lessons; achievement over time is also satisfactory. Literacy skills are developed through the correct use of technical words.
161. The standards of work seen in Year 10 and 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement, given students' standards on entry to the course. By the end of Year 11, students' work demonstrates confidence in the use of different ways to present material; many make successful use of diagrams, photographs and sketch maps within their text. However, annotation of maps and diagrams is less well developed. Concepts, and the linking of different aspects of geography, are also less well developed for a minority of students. This was exemplified in a Year 11 lesson on water use in Cairo, where some students had difficulty in combining the impact of both physical and human factors. Both literacy and numeracy skills support students' work in geography. Most use a range of charts and graphs to plot data. They make correct use of technical words such as lava and crater when studying volcanoes. Students make good use of computers, mainly at home, to improve the presentation of their work, especially coursework. Opportunities for fieldwork are still limited, but Year 11 students' first hand experiences are enhanced through a day's coastal fieldwork. As a result, they show a good understanding of fieldwork techniques, headlands and the formation of caves, arches and stacks.
162. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory from Year 9 to Year 11. However, there are some shortcomings; the major one is non-specialist teaching in Year 9, which constrains standards. Specialist geography teachers have good knowledge of the subject; they apply their knowledge well in order to promote the students' learning. This was demonstrated successfully for example, in a Year 11 lesson on water use in Cairo, following a prior visit by the teacher. Overall, planning is good. However, good planning does not always ensure good teaching. The range of teaching methods used by some teachers is limited; some often fail to involve students sufficiently well in their learning, so constraining independent learning. Limited access to computers in lesson time also constrains opportunities for enquiry. Opportunities are frequently missed to reflect upon the awe and power of nature, for example, Year 9 students were not made aware of the sheer force of hurricanes. Marking is undertaken regularly; teachers give attention to spelling and punctuation, however, targets need to be better indicated in students' books. Learning support assistants give appropriate help to students, which ensures that all students make satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of students with special educational needs where there is no learning support assistant present. Teaching is under-

pinned by good relationships, which ensure an inclusive atmosphere in lessons; this results in positive attitudes and good behaviour, which enhances learning.

163. Overall, leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Planning of the curriculum is good. There is curriculum agreement over modules to be taught with the feeder middle school, which allows for continuity and progression in learning for Year 9 students. There is a need to update the geography documentation and to improve departmental development planning. Observation of teaching is insufficiently developed to share good practice.
164. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Two of the three items identified for development have been addressed successfully. Standards at GCSE, assessment practice and resources for learning have all improved. However, there is a need for further curriculum development to be undertaken in order to provide appropriate support for non-specialist teachers. Currently, the time allocation and non-specialist teaching in Year 9 constrain standards.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The enthusiasm of the teachers raises the level of interest in students.
- Because of their good knowledge and understanding, teachers provide clear, accurate explanations.
- Through good use of supplementary questions, teachers encourage students to develop their responses.
- Teachers provide good guidance for the GCSE examination, enabling students to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment does not provide enough information to enable a student to move forward, or the teachers to monitor the progress of groups in specific attainment targets.
- There is insufficient opportunity or structure to enable the department to plan for its further development, or to make the most of the strengths of its teachers.
- Resources, including visitors, artefacts, posters and textbooks are insufficient for the enhancement of students learning.

165. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were above the national average. Results in 2002 were higher and are significantly above the national average for all students and above that for girls. All students who took the examination in the last two years gained at least a pass grade.
166. Standards in Year 9 are average and this represents good achievement given students' levels of attainment at the start of the course. Students are making significant gains in their knowledge and understanding of the changes that led to the development of the industrial revolution. For example, in a letter from the workhouse, students demonstrate sympathy for the poor and an understanding of conditions. Most students make simple comparisons between the lives of women between the 18th and 20th century. The responses of lower attaining students include stereotypical views that fail to recognise variations in experience. For example 'rich ladies go out and enjoy themselves' and 'the clothes of the poor weren't really decent.' Students use source material well to clarify events and they are beginning to evaluate its reliability. Higher attaining students make simple hypothesis based on this material, such the intentions of the suffragette Miss Wilding Davison.
167. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average. This represents good achievement. Students are developing a clear understanding of the reasons for the growth of the welfare state and higher attaining students use statistical information from the time to hypothesise about the causes of poverty. They are able to assess the impact of the liberal reforms, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Students are able to identify the meanings underpinning political cartoons and a few recognise the different methods used to influence the audience. Higher attaining students write fluently and are beginning to develop a well-organised essay style. The work of lower attaining students is often clear, but limited in content and containing little analysis of the information

presented. Students have a wide overview of early 20th century America and recognise the effects of the changing economy on the lives of the people. They are encouraged to consider the relationships between countries and, in so doing, they develop an understanding of the different viewpoints of the major powers in the 20th century.

168. The quality of teaching and learning in the main school are good. Lessons usually start promptly with a brisk question and answer session that reminds students of their previous work and enables them to build on this learning. In the best lessons, students are actively involved in their learning and are encouraged to develop their responses by the use of additional questioning. Teachers are enthusiastic and there are good relationships between staff and students. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms is positive and lively. Lessons proceed at a good pace and students achieve well. Students have confidence in their teachers, whose good knowledge and understanding enable them to provide clear responses to their questions. Teachers encourage students to consider the moral issues raised in their work and to consider the social impact of events they study. As a result, higher attaining students are developing good analytical skills. In some lessons teachers spend too long leading students through information sheets. As a result they become passive, and concentration and enquiry are reduced. Most lessons observed made use of information sheets and photocopied source material that did little to excite the students or to promote enquiry. The insufficient use and range of textbooks results in limited opportunity for students to investigate, and to follow their own lines of enquiry. There are too few opportunities for students to undertake independent investigations.

169. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Schemes of work have been put in place and work has begun on the introduction of cross-curricular subjects. The use of ICT as a teaching tool is developing. Teachers are committed to the success of their students and are quick to provide additional support when it is needed. Support and guidance for students regarding the expectations of the GCSE course is good. All members of the department however hold significant posts of responsibility within the school and, as a result, time to meet to consider the development of the subject is very limited. There is no considered development plan to ensure the continued planned improvement of the subject, and insufficient collaboration between staff to ensure that good practice is actively shared. Assessment is under developed, since there is no organised use of assessment information to enable the monitoring of different groups or to identify weaknesses in key attainment targets. Students themselves are unaware of the requirements of the different National Curriculum levels or what they must do to improve, especially in Year 9. Resources, including books, equipment, posters, useful videos and visitors are still unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teachers manage the students well and this creates good conditions for learning.
- Attainment at the end of Year 9 is now in line with standards expected nationally.
- The school has made funding available to increase computer resources significantly and this has had a good impact on learning.
- Systematic planning has led to the coverage of a broader range of skills both in specialist ICT lessons and in subjects across the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The school needs to raise attainment for students in Years 10 and 11.
- The department needs to use data on students' prior attainment, and information from previous schools, more effectively to plan work that allows all students to make progress.
- Teachers need to improve their use of National Curriculum assessment and use this appropriately to set targets to enable individual students to improve.
- The school needs to provide additional training for non-specialist teachers and increase opportunities for them to observe each other and so share good practice.

170. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 students in 2001 were well above the national average, with a slight drop in 2002. This, however, did not match the average standard of work seen during the inspection. A vocational GCSE and a key skills level 2 course have been introduced for students in Years 10 and 11 but students have not yet reached the point of taking the examination.

171. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 were average, representing satisfactory achievement over the year. By the end of Year 9, all students, including those with special needs, develop basic skills in desktop publishing; they can use specialist presentation software and electronic forms of communication, such as sending and receiving e-mails and using of the internet. They become confident in using a range of resources such as scanners and digital cameras. Students are given opportunities to analyse and identify uses of technology which enhance communication in the home. Research skills are well developed and students gain a good understanding of new developments in technology. However, a large proportion of students lack confidence in using spreadsheets and some have limited or no experience of setting up and using a database. In the work seen during the inspection, tasks did not always match the specific needs of individual students, particularly those who needed additional challenge and those with special educational needs.

172. In Years 10 and 11, students work towards a vocational double award GCSE in ICT or a key skills level 2 course in ICT. Standards vary considerably across the two courses. Overall, they are below average; achievement is unsatisfactory. Students taking the vocational GCSE course attain above average standards and achieve well. Their coursework portfolios show evidence of an increasing range of ICT skills and their work reflects the set criteria needed for examination coursework. Their skills in using databases and spreadsheets increase in complexity and depth as they become more confident in using a wider range of software. However, the large majority of students take the key skills course. Here, standards are below average; achievement is unsatisfactory. This is partly as a result of limited experience of ICT lower down the school, but also because they are given very limited curriculum time to complete the key skills course. Many are struggling to complete examination tasks with only two weeks of their curriculum time left. A large proportion of students doing key skills lack confidence in using spreadsheets and some encounter the use of databases for the first time in Years 10 and 11.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this creates very good conditions for learning. Specialist teachers have good knowledge of the subject and students are guided well in their learning. Teachers prepare well for lessons and follow a structured approach. This provides the opportunity for students to work through the set tasks systematically, which leads to satisfactory learning. However, non-specialist teachers are limited in the range of strategies and activities they can use in the classroom to support learning for all. Students in Year 9 follow a commercially prepared scheme;

detailed planning is inconsistent and there is little co-ordination of what is taught. As a result, students cover different work. Students show a very good standard of literacy in the subject and teachers pay good attention to the development and retention of the technical vocabulary and terms associated with the subject. Teachers encourage students to apply a wide range of vocabulary and to use it accurately when they speak and write.

174. The use of ICT in other subjects is not fully assured. In most subjects, it has developed well and examples of good work were seen during the inspection. In mathematics, for example, teachers use a set of laptops well to support students' learning. In English, students use word processing and desktop publishing effectively to draft and edit their work. They also use specialist presentation software. In design and technology, students use digital cameras and scanners to capture images to support them in designing and presenting their work. Aspects of control, computer aided design and computer aided manufacture are covered, but resources are limited for this work. The Internet is used well in GCSE religious education to aid research and to prepare presentations. Particularly good use is made of ICT in physical education. Students also use ICT in geography to present their coursework, although many do this at home. Whilst some use is made of ICT in most other subjects, it is not yet used sufficiently well to support learning in art and music.

175. The overall strategic leadership and setting of the school's priorities for development are good. This is evident in the major investment that has been made to improve the schools ICT resources and network system. The ratio of students per computer is now four to one, which is better than the national average. Technician support is good and makes a significant contribution to the efficient management of the schools network system. However, there is a need to improve the management and organisation of the subject on a day-to-day basis to secure students' achievement in ICT. Currently, this is unsatisfactory. The on-going co-ordination of teaching and planning and the monitoring and assessment of students' work is not effective enough to raise standards. Schemes of work provide little guidance for teaching students of differing attainment, nor on marking and assessment of work. Much of the work seen during the inspection was unmarked and students were not fully informed about how well they were doing or how to make further improvements in their work.

176. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good as a result of the increased quality and range of resources to support learning, the introduction of an ICT lesson for all students throughout the school and the development of ICT in the majority of subjects across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The department now has stability of staffing.
- Examination results in the second language, German, are consistently above average.
- Nearly all students leave school with some language certification.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information technology as an integral part of teaching programmes needs developing.
- The use of assessment data to inform both teachers and students of progress is underdeveloped.
- Guidance and support in implementing the school's management systems is required for new post-holders.

177. In the 2001 GCSE French examination, the percentage of students at grades A* to C was well above the average for all schools and above the average for girls nationally, repeating the pattern of the previous year. There was satisfactory achievement from the age of 14. Results in 2002 showed a significant drop to levels broadly average for all students nationally, but below those for girls nationally. In their final year, 2002 students were disadvantaged by staffing problems. In the 2001

German GCSE, results at grades A* to C were significantly above the national averages for all schools and for girls. Results in 2002 repeated this performance. Those entered for German are higher attaining students. Their results match those in their other subjects and show good achievement over the two years to GCSE. A good feature of the school's provision for foreign languages is the high level of entry. In addition to the GCSE, the school offers the Certificate of Achievement for lower attaining students. As a result, most students leave school with some certification.

178. Standards of work seen during the inspection in both languages in Years 9 and 11 were average. Higher attaining students show a good recall of language and write accurately, but writing levels are limited largely to structured exercises. The writing of average attaining students shows common weaknesses in grammar, but there are examples of a much higher standard. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, are catered for by setting arrangements and more limited content. Higher attaining students can follow teaching in the foreign language easily and they use the language to ask for help. Such students are confident when speaking. For example, in Year 11, they adapted and acted out scenes from a visit to the dentist. In listening to authentic tape recordings, they can identify key points. Some average attaining students within top sets benefit from working at the level of these groups.
179. Overall achievement at all ages is satisfactory. The good attitudes of students make a positive contribution to their learning. They are eager to answer questions, enjoy many of the activities and use pair work and group work profitably. The achievements of well-motivated higher attaining students would benefit from more opportunities for extended and continuous writing and more creative oral work. In Year 10, lower attaining students and some with special educational needs have begun German as a new language and are targeted at GCSE Foundation Level. They are motivated quite well by learning a new language and are achieving appropriately given their prior attainment. The achievement of parallel groups in French, preparing for the Certificate of Achievement, is unsatisfactory, because the course is not challenging enough and there is too little active use of the language for students to make satisfactory progress in lessons.
180. Teaching is satisfactory overall. New teachers have established good relationships. Lessons are planned with a range of activities to create interest. There are good strategies for the active involvement of all students and the use of ICT is starting to be developed. Teachers have good personal language skills and teach largely in the foreign language. On occasions, teachers use English unnecessarily where students do not immediately understand. They also accept students' questions in English. Here teaching misses the opportunity to develop the key skills of listening and speaking. Homework is set regularly and marked with helpful comments. Teachers assess students as required by whole school policy, but have not yet developed the use of data to monitor progress, to set work at different levels or to set targets for students.
181. The permanent appointment of two newly qualified teachers and of a temporary head of department for the year has brought staffing stability. The day-to-day leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department has monitored teaching effectively and has supported the new teachers well. There is a clear commitment to raise standards. However, weaknesses in some key areas make the strategic leadership and management of the subject unsatisfactory. For example, new staff would benefit from the school's guidance in implementing the existing departmental development plan and in the use of assessment to match the good practice in the school. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place and the new teachers have introduced information technology. There are now adequate textbooks.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently above average.
- Teaching is good and promotes good learning.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT and the Year 9 scheme of work both need further development.

182. GCSE examination results are consistently above average. In 2002, around 90 per cent of a small cohort achieved grades A* to C and a good proportion of students achieve A and A* grades.
183. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. In Year 9, students have well-developed instrumental skills. When performing on keyboards and classroom percussion instruments, students can sustain a steady pulse and can improvise rhythms with confidence. In group work, students use technical terms correctly when discussing musical ideas. The quality of their final performances in class is good. Students remember the structure of the piece they have been asked to play and many can reproduce elements of it, some enhancing these with imaginative improvisations. Many have individual instrumental lessons and bring the benefits of these lessons into the classroom. In Year 11, students can hear detail and are able to review and correct their work independently. In one lesson on 'minimalism', students listened attentively to a piece of music by composer John Adams. They identified and understood many of the key characteristics of his style and were able to incorporate these into their own compositions.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned carefully to ensure a good balance of practical activities. Music from the past is presented in a lively and interesting way; this helps to capture and sustain the students' interest. For example, in one lesson, students were asked to perform and improvise in groups using a Renaissance dance as a model. Teachers' instructions are clear and precise, students know exactly what is wanted and thus they work with a sense of purpose. Insufficient time is given to students' discussion of their own work at the ends of lessons. The scheme of work for Year 9, although good overall, could be improved further by more reference to and use of music from a broader range of musical styles and genres.
185. In Years 10 and 11, the pace of teaching is well judged and responsive to the needs of individual students. Students are confident that they will be listened to and that their questions will be answered and addressed. The teacher has a good range of questioning techniques and explanations are thorough; this helps to ensure that students have a solid understanding of basic concepts which supports their analysis and appraisal of their work. The teacher's good subject knowledge is used effectively to support students' learning; constant reinforcement of key knowledge and understanding helps to consolidate the students' progress. Students work well in groups; the high quality of their discussions with each other makes a significant contribution to their achievement. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory; there is only one computer in the department and this is used infrequently to support learning.
186. The students' behaviour and attitudes are very good in both key stages. They respect their teacher and enjoy their lessons. Advice is listened to carefully and followed. When working independently or in small groups the students work conscientiously and with a high degree of commitment. Students are aware of the importance of mutual support. In one lunch-time concert they listened carefully to the performers and gave special encouragement to the most nervous.
187. The department is very well led and managed. Good assessment practice ensures that students' progress is monitored and recorded efficiently. The information is used to inform future planning. A team of instrumental teachers from the Berkshire Music Service provides tuition of good quality. The extra-curricular musical activities on offer are a strength of the department. There is a range of instrumental ensembles and singing groups. Concerts are given at the school and the department works with other schools in the area on larger-scale projects. Last year, local schools performed

at St George's Chapel as part of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. More informal lunch time concerts give students opportunities to perform a broader repertoire, including their own choice of popular songs.

188. Since the last inspection standards in Year 11 have improved and the overall quality of teaching and learning has improved. There has also been a significant improvement in the department's accommodation. Overall, improvement is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results are well above average; teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- Information and communication technology is used very well on the GCSE course to develop students' learning.
- Extra-curricular activities extend learning opportunities well; participation rates are very good reflecting students' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 9 should be higher.
- Schemes of work do not have clear links with assessment criteria nor do they give enough guidance for promoting all areas of learning.
- Priorities for improvement are not supported by a development plan that ensures that they will be met.

189. In 2002, teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 showed that standards were very low compared to those for all schools nationally. These assessments were inaccurate because information through the year had been accumulated rather than judgements being made on standards attained at the end of the year. The GCSE short course results for 2002 were well above those nationally for students gaining A* to C grades and significantly above for the proportion of students gaining A* and A grades. This was the first year of entry and therefore a trend of improvement cannot be judged. Students' achievement was very good given their attainment on entry to the course.

190. From the work seen, overall standards are broadly average. However, there is a marked variation across the school between individuals, between classes and between core physical education and GCSE groups. In Year 9, students' knowledge of rules, and the understanding of technique in different activities, are not secure. Satisfactory gains are made from the time of entry, but work seen shows that standards are below average. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well overall, particularly so in examination groups. Coursework, and work seen in GCSE lessons, is well above average. Students present their work very well and demonstrate a good understanding of analysis and planning. ICT is used very effectively to present information. Achievement is very good for these students. In core lessons, standards are broadly average; students learn to apply their skills in activities such as trampolining, gymnastics and hockey. Students with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, are fully integrated into all activities and their achievement is similar to others in their groups.

191. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching on the GCSE course is very good because it is focused on students attaining the highest possible standards. Students are taught how to think and research; teachers' very good knowledge of the syllabus builds up students' knowledge and learning very well. This provides them with the confidence to develop and follow their chosen sports with commitment. In Year 9, and in core physical education, although all lessons were satisfactory or better, in some lessons teachers' expectations were not at a challenging enough level and consequently learning and skill acquisition was slower than it could be. For example, in a gymnastics lesson, tasks did not extend the most able performers and in a

rounders lesson, too many students took part in a game for each to have sufficient opportunities to put their skills into practice. All teachers use subject vocabulary appropriately and this contributes to reinforcement of literacy skills; appropriate reference is made to numeracy development through activities such as those measuring heart rate. Students in all year groups have very good attitudes to the subject and respond well in lessons.

192. Overall, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Management is good with clear procedures, routines and expectations set for staff and students; monitoring procedures are secure. The head of department inducts her new staff well and her mentoring and support are helping to develop an effective team. A good system to record end of module grades is in place, but the information gained is not used as well as it could be to inform short or medium term planning nor is it linked into schemes of work. Priorities for development have been identified but they are not supported by a plan to bring about improvement. A broad range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum well; participation rates are very good.
193. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Students are given greater opportunities to plan and evaluate their work and their achievement has improved. Schemes of work are in place, but further work is required to link these with assessment criteria. The department has led the school successfully to gain the Sportsmark Award.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in GCSE classes.
- A very hard working head of department has raised the subject's status.
- Teaching in Year 9 and in GCSE classes is of good quality, so that students make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time.
- The recent introduction of a structured assessment system for all students supports learning well.

Areas for improvement

- The department needs to develop its use of the new assessment system both to guide planning, so that individual needs are met, and to monitor students' progress more closely.
- Limited time allocation and non-specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11 for non-examination students restricts both the quality of provision and time for detailed study and reflection.
- Training for non-specialist teachers and those who are new to the department is limited.
- More attention should be given to the development of students' literacy and ICT skills in non-GCSE classes.

194. GCSE results in the 2002 were broadly in line with the national averages for both all students and girls nationally. Students did better in religious education than in most of their other GCSE subjects. There was a similar pattern in 2000, but the 2001 results had been significantly better, with nearly ninety per cent of the students obtaining an A* to C grade.
195. Standards in Year 9 are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, reflecting the good progress that students have made since they entered the school. Well-established links with the middle schools result in a detailed understanding of the students' earlier learning and the department successfully extends this knowledge through a finely structured curriculum. Year 9 students achieve well in lessons and over time. They remember previous work well, as shown by their recall of good quotes from the Koran on tolerance. Scrutiny of the work in their books indicates a brisk pace of learning and examples of detailed and thoughtful work. They wrote interesting poems on the nature of God, a task that challenged all, including the higher achievers.
196. The current Year 11 GCSE students are attaining standards that are above the national average. Their achievement, given their prior attainment on entry to the course, is good. Groups of Year 10 students, governed by time targets, worked quickly to prepare high quality presentations on what

food would be deemed *Kosher* by Orthodox Jews. A scrutiny of the work in their books indicates that they systematically increase their knowledge over time. Their literacy skills are extended and they make good use of the Internet for research

197. Standards of work seen for the 85 per cent of Year 10 and Year 11 students who do not take the GCSE examination are broadly average. Very well planned units of work enable them to reach standards that just meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. However, there is insufficient time allocated to the subject to allow an in depth, comprehensive approach or meaningful reflection. The religious education curriculum is taught as part of a carousel and this does not promote good learning through a steady and measured increase in knowledge. Overall, achievement over time is just satisfactory.
198. By Year 11, these students have acquired some understanding of the influence of religious beliefs on moral and social issues such as genetic engineering, animal rights and abortion. A carefully organised range of teaching and learning strategies maintains interest in the classroom. A Year 11 class responded well to issues raised by a video on fair trade; a mixture of precise questioning and well-led discussion on the main points promoted interest and enthusiasm. However, learning often is not good because there is insufficient time to study aspects in detail. For example, some Year 11 classes were only able to make sketchy references to a religion other than Christianity when studying the effects of belief on attitudes to world poverty. Homework is not given and there are too few opportunities for research, extended writing in a variety of formats and the systematic extension of vocabulary. In general, insufficient attention is given to the development of students' literacy and ICT skills.
199. The quality of teaching varies widely, ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory. Overall, it is satisfactory. GCSE students benefit from very good and sometimes excellent teaching. Expert knowledge is communicated clearly within the framework of carefully planned lessons. A range of tasks motivates the class well. Students learn easily as the result of the very good use of on going assessment to confirm and extend understanding. For other students, teaching is more varied. Good teaching was characterised by extensive subject knowledge, detailed planning and good relationships. For example, in Year 9 lesson, well-chosen videos interested the class and skilful teaching resulted in focused note taking that extended understanding. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred when Year 10 and Year 11 students were taught by non-specialists who were new members of the department. They lacked the expertise to explain points, especially when the lesson moved away from areas covered by the well-prepared guides and resources provided the head of department. On occasions, there was a lack of focus and good organisational skills. Questioning skills were not always effective and there was too little time left to confirm and extend learning at the end of lessons. Overall, students' responses are good. Mutual respect and good relationships promotes students' confidence to express views. They work hard to produce good course work. Students react positively to challenges such as considering the impact of religious values in a multi-faith society.
200. Leadership and management of the subject are good, showing a great improvement since the last report. A committed, very well qualified and hard working head of department has transformed the subject; she is an excellent role model for teaching. Well-structured schemes of work and teaching materials have been written, with good references to the development of literacy skills. All statutory requirements are now met. The curriculum enables students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well, although some students have insufficient time for reflection. There are too few visits and visitors. New, good assessment systems are in place but these are not yet used to evaluate teaching and learning in detail or to inform future planning. Overall, teaching is now satisfactory, although examples of very good practice were seen. Students' achievements are at least satisfactory and commendable in some aspects. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection; timetabling and staffing arrangements limit further progress.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- The headteacher has taken on the role of citizenship coordinator; this has given direction, leadership and status to the subject.
- An analysis of existing provision across subjects has taken place.
- Enrichment activities, including the work of the school council, are strengths; they begin to involve students in the wider and practical aspects of citizenship.
- The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to citizenship.

Areas for improvement

- There is no structured programme for the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and the coverage of citizenship.
- Structured assessment procedures are needed to check the progress that students are making.
- Departments have mapped out areas to promote citizenship but teachers need to develop these within their teaching; citizenship needs to be made more explicit.

201. Although some features of the citizenship programme have been taught across the curriculum for some time, citizenship as a distinct subject has only been introduced very recently. Standards are average by the end of Years 9 and 11 and are largely what might be expected at this stage of development. In work seen during the inspection, students are beginning to acquire knowledge and understanding of different aspects of society, for example, of human rights and conservation issues. They are only just beginning to develop discussion skills in pairs and small groups. Students' achievement is satisfactory.

202. The recent analysis of citizenship across subjects has enabled the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) to take on areas not covered across the curriculum. The PSHE coordinator has created a team of senior and established staff to teach PSHE lessons to ensure consistency in teaching. Citizenship, within the curriculum, is in the early stages of its development. However, some subjects have begun to take an active role in its promotion. For example, Year 10 and 11 geography students understand environmental issues like ozone depletion and conservation of the rainforests. English makes a positive contribution, mainly through discussion. For example, Year 11 students when studying the play "An Inspector Calls", thoughtfully and maturely discussed their views. In design and technology, environmental issues and re-cycling of materials are to the fore. By the end of Year 11, students work successfully in pairs when discussing issues like rights of the consumer, money management and price fixing. However, some subjects, like mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education have yet to contribute to citizenship.

203. Practical applications of citizenship are also being successfully developed. For example, the school council now provides good and effective forums for debate of issues affecting students in the school. School council members are involved in links with the parent teacher association and in a school link with a Ghanaian school. School council work is an expanding area of practical citizenship. Year 9 students, as an extra curricular activity, undertake a "mock trial". In preparing for "The Citizenship Foundation Mock Trial Competition"; they learn about the organisation and running of a magistrate's court. Enrichment activities, like sport, orchestra, musical and dramatic productions, are numerous. Students are also active in public speaking competitions and in junior master chef and young magistrate awards. Students initiate a range of good charity work; for example, Jeans for Genes week, raising money for Genes research. Students involved in inter-school matches are well involved in taking responsibility as team members or captains. All enrichment activities and events successfully support the citizenship programme. All students, including those with special educational needs, are integrated well into lessons and activities.

204. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection, some personal, social and health education lessons were observed in which citizenship was a major focus. Some other lessons, where elements of citizenship were taught, were also observed. Teachers demonstrate at least good subject knowledge and understanding, as seen in a Year 10 lesson on the legalization of drugs. Teachers have good expectations and plan lessons well, with clear aims

and objectives, which they share with students. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 PSHE lesson on the rights of the consumer, where objectives were made very clear. Lessons have a variety of planned and structured activities. Students respond well to the different approaches. Many like discussion; however, a significant minority of students find debate without structure difficult, which was well exemplified in a Year 10 lesson on debating the advantages and disadvantages of legalizing cannabis. The roles of chairperson, scribe and individuals needed better definition. However, where good interactive methods are used, like in a Year 10 buying and selling game, students learn very successfully. Students have a good awareness of the media and Internet in society and quickly identify where high tech can increase effectiveness. Students have positive attitudes to citizenship and enjoy the subject

205. The school council enables students to participate in decision making related to the school. Prefect and monitor systems give opportunities for students to be involved in worthwhile and practical citizenship. However, within the curriculum most subjects still have to be more explicit about when they are promoting active citizenship. Although subjects have identified citizenship, it is not yet embedded in either planning or teaching. The personal social and health education programme strongly promotes citizenship. Once citizenship is established then it can be effectively monitored and evaluated for further development. English, design technology, history and religious education show 'glimpses' of citizenship, but few subjects make students aware that they are developing the skills and knowledge needed to become informed citizens.

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 2002

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	8	100	*	75	*	110	*
Biology	10	90	*	40	*	70	*
Business studies	6	100	*	0	*	70	*
Chemistry	5	100	*	20	*	64	*
Economics	3	67	*	0	*	47	*
English literature	30	100	*	37	*	79	*
French	4	100	*	75	*	95	*
Geography	6	100	*	17	*	70	*
History	6	83	*	50	*	80	*
Mathematics	4	100	*	0	*	55	*
Physics	3	100	*	33	*	73	*
Physical education	3	100	*	33	*	80	*
Product design	7	100	*	14	*	74	*
Psychology	7	100	*	29	*	80	*
Religious education	12	100	*	8	*	73	*
Sociology	16	100	*	63	*	90	*
Sports/Physical education	3	100	*	33	*	80	*
Theatre studies	10	100	*	70	*	94	*

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ health and social care	2	100		50			
GNVQ business studies	12	87		25			

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and biology, but one lesson of chemistry and one lesson of physics were sampled. Teaching was very good and good respectively. In both lessons, the teachers used their very good subject expertise effectively. They gave clear explanations and used questioning skilfully, helping students to develop their understanding of scientific ideas as the lesson progressed.

Mathematics

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

Strength

- Good and clear leadership is beginning to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students need further opportunities for independent learning to help raise standards.
- The department needs to improve the overall quality of its teaching, by sharing the excellent practice that exists within the department more effectively.

206. The department offers courses in AS and A-level mathematics. Students can choose to study modules from pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Currently, there are two Year 13 students and six Year 12 students. Retention rates are good, as students rarely fail to complete a course. In 2001, A-level results for Year 13 students were very low, being in the bottom five per cent of all maintained schools nationally. Achievement was poor, given students' broadly average level of attainment at the start of the course. Results in 2002 improved slightly but, even so, they are likely to be well below average.

207. Standards of work seen in the inspection vary; overall, they are below average. Standards in Year 13 are well below average, reflecting the results of 2002. Students' poor attendance, due medical problems, is a contributory factor in their under achievement. Students' knowledge of basic definitions of probability is secure. The application of their knowledge to new work is not emphasised well enough in the teaching for good progress to be made. In pure mathematics, students' mental work in calculus is not yet good enough for quick and accurate work, in learning to sketch graphs for example. They are not familiar enough with some mathematical terms to solve problems quickly. Standards in Year 12 are higher than recent examination results, at least in line with those expected nationally at this early stage of the course. Students have a firm grasp of their new learning in pure mathematics, in using integrals to find areas under curves, for example. Confidence in the use of complicated formulae in statistics is not as secure. Students are able to argue sensibly over errors, however, showing some independence in their learning. In mechanics, students can define momentum and use their definition to solve problems, sensibly using their initiative in their studies.

208. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, which is why achievement overall is unsatisfactory. There is however huge variation in teaching quality. At times, students are given too little challenge; the work is too easy for real progress in learning to be made. The use of time is unsatisfactory in some lessons; again, little progress in learning occurs because of unsatisfactory planning. In marked contrast to this, there is some excellent teaching, wherein students are challenged very well. The excellent use of resources in mechanics, for example, clarifies basic concepts very well and adds significantly to students' enjoyment and interest. The encouragement for students to use their initiative in work selection encourages independent learning well. Students' in Year 12 have very good attitudes to work, a factor in the improvement of standards over previous years. There is a need to share best practice, so that all students are better prepared for their examination questions in mathematics.

209. Leadership gives a good and clear direction to the subject through personal example in the classroom and through the enthusiasm for teaching and improvement that has been generated within the department. Teaching is monitored and evaluated; the department is starting to share best practice but mechanisms for doing this need further development. The majority of the teachers are new to the school since September 2001, when the head of department was appointed. The match of the teachers to the curriculum is now broadly satisfactory, but effective action has not yet been taken to eliminate the unsatisfactory teaching. Standards have declined since the last inspection and so improvement has been unsatisfactory.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding; they teach lively and engaging lessons enabling students to make good progress.
- Teachers use assessment of past examination questions effectively, showing students how answers can be improved and thus preparing them well for final examinations.
- Lessons are planned well, with well-chosen methods to support learning
- Relationships are very good; students participate actively in lessons and have positive attitudes to work.

Areas for development

- Higher attaining students need further challenge through differentiated work in order to raise the proportion of A and B grades at A-level.
- The department needs to analyse student performance data more effectively so that both students and teachers can track progress and ensure that standards are sufficiently high.
- Teachers need to prepare students more effectively for the transition from GCSE to advanced level work.

210. The department offers biology at both AS and A-level. A level results in 2001 were well below average. 2002 results improved significantly; 90 per cent of students achieved a pass grade whilst the proportion achieving grades A or B rose to 40 per cent. AS results in 2001 and 2002 were broadly average. 2002 A-level results represent good achievement, given students' GCSE scores on entry to the sixth form. However the proportion of students achieving at the highest levels was disappointing compared with some other post-16 subjects and the department is working hard to provide further challenge for higher attainers and hence to raise attainment. Retention rates are good; 14 of the 15 students who started the AS course in 2000 were entered for the 2001 examination and all students who started the A level in 2001 completed the course. Currently, there are 10 A-level students in Year 13 and 16 students studying AS-level- in Year 12.
211. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files is above average in both year groups and matches performance in the 2002 examinations. AS students commenced Year 12 with a broad range of prior attainment. Students say they find the jump from GCSE to AS and AS to A level challenging; nevertheless, overall they are achieving well. In a Year 12 lesson, students consolidated their learning about the anatomy of the heart and began to understand the changes in volume and pressure associated with the heart's chambers and major blood vessels. They could explain how synchronised beating is achieved and could relate this to electrocardiogram outputs. In Year 13, A-level students use technical terms with accuracy and quickly grasp key ideas about gene pools and allele frequency. Again, students are achieving well.
212. Teaching is good; consequently, students' learning is also good. Teachers know their students well and are therefore able to plan and target work appropriately. Features of very good lessons include lively exposition stemming from very good subject knowledge, coupled with skilful use of available resources; this ensures that learning opportunities are maximised. Other features evident in such lessons are clearly identified expected learning outcomes, good planning, a brisk pace and the use of a range of methods to bring about effective learning. For instance, in a well-planned

Year 12 lesson, students had access to a range of resources including textbooks, microscope slides and well structured worksheets, to extend their learning about the structure of xylem vessels and to link this to the cohesion tension theory, to understand how water moves through plants. In a Year 13 lesson about gene pools, students were all involved through an effective use of a range of direct and indirect, open and closed questions that helped them and their teacher to monitor their developing knowledge and understanding. A useful plenary session helped students review their own learning and reminded them of tasks that needed completing before their next taught session. Marking is focused usefully on past examination questions, which helps students to develop examination techniques, as well as monitoring their learning. Students appreciate discussion and marking of exemplar questions and the use of model answers in supporting their learning. They find synoptic essay questions challenging but are making progress with these.

213. A real strength of post-16 lessons is the enthusiasm and high levels of participation of the students themselves. There is a very positive ethos for learning. Students ask perceptive questions and sustain high levels of concentration, applying themselves fully throughout lessons. Independent learning skills are quite well developed, particularly for students in Year 13. Further opportunities for Year 12 students to work independently would help them to develop their study skills earlier.

214. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department is relatively new in post and also has responsibility for science in the main school. Another new teacher has already made impact in the department and in order to build on existing good practice in biology, both teachers need to explore opportunities for continued professional development through lesson observations and systematic monitoring and evaluation. Both teachers should contribute to the scheme of work, continuing to develop opportunities for independent learning. Diagnostic feedback is offered to students about their strengths and areas for further development. Further development is needed so that the department can track students' progress against predicted results based on students' GCSE scores on entry. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on product design with food technology sampled at AS level. Teaching in the sampled lesson was very good and students made considerable gains in learning about smart foods and their functions.

Product design

Overall, the quality of provision for product design is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good; as a result, students learn effectively.
- Good relationships and a good working atmosphere help students to achieve well.
- Individual tutorial sessions are used well to set targets; they are helping to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities to use CAD/CAM.
- Students need to be encouraged to make fuller use of the department's facilities outside lessons.
- Teachers need to develop students' confidence in using graphical presentation of ideas.

215. The 2002 results represented the first examined entries at A-level for this subject. All students were successful in gaining a pass grade but the percentage of students achieving A and B grades is likely to be below average. The 2001 AS results were above average. Achievement is good, given students' GCSE scores on entry. Currently there are four students studying at A-level and eight students studying at AS-level. Retention rates are good. Attainment in lessons and work

seen is above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. Predicted grades and current standards of coursework support this judgement.

216. In Year 12, students make appropriate progress when developing research skills, including the use of ICT, freehand sketching, good use of colour and environmental considerations when designing. This is seen in a project investigating the use of re-cycled plastics including modelling ideas for experimentation. This and other projects use reference material, including the work of designers, as inspiration for ideas and as a support to developing creativity in designing. Some work shows reluctance to initiate problem solving solutions and modelling can be rather simplistic for this level of study.
217. In Year 13, standards are above average; students are achieving well. There is a good range of projects under investigation. A particularly good project involved a 1950's Hi-fi system, with research into associated environmental issues, including materials and safety concerns. Good analysis of existing products and good use of the Internet for research were seen in the above project. The appropriate use of colour to improve the quality of students' work is good feature of most of the work seen, whilst good levels of creativity and aesthetic awareness are seen in the best work. Standards of graphical presentation are good overall, including freehand sketching. However, sometimes students are reluctant to communicate ideas in this way. They lack confidence in their skills of graphical presentation; some ideas are not fully developed in sufficient depth for this level of work.
218. The quality of teaching is good; sometimes it is very good. Very good relationships exist between adults and students, who learn well as a result. Lessons are planned to include practical, theoretical, and oral work. There is appropriate emphasis on evaluation. For example, a Year 12 lesson involved students in developing skills of product evaluation and discussing how to effect changes or modifications. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher used a video presentation to support learning and understanding of why ideas have to be developed in depth before the making process begins. This lesson also involved the students in discussion work and they all contributed positively and constructively. A further good feature of teaching is the use of assessment information to help students improve their work. Individual tutorial sessions, where teachers and students discuss work against examination assessment criteria and set targets for improvement, are valued by students and are effective in securing improvement. The use of peer and group assessment also supports learning, whilst developing students' communication skills.
219. Leadership of the subject is good. The management of the subject is shared between two members of staff who co-ordinate the subject's direction. They work well together and have a good vision for future developments. Schemes of work have been revised and suitable tasks delivered in Year 12 to build on skills from GCSE level. Outside agencies are used as opportunities arise as a good support for learning. The use of CAD/CAM in students learning is not fully implemented and students do not generally take the opportunity to use the department's facilities outside of lesson time. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection; since its introduction, numbers taking the subject have been encouraging.

BUSINESS

No subjects were inspected in depth. One lesson of GNVQ intermediate business studies was sampled; teaching was good. Students enjoyed their work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No subject was inspected in depth. One lesson in Year 13 of the CISCO networking course was sampled. Teaching was good, leading to good learning. Students showed a good understanding of the work covered.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education; no other lessons were sampled .

Physical Education

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

Strengths

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good; teachers have very good knowledge and high expectations of their students.
- Achievement is good.
- The department works well as a team; this is a consequence of good leadership.
- Very good relationships and students' very good attitudes contribute to a very purposeful learning atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to extend the range of teaching methods used in theory lessons in order to extend independent learning.
- Continuing professional development and peer observation is needed to support teaching further.
- One dedicated room is needed for all examination theory work.

220. Standards in physical education are above average. This is a consequence of good teaching and high expectations by teachers. Students achieve well in terms of their transition from GCSE work.

221. Results in 2001 at A-level were average. The 2002 A2 results show a significant improvement, with more students gaining the higher grades. Students' results in the 2002 AS-level examination were broadly as expected. Retention rates are good; it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. Over the last four years, small numbers of students have studied A-level physical education. However, the number recruited to take AS level in 2002/03 has increased and there are indications that standards are improving. The standards of sixth form students' performance in physical recreation and sport are average, with school teams and individuals being successful at inter school and district level.

222. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are currently above average; this represents a good level of achievement. Students' course work is well-presented, showing good understanding. The above average work is also reflected during AS and A-level theory lessons. Students write with sufficient detail, applying their theoretical knowledge to the analysis of techniques and skills in sports. Both Year 12 and 13 students have very positive attitudes to physical education, although many find the work challenging. For example in a Year 12 lesson, students had to combine stopping and throwing of a ball into one movement. Higher attaining students coped well with the task but lower attaining students did not have the co-ordination to be successful. Year 13 students successfully relate theory to practice; this was well exemplified when students measured motor fitness through the use of a range of tests. They used technical words like agility, reaction time and co-ordination in the correct context, showing good understanding. Students show a good understanding of ethics and behaviour in sport. They relate these well to a range of sports. Overall, students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well because of the good structured support they receive from their teachers.

223. The quality of both teaching and learning in physical education are good. Teachers have very good teaching knowledge and exuberance for their work. This is evident in the enthusiasm for learning that they transmit, as for example in a Year 13 lesson on games ethics, and in the very good explanations, which they give to students. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the theory and practice of sportsmanship and gamesmanship were linked well through examples of each. Tasks and activities provided for students indicate good planning; teachers show a clear understanding of the needs of the AS and A-level modules. Learning objectives are clear and are shared with the students. This leads to increasing confidence the course progresses. Teachers have high

expectations of students and use questions very well to probe students' understanding; as a consequence, students' horizons are extended. However, there is a need to extend the range of teaching methods in theory lessons in order to extend students' independent learning. Overall, good knowledge, good planning and good expectations lead to good and confident learning by the students. Students are encouraged to engage in open debate with each other in order to improve the depth of their learning, which was well demonstrated in lessons on games ethics in Year 13. Students are very attentive in lessons and show a very good interest in the subject. Their attitudes towards physical education are very good which also contributes to a good learning environment. Students all show a mature and very positive approach to their studies.

224. The post-16 provision in physical education is well led and well managed. The department operates well as a team, helping and supporting one another. Monitoring takes place regularly. Students are tracked successfully through their AS and A-level courses and are well aware of their own achievement. Students have good access to computers and much of their work is word-processed; floppy disc exchange between student and teacher makes for a very effective exchange of work. The department has no dedicated room for theory lessons; this inhibits learning somewhat, as resources and display are constrained. Students can choose, if they wish, to follow a physical recreation option on a Wednesday afternoon but take up is not high; this is a constraint of limited indoor accommodation.
225. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Standards are above the national average and students achieve well. Teachers involved in the AS and A-level courses are working hard to improve the quality of physical education in the sixth form. However, continuing professional development and peer observation of teaching needs developing to support and extend teaching further. The department shows a good capacity for further improvement and continued development of high standards.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on the GNVQ intermediate health and social care course provided by the school. There is no provision at advanced level.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well.
- Very good relationships between staff and students create a very good climate for learning.
- Teachers work very well as a team and very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Teachers provide very good individual support for students.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers should try to raise the confidence level of a minority of students to enable them to discuss work more confidently in lessons.
- The department needs to provide suitable teaching resources to challenge higher attaining students to work towards achieving higher grades.

226. 2001 examination results were above average. Results in 2002 improved further. This represents very good achievement when compared to the below average GCSE results that students achieved prior to starting the course.
227. Standards of work seen in Year 12 during the inspection were also above those expected nationally. Students learn about maintaining good health and consider various aspects of personal development, relationships and the work of a wide range of support agencies within the community. The school has structured the course well to suit the learning needs of the students. This enables students to build a very good knowledge base about the subjects being studied; then

students are guided to apply this information to the coursework assignments needed for the examination. This is reflected in the very good standard of coursework the students produce and the high level of understanding that they have of the work they have covered. Teachers use a variety of interesting methods to ensure all students understand the tasks fully. Work is discussed well in class and students read widely around the unit topics. They show good research skills and use a wide range of sources to find information before preparing their coursework assignments. Students follow the guidance provided by their teachers well and structure their work closely to match examination requirements. This enables them to gain marks for each section of the work. As their knowledge and confidence increase, students work with greater independence. However, a few are less confident which prevents them from participating fully in class discussions. Students make very good use of opportunities to broaden their experience. They show a high level of interest in the work of support agencies within the community and value the planned visits which enable them to gain a wider understanding and experience of the support available for particular groups in the community.

228. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well organised and show a high level of planning. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and as a result they guide students well to focus on the relevant and most important aspects of the work. Students benefit from the very specific guidance and support which is well matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers set clear objectives for lessons and this helps students to pace themselves and to structure their coursework. They also use a range of activities to help students to consolidate their learning. Students are encouraged to complete a work experience placement as part of their learning experience. Many benefit very well from their work in local playgroups, nurseries and care centres, made either during or prior to starting the course. In one lesson, students were required to share their experiences with others in the group, giving them valuable opportunities to contribute to class discussion and group activities.
229. Teachers encourage students to develop their numeracy skills, helping them to analyse and interpret statistical data effectively. For example, students gained a good understanding of how data can be used to monitor the growth rate of children. This was seen in a lesson where students were deciding what developmental points to look for in their child study assignment. They were able to use national standard data to assess the growth rate of the child they were observing. Students develop good literacy skills and complete work to the level needed for the examination. Their use of ICT is very good. Laptops were used in lessons and, in addition, students used ICT well to both draft and present their final coursework. There is a wide range of books and specialist learning resources available for students in the department and they are encouraged to use the library for research.
230. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The GNVQ intermediate course is now well established and has become very popular amongst students. There is good monitoring of students' work. Teachers work together as a team very well and very good relationships are a strong feature of the department's ethos and learning conditions. Development since the start of this course has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art. In addition, a Year 12 theatre studies AS-level lesson was sampled, and a performance of upper sixth examination work was seen. Students made good gains in the lesson in interpreting and improvising ideas dramatically. The teacher's very good subject knowledge enabled her to challenge students to think deeply and the resources that students were given to work with provided interesting stimuli. As a consequence, students learnt well. In the performance of the examination piece, students produced high quality work using a range of interesting theatrical effects.

One lesson of AS media studies was also observed. Teaching was very good, characterised by very good planning and with particular attention paid to developing students' powers of analysis. Relationships were very good - respectful and relaxed - which aided students' learning.

Art

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average; students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good..
- Leadership and management are very good and instrumental to the subject's success.
- Sketchbooks are used very effectively for investigation and experimentation.

Areas for improvement

- Year 12 students' understanding of drawing to collect particular information needs developing.
- Students need to develop their own informed personal views through reading, thus promoting improved written and spoken criticism.
- The accommodation relating to three-dimensional studies and sixth form studio space restricts learning.

231. Standards in the sixth form are well above average. The AS and A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average and amongst the best in school. The A-level results in 2002 were the best. These results reflect continuing improvement since the last inspection. All students who begin courses sit the terminal examinations.

232. A strength of students' work is that it reflects their backgrounds and the events in their lives. Most are well travelled and they use their visits to Australia, America, Europe, Malaysia, and Hong Kong to enrich their work. The department further enriches these experiences with visits to London galleries, opening already inquisitive eyes to the excitement of original artworks. A student's holiday in Australia led to her making a comparison between traditional and contemporary Aboriginal Art. She confidently recognised the many similarities in both, drawing links with the spirituality in Salvador Dali's work. Students are confident and enjoy talking about their work, although their use of subject specific language is limited and their opinions are unsupported by knowledge gained from reading. The highest attaining Year 13 students have the ability to draw for different reasons. This concept is not evident to all and there are occasions when drawing is restrained by students' perceived need to refine their work, causing drawing to be presentational rather than investigative. Their investigation and experimentation in sketchbooks, with materials such as tissue paper, glue and ink, is more immediate and vital. Recognising students' prior GCSE attainment and that a small number have not followed GCSE art and design, their achievements are very good. Those who are most talented do particularly well and, each year, well above average numbers gain grade A passes.

233. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Year 13 lessons centre on individual investigation. A student made very good reference to changes in art and artists over time, noting how Monet's use of colour changed due to cataracts on his eyes. Another, following her visit to nearby Cookham, made rapid progress after seeing the religious paintings of Stanley Spencer. Year 12 students are making equal progress, although they are not yet able to respond in this manner. Some do not read enough to be able to make connections between their own work and that of famous artists. A student working on the theme of movement was unaware of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, even though the class had earlier discussed this masterpiece. There is a strong group identity in art and students and teachers care for and appreciate each other's work. Students' recognition of their teachers' knowledge and genuine feel for their subject adds extra value to the good quality career advice they receive.

234. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The curriculum in art is satisfactory and students develop individual styles in two and three-dimensional processes. The assessment of their work is thorough and they work with teachers to set targets to speed progress. The head of department generates strong teamwork and she and her colleagues work together for the students' future. The accommodation in art is unsatisfactory, because the space for three-dimensional work is inadequate and sixth formers lack studio space where they might work in free lessons. However, there are plans to address these deficiencies. There has been good improvement since

the last inspection. Standards of attainment, students' achievements and teaching and learning have all improved to very good.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history and religious education. Two geography lessons were sampled; teaching was good in both. Students learned well as a consequence of the teacher's good subject knowledge, the effective use of challenging questions, the good use of resources and their own very good attitudes. 2001 A level results in geography were average with similar results in 2002.

Two lessons of psychology were also seen, where teaching was good and very good. Students were challenged well by good teacher intervention and high expectations for standards of work. Two sociology lessons were also sampled. In a satisfactory lesson, pace was at times rather slow, but good class discussion at the end consolidated learning. In a very good lesson, careful preparation and a range of teaching strategies, coupled with clear use of specialist terminology, ensured that students learned very effectively. Sociology is a popular subject; A-level results, which were broadly average in 2001, improved significantly in 2002.

History

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding supports students' learning.
- Good relationships encourage students' confidence and involvement.
- Students receive good guidance through informal discussion of their work.
- Students are encouraged to take a global perspective on the events they study.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient resources to support wider reading and research.
- A minority of students are reluctant to become involved in the oral work of the class.
- There is no use of external conferences or lectures to support study.

235. The school offers courses in AS and A level history. The number of students following each course is rising. Arrangements have been made for five further girls, who were unable to study history at the school due to timetable restrictions, to study at the boys' school. A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average, with around 60 per cent of students gaining the higher grades of A and B. Results in 2002 are similar. This represents significantly good achievement given students' GCSE scores on entry. All Year 12 students achieved a pass grade in their AS level examinations in 2001 and 2002. All students who started the courses completed them.

236. The standard of work seen during the inspection on the A-level course is above average. This represents good achievement. Students are encouraged to consider the wider view of history and to identify the long-term impact of events. In response to good questioning by teachers, higher attaining students in particular develop their oral responses and demonstrate understanding of wider issues. The level of their oral work is clearly lifted as a result of such questioning and attains a higher standard. Students research and present information clearly and essays are generally well constructed and fluent. The work of higher attaining students demonstrates the ability to evaluate their knowledge and select what is most relevant to the question implicit in the essay title. Average students are less selective and do not generally build a case for the judgement they reach. For example, in an essay about the inevitability of war between America and Great Britain, students included much relevant information supporting different views, but failed to write convincingly about why they preferred a particular view. Year 13 write fluently and with clear logical order. They are beginning to identify strengths and weaknesses in essay formation and identify the need for analysis, using facts to support statements rather than as items in their own right. Higher attaining students are fluent, and able to follow logical links between countries. They recognise the growth of

nationalism and identify the competition for power and the features that contribute to the growing influence of revolutionary groups.

237. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and students have confidence in them. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding enables them to provide clear, detailed explanations for their students. They have a good understanding of examination requirements and this enables them to give students good advice and support. Teachers have appropriately high expectations and at times skilful, supplementary questioning results in students achieving a higher standard in their oral work than might be expected. Teachers encourage students to make oral presentations to the group, which encourages them to organise their ideas and thoughts clearly. A minority of students limit their contributions to formal presentations or responses to direct questions and they miss the opportunity to discuss their ideas with their peers. Students have the opportunity to undertake research, and their coursework is well supported by their teachers. Relationships between students and their teachers are good, enabling them to become partners in their learning.
238. Students have a limited range of textbooks for private use, which reduces the scope for wider reading, although teachers supplement this with photocopied extracts. Students would appreciate a greater range of texts, and opportunities to attend external lectures to enable them to consider a greater variety of interpretations.
239. Leadership and management of the course is satisfactory. Although there are limited opportunities for formal meetings to develop and review the work, the two experienced teachers work well together to deliver the course. Most lessons are taught in the seminar rooms in sixth form block. Whilst these are conducive to discussion and individual support, there are missed opportunities to extend and re-enforce learning through display. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report.

Religious education

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Achievement is good in relation to students' prior attainment at GCSE.
- Expert and committed teaching, which effectively highlights and revisits areas where students are having difficulties, promotes good progress.
- Students work hard to succeed and produce well researched coursework
- The very good quality of teachers' continuous assessment gives students clear guidance.
- There is a very good, positive partnership between staff and students, with a focus on developing independent learning and research skills.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to continue with their focus on teaching ethics in a variety of ways.
- The schemes of work for religious studies, taught within the Year 12 and 13 general studies examination and as part of the entitlement programme, needs further refinement.
- The department needs to develop a strategy to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning of these courses.

240. The first cohort took the AS examination in 2001. Results were below the national average, with only one student achieving a higher level grade. Results improved in 2002; all students gained a grade but, as in their AS examination, only one achieved a higher grade A or B. Even so, students achieved well given their modest GCSE scores on entry to the course. It is very rare for a student not to continue with their studies; all sit the final examination.
241. Students currently studying for the A-level examination appear set to do better than this and to reach standards in line with those expected nationally. However, it is not easy to predict overall

results as the small number of candidates can result in skewed results. Overall, students are achieving well when the wide range of prior attainment and previous knowledge of religious education is considered. The high quality of the teaching and the mature attitudes of the students are important factors in this success. Year 12 and Year 13 students make very good progress in lessons in their oral work. For example, Year 12 students made good gains in their understanding of the nature of evil. A Year 12 class was very good at discussing the nature of evil, increasing their understanding because of the teacher's continuous links with theories about its existence. Challenging and open -ended questions promoted an interesting debate about the interpretation of The Garden of Eden story, indicating that students had learnt well. The quality of some of the written work of this group was not so good. This tendency for students to do much better in discussion and in group work, also applies to Year 13 students. For example, students were interested in real life decisions relating to genetic engineering and most made very good oral contributions to an argument about what constituted a moral dilemma. They worked very well as a group, sharing ideas, thereby increasing the understanding of all. However, a scrutiny of individuals' work indicated that the detailed written analysis of theoretical ideas was not always so strong.

242. Teaching is very good. Teacher's in depth subject knowledge and the excellent use of current issues to illustrate and clarify theory engages students and motivates them to learn. A range of well-prepared and chosen materials is used effectively to develop understanding. A particular strength is the teachers' ability to stand back and ensure that students think for themselves, so that good research and independent learning skills are developed. Pertinent questioning tests, reinforces and extends learning. Teacher's commitment and the positive response of the students result in an effective learning partnership. There is a strong focus on literacy and students gain from the highly organised and formal teaching of essay writing and other skills. Teachers who are very well informed of particular requirements sensitively support students with special educational needs
243. Students are appreciative of the quality of teaching they receive and they highly recommend the course to others. They comment favourably on teachers' on-going assessment of their work, that pinpoints difficulties and highlight areas that need improving. They are appreciative of teachers' regard for areas that they find difficult, such as an in depth analysis of some of the ethical concepts. Students research well, frequently on the Internet, and the majority work hard to produce good coursework. They enjoy a subject that is relevant to everyday life and allows them to discuss current issues to confirm their understanding of theory. They are very pleased with the quality of the teaching
244. Leadership of the subject is very good. Vision has been combined most effectively with a high level of administrative skill and the ability to implement change. Commitment and energy abound. There are high expectations that students will make good progress and they respond accordingly. Resources, including books and links with the library, are very well organised and enhance learning. Schemes of work have been written recently to ensure that all sixth formers have a good quality religious education course as part of their enrichment programme. It is too early for the effect of these new schemes on teaching and learning to be evaluated. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There were then no post-16 courses on offer and the school was not meeting its statutory requirement to provide a religious education programme for all. There were no specialist teachers and a head of department did not exist.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature, but one Year 12 French lesson was sampled. Here, excellent teaching developed independent learning and high standards.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- Students achieve very well, often from a low base.
- Students are encouraged well to develop independent study skills outside of lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to develop further strategies for encouraging students to participate actively in lessons.

245. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average, as well as being well above girls' nationally. All candidates passed and over 40 per cent achieved an A or B grade. In 2002, the proportion attaining A or B grades dropped a little, while all students passed. In the 2002 AS examinations, all candidates passed, with 40 per cent achieving a top grade. These results represents very god achievement given students' GCSE scores on entry to the course. English is a popular subject; usually around 30 students are entered for A-level. Very few drop out of the course.

246. The standard of work seen was also above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students can analyse literary texts successfully, and are able to compare and contrast treatments and themes. Higher attaining students write accurately and stylishly. Students use the techniques of literary criticism well to comment on writers' intentions and the methods used to achieve specific effects. A higher attaining student writing on Brian Friel's 'Translations' analysed Friel's use of language very well. In an essay by another student on 'Hamlet', the student examined the significance of the Ghost from four different viewpoints; she used quotations well to illustrate her points and structured her essay well.

247. Teaching and learning in the sixth form on the AS and A-level courses are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions of the students, as well as to explain the finer points of literary analysis. In a lower sixth group that was looking at 'Emma', the teacher's specialist subject knowledge enabled her to challenge students very effectively. She also planned group work expertly, to get different attaining groups of students to work on different questions. These strategies led to students learning very well in the lesson. An upper sixth group was studying 'The Whitsun Weddings'. The students learnt a lot about Larkin's poetry because the teacher had very carefully planned a range of activities and she used her very good knowledge to explain and ask questions.

248. AS and A-level students usually have very good attitudes to work. They generally work well independently. However there are times when students are rather passive and teachers find it hard to get a response. In an upper sixth lesson, students were looking at speeches from 'Othello'. Despite the teacher working hard, they rarely volunteered ideas unless directly questioned, and this passivity stopped them from learning really well.

249. Leadership and management are very good. The department is very supportive of students' learning. Teachers are readily accessible to go over difficult concepts and help with essays. Work is very well marked. Teachers take the trouble to write helpful comments on written work and indicate how students can improve. They know their students well, and set appropriately challenging targets. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. They have responded well to the demands of the new AS and A-level courses, and teachers work together very well as a team.