

**OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119798

Headteacher: Mr Michael Webster

Reporting inspector: Elizabeth Charlesworth  
19532

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249863

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Morecambe Road Lancaster
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sister M Coyne
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19532	Elizabeth Charlesworth	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are the pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
13459	Eva Mills	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1475	Val Lynch	Team inspector	Physical education Citizenship	
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
23080	Robert Isaac	Team inspector	English	
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communications technology Health and social care	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art and Design	Assessment
30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	6 <sup>th</sup> form co-ordinator Music	
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Special educational needs Inclusion Psychology	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
10316	Norman Bertram	Team inspector	History	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady's Catholic High School is the only Catholic high school in Lancaster, drawing most of its pupils from nearby Catholic primary schools. It is an average-sized comprehensive of 941 pupils, with a sixth form of 145 pupils. Most of the pupils are of UK origin. Thirty pupils speak English as an additional language, rather more than in most schools, but because most of these pupils' parents attend the university they do not stay at Our Lady's for very long. The number of pupils with special educational needs is rising sharply and is now above the national average, as is the number with statements of special educational need. Our Lady's is the choice of school for the children of traveller families when they are in the Lancaster area: there are currently seven pupils in the school. Because part of the city of Lancaster has a high degree of social deprivation, the city receives funds from the government's single regeneration budget. The school benefits, therefore, from the extra grant for a small proportion of its pupils. However, pupils in the school generally come from a wide social background and only an average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school in Year 7 is below average, with very few pupils of above average ability. There are two grammar schools nearby and a language college, which selects a proportion of its pupils according to aptitude, which is where many higher-ability pupils attend. The school received the Sportsmark Award in March of this year and is now awaiting the outcome of its recent bid for Sports College status.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is generally an effective school, but there are things, which could be done better if the school showed a greater commitment to improvement and change. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 helps pupils make good progress from their below average attainment when they start school. However, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have not kept pace with the rising national trend. Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) nevertheless are still above the national average. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but have not provided the impetus for the changes, which have been initiated at national level. Not enough thought has been given to how the school can promote the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils in all subjects and activities. The provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- GCSE results are above the national average.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because provision is good.
- Good teaching results in most pupils leaving school with a sense of maturity and responsibility.
- Links with the community and partner institutions are good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities and for design and technology, science, English and mathematics is good.
- The school supports pupils well through its monitoring of their academic progress and attendance and its commitment to equality of opportunity in a Christian environment.

#### **What could be improved**

- Results in Year 9.
- The systems for managing challenging behaviour, including the teaching in Year 10.
- Opportunities for pupils to take more initiative and personal responsibility.
- The curriculum to include ICT and improve literacy.
- Roles of the governors and the senior management team in monitoring and evaluation.
- The application of the principles of best value.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1997. Since then it has made satisfactory progress overall. It has improved the accommodation and resources in the areas specified and further refurbishment of accommodation is about to take place. It has introduced training for middle managers, trained them in how to use information about pupils' attainment to identify where they can do better, and has begun to develop effective management tools in how to run their department. There is, however, more work still to be done in these areas. Teaching and learning have improved and the impact of the work of the school's group on teaching and learning will give further momentum to improvement in this key issue. ICT is still not planned and taught across the school, although considerable investment in equipment now puts the school in a position to implement this statutory requirement.

## 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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C		

Standards at the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests are average, but declining against the rising national trend. This trend was reversed in science in 2002. Results in GCSE examinations have been above the national average over recent years and remained so in 2001. They are well above in comparison with similar schools. There are, though, relatively few students with A\* grades, except in sciences. Throughout the school, girls and boys do equally well and the gap between boys' attainment and girls' is smaller than is found nationally. There are as yet no national results for comparison in 2002, but the number of pupils gaining five A\*-C grades increased significantly on 2001. The best subjects where attainment is significantly above average are mathematics, biology and design and technology. Results were above average in art, chemistry, physics and physical education, whilst those for combined science, drama and English literature were broadly average. Results in other subjects were below average and were significantly below in English language and French. Standards throughout the school in lessons seen are average and achievement is good. The strongest subjects are mathematics, ICT in Years 7 to 9 and science in Years 10 and 11. The weakest subjects where standards are below average are geography and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and music in Years 7 to 9. Achievement in these subjects is satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils enjoy coming to school, but a significant minority do not join in with what the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour around the school and in most lessons is good. A small number of pupils put themselves outside the norms of the Christian ethos. The number of fixed term exclusions is very high.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are given few opportunities to take responsibility, but when they are they respond well. Relationships are satisfactory.
Attendance	The hard work, which the school has done in raising attendance, is paying dividends as attendance is now close to the national average. Unauthorised absence remains above average.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to school. They respond well to good teaching and behave well in lessons and around the school. The very high number of fixed term exclusions is related to violence and offensive behaviour. The school works very hard to prevent exclusions by providing a behaviour support unit within school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection. Working with the

welfare officer, the school has organised a system of telephoning home and as a result, unexplained absence has been reduced considerably.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.*

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching was observed in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in religious education where the focus was on the subject's contribution to citizenship. Very good features were also observed in German in Years 10 and 11, mathematics, physical education and drama. Pupils benefit from teachers' expert knowledge and learn well. The unsatisfactory teaching was mostly in Year 10, but most subjects had an unsatisfactory lesson except mathematics, science, art and history. Teaching is unsatisfactory where pupils are unco-operative, their behaviour is not well managed and where the purpose of the lesson is not clear to pupils.

There are good arrangements for the teaching of numeracy. The mathematics department has given a lead to other departments about how to find opportunities to develop and apply number in their subject. Strategies for teaching literacy are unsatisfactory because they are not co-ordinated across the school. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs by carefully assessing their progress and then supporting them according to what they need. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory: pupils are put into sets according to their ability, but where their language needs are not met by support in class, their progress is held back.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities for pupils. It has good links with outside bodies. Statutory requirements for ICT are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Because systems for identifying pupils and managing the deployment of staff are good, pupils play a full role in school life.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school warmly welcomes pupils, who do not speak English as their first language. Many teachers work hard to ensure that these pupils make progress, but there are no formal systems in place to monitor their progress. There is support for their language, but not in all their lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. There are good opportunities for spiritual development through worship, but a lack of planning and co-ordination across departments for this aspect of personal development. Provision for social development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for child protection are good and satisfactory for monitoring the personal and academic development of pupils. Several issues relating to health and safety were pointed out to the headteacher.

ICT is not taught to all pupils throughout the school. There is no scheme of work that follows the National Curriculum in order to ensure that all pupils complete the programme of study. The rest of the curriculum meets statutory requirements, but because the school does not monitor its effects, there are several instances of uneven distribution of lessons, unequal class sizes and pupils having more than one teacher for a subject, which all slow progress. The care and welfare of pupils in all its aspects are good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED



Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. There are individual strengths and a common sense of purpose, which give direction to the school. The senior management team as a whole, though, lacks unity. Responsibilities overlap and are often duplicated. Monitoring has not been at a sufficient depth to raise standards and to identify the impact of action taken.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Members of the governing body bring expertise and professional knowledge to their duties, following the lead given by the headteacher. Statutory requirements are not met for ICT.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior managers monitor the work of departments, but are inconsistent in what they do as a result. The actions taken as a result of monitoring have not brought about the steady rise in results, which is happening nationally. This is unsatisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The quality of the accommodation has been improved by making good use of specific grants. Although the school did not spend all its available funds in the most recent accounting year, some departments are short of resources. Although day-to-day financial management is good, the lack of a thorough budget-setting process that involves options and evaluation means that this aspect is unsatisfactory.

The individual strengths and expertise of the senior management team and governing body have brought about the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, standards have not risen as they have nationally. There is a weakness in the way the school's systems for monitoring are acted upon and the priorities, which are established for allocating the budget. The principles of best value are not fully understood and applied.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• They like the amount of homework their child receives</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve well</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• The school helps their child to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the school works closely with them</li> <li>• The amount of information they receive about the progress their child makes</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with most of these views, but have concerns about aspects of the leadership and management of the school and elements of behaviour and personal development.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Our Lady's Catholic High School has 145 students in the sixth form. This is a considerable increase in numbers since the previous inspection. In 2002, half of the pupils in Year 11 continued into the sixth form. A few students joined the school from elsewhere. The school provides a wide range of subjects at AS and A2 level **as well as** vocational courses in business and health and social care.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Good progress has been made in dealing with the key issue from the last inspection by increasing student numbers and making the sixth form cost-effective. Students learn well and results are above average. Approximately 85 per cent of students continued from Year 12 to Year 13 in 2002. The sixth form caters well for students by providing a wide range of academic and vocational courses and the provision for personal development is good. There is a varied enrichment programme that is very well attended by students. Teaching in the sixth form is good in all subjects, except in art and design, where it is satisfactory. The popularity of some subjects, for example psychology, results in very large class sizes, whereas others, for example French and music, have very small numbers. Attendance is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

### Strengths

- Students achieve good results, especially in English, chemistry, health and social care and mathematics.
- Good progress has been made in securing the viability of the sixth form.
- Teaching is good overall with some examples of excellent teaching.
- The curriculum is varied, including an interesting enrichment programme offering good opportunities for all students.
- Attitudes are very good and students enjoy their studies.

### What could be improved

- Monitoring and evaluation of students' performance in the sixth form.
- Strategic management of the courses offered in the sixth form.
- The parity between sizes of groups.
- Accommodation and resources to support independent learning and students' personal development.
- Opportunities for students to express their views and participate in decision-making.

*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
English	<b>Good.</b> Results are good. Teaching is good overall and students achieve well in lessons. Literature study at GCSE prepares them well for advanced level work. Students are perceptive and mature.
Maths	<b>Good.</b> Results are good. Teaching is good overall and students make good progress in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic. Students display mature attitudes to the subject.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Results are good, reflecting above average progress from GCSE. Teaching is at least good with students responding well to the high expectations of their teachers.
Art and Design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A level results are below the national average, but have improved since the previous inspection. Very few students achieve the higher grades in either AS or A2 examination. Teaching is satisfactory.
Design Technology	<b>Good.</b> There is good teaching by specialist staff. Standards have been

	maintained broadly in line with the national average. Take-up of the subject is increasing and in response an AS Food Technology course has been introduced this year. Accommodation and resources for practical work are very good.
Health and Social Care	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve higher than expectations. They benefit from enlightened teaching and are very good at managing their own independent learning.
French	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students achieve average standards. Teaching is good. Students have positive attitudes to their studies, although they are reluctant to speak at times. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.
Geography	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Recent results show an improvement from a very low base, but only a few students reach the higher levels. Teaching is good. Fieldwork makes a significant contribution to students' achievement.
Psychology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students attain average standards. This is supported by good teaching that develops the students' awareness well. The provision of resources is unsatisfactory.

Other subjects were sampled. An excellent lesson was seen in ICT. Very good lessons were seen in drama, physical education, general studies and German and good lessons in music, physics and biology. Teaching in history was satisfactory.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students get good advice before they start their courses. There are regular reviews of students' progress during Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is good. Some students feel they are not given sufficient careers guidance beyond that relating to university entrance.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form.	Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The head of sixth form manages efficiently. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and generally has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form.

#### 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"> <li>• They enjoy being in the sixth form</li> <li>• Teachers are regularly available to help students</li> <li>• Students' work is marked regularly and they are given good oral feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers advice and information</li> <li>• Opportunities to express their views</li> <li>• Information on progress</li> </ul>

Students are positive about the sixth form and the range of opportunities it offers. They also appreciate the academic guidance and support they receive from their teachers. The strengths the students identify are well founded. There are regular reviews of students' progress during Years 12 and 13 with students setting themselves goals to achieve. The advice provided by the school regarding careers and opportunities beyond school is good, but some students feel there is limited information about careers beyond university entrance. The sixth form council is not meeting at present so there is limited chance for students to become involved and contribute to decision-making.

#### PART B: COMMENTARY

## HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

### The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils join the school at the end of Year 6 their overall attainment is below average. Results in the national tests taken by pupils aged 11 in 2001 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels is close to the average in each of the core subjects – English, mathematics and science. However, standardised testing done by the school in Year 7 shows that few pupils are in the top ability range, reflecting the presence in the city of selective schools. This has been the case since the previous inspection, though the number of pupils with special educational needs is rising.
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, results were average in comparison with all schools. The attainment of boys and girls is very similar, as seen in the gap between boys' and girls' attainment, which is smaller than is found nationally. Five years ago the school's results were above the national ones. While the national results over the last five years, and since the previous inspection, have been rising, the school's results have been falling. The result is that the gap between the school's and the national results has closed. English and mathematics results have fallen most sharply while the decline in science was halted in 2000, rising again in line with national results in 2001. In 2002, results continue to decline compared with nationally. Compared with the results of similar schools, (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) results are above average. These results are not altogether confirmed by assessments made by teachers because the results of assessments were lower than the test results in English, very similar in mathematics and matched almost exactly in science.
3. In the summer following the last inspection results in GCSE examinations were well above average. However, although national results have risen steadily, the school's results have remained much the same. By 2001, however, the school's average GCSE points score per pupil was still above the national average. The gap between boys' and girls' results is smaller than is found nationally. In comparison with similar schools, the school's results are well above average.
4. For 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher A\*-C grades was above average and the proportion of those gaining five or more passes across the full range of A\*-G was well above average. Compared with similar schools (using the free school meals indicator), the results were well above average on all counts. When compared with pupils' prior attainment in their National Curriculum tests at age 14, their 2001 GCSE results were below average for the average points score, well below average for five or more higher A\*-C grades and above average for the full range of A\*-G grades. This indicates that whilst the performance of lower-attaining pupils is positive, some higher attainers are not doing as well. There are fewer A and A\* grades than are found nationally and the school is aware of this. The school has set realistic targets based on prior attainment, which have been exceeded in 2000 and 2001. The most recent 2002 GCSE results show an increase in the five A\*-C grades and almost all pupils leave with at least one GCSE grade A\*-G.
5. GCSE results in subjects for 2001 varied considerably for grades A\*-C. They were significantly above average in mathematics, biology and design and technology. Results were above average in art, chemistry, physics and physical education, whilst those for combined science, drama and English literature were broadly average. Results in other subjects were below average and were significantly below in English language and French. However, almost all pupils are entered for French, which is not

the case in most other schools, and English language and literature are taught within the same amount of time that many other schools devote to language alone.

6. Overall, standards are average in work seen during the inspection, although achievement is good. Standards are particularly good in mathematics and in science in Years 10 and 11. Weakest subjects where standards are below average are geography and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and music in Years 7 to 9. Achievement in all these subjects is satisfactory.
7. Standards of numeracy are good. The pupils' skill in number allows them to develop their learning in a variety of subjects across the curriculum in:
  - science and design and technology, to collect and interpret data and for taking measurements;
  - geography, to use statistics in tables and graphs;
  - French and German, to tell the time, to learn the use of other currencies and for measurement, studying graphs and carrying out surveys;
  - ICT, where pupils with additional needs prepare spreadsheets and use simple formulae for converting currency.
8. The general level of literacy within the school is satisfactory. The extent to which pupils use their literacy skill is mixed, but opportunities occur in:
  - business studies where they debate socially contentious issues;
  - science where they use scientific terms;
  - art and design and technology where they take notes and annotate drawings.Not enough emphasis is given to developing language for pupils to raise their standard of literacy in history, geography, music and ICT.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

9. At the time of the inspection the school had approximately 15 per cent of the school population identified as having special educational needs, including statements. As there are now three stages, instead of five, under the new Code of Practice, it is not possible to compare this with the average size nationally. The school indicates that the number of pupils with special educational needs is rising and there is an increasing number with more pronounced needs. Inspection evidence supports this.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. They receive good levels of assistance in their classes and by occasional withdrawal from teaching by support staff. There is an emphasis on improving pupils' literacy, numeracy and work-study skills. Suitable targets are defined in individual education plans and pupils receive good levels of support to meet their social, emotional and behavioural needs arising from their learning difficulties. The progress made by gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The level of challenge in lessons does not always push them to do their best and this is reflected in the number of A and A\* grades in GCSE. The good progress of traveller children is due to the support they receive within the special needs department.
11. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. They are not excluded from the top sets where they keep pace with the learning, but where their language needs are not supported they do not progress as well as their peers. Pupils from the same country, who have been in the school longer, help with translating when a language support teacher is not present.

### **Sixth form**

12. Overall, students' attainment when they enter the sixth form has been below average. However, in 2002, very few Year 11 students left to go to other sixth forms, reflected in the now average ability intake. Given this starting point, students achieve above what might be expected, making good progress as they move through the sixth form. Results in examinations have improved and are average in most subjects. They reflect good achievement. The results of male students were better than female students in 2001. The pass rate per entry of the Year 13 students in 2001 was 82.5 per cent.
13. The average total points score per student rose in 2001 to match the national average. A high number of A-B grades produced an average points score, which was well above average in computer studies and economics and above average in general studies. Results in vocational business studies are also well above average. Conversely in art and design, mathematics and physics, a lower proportion of A-B grades resulted in an average points score well below average. Biology and chemistry were below average and average respectively. In all other subjects, there were too few students to make valid comparisons.
14. In 2002, there was an overall increase in the average points score, overall pass rate and percentage of A grades.
15. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards are above average and achievement is good. They are particularly good in mathematics, science and in ICT.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

16. Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Throughout the school, they are highly motivated and show a keen interest in their studies. They take part enthusiastically in lessons, work hard and concentrate well. Attitudes are consistently positive in some subjects such as physical education and science and most pupils throughout the school respond well to the lead set by staff. They display maturity and confidence. However, a few pupils, both boys and girls, do not have such a positive attitude to their work and on occasions during lessons the learning of the class is adversely affected. A few examples of this were seen during inspection throughout the school, but most were in Years 10 and 11. In one lesson, a few pupils set out to disrupt the lesson, displaying insolence and silliness, which made learning impossible. Some, but by no means all, of the less positive attitudes were seen during lessons where teaching was weaker and pupils lacked interest. In some lessons where accommodation is poor or overcrowded, for example in music, the irritation of pupils was evident and learning was less successful.
17. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is mostly good. Most pupils are courteous and respectful with a clear sense of right and wrong. Because the school works very hard to avoid excluding pupils permanently and to keep them in school, there have been no permanent exclusions in the last year. However, the number of pupils with fixed-term exclusions, both boys and girls equally, is very high, many involving aggressive or abusive behaviour and bullying.
18. When they are given the opportunity, pupils plan their work and study without supervision. In most lessons, they work well and co-operatively with each other. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds integrate well and there is no evidence of racial disharmony. They listen well to each other and to their teachers. Extra-curricular clubs are well attended. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes of school, for instance, through a school council. There are

plans to widen the 'house' system to enable pupils to voice their opinions, give them more responsibility and to contribute more fully to school life.

19. Attendance rates at the school have improved since the last inspection and are now close to those achieved nationally. The school has implemented measures to promote good attendance and to make sure that explanations are received for absence. This has resulted in a decrease in the rates of unexplained absence. Punctuality to school and to lessons is satisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

20. Students are generally positive in their views of the school and attitudes to their studies. Although only a small number of students returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, some responses highlighted criticisms of the pastoral support available in the sixth form. However, in discussions, most students were positive about the sixth form and would recommend it to others. They are especially appreciative of the support given by their subject teachers.
21. Students are hard working in lessons. In some subjects, for example art and design, chemistry, health and social care and mathematics, attitudes are described as very good and at times excellent. Students behave sensibly and can be relied upon to get on with their work. In Year 13, especially, they work independently and have clear views of their long-term goals. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and initiative, for example as prefects, sports captains and head boy and head girl. Their support for younger pupils as peer mentors is very valuable both to them and the pupils they help. They are learning valuable lessons in leadership and team-work through taking part in Young Enterprise. However, these opportunities are limited and some students are frustrated by the lack of structured opportunities to express their views.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

22. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 92 per cent, good or better in 70 per cent and very good or excellent in 25 per cent of the lessons seen. This is a higher profile than typical for a secondary school. Teaching has improved in quality since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. The best teaching is in Years 7 to 9 where five excellent lessons were observed. However, there was an amount of less than satisfactory teaching in every year group and in most subjects, but a disturbingly high proportion (15 per cent) in Year 10. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in art, history, mathematics and science.
23. The improvement in teaching can in part be attributed to the introduction of specific teaching methods in modern foreign languages, mathematics and science. Under the leadership of an assistant headteacher, a teaching and learning group has recently been established to look at best practice across a number of programmes such as the Key Stage 3 Strategies in literacy and numeracy. The inconsistency across subjects and years is caused by the fact that the work of the teaching and learning group has not properly begun to change practice and also by the inconsistency with which departments monitor teaching. As a result, the pockets of good, and indeed very good, practice are not being spread for the benefit of all pupils.
24. Pupils' gains in learning are good when teaching is lively and moves at a brisk pace. Where a range of activities are planned, pupils look at issues from different angles and increase their understanding. This was most noticeable in mathematics and modern foreign languages. This approach particularly suits boys without putting girls at a

disadvantage and accounts for the fact that boys are not as far behind girls as they are nationally.

25. Where teachers know their subject well they inspire pupils and show by example what they expect. They ask probing questions, such as the examples observed in science and geography, leading pupils to deeper understanding. Very good examples are also found in drama, business studies and physical education. Pupils were inspired to learn in many other lessons because the teacher could speak the language well, or demonstrate a procedure or method.
26. Pupils are helped to understand how well they are doing when teachers give praise and support it with indications of how the pupils can improve. This was particularly evident in English, mathematics, science and geography, especially lessons with special educational needs pupils.
27. In most subjects, relationships are good and help pupils to feel confident so that they learn well. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers have high expectations and give pupils challenging things to do. This is a strong feature of teaching in science, design and technology and in physical education where a low level of skill does not excuse pupils from knowing and applying the rules of the game. However, this level of challenge is not as strong in Years 10 and 11.
28. Good planning, where the aims of the lessons are clearly set out and activities are varied, helps pupils to understand the purpose of what they are doing and to join in readily with the lesson. Not all pupils are co-operative and want to learn. Where teachers recognise this and are firm and patient, even the most reluctant learners make progress.
29. However, where teaching is unsatisfactory it is mostly associated with a failure to grasp the attention of pupils at the beginning of the lesson and to keep them focused on their work. On the rare occasions when teaching was unsatisfactory in English, ICT and design and technology it was linked to the poor behaviour of a few pupils, who were not managed effectively and so disrupted the learning.
30. Lack of planning to build on previous learning and give pupils a clear aim for the lesson resulted in unsatisfactory lessons in ICT and geography. Learning is unsatisfactory when pupils are not involved in planning and reviewing their work in order to reinforce progress. Examples of lessons where pupils were not involved in these activities were seen in physical education, geography and ICT.
31. Unsatisfactory teaching is not confined to one year group or subject, although the highest number of lessons was in Year 10.
32. The teaching of literacy skills overall is unsatisfactory. While there are examples of good practice, such as:
  - words with specific relevance to the subject displayed in some mathematics classrooms;
  - using scientific phrases in chemistry and biology lessons, although the quality of worksheets does not encourage pupils to develop writing;
  - opportunities for speaking and listening through debate in business studies;
  - note-taking and annotation in art and design and technology, these are not brought together in a common approach.

For example:



- Literacy is underdeveloped in ICT and music, although there is some use of technical language;
  - There are too few opportunities in history or geography and this is holding back progress.
33. The teaching of numeracy is good. The mathematics department has provided training in the use of numeracy across the curriculum and produced a useful written guide including advice on how to teach certain topics. The aim is two fold: to establish a consistent approach and to identify areas where topics are being addressed in one subject to avoid duplicating the teaching. This was seen to work well in:
- science and design and technology to collect and interpret data and for taking measurements;
  - geography where pupils learn about development issues involving the study of statistics in tables and graphs;
  - French and German to tell the time and to learn the use of other currencies; for measurement and for studying graphs and carrying out surveys;
  - ICT in preparing spreadsheets and using simple formulae for converting currency.
34. Pupils, who do not speak English as their first language, are given additional support in lessons by two regular visiting staff. This support is either in lessons or as a separate lesson in English where it is effective in helping pupils to learn the English they need to understand their work. The school's co-ordinator recognises that a more structured approach is needed to accommodate the growing number of pupils. In modern foreign language lessons, the use of the foreign language helps them to be included in the lesson. In a science lesson, two new boys were helped by another pupil, who speaks their language, so that they could then cope with the chemistry, even though they found written English difficult.
35. The few traveller children, who were seen in school, play an equal role in lessons and are well supported by specialists.
36. Teachers modify their methods and resources for pupils with special educational needs by referring to their targets in individual education plans. There are good levels of assistance from support staff. The quality of the planning and teaching allows pupils with special educational needs to complete similar work as the pupils in the rest of the class. As a result of this effective support, together with the good levels of teaching they receive in class, pupils with special educational needs learn well alongside their fellow pupils. Pupils with more pronounced learning difficulties in literacy, numeracy and with their application to their studies are taught in small groups. Here, the very good teaching they receive from the learning support department allows these pupils to achieve very well.

### **Sixth form**

37. Teaching is good in the sixth form. In many subjects, there are examples of very good or excellent teaching. Teachers know their subject well and enthuse students, who respond with a level of maturity and independence expected of sixth formers. Planning and methods used are both good and appropriate for the level of work. In science, a tutorial approach works very well and leads students to independence. Similarly, students are developing good techniques for research and independent study in psychology. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed on the enrichment programme, but other enrichment lessons observed were very good or excellent.

38. Teachers have high expectations of their students and keep them informed of how well they are progressing. Having settled into the new courses teachers now have a more accurate view of the demands of advanced level requirements.

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

39. The school has planned the curriculum in the context of its status as a Catholic school. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 are satisfactory. Pupils are provided with equal access and opportunities to learn, except in the case of ICT where there is not enough curriculum time allowed to teach the full programme of study. As a result, the school does not use ICT to the full to support pupils' learning in all subjects because the use of computers is uneven across the years and subjects.
40. Appropriate time is allocated to all subjects of the curriculum. However, the fortnightly timetabling across the school means that some pupils have different teachers for the same subject so that staff see pupils once a fortnight. The spread of lessons across the fortnight is irregular and some classes have two lessons at different times on the same day. There is an inefficient use of the laboratories because there are frequently a number of them free and at other times three science lessons with only one laboratory available. The members of the senior management team, who have the responsibility for co-ordinating the curriculum, have not reviewed the effects of the current planning and organisation of the curriculum to determine its strengths and weaknesses or to consider ways to improve it.
41. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is satisfactory and all students are entered for GCSE examinations. The curriculum is influenced by the school's status as a Catholic high school and all pupils take religious education. In addition, they all have a broad range of subjects: English language and literature, mathematics, a modern foreign language, design and technology, physical education, and personal, social and health education as well as choices of humanities and arts subjects. An advantage for higher attainers is that they may choose separate physics, chemistry and biology instead of the double award in science.
42. Students, who have learning difficulties, are allowed to follow other forms of accreditation in a few subjects after consultation between the student, parents and the head of learning support. For example, the school is starting to provide a 'Club 2000'. At present, there are 64 similar clubs in the United Kingdom and others in process in New Zealand and Jamaica. The aim of this is to motivate and support young people, who are failing to meet their potential and who are disengaging from school. In attempting 15 challenges they are entered for the Bronze Youth Award. Success at this level can lead onto NVQ Level 1 courses.
43. The school places good emphasis on improving pupils' numeracy skills. Most heads of departments are aware of the need to prepare a numeracy policy and the mathematics department has given a strong lead in making sure that pupils have every opportunity to develop and apply their numerical skills appropriately. The school has been awarded a Best Practice Research Scholarship to investigate the value of the plenary session in the National Numeracy Strategy.
44. The strategies for teaching literacy skills in a broad range of subjects are unsatisfactory. The school has only recently appointed a literacy co-ordinator and there is as yet no forum for departmental representatives to meet and discuss methods of promoting literacy. The good work in promoting literacy in mathematics, science,

business studies, design and technology and art is not replicated across the rest of the curriculum.

45. The way that the school deals with different groups of pupils across the school is good. All pupils, including those with special education needs, travellers' children and pupils, who have English as an additional language, are well included in lessons and the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils, who good assessment procedures have identified as having more pronounced special educational needs, are withdrawn from some of the time they would spend studying a modern foreign language. They can still, though, study a foreign language. The very good teaching and levels of support they receive in these withdrawn groups are effective in developing their very good attitudes to their work and their learning of basic skills of literacy, numeracy and how to study. They talk highly of this provision and the opportunities to be full members of the school. Some of these pupils in the past would have been in special schools. The school has not adequately reviewed its policy for behaviour support and exclusion, as there are occasions when the actions it takes goes against its own principles of keeping pupils in class and in school.
46. The school makes good curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. Led by the very good management of the head of learning support, and supported by class teachers and support staff, the school writes individual education plans, which express pupils' needs well. These individual education plans are regularly reviewed with good levels of input from parents and specialists from agencies outside the school. The school is starting to use its good assessment procedures to identify pupils, who may be gifted and talented. It does not, however, take sufficient account of how their abilities might be sometimes expressed in subjects such as art and design, design and technology and music.
47. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities for pupils' personal development and for their social and health education, which is taught once a fortnight. Valuable use is made of outside speakers when specialist help is needed. However, the available curriculum time of 15 minutes in the morning for registration is not sufficiently structured across the school for pupils to have proper opportunities to discuss matters affecting their personal, social and health development.
48. The school has good links with its partner primary schools. There is a strong link in English through the National Literacy Strategy, which helps pupils to make the transition from primary to secondary school. The school works well in partnership with the university in the training of new teachers, which benefits the school because of the professional development given to teachers in mentoring university students. University links are further strengthened because the university makes its facilities, particularly the library, available to sixth form students, not only augmenting their own resources, but also offering a valuable introduction to university life.
49. The good quality of the school's provision for careers education and guidance, supported by the good links with the local careers service, allows pupils to receive good advice before they leave school. Careers information and guidance are provided in the personal and social education programme and through careers lessons in Years 9 and 10, but does not continue into Year 11. The county careers service gives individual advice to parents and pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11, who benefit from a programme that includes preparation for option choices. The knowledge of what they want to do is well improved through the good range of links the school has established with local industry and commerce for work experience placements.

50. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, in which an increasing number of pupils participate. There is a very good and wide range of:
- sporting events;
  - inter-school competitions;
  - swimming galas;
  - athletics competitions;
  - school choirs;
  - school band;
  - ensembles for woodwind and strings.
51. Drama plays a big role with rehearsals after school for dramatic productions in the drama studio. The school produces a major dramatic or theatrical production at least once a year and a Christmas concert or carol service. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to make visits, both within the local area and further afield, including trips to a number of European countries.
52. There are satisfactory links with the local community. Increasing use is made of the community to add to pupils' learning, which includes work experience. The school is actively involved with the police and other agencies in promoting drug education and members of the community contribute to the personal and social education programme.
53. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection the school has developed its mission statement, which is now prominently displayed around the school. However, there is no planned and co-ordinated approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school. As a result, teachers are not sufficiently aware of how their lessons can contribute to this aspect of curriculum provision and there is no shared policy for its planning, teaching and monitoring. The English department provides good opportunities for social and cultural development through a range of extra-curricular activities, including successful participation in the county poetry competition, public speaking competitions and visits to theatres.
54. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies, held once a week for each year group, make a useful contribution to the spiritual dimension, as does the weekly celebrating of the Mass. Religious, social and moral issues are also addressed. Pupils contribute to assemblies either by readings or by sixth form students performing their own musical compositions. During the inspection all assemblies met the legal requirement for collective worship. However, this was not the case in tutor time where the time was mostly used as a vehicle for administrative matters. The school provides time for reflection by ensuring that students in Years 10 or 11 and the sixth form take part in reflection days held at a residential college. There is still, however, little evidence of any planning in departments for spiritual development. The best examples of spiritual reflection were seen in sixth form lessons. For example in drama, students considered their performances as they prepared for assembly on the theme of world hunger. In food technology, students were shocked as they reflected on the effects of food poisoning within the food industry. However, insufficient use is made of the many opportunities in other subjects to develop this important aspect of pupils' development.
55. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school has a behaviour policy, but its implementation is inconsistent. The physical education department promotes fair play and adherence to rules; in music, pupils are trusted to work sensibly in groups at some distance from the music department. An excellent lesson in citizenship as part of religious education prompted strong and focused discussion regarding moral issues in

Haiti. Students articulated their feelings thoughtfully regarding racism and the gulf between rich and poor. There are other lessons where pupils can express their views, for example in English, geography and mathematics, but not all subjects give this opportunity in lessons.

56. Provision for social development is good. The school provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, for example, through the school councils. However, at present, these are limited to pupils in Years 7 to 9. Responsibility is given to older students through the school prefect system and peer listening scheme. Good collaboration was seen between pupils in practical lessons, for example in art and design, drama, music and physical education, where they work sensibly in pairs and small groups. Extra-curricular drama productions, which link with the nearby special school, help pupils to become more socially aware. There are picnic benches in the courtyards where pupils relax at lunchtime. Assemblies make a significant contribution to social development by addressing topics such as caring for each other and valuing differences.
57. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are few references to multicultural education in subject documentation and as a result, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity and richness of other cultures. An exception to this is in the art and music departments, where pupils study African art and music, along with South American art and Indian and Asian music.
58. The range of texts used by pupils in their drama lessons reflects a range of cultures. However, neither the history nor geography department makes sufficient use of cultural resources in the local area, apart from those needed by the requirements of the syllabus.

### **Sixth form**

59. Curricular provision is good for students in the 16 to 18 age range. The curriculum is based on a strong commitment to offer broad and flexible learning opportunities to meet students' wide-ranging learning requirements. The school has responded to requests from students by, for example, offering a food technology course at AS level. A good range of AS and A2 subjects are offered, together with a range of vocational courses that can be followed in multiples of units. Students also have the chance to re-sit GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. The entry requirement to the sixth form is relatively low, but this is an inclusive school and no student is refused entry to the sixth form because of special educational needs. The majority of students can study whatever subjects they wish, but timetable clashes make this very difficult for a small number, including those re-sitting English and mathematics at GCSE level. The desire to offer students as much choice as possible results in some very small or very large teaching groups. The quality of learning is sometimes impoverished as a result. Although the sixth form is now well established, the school has not done the work to make sure that everything it offers is viable. It is not efficient to continue to respond to all students' requests when this results in very small groups affecting the value for money, which the sixth form provides.
60. Students are provided with clear information about the range of subjects and courses available in the sixth form. Subject departments have spent considerable time developing, writing and reviewing course outlines and schemes of work in order to reflect the new national requirements. About half of Year 11 students continue into the sixth form and a small number join from other schools. Each option subject is delivered on a sliding time scale from seven to nine hours per fortnight depending on numbers in the group. This means that some students have very full timetables, others considerable free time.

61. There is a comprehensive enrichment programme where students can choose extra subjects at AS level or sporting and community service programmes. There is no structured work experience for students in Year 12. Many students do not wish to miss lessons in order to undertake placements and so miss out on a valuable experience. A varied personal and social education programme brings a variety of speakers and organisations into the sixth form. A recent visit from a member of parliament stimulated lively debate and understanding of government, locally and nationally. The school does not deliver key skills as a separate subject. A key-skills co-ordinator, who has a clear understanding of the relevance of the subject, has produced a logbook so students can provide evidence related to their individual subjects. This makes it possible for students to study key skills independently.
62. Students receive careers interviews and guidance, but the guidance is mainly linked to university applications with less emphasis on other career paths. There are limited links with partner institutions, although students of psychology and science make use of facilities at Lancaster University.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

63. The school's systems for making sure pupils have access to the appropriate support and guidance have been revised and mostly work well. Recent initiatives include a programme of mentoring in which pupils in all year groups have an individual timetabled meeting with their form tutor to discuss their work and deal with any problems they may be experiencing. In Year 7, tutors also use these sessions to identify any issues for pupils settling into the school. The school has also recently set up a support team for pupils involving people from many areas of the school's work with the aim of providing more structured systems to support pupils. Younger pupils make good use of a peer supporters group led by a team of sixth form students, directed and trained by two heads of year. This gives pupils the opportunity to talk to older students, who listen well to their concerns and direct them to appropriate support if they are unable to deal with the problem themselves. However, these schemes are relatively recent and a number of pupils expressed their concern that they do not always feel that adequate support is available to them. In one year group, there has been a high turnover of form teachers and a lack of continuity in pupil support. Heads of year are experienced, dedicated and skilful, but have extensive teaching commitments, which limit the time they have to provide pastoral support. The chaplaincy team provides a base in school where pupils can obtain help and advice. This support is sensitive, caring and a valuable contribution to pupils' support.
64. The recommendation of the last report to develop links between pastoral and academic staff has been addressed successfully and there are now good procedures to share information.
65. Systems to monitor attendance have been successfully introduced since the last inspection and have resulted in an increase in attendance rates and a reduction in the rate of unexplained absence and truancy. A member of the senior management team gets together with form tutors and the educational welfare service to identify quickly pupils whose level of attendance is causing concern. Administrative staff provide good support by following up absences with 'first day call' to parents. Registers are kept meticulously.
66. Although the school has clear procedures for dealing with and monitoring instances of misbehaviour, staff do not always use them consistently. Even when staff try to deal

with incidents of unacceptable behaviour in line with school policy, this is not always effective because relevant staff are not always available because of their teaching commitments. The school is beginning to analyse the data it keeps regarding poor behaviour to attempt to identify where the poor behaviour is mostly found.

67. Child protection procedures are good. Experienced staff follow local guidelines and have appropriate contact with supporting agencies. Although safe practices were observed in lessons and around school and appropriate risk assessments are in place, the registered inspector advised the school of a potential hazard in science laboratories and overcrowding in some classrooms.
68. Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of support in classes through the school's use of good assessment procedures. Test results, target setting and concerns expressed by class teachers are used to decide where extra support can be introduced. Assessment information is suitably used to group pupils according to their respective abilities.

### **Assessment**

69. The school has clear assessment management systems in place from Year 7 into the sixth form to make data available to all departments so that pupils' academic progress can be systematically monitored in conjunction with departmental marking and assessment. The school uses public and internal test and examination performance data to consider its achievements and set targets for improvement. The Year 6 national test data is used to band and set pupils on entry to the school and there is careful assessment to identify pupils with special educational needs. Those pupils for whom English is not their first language are identified and given some additional language support, but are not precluded from achieving in the higher sets in mathematics and science. The assessment system is now well managed and since the previous inspection the school has secured links to the pastoral system via the form tutors. This allows tutors to monitor and give effective academic support for pupils based upon assessment information from subject leaders. The system of records of achievement is well established and integrated in the whole process of assessment and reporting. Pupils are involved in developing their National Record of Achievement through planned opportunities in the personal and social education programme. The use of data to set school targets for improvement and individual targets for students at GCSE is in place for Year 11 students and is being developed for the Year 10. The use and interpretation of data and assessment by departments, whilst very good in some areas, is not fully developed and monitored by management across all areas of the curriculum.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

#### **Sixth form**

70. Students are given good advice prior to starting their sixth form courses and information about the curriculum is good. They have good contact with their tutors, seeing them daily. Students generally appreciate the support and guidance they receive from teachers, who make themselves available as often as possible. Although students are provided with impartial advice regarding choices about higher education, some pupils feel that insufficient guidance is available for those considering employment as their next step. There are regular reviews of students' progress during Years 12 and 13 with students setting themselves goals to achieve.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

71. Parents are supportive of the school and their views are positive in most aspects of the school's work. Almost all parents, who replied to the questionnaire or who were seen in school, feel that their children like school and are making good progress. They feel that teaching is good and teachers have high expectations. Although most parents believe that staff are approachable, some would like more information about their child's progress and feel that the school could work more closely with them. Most feel that behaviour is good and that the school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible.
72. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents, although there are occasions when the behaviour of some pupils is unacceptable. The school makes good efforts to work closely with parents and information about progress is satisfactory overall.
73. Parents are provided with adequate information about the school and its work. The prospectus contains all information required, although information about the school's provision for special educational needs is not sufficiently detailed. The annual governors' report to parents is comprehensive. Parents are kept up to date on events and educational issues through newsletters and meetings. The school has good contact with parents if they have any concerns about pupils' work or their behaviour. Parents are supportive of the school when problems arise and are kept fully informed by form tutors or heads of year, who then work with subject teachers when necessary. Planners are used well throughout the school as a means of communication between home and school.
74. Information on pupils' progress is mostly good. Parents are provided with interim progress reports and a consultation evening, which is well attended. An additional consultation evening for parents of Year 7 pupils early in the school year is useful and appreciated by parents. Annual written reports have been revised since the last inspection and provide good information in English, mathematics, and science. In other subjects, they vary in quality, being too general with little reference to the subject to which they relate, although there is good information about the curriculum covered and pupils' attitudes to their work.
75. The school has a successful Parent Teacher Association, which holds social and fundraising events, providing valuable resources and supporting the school in the recent bid for Sports College status.
76. Parents are well informed about the progress of their children with special educational needs through contact with teachers; at any time they wish and through at least twice-yearly reviews of individual education plans and the yearly reviews of statements.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

77. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior management team are satisfactory. Responding to local need and building on a successful physical education department they have raised a sufficient amount of sponsorship to complete their recent application for sports college status.
78. Response to the key issues raised in the last report has been satisfactory, but not sufficiently effective to maintain the comparative standards in public examinations reported at the time of the last inspection. Some training has taken place for heads of department, which has helped them to become more effective in analysing results and setting targets. There are, however, departments, for example geography and ICT, that do not have a complete scheme of work and there is little opportunity for departments to contribute to whole-school development planning. One of the assistant



headteachers has worked hard on developing a system for using assessment data at the end of Years 6, 9 and 11 to identify underachievement and set targets. This system is now used across the school and provides the essential link between pastoral and academic heads. Its use is beginning to arrest the decline in standards at the end of Year 9, which have fallen from being above average in 1996 to being average in 2001.

79. Teaching and learning have improved substantially and the impact of the teaching and learning group will give further impetus to consistent improvement. Good use has been made of specific grants and funding to improve resources and accommodation, especially computers, the library and the design and technology block.
80. The leadership and management of the school have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As individuals, members of the management team have a number of strengths, which have helped to put the school where it is in terms of achievement and its reputation in Lancaster. Most staff share a common sense of purpose, *Educating for Excellence in a Christian Environment*, and have taken steps to introduce systems to make the school more effective. During the important preparation for the bid for sports college status, routine duties were shared and the school is aware of the need now to redefine the respective roles and responsibilities of all the senior management team in order to bring parity and cohesion and reduce overlap.
81. Members of the governing body bring professionalism and expertise to their duties, which have benefited the school. They use their influence well within the Catholic family to improve the resourcing of the school. The aims and values of the school are firmly embedded in the Catholic faith and the governors play an important part in supporting the headteacher in promoting these.
82. The governing body is not fulfilling its statutory responsibility to provide for the teaching and experience of ICT in Years 7 to 11.
83. The headteacher meets heads of department annually to review examination results and to set targets for the coming year. Through his coaching they have become better equipped to undertake the review of their work and the responsibility for their department. Nevertheless, the dialogue between the headteacher and some other teachers in the school is not always a two-way process and they are sometimes frustrated at not having been listened to. The capacity to link strategic planning and financial management by departments is inhibited because the global sum given to departments does not always match the needs of the pupils and students.
84. One of the improvements that has been put in place is the system for monitoring pupils' academic progress through the school. This was a key issue from the last report and has been tackled well. Pastoral and academic heads work together to keep track of pupils' progress. The assistant headteacher responsible for this is aware that having analysed results, the next step will be to link pupils' performance with the teaching styles, which will bring about improvement. The capacity for further improvement is good.
85. The management of the curriculum is not effective enough and there are several problems with the present organisation. Some departments suffer because their staff have to be part-time owing to their commitments elsewhere in the school. The school operates a two-week timetable in order to fit everything in, but has not managed to plan it carefully enough. As a result, pupils suffer a lack of continuity because their classes are often shared between two teachers and are spread unevenly across the fortnight.

The effect of these arrangements has not been monitored to find out how they affect learning. There are examples of how good ideas are being developed and put into practice, but the Plan-Do-Review cycle is not being completed. All these problems are holding back pupils' progress.

86. The school budget is capably administered under the direction of the business manager. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to eliminate the deficit in the budget. At the same time, by successfully promoting the sixth form, a balance of spending against income has been achieved. However, money was unspent at the end of the last financial year even though some departments were short of learning resources. The business manager is aware of the problems created by using two systems of identification of expenditure under relevant headings and is taking steps to bring the governing body's information in line with what the local authority requires in order to keep a closer check on spending.
87. Good use has recently been made of specific grants to improve parts of the building, including the installation of a lift. The school has also taken advantage of the money available from the National Grid for Learning to install new computers, putting them in a strong position to give all pupils the required access to ICT.
88. The school does not fully understand the principles of 'best value'. Agreement has been reached with the local authority about contracting and tendering and a good deal was struck to install computer equipment based on competition, comparison and challenge. However, the application of these values, particularly consultation, is not applied to events other than financial.
89. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is the head of learning support, informs teachers and support staff of the pupils' needs very effectively. There is a very good team approach amongst staff that supports the overall good levels of provision for identified pupils. Funding for special educational needs is prudently and well used. Support staff are suitably trained. The monitoring and evaluation of provision and teaching by the learning support manager are carried out very well. The level of finance and resources for the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is too low. The present deployment of the existing nine support staff is very effective, but there are not enough of them to cover the whole curriculum. In some lessons, for example in geography, there are large numbers of pupils with special educational needs in class. Here, even though the teacher meets their needs well, the pupils need extra support. In their annual report to parents, the governing body report on the implementation of the policy for pupils with special educational needs, as they are required to, and indicate that access is available for the disabled.
90. There are sufficient and well-qualified teachers, who use their expertise well. There is a well-planned programme for the induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers, although because of the high number of part-time teachers, newly qualified teachers take on the extra task of form tutor in their first year. The governing body have approved the performance management policy and its implementation is satisfactory.
91. The strong teamwork between the head of special educational needs and learning support assistants means certain help is given where it is most needed to support learning. There is insufficient time for technician support in design technology, food technology and in science, where support is spread too thinly across the department.
92. The school has made considerable efforts to improve accommodation since the last report, but overall, it is unsatisfactory with poor conditions in several subject areas. The

buildings and health and safety committees of the governing body have been very active in addressing problems identified in the last report. In particular, the school now has a new design and technology block, refurbished science laboratories, full ramped access to each building, new lifts, and an improved library. The school also has an ongoing programme of accommodation improvement and refurbishment. Health and safety issues are also dealt with effectively.

93. However, the accommodation in several subject areas is unsatisfactory. The music rooms have no windows and are awkwardly shaped and gloomy. The hard surface area for physical education is old and in poor condition and the pitch area is too small. In geography, there is only one dedicated room for five teachers. The third art room has no sink and is small and inadequate. Large class sizes of over 30 are creating cramped and oppressive conditions in some of the smaller classrooms. Many classrooms, such as in mathematics, are shabby and in need of redecoration. There is no corporate approach to wall displays so they vary in quality from room-to-room. Externally, the picnic tables are well used by pupils, but litter spoils the appearance of the shrubbery and fields.
94. Overall, classroom and teaching resources are unsatisfactory with a level of budget allocation to departments, which is below average based on a formula funding arrangement. Only the design and technology area is very well resourced. Several subjects have inadequate resources:
- ceramic three-dimensional work in art is limited because a new heating installation prevents the use of the kiln in the winter months;
  - psychology is poorly resourced;
  - the music rooms are poorly equipped;
  - geography has no ICT equipment;
  - physical education is unable to meet its priorities due to a lack of resources;
  - the special educational needs department does not receive sufficient budget to enable the purchase of adequate resources.

Many departments do not have sufficient access to use computers either in support of pupils' work or to improve their key skills.

## **Sixth form**

95. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory. The head of sixth form works hard in the day-to-day administration of the sixth form. She meets regularly with the senior management team to discuss operational issues. However, at present, there is no clear structure of responsibilities for strategic planning. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are carried out by members of senior management, so in this respect, the role of the head of sixth form is limited.
96. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and generally has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form. They have contributed well to addressing the key issues from the previous inspection. Student numbers have risen significantly and the sixth form gives satisfactory value for money.
97. Overall, the accommodation in the sixth form is satisfactory. The sixth form block has recently been refurbished. The sixth form students have their own social area, but because they prefer not to use this area it has begun to look shabby and unkempt. Students can now enjoy the new design and technology facility and most subjects have satisfactory accommodation. However, as with the main school, certain subject areas

are poorly accommodated. Some teaching rooms and the common area in the sixth form block have a shabby and dirty appearance.

98. Overall, the provision of resources in the sixth form is satisfactory, although some subjects are unsatisfactorily resourced. In art, physical education, geography and music, the lack of good resources and equipment is limiting the quality and range of curriculum provision. The growth in numbers in psychology has not been matched with additional funds so is also poorly resourced. Although the library provides a quiet study area, there are insufficient computers to cope with the demands of an expanding sixth form.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to raise standards and improve educational provision, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Improve results at the end of Year 9 to return to a position above the national average by:

- Assessing pupils regularly in all subjects
- Continuing the very good work that has started in monitoring and analysing pupils' progress
- Developing strategies through which all subjects use information about pupils' performance to plan teaching
- Continuing the training of all staff in the use of assessment data (Paragraphs 2 and 69)

Reduce the amount of unsatisfactory teaching, especially in Year 10, and thereby decrease the incidence of unsatisfactory behaviour in class by:

- Establishing the work of the teaching and learning group so that good practice is spread to all teachers
- Monitoring the effect of teaching on learning to ensure all the needs of all pupils are met (Paragraph 22)

Improve the quality of the curriculum by:

- Implementing the statutory responsibility for ICT
- Developing strategies for teaching literacy by taking a whole-school approach to developing pupils' literacy skills
- Ensuring that the development of literacy is written into schemes of work in every subject (Paragraph 40)

Revise the systems for managing challenging behaviour in order to reduce exclusions and encourage pupils to be more responsible for the life of the school and for its ethos by:

- Ensuring that every member of staff consistently follows the behaviour policy
- Providing training for all staff in how to manage behaviour in order to effect good learning
- Developing strategies that are more in tune with the school's aims of *Educating for Excellence in a Christian Environment* (Paragraph 17)

Monitor all aspects of the work of the school and improve the action taken as a result by:

- Redefining the roles and responsibilities of members of the senior management team

- Creating job descriptions, which reflect individual strengths and share the workload evenly
- Being more consistent in the support that senior management provides for middle managers  
(Paragraphs 80 and 85)

Gain a greater degree of understanding of the principles of best value in order to make better use of available funds by:

- Organising professional development for the headteacher, senior management team and governing body
- Learning to review and challenge their own decisions by testing them against the principles of best value
- Making sure there are enough books and equipment throughout the school and increase the use of new technology
- Consulting all members of the school community more widely.  
(Paragraph 88)

In addition, the school should continue its programme of refurbishment in order to increase the accommodation to match the number of pupils and improve the quality of all to match the new and newly refurbished parts, especially in music.

The school was informed of specific health and safety issues.

### **Sixth form**

Improve the monitoring and evaluation of students' work by:

- Arranging regular review sessions between students and teachers
- Giving closer attention to the methods by which students evaluate their own performance  
(Paragraph 70)

Make sure the sixth form continues to be financially efficient by:

- planning the courses offered so that the sizes of groups and the lesson times allocated to subjects are more equal and timetable clashes are avoided
- continue to retain present pupils and attract new ones at the current level  
(Paragraph 96)

Develop students' personal development and independence by:

- Providing better accommodation and resources for private study and research
- Creating more opportunities to express their views, for instance, by re-instating the work of the school council.  
(Paragraph 21)

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

### ***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed

Years 7 –11

124

Sixth form

47

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

55

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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### Years 7 - 11

Number	4	27	56	27	9	1	0
Percentage	3	22	45	22	7	1	0

### Sixth form

Number	3	13	20	10	1	0	0
Percentage	6	28	43	21	2	0	0

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

## Information about the school's pupils

### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	941	145
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	161	6

### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	256	0

### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	71	118	189

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	51	51
	Girls	89	78	79
	Total	130	129	130
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (69)	68 (61)	69 (63)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (31)	34 (43)	31 (32)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (31)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	47	52
	Girls	79	80	79
	Total	116	127	131
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (67)	67 (63)	69 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (39)	39 (37)	31 (33)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	82	97	179

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	41	79	82
	Girls	55	93	96
	Total	96	172	178
Percentage of pupils achieving	School	54 (54)	96 (95)	99 (99)

the standard specified	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.5
	National	39

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	24	29	53
	Average point score per candidate	18 (n/a)	16.8 (n/a)	17.3 (n/a)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (n/a)	18 (n/a)	17.5 (n/a)

		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	24	29	53	4	3	7
	Average point score per candidate	15.7	15.6	15.6	13.5	12	12.9
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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	0	n/a
	National	n/a	80

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
911	132	0
	0	0
	0	0
	0	0
	0	0



Mixed – White and Asian		0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background		0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian		0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani		0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi		0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background		0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean		0	0
Black or Black British – African		0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background		0	0
Chinese		0	0
Any other ethnic group		0	0
No ethnic group recorded		0	0

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.24
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	529

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	25.81
Key Stage 4	21.61

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	2002
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	£
Total income	3133303
Total expenditure	3105935
Expenditure per pupil	2844
Balance brought forward from previous year	130052
Balance carried forward to next year	157420

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	28
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.55
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	1142
Number of questionnaires returned	437

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	55	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	58	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	55	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	52	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	29	63	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	44	20	4	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	47	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	45	20	1	7
The school is well led and managed.	35	51	5	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	58	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	49	8	3	11

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:

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good so that pupils understand quickly and share their ideas freely.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Assessment is good and helps pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve further.
- Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement:

- The behaviour of a minority of Year 10 students.
- The use of ICT.
- The library, which is inadequate.

99. In the 2001 national assessments in English for 14 year olds, standards were in line with the national average and there was little change in 2002. Given that most pupils have below-average standards on entering the school this represents good achievement. The proportion reaching the expected Level 5 or higher is average. Those attaining Level 6 or higher is below the national average. From 1998 to 2001, overall, results have been broadly average, with a slight dip in 2002. The number of students with lower abilities has increased though and last year about 80 per cent were below average according to the results of standardised assessments taken at the beginning of Year 7. Those few students, who come from ethnic minority backgrounds, achieve their potential and are included fully in learning because of good teaching. Girls do better than boys by the age of 14, but there is only a marginal difference in standards by the age of 16 years.
100. In the 2001 GCSE English examinations, the proportion of pupils reaching grade C or higher was broadly average. Standards have steadily improved in GCSE English literature for four years, but not in GCSE English. Girls attain as well as boys. Students make good progress and achieve well in both examinations relative to their attainments at the start of Year 7.
101. By the age of 14, students are confident speakers and listen attentively. Pupils pick out phrases and sentences from the text to support their opinions. They are articulate and respond to questions quickly with cogent reasons for their beliefs. Pupils keep listening and speaking log books and these useful records encourage them to evaluate their own progress.
102. Standards are average in speaking and listening by the age of 16 years. In Year 11, students analyse shrewdly the character of Billy Caspar in Hines' *A Kestrel for a Knave*, picking out relevant textual evidence appropriately. In a very good Year 11 lesson on character development in *Death of a Salesman*, students read well and showed they had a very good understanding of the complexity of Willy Lomax's character.

103. Standards in reading at the start of Year 7 are below average. Pupils make good progress and by the ages of 14 and 16 they are average, representing good achievement.
104. By the age of 14, pupils' writing skills are average. The accuracy and expression of higher-attaining pupils engage the reader's interest. Middle attainers lack the range of vocabulary, but they use paragraphs consistently and have reliable standards of spelling and punctuation. They write sensitively in poems about the seaside as in:  
"The sand sneaks through your toes  
A feel of sweet delight."
105. Higher-attaining Year 9 pupils describe effectively how tension is built up through short, snappy sentences and the judicious use of punctuation marks. By the age of 16, standards of writing are average, although occasionally pupils write very evocatively as in: 'Like waves carrying shells far out to sea, my doubts were washed away'. Pupils write essays analysing Shakespearean texts such as *The Merchant of Venice* or *Othello* and explaining what motivates characters such as Shylock or Iago. The more perceptive students write about Elizabethan bigotry and anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice*.
106. Pupils improve their writing through a structured process of drafting and redrafting. They demonstrate a good understanding of the underlying implications of literature. Pupils' writing covers a good range of genres. In the best, they handle and communicate ideas fluently and are able to support hypotheses with well-chosen quotations from the text. Most students only use ICT to a limited degree in their writing. Standards in punctuation, sentence construction and spelling are sound.
107. Students with special educational needs achieve well, as do lower-attaining students. Their speaking skills are average. They understand the main events of a plot and use a range of quotations to illustrate a point. Their writing is below average and has errors in spelling and punctuation. Most make good progress in writing longer pieces and try to organise their work into paragraphs.
108. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are good overall. Most pupils show maturity in evaluating their attainments, as well as the work of their peers, in the literature they study. They usually have good working relationships with their teachers and other students. A few students in Year 10 have unsatisfactory attitudes to learning and behave poorly in class. This impedes not only their progress, but also the rate of learning of other students.
109. Teaching is good overall and is very good in about a quarter of lessons. The main features of good teaching are very good subject knowledge, good relationships, first-class discipline, confidence, a sharp focus on the task, and thorough planning. Pupils are eager to learn from their mistakes and enjoy discussions of good quality because the teachers know and make clear exactly what they want them to learn. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge through informed questioning and have a thorough understanding of examination board requirements. Teachers also make lesson objectives explicit to focus pupils on the requirements of the course. Classes are managed well and most lessons are pacy and well timed. Teachers usually, but not always, use plenary sessions well to draw conclusions and establish what new understandings have been gained. When, rarely, plenary sessions are unproductive, it is because lessons have too much content and there is not enough time left to draw conclusions. The match of work set to the needs of individual students is usually good. Pupils learn well when teachers use humour, their lessons are more enjoyable and

learning is better as a result. In the rare instances of unsatisfactory teaching, it is because methods of encouraging students to behave well have not developed.

110. The English department is led and managed well. The department has a clear sense of its educational direction and this comes through clearly in its handbook, the schemes of work and in lessons. Departmental managers have responsibility for a wide range of areas, but too few powers of strategic decision-making. Schemes of work are good and take account of the needs of students, who come from a very broad range of backgrounds and abilities.

### **Literacy throughout the school**

111. The strategies for teaching literacy skills in a broad range of subjects are unsatisfactory. There are good practices in individual subjects, but they are not combined into a comprehensive policy, which can be used across the whole school. Standards are good in English, business studies and science, but are underdeveloped in other subjects. Key words are displayed in some mathematics classrooms and scientific phrases are used well in chemistry and biology lessons. In business studies, students have good opportunities for speaking and listening when they debate socially contentious issues. The lack of attention to literacy is holding back progress in some subjects, most notably history and geography. Literacy is underdeveloped in ICT and music, although there is some use of technical language.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching is good overall, and is very good in Years 7 to 9, motivating pupils to learn.
- There is a well-established work ethos.
- The relationships between pupils and teachers are strong.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The provision for information technology is unsatisfactory.
- The condition of the classroom decoration and storage space.
- Curriculum time for mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for the most able pupils to experience challenge.

112. Standards of attainment for pupils at age 14 are in line with the national average for all schools and above the national average for similar schools. Since the last inspection there has been a decline in the number of pupils attaining higher standards, but the 2002 results indicate that there was a marked improvement last year. The standard of attainment for pupils at age 16 has remained above average. The 2002 results are similar to previous years, but with a higher number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\*-B. In 2001, boys did better than girls at age 14 and at age 16, girls did better overall, but with more boys than girls achieving the highest grades.

113. The standard of attainment seen in lessons and in books of pupils in Years 7 to 9 reflects the improved 2002 test results. Pupils show increasing confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics and their work is well presented. As they proceed through the first three years, pupils extend their knowledge of number and algebra, shape, space and measure, and handling data. They became more and more competent at plotting and interpreting graphs, using positive and negative numbers. They learn how to solve algebraic equations and become adept at managing fractions,

decimals and percentages and at applying this knowledge to solve problems. One Year 9 class calculated compound interest on savings and in another, given a price, which included VAT, pupils worked out the original price. They use protractors to measure angles and do a variety of practical exercises to help them understand symmetry, scale and enlargement. Much of this work is proudly displayed.

114. The very good achievement during Years 7 to 9 is a result of very good teaching. All lessons begin with imaginative mental starters, which allow pupils to reinforce basic skills or to focus on the skills needed for the lesson. In one class, pupils used write-on/wipe-off boards to recall answers to questions on co-ordinates quickly. The teacher adjusted the questions to help pupils, who were struggling or, who needed challenge. A group of pupils with special needs played a game, which encouraged them to listen, read and calculate.
115. There were some good examples of the use of information technology to support learning. After a hand and finger exercise game to increase mental agility, for example, pupils in one class learned about ratios as the teacher moved characters about an interactive white screen and in a lesson on rounding numbers, calculators were used to demonstrate decimal places. The use of computers is generally extremely limited, though, because the department does not have enough access to the single computer suite and there are not enough computers in the classrooms.
116. Investigation work is a regular feature of the mathematics courses at all levels and pupils work very well in groups, sharing ideas and problem solving. However, the highest-attaining pupils are not given sufficient challenge to allow them to develop the breadth of their mathematics and the depth of their thinking.
117. The standard of Year 10 and 11 students' work seen is above the national average and by the age of 16 they have covered all the topics of the GCSE syllabus and are sufficiently prepared for the examination. The higher attainers solve quadratic equations, create graphs from equations and interpret graphs to create equations and to solve problems.
118. Overall, teaching is at least good and of a higher standard than at the last inspection. This results in pupils' good progress. Teachers plan well, use a variety of teaching styles according to the needs of the students and they continue to start every lesson with a mental starter to prepare pupils for the lesson and to help their understanding. In one Year 10 class, students studying curves used their bodies to show how curves changed shape according to changes made in equations called out by the teacher. The teachers are skilled in explaining new concepts, but do not always challenge the most able students. One teacher effectively explained the properties of the angles of polygons, but missed the opportunity of allowing the students to discover the properties themselves through investigation.
119. All the teachers plan, record and assess progress as an on-going process. The standard of marking ranges from satisfactory to excellent. When it is excellent, the teachers add comments of encouragement and advice. The teachers are excellent role models, being calm, kindly and conscientious. In response, the pupils and students are respectful, work hard and make good progress.
120. The leadership and management of the mathematics department are very good and teamwork is well established. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted for pupils aged 11 to 14 and GCSE courses at three levels for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. The school offers catch-up programmes and skilled assistants help-lower attaining pupils to develop their learning. At present, the number of lessons time tabled for

GCSE mathematics is below the national average and so these students do not have the same opportunity as most students for success in mathematics at this level. They are further disadvantaged because of the limited access to computers.

121. The subject improvement plan is thorough and addresses most priorities for development. However, at present, there is no time-plan for the staff performance management or staff development programmes, including the monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons and the head of department does not have sufficient time to pursue these important functions.
122. Being in a poor state of decoration, the classrooms do not create an inspiring learning environment. There is also insufficient storage space for books and equipment.

### **Numeracy throughout the school**

123. The pupils' skills in number are good and allow them to improve their learning in a variety of subjects across the curriculum.
124. In science and design and technology, the pupils use numeracy skills to collect and interpret data and to take measurements. In geography, pupils study statistics in the form of tables and graphs. In French and German lessons, pupils use their skills in number to tell the time or to learn the use of other currencies and also for measurement and for studying graphs and carrying out surveys. In information technology, pupils with special educational needs prepare spreadsheets and use simple formulae to convert currency.
125. Most heads of departments are aware of the need to prepare a numeracy policy. The mathematics department has already provided training in the use of numeracy across the curriculum and it has produced a useful written guide including advice on how to teach certain topics. The aim is two-fold: to establish a consistent approach and to identify areas where topics are being addressed in one subject to avoid duplicating the teaching.
126. Although the mathematics departments' initiative is at an early stage of development, it is proving to be effective in ensuring that pupils have every opportunity to develop their numerical skills and that their skills are applied appropriately.

### **SCIENCE**

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

#### **Strengths:**

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Assessment is accurate and is used to modify the curriculum.
- The good working relationships between pupils and teachers give pupils' confidence to both ask and answer questions.
- Demanding work sets high expectations for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Good emphasis on practical work underpins the understanding of scientific principles.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Marking to give more help and guidance.
- The science curriculum, which is fragmented in Years 8 and 9.

127. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2001 and well above average when compared to similar schools. The trend had been slightly downwards, but 2002 results and observations in class show that this decline has been reversed. This is due to the leadership of a new head of department introducing new teaching schemes and a system of assessment that helps pupils focus on their learning. Teaching is consistently good and by the end of Year 9 pupils reach national average levels. This represents good progress as standards on entry to the school are below average. Science results are better than those attained in mathematics and English. Boys and girls reach similar standards. In Years 8 and 9, teaching physics, chemistry and biology separately with different teachers and with a two week teaching cycle produces a very fragmented experience for some pupils. ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning. Numeracy skills are good, but pupils have few opportunities to write extended answers or descriptions. The department has plans to remedy this, but, currently, they do not have enough access to a suite of computers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
128. GCSE results were above average in 2001 and have increased again in 2002. All pupils normally attain an A\* to G grade in a science subject. Pupils do better in science than in their other subjects. Boys' results are very slightly better than those of girls. These good standards are confirmed in the analysis of pupils' files and in classroom observations. Teaching is consistently good and teachers produce demanding lessons, but the diet tends to be prescriptive. Very good learning only occurs where there is a variety of learning activities and pupils are fully engaged in the lesson. For example, in a lesson where pupils were seen to be having difficulty with the theory of transformers, their interest and learning improved rapidly when the teacher provided an insightful demonstration that pupils could relate to. There is a good emphasis on practical investigations to help understanding of scientific principles. The curriculum is fully covered with no weaknesses. High-attaining pupils obtain the highest GCSE grades and make good progress. They can explain sensitivity in plants, and predict the products of electrolysis. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from being organised in groups with similar ability. The appropriateness of the work and the individual attention given ensures that they make good progress. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but they do not consistently use written comments to help pupils in areas of weakness. Pupils rarely have the opportunity to use computers to develop their learning further or to present their work. Literacy skills are better developed in Years 10 and 11 where pupils use correct scientific vocabulary in their extended writing. Numeracy skills are well used to collect and interpret information and data.
129. Teaching and learning are consistently good in all years. There are no significant weaknesses in the teaching of the biology, chemistry, physics and investigative areas of the curriculum. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teaching has improved since the previous report. Lessons are well prepared and pupils are regularly assessed. The more successful lessons have a lively introduction, a variety of learning activities and regular checks of understanding. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and learning takes place at a lively pace. In the less exciting lessons, pupils complete more worksheets, rarely plan their own tables of results and are not given opportunities to report back to the rest of the class. Relationships are good and pupils have the confidence to ask or answer questions without fear of failure. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ask the probing questions that deepen understanding.
130. The department is purposefully led and well managed. Departmental meetings are used constructively to monitor the curriculum, staff development and assessment. The head of department does not have sufficient time to monitor and evaluate classroom



teaching. Consequently, there are inconsistencies and good practice is not fully shared. Assessment is good and is used to develop the curriculum. Science subjects are increasingly popular choices for students in the sixth form. The hard working technicians support a department that places great importance on practical exercises. The amount of technician help is less than that expected in a department offering three advanced level sciences.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- GCSE results are improving.
- All abilities are catered for.
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils in lessons.

### Areas for improvement:

- Standards of drawing and amount of three-dimensional work.
- The use of art vocabulary and art-making materials.
- Accommodation in one art room.
- Use of ICT.

131. In 2001, teachers' assessments in Year 9 showed the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 5 to be well below average. There was, however, an improvement in 2002, when slightly more achieved the expected level, but that is still well below average. Boys are improving their performance in relation to girls.
132. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 are below the national average. The quality of observational drawing is below average and there is insufficient improvement in drawing standard from Years 7 to 9. Colour and graphical work is around the national average. Sketchbooks are used well and often contain good colour work, especially when students are developing ideas and techniques based on the work of other artists. Three-dimensional experience is limited, but projects seen involving mask making and the use of card to produce wall reliefs were of a good standard. Pupils have a limited art vocabulary. However, they have an above-average knowledge and understanding of the work of a range of artists and are competent in applying new techniques to their own work, particularly painting.
133. GCSE results have improved since the last report and recently moved above the national average. In 2000 and 2001, 74 per cent of pupils achieved a grade A\*-C against a national average of around 66 per cent. In 2002, however, the figure fell to 61 per cent, although there is no national comparison available yet. The gap in performance between boys and girls is narrower than the national average.
134. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 matched the GCSE results in 2002 in that much work was of an average standard. Standards of drawing, however, remain below average. Some above-average colour graphical work showed good use of colour, composition and graphical skills. Sketchbooks show personal response and are used well for experimenting with different media, colour work and research into the work of famous artists.
135. The standard of teaching in all years is at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and syllabus requirements. Lessons have clear objectives and are sensibly structured to cater for pupils of all abilities. Teachers

prepare good-quality resources for each lesson and a well-stocked library of books on famous artists is well used for illustration. Teachers do not demonstrate drawing technique and the development of good composition enough. There is also not enough opportunity provided for pupils to talk and develop their art vocabulary. Pupils do not use ICT either for research or for making art and three-dimensional work is limited in all years. Pupils are keen and prepared to learn and are attentive and well behaved in lessons.

136. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There are regular team meetings and progress has been made against the issues identified in the departmental development plan. The head of department is aware of the need for further development. There is a commitment to continuous improvement within the confines of limited resources. Teachers attend appropriate in-service training to develop their teaching skills and keep up to date with syllabus requirements.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths:

- The contribution made to citizenship development by religious education is excellent.
- Many pupils are voluntarily involved in supporting charities.
- The link with a local special school provides many opportunities for pupils to show care and understanding towards others.

### Areas for improvement:

- The lack of an effective school council limits pupils' understanding of democratic principles and practices.
- Not enough work has been done to develop ways in which the subject is assessed and reported to parents.
- The school has not looked sufficiently at the way it works with pupils at a whole-school level to see how it might do things differently to meet the three elements of citizenship teaching.

137. It is not possible to comment on the standards pupils reach at the end of Year 9 or Year 11 because there was not enough evidence available to support such a judgement. During the inspection, there were no personal, social and health education lessons and this is where the school feels that most of its citizenship is taught. No other inspectors reported examples of citizenship in other subjects.

138. However, one lesson was observed in religious education. A small Year 11 group of pupils studying for the certificate of achievement in religious education, showed a very good level of personal and group responsibility in the way they prepared for and responded to a visiting speaker. This was exemplary in the way it contributed to the citizenship education of the pupils. Pupils had prepared for a visit from the Bishop of Haiti and for an hour questioned him about the country, its people and the conditions in which they live. Through working together and reflecting on the issue of rich and poor, they increased their understanding of the complexities faced by developing countries and what might be an appropriate Christian response to these.

139. The content of the personal, social and health education course fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The documentation, however, lacks guidance on teaching and learning strategies that would promote active citizenship. Some examples used to explore contemporary issues are dated and more up-to-date case

studies would be more relevant to pupils. For example, using Adolf Hitler to introduce genetic engineering is not as relevant as using the more immediate issues raised daily in the media.

140. The school has completed a thorough audit of where subjects already contribute to citizenship education, or could in the future. In history and religious education, there are many such opportunities identified. Although all subjects have completed this audit, there is no systematic monitoring to make sure that what is intended to be happening for all pupils is happening in practice. It is particularly sad that the school council is not seen as an effective body for showing pupils how they can take collective responsibility and influence their lives. Year 10 pupils, in particular, feel that they are not listened to and this contributes to their feeling of unhappiness about aspects of their life at school. The school is particularly strong on its commitment to supporting many different charities and each year has been asked to identify its particular charity. Not all years have involved pupils in this decision making.
141. At a practical level, the school is doing well in what it provides through personal, social and health education and religious education. The contribution from other subjects is developing. However, there has not been enough questioning at a whole-school level about how, in all that it offers, the school can promote the three elements of citizenship. These are developing informed and active citizens, developing the skills of enquiry and communication and developing the skills of participation and responsible action.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

- Standards in public examinations are above average.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is good.
- Teaching throughout all year groups is good.
- Assessment and the use of data target the improvement of individual pupils.
- The use of ICT and the quality of accommodation and resources support learning are good.

### Areas for improvement:

- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The time available for technician support for food lessons in particular.
- The size of some teaching groups to reduce overcrowding.

142. Teachers' assessments for Year 9 in 2001 show the number of pupils attaining at the expected Level 5 to be in line with the national average. This level was sustained in 2002. There are, however, fewer pupils achieving at the higher levels than nationally.
143. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, boys attained well above the national average in the higher A\*-C grades. Girls attained above the national average. Students taking design and technology achieved over a grade better on average than they did in other subjects taken at the same time. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of boys and girls attaining the higher grades fell slightly, but their average points score was similar to 2001, indicating good achievement. Overall, standards across the full range of materials have been maintained above the national average over the past three years.
144. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards were average. By the end of Year 9, pupils handle tools and materials with skill. They develop their ideas confidently. They

use notes, diagrams and illustration techniques skilfully to develop their ideas. They work effectively with a range of materials, including textiles, food and electronics, to create well-crafted products. Teaching allows the development of knowledge and making skills alongside the design process and this builds pupils' confidence. The range of work is sometimes constrained by the structure of the set tasks that do not fully challenge the highest attainers. Pupils behave well in the great majority of lessons and develop positive relationships and good attitudes to design and technology, which help with their learning. In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to take part in discussions and develop their literacy skills through the use of technical language and written work. Pupils use computers well for their written evaluations and to design and develop their products.

145. Pupils' achievements in relation to their standards at the start of Year 7 are good. They achieve well across a range of materials and practical tasks in Years 7 to 9 as a result of the good specialist teaching. The task-based approach in particular helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.
146. The strengths in standards are in graphics, resistant materials and food. These standards are achieved because the specialist teaching is predominantly good across the year groups and is very supportive of all pupils. The improvements in resources and accommodation allow pupils to study the full range of materials and processes and regularly use ICT.
147. Standards are sustained in Years 10 and 11 with good achievement and above average standards at GCSE. Most lessons are characterised by good relationships, though a few students have poor personal control and at times disrupt lessons. Students follow their chosen area of study and build effectively on their practical skills and knowledge from earlier years. Boys, in particular, achieve very well in relation to their abilities. Students are encouraged to work more independently and many use computers to support the development of their coursework. Good facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture ensure that pupils develop their skills in this area. The specialist teaching is frequently good and sometimes very good. The use of tracking sheets for project work helps staff to monitor and inform students of the progress they make. Assessment and practical advice during lessons are good and help all pupils understand how to improve their practical work.
148. Teaching is good in all years and supports the development of knowledge and making skills alongside the design process, thus, building pupils' confidence. Good relationships were evident where students with English as their second language worked as a group and helped one another make progress with their electronics work.
149. Leadership and management of the department are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. After a period of some staffing changes there is now a strong specialist team in place. Working relationships are good and focused on achieving and maintaining high standards. ICT resources are very good and well located and used by teachers to support learning in all areas. The development of the curriculum in the light of school and national initiatives has been good and guarantees curriculum requirements are fully met. There is no formal lesson observation to support and monitor the development of teaching and learning. The new accommodation block built since the last inspection provides a very good environment for teaching and learning, but with the increase in student numbers there is pressure on space and some groups have to be taught in non-specialist rooms. Opportunities are constrained in some lessons because of the lack of learning support assistants for large numbers of pupils with special needs. There is insufficient technician support, particularly for practical subjects.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths:

- GCSE examination results have improved since the last inspection.
- Coursework for Years 10 and 11 is well organised and challenging.
- Teamwork and relationships within the department are very good.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

### Areas for improvement:

- The incomplete schemes of work.
- Timetable arrangements and curriculum time.
- Accommodation and provision of essential equipment.
- Opportunities for using ICT in lessons.

150. In the 2001 teacher assessments, the proportion of pupils, who reached the expected Level 5 or above, was slightly above average. At the end of Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection are average in relation to national standards. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Girls achieve higher standards than boys, but the difference is less than the national picture. Pupils' progress is inconsistent during their first three years in the school. In Years 7 and 8, the amount of time allotted for geography is below the recommended level so that there are very few opportunities for pupils to explore topics in depth. In Year 8, learning is disrupted even more. The fact that less time is available is compounded in this year by timetable arrangements that divide more than half of the classes unevenly between two teachers, resulting in many practical difficulties and the disruption of pupils' understanding of the unity of the subject. The department makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs in all years so that these pupils make at least satisfactory progress.
151. Pupils enter the school with a limited amount of background knowledge in geography. In a good lesson in Year 7, pupils made rapid strides in transferring their theoretical map-reading skills to actual examples, thoroughly enjoying the well-planned activities that allowed them to share their understanding with each other. By Year 9, they have extended their grasp of essential numerical skills, although they lack confidence in drawing graphs and in interpreting the results. There are few opportunities for practising writing in paragraphs and many pupils have difficulty in presenting their work accurately. Access to ICT facilities is very limited, so that progress in using computers for research and investigation is restricted.
152. Results in the GCSE examination have improved since the last inspection, approaching the national average in 2001 for both girls and boys. This improving trend, within a smaller group of students, was continued in last summer's examination. Although there are no national figures for comparison yet, these results were well above the previous national average.
153. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen during the inspection are below average in relation to national standards. Overall, the achievement of students is satisfactory. There are several reasons for the discrepancy between standards seen in Years 10 and 11 and those achieved in the recent examination results. The prior attainment of students, who have currently opted for geography, is lower than in the previous two years. Unsatisfactory behaviour and a lack of commitment by some students in Year 11 reduce their progress in lessons. In contrast, last year's group used their initiative to

complete very good coursework, which made a significant contribution to their final examination grades. The department is beginning to make good use of occasional opportunities for dividing the one large group in each year in order to target the needs of individual students. However, some lessons do not provide sufficient challenge and variety, particularly for higher-attaining students, to enable them to extend their learning. The department has developed some very good resources for lower-attaining pupils that enable them to understand complex processes. For example, students in Year 10 consolidated their knowledge of river features very well by using large-scale diagrams, accurate definitions and photographs of real examples. Pupils, who do not speak English as their first language, have access to the same learning as others because teachers are aware of their individual needs.

154. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen in which pupils did not learn enough because previous work was repeated and there were no opportunities for students to discuss the topic. An increase in the number of specialist teachers has brought a wider variety of successful teaching styles into lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, but there are too few learning assistants to support activities in large classes with a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Under these conditions, the achievement of all pupils is restricted. An experienced team of teachers shares expertise and ideas freely. However, teachers are frequently working in non-specialist rooms without basic equipment or sufficient textbooks. This makes it difficult to bring current aspects of the subject alive, to extend pupils' spatial awareness and to stimulate interest in the world beyond their local environment.

155. The leadership and the management of the department, and progress since the last inspection, are satisfactory. Schemes of work do not give enough detail on the planned provision of learning opportunities such as literacy and numeracy. Assessment procedures are now well established, but they are not related to national levels that show pupils how well they are achieving in relation to all pupils, or how to improve the quality of their work.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths:

- Teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs, using targets in the individual education plans, are good.

### Areas for improvement:

- Achievement of all pupils, especially higher attainers.
- The use of ICT in the normal course of teaching.

156. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that standards are average with girls doing better than boys. This level was sustained in 2002.

157. The evidence from inspection is that standards are average and achievement is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Their knowledge and understanding are secure. Pupils in Year 7 know who the main personalities are in the Roman history they study and pupils in Year 9 have a clear understanding of the reasons for the beginning of the First World War. However, they do not evaluate information and draw conclusions for themselves, a quality, which characterises higher levels of attainment.

158. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the proportion of 16 year-olds gaining the higher A\*-C grades was below average compared with national figures, a falling trend from above average in 1998. Boys' and girls' results are fairly equal. In 2002, the number of students at the higher grades increased substantially and while there are no national comparison figures available yet, this can be regarded as a significant improvement on the previous three years. There is a close correlation between the assessments at the end of Year 9 and the examination results for GCSE. The higher levels seen in 2002 can be traced back to the above average grades when the pupils were assessed two years before.
159. Because they are less well able to make reasoned comparisons or to present arguments, only a small number of pupils reach the highest grade of A\*. They are able to retell and recount, for example, the progress of changes, but are less practised at making deductions and drawing their own conclusions. Because ICT is not included in practice or planning, opportunities for development of personal research and learning are held back. Achievement is, therefore, only satisfactory.
160. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to the staff, who use their individual education plans to ensure that they make good progress to their targets.
161. Teaching is satisfactory. Where there is a brisk pace maintained by frequent open and penetrating questions, as in a Year 7 lesson on the Romans, pupils made good progress in developing their understanding. However, there is not enough challenge for pupils in top sets, so there are few higher grades obtained in GCSE by the small number of pupils, who did well in assessments in Year 9. Lesson planning builds on earlier learning and teachers use simple resources, such as worksheets, video clips and board work, well.
162. Information about the progress of pupils is available for teachers to consult, but is not shared on a regular basis with pupils so that they know how to raise their own standards to the next level of attainment. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding in lessons thoroughly enough to help pupils make better progress. The spiritual aspects of history are not well developed because few opportunities are given for pupils to explore the different effects of change, such as those of the agricultural revolution, on the different social groups in the rural community, and morality of the changes. Whilst the vocabulary needed for history is taught, development of longer pieces of writing and speaking and listening skills are less well practised.
163. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, with adequate policies on teaching and learning, including citizenship. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Routine meetings and collective policy making with all, who teach history are presently difficult because the history teachers have other school responsibilities, throwing a heavy load on the head of department. The use of ICT is severely underdeveloped and none was seen during the course of the inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- There is a strong level of care for pupils with special educational needs and a range of stimulating materials, which are delivered with support from learning support assistants to meet pupil needs.

- The day-to-day monitoring of pupil performance, with support and advice for improvement, is helping pupils develop and consolidate new skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Meeting statutory requirements for ICT across the curriculum.
- Teaching and learning styles in ICT.

164. Overall, standards of attainment are satisfactory.

165. In 2001, Year 9 pupils reached an average level of attainment according to assessments done by teachers. Boys did considerably better than girls. In 2002, more pupils were judged to be reaching the expected level. However, the evidence from inspection, which indicated that attainment is below average, suggests that the school's judgement is too generous.

166. The number of students attaining GCSE A\*-C grades has fallen since the last inspection and in 2001, attainment was below the national average, although overall A\*-G grades were above. However, attainment at GCSE is slightly above average when compared with other subjects in school and pupils have achieved higher results than expected, compared with their attainment on entry to the school. In 2002, results were very similar.

167. Due to the unsatisfactory timetabling arrangements, pupils in Years 8 and 9 are given only half the recommended teaching time in one lesson every two weeks and overall progress is slow. However, in these lessons, Year 8 pupils continue to develop their word-processing skills and in Year 9, pupils make very good progress in creating a database. A group of able pupils in Year 7 has alternate lessons using different computer rooms and, thus, different software and they, therefore, have a different teaching programme on alternate weeks. Although pupils make good progress during lessons, the learning process on their basic software skills is disrupted and their overall progress is slower than expected. In Year 7, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They achieve above expectations for their ability when with strong support they create a spreadsheet and insert formulae for calculations.

168. In half the lessons observed in Years 10 and 11, students make very good progress. They use trial and error to develop ideas, to combine text, graphics and colour to present attractive business cards or web sites. Girls are more adventurous and imaginative, they are thorough in the evaluation their work and are achieving high-quality outcomes. The majority of boys work hard on design work, but a small minority of less able boys waste time researching images on the Internet without implementing them into designs. In the remainder of lessons, attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. Students are still developing their basic skills of word processing and some lack knowledge of "find and replace" techniques to make editing easier. In database coursework, students use hypothetical situations without proper research into a video rental and a car salesroom and where the research lacks depth this leads to low levels of understanding of database applications in business.

169. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the very good teaching in the majority of lessons develops knowledge and skills and motivates pupils. Teachers have had to adapt their approach in response to the timetable. The most effective lessons are well planned and pupils know exactly what they have to do. Lessons start with demonstrations of software, new techniques are clearly explained and there are opportunities for pupils to practise and build up expertise. Individual performance is monitored closely and guidance helps good progress in learning new skills. Teaching of spreadsheets to pupils with



special educational needs in Year 7 is very good. Resources have been developed to meet their specific needs and pupils also benefit from the high-level support from learning support assistants and an extra teacher. Teachers share excellent subject knowledge of databases with a more able group of Year 7 pupils, whose learning accelerates via a range of carefully-planned activities.

170. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very inconsistent and ranges from being either very good to unsatisfactory. In half of the lessons, a range of very good teaching styles is used to motivate and provide opportunities for students to learn new skills. Teaching is well planned, there are clear learning objectives and targeted questions involve all students in the recall of learning. There is strong support for all students, including those with special educational needs, and in one lesson, an individual tutorial session was used successfully to re-motivate two students whose interest waned. Strong subject knowledge and positive relationships build student confidence and as a result, they sustain their efforts during the lesson. Unsatisfactory teaching lacks structure and students with low level ICT skills are not challenged sufficiently. As an example, students continuing with coursework over several weeks are not clear about specific learning activities for the lesson, resulting in time wasting and insufficient progress. There is a lack of strategies to re-engage students, who exhibit poor behaviour. In several lessons, there was no review to consolidate learning. Some student coursework from the previous Year 10 is still unmarked due to changes in staffing, so students are not aware of how well they are doing or what they have to do to improve.
171. After recent staffing changes, there is a new, knowledgeable and enthusiastic ICT co-ordinator, who is also acting head of department. She has made a good start in monitoring teaching and developing strategies for raising attainment. Through the revision of schemes of work, the requirements of the national ICT strategy for Years 7-9 are being brought in line. The vision for ICT within the school is evolving with the support of senior management and the governors have committed funding for the immediate replacement of obsolete computers.
172. There has not been enough progress in curriculum provision since the last inspection. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the requirements of the statutory curriculum are met, but there is not enough time for pupils to make satisfactory progress over the three years. Many pupils opt to take GCSE ICT, but students, who do not take the option, lack a separate lesson, which holds back their ICT capability. The current arrangement for an extra lesson within English and mathematics is not happening due to lack of time. The use of ICT by subjects across the curriculum continues to be a weakness, although there is good access to computers in lessons in design technology, business studies and vocational subjects. Many teachers have now completed their ICT training, financed by the New Opportunities Fund, and are keen to use their experience to improve teaching and learning, but they have insufficient access to computers.
173. The provision of ICT resources is unsatisfactory. Only three of the four main computer rooms are up-to-date and have access to the Internet. Subjects have uneven access to reliable, up-to-date computers, but a well-qualified network manager makes up for some of the deficiencies by giving good support. There are three interactive whiteboards in the school, which are used well in several subjects, but, overall, there is a lack of resources, for example of digital cameras and scanners.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:
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- Teachers have very good subject knowledge in both French and German.
- Accelerated learning courses are improving standards.
- New setting arrangements allow courses to be matched to need.
- Stable staffing and a strong team spirit.
- Use of foreign language is generally well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Raising standards at Key Stage 4.
- Monitoring teaching styles and learning needs.
- Use of information technology.
- Promoting independent learning.

174. At the end of Year 9, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. However, GCSE results in both French and German are below the national average.

175. The achievement of pupils during Years 7, 8 and 9 as observed during inspection is satisfactory. This improvement is due to more favourable setting arrangements, very good teacher knowledge and use of French and German in the classroom. High expectations and challenge, combined with the department's practical use of assessment information, allow achievable targets to be set.

176. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language learn well in language lessons, although there is room for a more formalised scheme of monitoring the needs of these pupils.

177. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall, with some very good practice being observed and some unsatisfactory. Pupils learn best in lessons where the teachers make extensive use of the foreign language and motivate and challenge their learners to do the same. Relationships are very good throughout the department. Teachers share targets with pupils. Pupils have real contact with native speakers through well-supported trips to France and Germany and the deployment of a German assistant in school. Where teaching is less satisfactory, pupils are not challenged to extend their knowledge and skills. Some teachers use French and German inconsistently in the classroom, or use too much English, thus, depriving the pupils of maximum learning opportunities. Pace is occasionally too slow for the learners' needs and when the lesson is too teacher-centred, pupils drift off task. Poor behaviour occasionally contributes to unsatisfactory learning. The department has not addressed boys' learning in particular.

178. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The head of department knows her staff well and ensures that strategic planning, funding and the importance of sharing and developing good teaching styles are high on the department's priorities. There is still further scope for developing the monitoring of departmental practice across all staff and years.

## MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Pupils enjoy music.
- Teachers make good efforts to overcome practical difficulties in order to provide worthwhile musical experiences.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- The quality of accommodation.
- The provision of tuned and untuned percussion instruments.
- Sufficient and appropriate ICT equipment to support learning for all pupils.
- The use of assessment to monitor and track pupils' progress.

179. At the end of Year 9, standards are below expectations in relation to national standards. A small number of higher-attaining pupils, mostly girls, achieve above expectations. This discrepancy between boys and girls is shown in teachers' assessments of work at the age of 14 years. These assessments, however, are consistently over-generous and are not reflected in the work seen in lessons during the inspection. The higher-attaining pupils, at the age of 14, can notate their work and understand how to improvise melodies and layer rhythms. This was clearly seen where a small group of Year 9 pupils composed a piece using interlocking rhythms, played on traditional African drums. The players listened carefully to each other all the time and made suggestions for improvement. Their progress in this lesson was good. For the majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those with special educational needs, their progress in lessons is hampered by the lack of suitable resources and the cramped and unsuitable accommodation, which is too small for the numbers of pupils. The occasional inappropriate behaviour caused by the crowding is one reason why progress is less than expected.
180. Only a small number of students entered GCSE examination in 2002, with boys and girls achieving equally. The percentage of students achieving A\*-C grades has increased over the last three years, although few students achieve the higher grades. Performing skills among students in Year 10 are very low, lacking fluency, expression and rhythmic awareness. This has been recognised by the department and performing skills have generally improved by Year 11, despite some immature and negative attitudes shown by some girls. Pupils in Year 11 have good awareness of melodic composition. This is demonstrated in a rondo composition for woodwind quartet that develops short motives and phrases between the different instruments. Other pieces have more simple melodies and harmonies written for a variety of ensembles.
181. Teaching and learning is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The variety of teaching styles is seriously hampered by the accommodation and size of teaching groups in Years 7 to 9. However, teachers' expectations are high, despite not always finding the right way to keep lower-attaining pupils engaged in their lessons. Too often pupils are not sufficiently involved in learning, for example, when the teachers review previous lessons rather than involving pupils. The teachers have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject. They use personal knowledge of musical repertoire in their lessons. An example of good teaching was seen when students' performances were evaluated orally by the teacher then used as further teaching points to improve the group's performance of a popular song. Students enjoyed the lesson and left humming the tunes.
182. The head of department has recently been appointed and is beginning to evaluate and prioritise developments. At present, the day-to-day management is satisfactory. Despite the recent introduction of two computers for the department, there is insufficient ICT equipment for pupils' use. There has been an increase in extra-curricular activities with a separate boys' choir enjoying singing together and also as part of the main school choir. Recently, the choir took part in a prestigious event with Granada Television as part of their Sunday programmes in the Cathedral. There are plans to increase opportunities for students to perform on a regular basis in school and

within the local community. A new system of assessment is being introduced, together with planning to embrace whole-school initiatives such as literacy and citizenship. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Some issues have been addressed, but a lack of rigorous monitoring from line managers means that several issues are unresolved.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- Pupils do well on GCSE examination courses.
- Teaching is good or very good in nearly all lessons.
- Pupils, particularly boys, are keen and enthusiastic.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The department benefits from very good leadership and a strong team of teachers.

### Areas for improvement:

- Timetabling arrangements result in too many different teachers teaching groups and some pupils only have PE lessons once a fortnight.
- Outdoor accommodation is very limited, of poor quality and pupils leave too much litter around.
- Reports to parents do not contain enough specific information about how well pupils are doing in the subject.

183. In 2001, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. In 2002, they were below. This is because teachers are not absolutely clear about how they will assess pupils against the National Curriculum levels. In all lessons, pupils' practical skills were better than their ability to make decisions and choices and to evaluate their work and the work of others. The lessons seen during the inspection were mainly with lower-band pupils, but the standard of their work was average in relation to national standards. The work of older pupils was above average. This is because teaching is very good and pupils are generally keen to join in. Pupils' achievements, in relation to what they can do when they join the school, are good. The department has worked hard to improve since the previous inspection, but some of the issues not addressed are whole-school issues. The school has been awarded the silver *Sportsmark* award.

184. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average. In 2002, they declined, but were in line with the school's results. Standards of work seen in Year 11 GCSE lessons are broadly average and in line with predicted grades. In all years, talented pupils gain representative honours at district and county level. There is no difference in the standards or the achievements between boys and girls.

185. Teaching is good overall and in nearly half of the lessons observed it was very good. All teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and examination course requirements. They are perceptive and accurate in their observations of pupils and are able to provide very helpful advice on how they can improve. Most teachers provide a variety of activities that maintain pupils' motivation and enthusiasm. In the best lessons, these activities are closely linked to the learning objectives. Most teachers are very clear in their instructions and explanations, which means that pupils can quickly get on with their learning. Teachers have high expectations that, despite some low levels of skills, pupils would learn at a level appropriate to their age. A good example

was in a Year 10 netball lesson where, although the skill level was not high, pupils were still expected to know the rules, to develop tactical play and to find their own strategies for receiving a centre pass. Although the introduction to most lessons is good, there is not enough emphasis on extending pupils' understanding of why and how we prepare for physical activity. Teachers plan well for pupils with special educational needs and work well with learning support assistants. There is not enough account taken of the language needs of pupils, who have not yet learnt to speak English and who are new to this country. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to speak and listen and encourage the use of technical language. All teachers have high standards and the way they present themselves provides excellent role-models for pupils.

186. Pupils are willing participants in lessons, but boys are more enthusiastic than girls, particularly in Years 9 and 10. Relationships between pupils are always good, as is behaviour. Both boys and girls show maturity when asked to plan and lead activities. Lower attainers on the GCSE course do not always complete work. Many pupils are keen to participate in extra-curricular activities and it is to the credit of them and the school that so many teams take part in local competitions.
187. The leadership of the department is very good. There is a strong sense of team work and a shared vision of what the department wants to provide and achieve for its pupils. Teachers' willingness to provide opportunities for pupils outside of lessons and to make links with the community is having a very positive impact on pupils' participation in sport. The management and organisation of the department are very good and all pupils and teachers know exactly what is happening, when and where. However, there are not enough opportunities for teachers to share the good practice that exists in the different sports. The two-week timetable results in too many classes having different teachers. Some groups have all their physical education lessons in one week and none the next. The changing rooms are too small when large groups of pupils come for their lesson. Outdoor accommodation is unsatisfactory – the all-weather area is very difficult to play on when it rains and the football pitch is only two thirds of the size of a full pitch. Litter remains an issue from the previous inspection and the field is accessible to the public where some walk their dogs. There are just about enough resources for teaching because the department tries to repair equipment where it can. Because money is allocated on the basis of a formula it is not related to the department's priorities. Reports, completed as required by school policy, do not provide enough subject-specific information to parents. The department is doing a good job in difficult circumstances.

## DRAMA

Drama was sampled during the inspection. It is taught in all year groups, except Year 9, and courses are run for GCSE drama and advanced level theatre studies.

The overall provision for drama is **good**.

### Strengths:

- Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards are good and improving.

- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Students are given many opportunities to make their own decisions about character and performance and they gain maturity as a result.
- The drama studio is a useful, but isolated, working space.

Areas for improvement:

- The department lacks a specialised classroom space.
- Students have insufficient access to ICT in the drama studio and other resources are rather basic.

188. Standards are average by the age of 14 and pupils achieve well. Standards are above average by the age of 16 and students' achievement is good. In the 2001 GCSE drama examination, the proportion of students gaining grade C or higher was above average and results were even better in 2002. GCSE results have shown a dramatic and consistent improvement since 1998. Students are knowledgeable about drama skills and incorporate them into their performances. They have a growing understanding of the impact of projection, gesture and body language. In Year 11, students have average standards in speaking, but their overall standards of performance are good.

189. Students' attitudes are very good. They get on well with each other and with their teacher.

190. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are planned with a very clear idea about what the students need to learn and the skills they need to develop. Overall, drama is a successful subject. Its success is directly attributable to the skill, experience, high standards, enthusiasm and commitment of the drama staff.

### **Other courses**

191. Vocational courses in business studies and leisure and tourism were sampled, both in Year 10. In business education, students responded well to the teacher and reached an average level of attainment. However, in leisure and tourism, despite the teacher's efforts, very little learning took place because of the very poor attitudes of the students. Analysis of their work shows this to be untypical.

## **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 teaching and learning in the school.

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

### **GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
French	1	100	78	0	13	1	1.7

### **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
Mathematics	14	57	87	14	43	2.9	5.8
Chemistry	7	86	90	43	43	5.4	5.9
Biology	16	75	88	19	34	3.5	5.2
Physics	11	55	88	18	40	3.1	5.7
Design and technology	4	100	91	0	30	4.5	5.4
Business	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14.4	10.5
Computer studies	27	96	86	37	23	6.4	4.6
Health and social care	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	10.8
Art and design	8	100	96	13	46	4.8	6.6
Music	1	100	93	0	35	4	5.7
Geography	6	83	92	17	38	4	5.7
History	2	100	88	0	35	3	5.5
Psychology	10	50	87	10	34	2.2	5.3
English	18	89	92	22	30	4.4	5.3
French	3	67	89	33	38	4	5.6
German	4	75	91	25	40	4	5.8

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

#### **Mathematics**

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

Strengths:
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- Teaching is good in both year groups.
- Teacher-student relationships are strong.

Areas for improvement:

- Access to computers.

192. The standards of attainment at the end of 2001 were well below the national average, with males doing better than females. Apart from 2000, when results matched the national average, results have remained below average since the last inspection. However, the 2002 results present a much better picture with all the pupils gaining an A-level grade between A and D and almost half gaining grades A or B.
193. The standard of attainment seen in lessons and in students' books is good. One group of students beginning their A level study of mathematics has revised early differentiation and are now looking at gradients and parallel lines and are using their knowledge of differentiation to solve problems such as calculating gradients. Another group of students are studying statistics. In both groups, students display their ability to deal with abstract mathematics. In a final-year class, the dialogue between the teacher and the students illustrates their familiarity with the language of mathematics and their higher-level thinking skills.
194. The standard of teaching is good overall and the teachers are skilled in eliciting the students' logical thought processes. This has resulted in students making good progress. The relationship between teachers and students is mature. The teachers are very knowledgeable and clearly enjoy sharing their love of mathematics with the students. Students are aware of their present standard of attainment and have set themselves target grades.
195. Some groups are taught by more than one teacher, but this seems to work well because of the teachers' close teamwork. The students are happy with the arrangement, which has not adversely affected their progress. The use of information technology for teaching and learning is limited.
196. A group of students re-taking GCSE are following a well-structured revision plan and each student is expected to improve his/her grade.

## Chemistry

197. The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled. Two lessons, one biology and one physics, were observed and the teaching was assessed as good in both. Year 12 biology students are making good progress from GCSE and can explain the production of emulsions. Year 13 physics students carry out accurate calculations related to the efficiency of machines. Analysis of students' files shows that the curriculum in physics and biology is fully covered and that students are achieving in line with expectations.

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



**Strengths:**

- Good relationships promote in-depth discussions and understanding.
- Practical skills and techniques are of a high-level.
- Students have been trained as independent learners.
- Students are given demanding work.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables probing questioning.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Computers are not used widely enough for presentation or analysis of data.
- Some independent work in students' files is left unmarked.

198. The average points score for students in 2001 was close to the national average. Results for 2002 show a marked increase above this level and have improved from the previous report. In 2002, all students achieved an A level pass grade, with nearly two-thirds obtaining the highest grades, A or B. Students generally achieve beyond what could be expected when their prior GCSE results are taken into consideration. High-attaining students achieve the highest grades. Observations in class and the analysis of students' files confirm these high standards. Students in Year 13 can carry out sophisticated investigations involving chemical analysis techniques and demonstrate very high standards of practical skills. They can also apply their mathematical skills when carrying out calculations on ionic products. There is no difference in the quality and quantity produced by male and female students. Students in Year 12 are already making good progress beyond GCSE and can explain the differences between the different types of chemical bonds.

199. Teaching is good overall and some of it is excellent. Lessons are structured and well planned. Features of the lessons are the focus and pace. All teachers place a high demand on students to think for themselves. Students respond to the teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations and, in consequence, learning is rapid and understanding secure. Regular assessment and questioning in the classroom are of high quality and reflect the teachers' good subject knowledge. Students do not use computers to interpret or present their findings. Students are set demanding targets and benefit from knowing the precise learning objectives. Visits to university science departments and the ready availability of teaching staff for support guarantee that interest and pace of learning are maintained.

200. Scrutiny of coursework and files shows that students carry out research and learning confidently and effectively. Students write most of their own notes, which greatly extends their understanding. Homework and tests are marked in depth, but some independently produced work is left unmarked. Files are well organised and maintained.

201. Students form good working relationships with each other and their teachers. This gives them the confidence to exchange ideas freely and be ready to learn from their mistakes. Students are willing workers, show maturity in their attitudes to their work and respond readily to their teachers. They are being fully prepared for the next step in their education.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on design and technology.

### **Design and Technology**

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

**Strengths:**

- A level results are broadly in line with the national average and achievement is good.
- The match of specialist staff to courses makes for good teaching.
- Students have positive attitudes and take-up rates are increasing.
- The progress made by students in food technology is good.
- Accommodation and resources for practical work are very good.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The resources and textbooks to support learning on the product design course.
- The organisation of teaching time to avoid split teaching groups.

202. The GCE A level examination results in 2001 for the four students, who took the examination, show a slight decline on the previous year and this trend was continued in 2002. Standards are broadly average, but the small entry number makes accurate comparisons with the national average unreliable. Over the last three years, there has been a decline in the average points score of students year on year. Numbers taking the subject had also been falling, but increased in 2002 and there has been very good take-up of courses this year.

203. A-level results in 2002 represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' prior attainment, though there are no higher grades. Male students did better than females. In the 2002 AS examination, the majority of students, both male and female, did better than expected given their GCSE results, showing good achievement.

204. Standards of work for the current Year 13 students are average in relation to course expectations. Most students have satisfactory design skills and demonstrate that they understand a range of materials and processes. They use their understanding and their research skills to analyse a range of products and develop their own work. Teachers use their good specialist knowledge well in their lesson planning. Students develop their knowledge of a range of methods alongside the development of their coursework. For example, in one lesson, a short task to develop skills and a clear demonstration of the use of the mortising machine by the teacher allowed students to develop a new skill. Students make use of computers to develop and present their work, but more advanced computer-aided drawing skills are uneven.

205. Standards in Year 12 for AS product design are below average for this stage in the course. The pressures upon department time and the structure of the sixth form timetable mean that the teaching of the group is split between four staff. Although there is a secure system of monitoring by staff, the fragmented structure has impacted on the continuity of the learning so that students have made slower progress than expected. Their understanding of product analysis methodology has not developed sufficiently and the fact that students do not have a course textbook each hinders independent learning. On the other hand, students studying AS food technology are in a teaching group that is shared between two staff. They have made very good progress with their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson about the function of bacteria in food, the teacher developed the class discussion very well using good specialist knowledge and examples to emphasise and expand upon important points, checking understanding through questioning. Students responded positively and made good contributions to the discussion. Students have positive attitudes and feel well supported, which helps their learning. Most develop very good levels of confidence and independence in their work.

206. The leadership and management of design and technology are strong and the range of specialist staff skills to support the courses is good. There is a clear focus on improving standards. Examination performance is carefully analysed and targets set in relation to past achievement and students. Food teachers have undergone training on new course requirements and standards, which allows them to give accurate advice to students on what and how to improve their work. The department has a flexible entry policy and is responsive to students' needs: the range of opportunity this year has improved by offering food technology in addition to product design. Since the time of the previous inspection, there have been major improvements to accommodation. The subject is popular with rising numbers of students choosing it. The department is aware that resources in the form of books and other materials need developing to support the increasing demands of the AS and A2 design courses.

## ICT

207. Advanced level computer studies is a popular course and a newly introduced computer literacy course in the enrichment programme provides good curriculum opportunities for students to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Teaching is very good and standards are above average.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

208. The inspection did not focus specifically on subjects in this area, but two advanced level physical education lessons were observed. The work of two A2 students was looked at in detail. Three activities in the enrichment programme for Years 12 and 13, that take place every Wednesday afternoon, were observed. Attainment is broadly average. Students are keen and interested in their work. Teaching in the sixth form is good and there is very good teaching in the enrichment programme.

## Health and Social Care

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

### Strengths:

- The majority of students achieve higher results than their prior attainment predicted.
- Formal class teaching and individual tutorials establish excellent relationships and build students' confidence, enabling them to make very good progress.
- Standards of marking are very good. Students benefit from positive encouragement and clear guidance for improvement.
- Students take advantage of arrangements to research and experience the real world of health and social care.

### Areas for improvement:

- There are not enough textbooks for each student to have a personal copy and thus, regular access to theoretical information.

209. Students have a range of options in health and social care. In Years 12 and 13, students can select either a one-year or a two-year course leading to the single award or double award. In Year 13, students may also take the 3-unit AS course to broaden their subject base.

210. In 2001, one student gained a distinction in advanced level GNVQ health and social care by the end of the course. Three students, who did not complete the whole award by the end of the course, continued to complete their work after leaving school; one attained a distinction and two a pass. Attainment is well above other schools and above expectations for students, who often start the course with lower prior attainment than in other courses. In 2002, the majority of students taking the new AVCE course

attained higher than predictions based on prior attainment. At AS level, attainment is in line with expectations.

211. In lessons, both Year 12 and 13 students are developing strong personal views on discrimination. They take part in class discussions and carry out primary research in the local area and use the World Wide Web. Work folders are well organised and many students use a word processor to improve the presentation of their work, terminology is used well and students deal with sensitive issues well. In some units, there is too much description and lack of reasoned argument, which limits achievement to E grade. Students are keen to discuss their work and act immediately on guidance for improvement. They are knowledgeable about assessment criteria and set themselves high personal targets to re-submit work in order to raise grades. Students take responsibility for the completion of their units in a mature way and independent learning skills are well developed.
212. The quality of teaching is very good. There is a good mix of formal class teaching to introduce new topics on legislation in the care sector, as well as individual tutorial sessions, and this allows students of all abilities to make very good progress and build confidence. Marking of portfolio work for individual units is comprehensive; students know what they have achieved and what they can do to improve. Action planning has been developed to support students to meet deadlines, which are monitored regularly by teachers.
213. Leadership and management of health and social care are very good and there is a good working relationship between teachers, who manage shared units. There are insufficient textbooks for students to have a personal copy of a course textbook, although there is a small range of books available within the department. Access to computers and the Internet is good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

214. The focus was on art and design, but drama and music were also sampled. Drama results at AS and A level are average and have been for a number of years. Students respond well to good teaching and display a range of skills in performance. One lesson was observed.

### **Art and design**

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

#### Strengths:

- Standards are improving.
- Students' work has individuality.
- Students' knowledge of the work of other artists is good.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Access to the latest ICT.

- A more systematic approach to skill development, focused on improving the quality of drawing for a range of purposes.
- Lessons to include more opportunity for discussion, with an emphasis on development of art language and terminology.
- Extended opportunities for three-dimensional art.

215. Results at A level have improved since the last report. This improvement is mainly due to an increase in the percentage of students gaining a grade C. Results at A level have improved since the last report. This improvement is mainly due to an increase in the percentage of students gaining a grade C. The numbers achieving the higher A and B grades have consistently been well below the national average. There is a significant improvement in 2002 with all students achieving a pass grade. Results at AS Level in 2002 improved from 2001, with a higher percentage of students achieving a grade B or C and all students achieving a pass grade. However, as with A level, there is a noticeable absence of students achieving the highest grade.

216. In Years 12 and 13, the work seen was of average or below average standard. The level of skill in drawing is below average and undermines the quality of finished artwork. Painting technique and the use of colour are of average standard. Students have an above-average knowledge of a wide range of famous artists and much of the good work seen is inspired by techniques and approaches used by other artists. The level of personal response and individuality of work produced is good. There is good use of sketchbooks where colour work is above average in some cases. Students have a limited art vocabulary and are a little reticent in talking about their work.

217. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers show sound knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the new syllabuses. They display satisfactory artistic skill in supporting students with their work, usually on an individual basis, with new techniques introduced appropriately. There was constant illustrative reference made to a range of appropriate artists using good-quality colour reproductions. This clearly inspires and helps students make progress. There is, however, a lack of whole-class demonstration and not enough emphasis placed on improving drawing skills. Opportunity to produce three-dimensional art is very limited. However, students enjoy the work and the relaxed art room atmosphere and demonstrate a good attitude, attentiveness and commitment in all lessons seen.

218. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The sixth form teachers maximise their own teaching strengths and constitute a good team. They have regular team meetings focused on improving both the teaching and quality of resources used, in response to syllabus requirements. Staff are aware of the deficiencies in resources and work hard to make best use of a limited budget. They regularly attend in-service training and the head of department is currently helping to organise a regional conference for art teachers on ICT.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, but history was also sampled. Teaching is satisfactory and students attain and achieve well.

### Geography

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

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Fieldwork makes a good contribution to students' learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of work from small groups of students are below average.
- Accurate, extended writing is underdeveloped.
- Schemes of work for the AS and the A2 courses are incomplete.

219. Results in A level examinations have been well below the national average for the past three years, particularly at the higher grades, although very small group sizes reduces the significance of comparisons. This situation is unchanged since the last inspection. The AS results this summer showed a slight improvement. The department operates a flexible entry policy for this subject, encouraging students from either year and with a wide range of prior attainment to join the course if they wish. Most students, who begin to study geography in Year 12, continue to do so into Year 13.
220. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. They are higher in the current Year 12 than in Year 13, reflecting the higher prior attainment and motivation of students in this year. Although teaching and learning are good, achievement overall is only satisfactory because some students in Year 13 do not attend regularly or complete all their assignments.
221. Students in Year 12 show very positive attitudes in their lessons and are keen to explore and debate geographical issues. In a good lesson on tectonic plate boundaries, they used their own research to extend their knowledge of volcanic activity in the required depth and detail. These students concentrate well and, although they are in the early stages of their sixth form careers, they are already developing good study skills. Written work shows that they can respond satisfactorily to structured questions, but have only just begun to improve the quality of their written answers by including more than the basic information. There was very little opportunity to see students in Year 13 or to examine their work. Half of this very small group was absent and those that were in school did not have any completed, marked work with them. The teacher's records showed that there was a patchy record of completion of work set. Although students could respond in general terms in the one lesson observed, they lacked detailed knowledge and a quick recall of previous learning. So far they have not had enough practice in writing accurate, essay-style answers. However, they have gained considerable benefit from local and residential fieldwork experiences giving them the confidence to complete their own investigative studies. They also have a reasonable understanding of their own performance in the modules of work completed last year and are prepared to re-take some papers in order to improve their results.
222. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good, resources are well prepared and very supportive relationships give students every encouragement to succeed. Work is marked regularly, giving students a clear indication of the standard they have achieved. Some opportunities are missed for including recent examples of geographical events in lessons and for requiring students to take responsibility for acquiring their own up-to-date information in illustration of the syllabus themes.
223. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a shared desire to raise the profile of geography in the main school in order to secure the survival of this subject in the sixth form. Teachers collaborate very well in lesson-

planning and in the division of responsibilities within the syllabus. However, detailed schemes of work, tailored to local circumstances and to the needs of students in this school, have not yet been produced.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were English and French. German was sampled.

### English

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

#### Strengths:

- Standards of attainment are above average and students achieve well.
- Overall, teaching is good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject. As a result, students understand quickly and share their ideas freely.
- Students are prepared well for sixth form study by a good grounding at GCSE.
- Students feel respected and know that teachers value their views.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Accommodation. English classrooms are small and shabby and noise from other rooms and corridors distract students from learning.

224. Results in GCE A level examinations have improved steadily for the last four years and were well above average in 2001. All students, who took the examination, gained at least a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was above average. Many students do well in English because they have been prepared well at GCSE and they are taught well. Most complete the AS level course and are prepared well to embark on the A2 course in Year 13. Girls tend to do a little better than boys. The standards of work of current students are above average by the age of 18 years. Most students achieve well. This is due to a good mix of skilled teaching coupled with well-motivated learning. Those students, who are more able do well, are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Students are able to examine poems by contemporary poets and compare the underlying concepts with their own beliefs in an insightful way.

225. Most students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing. When students speak in class discussions, others listen respectfully and carefully. In a very good Year 13 poetry lesson, students were increasingly confident in their analysis of each stanza, making reference to *exotic* imagery. They took part in thoughtful discussions, which explored the poem's meanings very perceptively. They were confident enough to cross-question their teacher in order to add depth to their understanding. Boys take a little longer than girls to engage in discussion, but when they do, their contributions are valuable and add richness to the group's understanding.

226. Standards in reading are above average. Students read fluently with good emphasis. They have a good understanding of the poetry, plays and novels they read and develop this further through vigorous discussion with others. Many read with good emphasis and understanding, but in an understated way. Students' written work is good. They write imaginatively about Iago's manipulation of Othello's mind and describe how Iago's words *eat away* inside the Moor's head *like the mines of sulphur*. In studies of George

Orwell's essays, students are accurate in assessing the mode, genre and narrative style an essay possesses. Students have good attitudes to their learning and behave very well in lessons.

227. The quality of teaching is good, but ranges from satisfactory to very good. The key feature of all sixth form English teaching is very good subject knowledge. Where teaching is satisfactory, the important elements of good learning are in place, but the resources provided lack quality. The curriculum for English at AS and A2 level is satisfactory and the department is developing this aspect of provision.

228. The department is led and managed well, giving clear direction to the subject.

## FRENCH

Overall, the quality of provision in French is good.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers have very good subject knowledge in both French and German.</li><li>• Staffing is stable and there is a strong team spirit.</li><li>• The use of the foreign language is well managed and extensively used.</li></ul>
Areas for improvement:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitoring of teaching styles and learning needs.</li><li>• Take-up of languages in the sixth form.</li></ul>

229. At the end of the sixth form, standards are below expectations, although the numbers continuing to study languages at an advanced level are small, so that statistically, the figures are not representative of the teaching and learning seen during inspection. Both teaching and learning in the sixth form are good or very good and the department has a commitment to improving the number of students, who study languages at this level. Teachers have a very good command of French and German and use the foreign languages extensively in the classroom. Relationships are very good throughout the department, teachers share targets with students and real contact with native speakers is assured through well-supported trips to France and Germany and the deployment of a German assistant. Students are generally keen to improve their knowledge and skills, but do struggle to fully participate in oral work. There is good provision for independent work in the form of self-selected reading of extended texts leading to book reviews and presentations all in French. There is also a mini library in the sixth form room from which students supplement their course book materials. The level of language is in line with national expectations and the department has set realistic targets for current students.

230. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The head of department knows her staff well and ensures that strategic planning, funding and the importance of sharing and developing good teaching styles are high on the department's priorities. There is still further scope for developing the monitoring of departmental practice.

## PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths
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- Many students obtain the higher grades in examinations and achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed and supported as they progress.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and show a strong commitment to the subject.
- The course is very popular and numbers taking it have greatly increased.

#### Areas for improvement

- The level of staffing, accommodation and resources.
- The marking of students' work.

231. In the 2001 and 2002 AS and A2 examinations, overall, nearly half the students entered obtained the higher A to C grades. At the time of the last inspection, with many fewer students, average standards were achieved. Now, with more students, these average standards have been maintained and students achieve well. Evidence from samples of previous work, lessons seen and examination results from students, who sat the examination again to attain higher marks, indicates that standards are being maintained at broadly average levels of attainment. This is due to the thorough preparation of learning resources and style of teaching adopted by the teacher.
232. In Year 12, students are well aware of the main authorities, who have written on developmental psychology, individual differences, disorders and the influence our upbringing has on the way we function. In one lesson, students used their A level textbook, the comprehensive range of notes provided by the teacher and their own detailed notes very well to conduct successfully a series of experiments on how we reconstruct memory and to distinguish the influences memory has on the way we function. Their awareness was greatly heightened by the teacher, who evaluated their progress thoroughly and gave them the necessary individual help to further aid their understanding of how memory works.
233. In Year 13, students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their AS results. In lessons, they are well motivated and work successfully in pairs or larger groups to complete taxing and challenging tasks. The teacher has high expectations, very good subject knowledge and very well supports the students' learning. For example, students effectively examine the biological and medical model of behaviour and how our attitude to our lifestyle can affect our health and the ways we perceive people. In their investigations into male and female perceptions of the ideal female body shape, there was good evidence of them using appropriate research methods to gather their findings with appropriate references to a range of sources studied. They show a good awareness of how published studies in psychology indicate the various ways people behave towards health and illness. They translate this awareness into well thought out verbal and written descriptions.
234. Teaching is good overall with very good application of expertise and knowledge to teach AS and A2 level courses. The use of resources to aid the students' learning is supported with a very good analysis of how students can improve their standards. Relationships are good, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and high levels of support are given to develop the student's independent learning skills.
235. Students respond positively to the high-quality help they receive. They use their time well, showing independence and maturity in their approach. Most show high levels of enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Some students are already considering careers that involve psychology. When asked they all talk very highly of the teaching and support they get to further their psychological knowledge. The recent very big rise in

numbers is illustrative of the popularity of the subject and the high quality of teaching. There is no specialist room for the teaching of psychology. This means that the opportunity to use interactive displays to celebrate and to inform the students' learning further is limited. Staffing levels have not been adjusted to match the increased student numbers. This is a problem, which is keeping standards low, because teachers do not have enough time for marking or providing written illustrations of how the students can improve their work. Resources are unsatisfactory. The amount of money allocated to the subject does not buy all the necessary textbooks and other required resources, including ICT, for all the students.