

INSPECTION REPORT

WELLSWAY SCHOOL

Keynsham, Bristol

LEA area: Bath & North East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109311

Headteacher: Mr Paul Kent

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 31st March to 4th April 2003

Inspection number: 249869

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chandag Road
Keynsham
Bristol

Postcode: BS31 1PH

Telephone number: 0117 9864751

Fax number: 0117 9161039

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Lyn Sammons

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? Attainment and achievement. How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	Inclusion	Attainment and achievement How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Science Physics	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20124	Jo Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15971	Mick Pye	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Special educational needs Geography	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History Business education	
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship	
32216	Annie McCabe	Team inspector	Design and technology	P16 co-ordinator
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Biology	
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	Drama	
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Psychology	

The inspection contractor was:

TWA Inspections Ltd
102 Bath Road, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire. GL53 7JX

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wellsway School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years of age. The school is located in the town of Keynsham, about five miles east of the centre of Bristol. Students generally live quite close to the school. Around three quarters of the pupils come from five primary schools in the neighbourhood, the remaining pupils coming from around 15 other schools. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average. There are 1358 pupils on roll, making the school larger than average. The school is popular and is over-subscribed. Pupils come from homes with above average socio-economic circumstances. Unemployment in the area is below the national average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low when compared with the national average. Just over 4 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with around 1.5 per cent having English as an additional language, though none at an early stage of language development. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is below the national average, as is the number with statements of special educational needs. Around nine tenths of pupils transfer, at the end of Year 11, to sixth form or further education, many of these remaining at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wellsway School is a good school. It has many very good features, together with a small number of important areas where further improvement is needed. Standards are well above average in the main school and above average in the sixth form. Pupils and students make good progress as a result of good teaching, which provides well for the needs of each individual. Strong leadership provides a clear direction for the school's work and management is good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong leadership ensures a clear educational direction, strongly committed to supporting and involving staff in school life.
- Good teaching enables pupils and students at all stages to achieve impressive standards in public examinations and tests.
- Pupils and students are encouraged to adopt a very purposeful and industrious approach to their studies.
- An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities complements and enriches the taught curriculum.
- Very good relationships are carefully nurtured throughout the school community and this helps ensure that pupils and students thrive in an environment characterised by respect and tolerance.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and this enables these pupils to make good progress.

What could be improved

- The curriculum, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11, by ensuring that all pupils are able to receive their entitlement to a full range of educational experiences.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning in order to guide work to bring about further improvement.
- The extent to which pupils are encouraged and enabled to become more actively involved in their learning.
- The coherence of long-term strategic planning to give a more detailed framework for future developments.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since the time of the previous inspection. Results in GCSE examinations have improved in recent years at about the same rate as improvement nationally. Teaching continues to be good, with some improvement since the previous inspection, but gaps in the curriculum identified in the previous report have not been dealt with adequately. The very good climate for learning in the school has been maintained. When taken together, satisfactory progress has been made in dealing with the key issues identified in the previous report. The marking of pupils' work is better, with pupils now receiving more helpful advice on how to improve. Good progress has also been made in evaluating the progress that pupils are making in their studies. The school has

effectively dealt with the health and safety issues identified previously and some effective work has been undertaken to improve the overall accommodation in the school. Progress on dealing with inadequacies in the curriculum has been unsatisfactory. The school did not take the action necessary to ensure that all students received their entitlement to follow a course in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, not enough has been done to ensure that all pupils in these years follow courses in both religious education and information and communication technology, as is required. The school still does not provide for all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14- and 16-year-olds and sixth-form students at the end of Year 13, based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	C
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	B	*	

Key

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

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have remained steady in recent years, while national results have been improving. This is largely because results for English have declined during the past two years. In 2002, results in mathematics and science were well above average, while English results were above average. While overall results were at the average for similar schools, those for English were well below those in similar schools. The standards being achieved by pupils currently in Year 9 indicate that the decline in English results has been arrested and pupils are working at well above average standards in all three subjects. GCSE results have been improving at about the same rate as those nationally in recent years. In 2002, results in GCSE were well above both the national and similar school averages and this represents good progress by these pupils over their time in the school. Pupils currently approaching the end of Year 11 are working at well above average standards and are achieving well. Results at the end of the sixth form were above average in 2002 and better than in the previous year. This represents good achievement. The school has achieved its targets for performance in tests and examinations in recent years. Its targets for forthcoming national tests of Year 9 pupils are challenging, but achievable. Its published targets for older pupils are lower than the results achieved in last year's GCSE examinations and could be more challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like their school and have very positive, purposeful attitudes to their work and to wider school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They are polite, obedient and very respectful of adults.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good throughout the whole school community. Pupils enjoy each other's company and are very kind to one another. They adopt good levels of responsibility for themselves and for others.
Attendance	Pupil attendance is very good, being well above the national average. Pupils arrive on time for the start of school and move quickly to each lesson.

Pupils take their learning very seriously and show that they want to work hard and perform well. Eagerness characterises many lessons with younger pupils. The response of older pupils, while still very positive, becomes more muted as they move through the school. High levels of mutual respect between staff and pupils mean that all pupils feel secure and valued and this is a major reason why relationships are very good. Attendance is very good because pupils like coming to school. Their commitment to study is particularly good and helps improve their attainment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall, with very good or excellent teaching in around a third of lessons. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The overall good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve well. The teaching of English is good overall, with good teaching in the sixth form also. Mathematics teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching for younger pupils and sixth-form students. Science teaching is very good in the main school and good in the sixth form. Teaching is good overall in most other subjects. It is very good in religious education, art and design, drama and physical education and good in almost all other subjects. The exceptions are in the sixth form, where the teaching of theatre studies is outstanding and in psychology, where teaching is satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils and students well and plan lessons thoroughly to meet their needs. This is particularly true in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs learn well because of sensitive and well-targeted teaching, both in special classes and in lessons generally throughout the school. Pupils and students are very successful learners of knowledge, skills and routines because this is what teachers concentrate on. They are less successful in other aspects of their learning, particularly related to investigative work and extended problem solving and to taking initiative and responsibility for their own learning. This is because teachers give less attention to these aspects in lessons, particularly as pupils move up the school. Although teaching is good overall, there is a wide variation in quality, which is not being successfully dealt with.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	At all stages, the school offers its pupils and students a stimulating variety of courses and subjects, with a good range of choice for older pupils and a rich programme of advanced level courses in the sixth form. However, the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11, particularly, has some serious omissions.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good. These pupils are well provided for in a very well organised department. They receive strong support in lessons and a range of additional provision enables them to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has a small number of these pupils and students. Their needs are reviewed on an individual basis so that these pupils and students are able to participate fully in what the school offers to all.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities is the most notable feature of this part of the pupils' education and makes a strong contribution to their social and moral understanding. The school's arrangements for raising pupils' spiritual and multi-cultural awareness are adequate.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for all its pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and pay close attention to their needs. They assess the pupils' progress regularly and give pupils good guidance that helps their academic development.

The school seeks to work very closely with parents and is successful in doing so. Parents rate the school exceptionally highly and have a very strong commitment to what it is doing. Parents are kept well informed, both about the progress of individual pupils and students and also about school life in general. Notable in achieving this is the 'Ammonite', a very successful weekly newsletter. The curriculum currently does not meet statutory requirements in several ways. The development of a citizenship course has been slow and it is currently not in place, though it will be in the coming year. Not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an adequate course in either design and technology or religious education, as required. Both of these omissions were identified at the time of the previous

inspection and neither has been dealt with adequately in the intervening six years. Not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a course in information and communication technology, also as required. Not all sixth-form students are able to follow a course in religious education, as required, and this, too, was identified as a weakness by the previous inspection team. The school offers an excellent programme of activities beyond the classroom, including trips, visits and musical and dramatic productions. It also provides an extensive range of activities for pupils to join in at lunchtime and after school. The success of this programme is limited, to some extent, by the fact that a large number of pupils do not take part in the programme of activities offered at lunchtime and after school. A strong feature of the way that the school cares for its pupils and students is the close individual knowledge of each individual that enables the school to respond to changing circumstances. Parents are very appreciative of this aspect of care.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership. The school has a clear sense of purpose that focuses well on the needs of pupils and students. Day-to-day management of the school is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a strong interest in the school. They are active in many aspects of school life, including regularly reviewing school aims. They do not fulfil their responsibilities, however, particularly in ensuring that pupils receive their curriculum entitlement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school keeps its work under general review and each annual plan for development begins with a check on progress on the previous plan. The lack of clear criteria for the intended impact on quality and provision in the plan tends to limit the effect of this review. Arrangements for the evaluation of teachers' work in classrooms are not rigorous or thorough enough to help bring about improvement.
The strategic use of resources	This is good.

The headteacher gives very good support and encouragement to all members of staff, who, in turn, work very hard on behalf of pupils and students. There is a strong sense of common purpose. The absence of long-term strategic goals and clear timeframes for action in a coherent plan for improvement slows the pace of improvement. Governors do not ensure that pupils and students are able to take part in a daily act of collective worship. The school is adequately staffed. Resources for learning are generally good, though the number of computers in the school is relatively low. Accommodation varies in quality and there are shortfalls, particularly in the number of laboratories. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Before the inspection, 60 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. Questionnaires were returned by 249 parents (18 per cent) and comments were appended to around 33 of these.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like coming to school where they are helped to become mature and responsible Good teaching and high expectations help pupils to make good progress The school is well led and managed The school is welcoming of parents when they approach with questions or problems The school offers a wide range of activities outside lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with parents about pupils' progress The way the school works closely with parents

Inspectors concur with the positive views of parents. They do not consider that the school needs to improve the way it works with parents or communicates with them about the progress being made by their children.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large comprehensive school has 275 students and is bigger than the average sixth form nationally. Numbers are rising steadily. Around 90 per cent of those, who completed Year 11 at the school in 2002, have entered the sixth form, with a small additional number remaining in full-time education at local further education colleges. Roughly similar numbers of male and female students follow sixth-form courses at Wellsway. The number of students from minority ethnic groups reflects the composition of the school generally. Students follow a mixture of courses. Most students in the sixth form follow courses at AS and A2 level or a small number of advanced vocational (AVCE) courses. Courses in the sixth form are open to all students that teachers believe will benefit from continuing to study at the school. Thus, the overall ability of students entering the sixth form is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Careful deployment of teachers and resources means that sixth-form provision is cost-effective. Standards are improving, with the most recent results above those in recent years. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Overall leadership of the sixth form is very good and its management is good. Careful attention is paid to the needs of each individual student.

Strengths

- Very good leadership, which ensures a clear sense of purpose.
- A very good curriculum, together with a rich programme of enrichment activities, provides well for all students in the sixth form.
- Very good arrangements for monitoring the academic progress of students enables the school to respond promptly to students' needs.

What could be improved

- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of tutors.
- The provision for all sixth-form students to be able to follow a course in religious education and to attend a daily act of collective worship.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. A level results are consistently well above national averages, with improving proportions of A and B grades. Teaching is very good and students' attitudes are positive. They work hard and show high levels of interest and enthusiasm. A good range of modules is offered in the A level mathematics and further mathematics courses and GCSE retake sessions are also held.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are above average and have improved recently. Teaching is good, encouraging students to adopt a very conscientious approach to their work.
Biology	Very good. Standards are very high and the subject is popular with students. Good teaching enables students to make good progress.
Physics	Good. Standards in physics are well above average. Students enjoy their work in this subject and make good progress because they are

	taught well.
Business Studies	Good. Standards of attainment are above average and students make good progress. Teaching is good and students learn well as they have very positive attitudes to work.
Sports and PE studies	Very good. Standards are very good. Very good teaching encourages very positive attitudes amongst students, who make good progress.
Music	Good. Students make good progress on AS and A level music courses. They achieve standards, which are broadly similar to their standards in other subjects. Teaching is good and teachers are committed to students' learning.
Theatre Studies	Outstanding. The high proportion of excellent teaching leads to excellent learning and high standards. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on joining their courses. Leadership and management are very good.
History	Very good. Students attain well above average standards and make good progress. This is as a result of good teaching and very positive attitudes of the students to their work.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Students achieve average standards overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students adopt positive attitudes to their work. <u>Subject leadership is not strong.</u>
Religious studies	Very good. Students achieve well and standards are well above the national average. Analytical and evaluative skills are well developed. The quality of teaching, leadership and management are very good. Contribution of the subject to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding.
English	Good. Standards are above average in English language and well above average in English literature. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
German	Good. Standards in examinations are well above average. Teaching is good, with careful planning ensuring that recent and relevant resources are used.

Work was also sampled in French, art and design, design and technology, sociology and in the AVCE course in information technology. In French, standards are well above the national average. Students are achieving well, given their previous GCSE results. They develop strengths in arguing their case persuasively, both in writing and in speaking. Students of French do not often read beyond the requirements of the examination. Standards are above average in art and design. Students make good progress here because very good teaching ensures that the work is well structured. This motivates students well in their learning. Standards in design and technology are above average. Students make good progress as a result of specialist knowledge and good teaching. They receive very good individual evaluation feedback and guidance about their work. This maintains their motivation and helps them improve. Standards in sociology are above average. Students are more successful in those lessons where they are encouraged to become active participants in their learning. In the AVCE course in information technology, standards are in line with course expectations, with significant numbers of students above average. Students make good progress overall as a result of coursework being monitored very effectively and evaluation that helps students understand how they can improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Teachers guide students very carefully throughout their time in the sixth form. They ensure that students get very good advice about their future options. They help students identify how they are progressing in their studies and what they need to do to achieve the best result in each subject. They offer good support for their personal development.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership of the sixth form is very good, ensuring a clear sense of purpose. The school aims help ensure equality of opportunity for all, who study in the sixth form. Management is good, but there is a lack of systematic review of the work of teachers and tutors that leads to inconsistencies not being identified or adequately followed up.

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"> • The good teaching, which challenges them to do their best • Staff are helpful and supportive • The curriculum, which suits their talents and aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of information about their progress • To be treated more as responsible young adults

The inspection team agrees with all the positive comments from the sixth-form students. Students receive good-quality advice and support relating to higher education, training and employment. However, the team agrees that assessment should give earlier indication of examination achievement in all subjects. There should be greater use of teaching approaches that actively encourage greater student independence and responsibility for their own learning.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils join the school their attainment is above the national average. They make good progress during their first three years in school so that, at the end of Year 9, they gain well above average results in national tests. Good progress is maintained during Years 10 and 11 and pupils gain well above average results in GCSE examinations.
2. In 2002, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average, as they had been for the past four years. Results have not, however, been improving over this period as fast as they have nationally. This is largely because, over the past two years, there has been a decline in test results in English. The school was slow to identify the causes of the problems in English, but is now dealing with these. As a result, the work of pupils currently in Year 9 is well above average. In mathematics and science, results have remained stable in recent years. There is no significant difference in the overall attainment of boys and girls in national tests at the end of Year 9. Test results in 2002 were average when compared with similar schools¹, largely due to the impact of the lower performance in English. When taking into account pupils' prior attainment, results in English were average, whilst those in mathematics and science were well above average. Further details of test results are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Stage 3 (Year 9) results 2002

Subject	Boys	Girls	Total	Standards compared to similar schools 2002 are	Recent school trends
English	Above average	Above average	Above average	Well below average	Declining
Mathematics	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	Average	Steady
Science	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	Average	Steady
All core subjects	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	Average	Steady

3. Pupils currently approaching the end of Year 9 are working at well above average standards in English, mathematics and science, suggesting that the pattern of well above average overall test scores will be maintained. Standards are also well above average in geography, history and religious education. In all other subjects, standards are above average, except in information and communication technology (ICT), where they are average. Currently, the school teaches ICT within other subjects. This helps pupils achieve well in those subjects, but does not ensure that pupils are consistently developing their skills and understanding in all aspects of ICT. Recognising this, the school is planning to introduce the teaching of ICT as a separate subject from September 2003.
4. The main reason for these standards is the good teaching that enables pupils to achieve well in lessons. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and to focus on those aspects of the subject that will help them to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to do well in tests and examinations. Good foundations are laid in Years 7 to 9 upon which pupils can successfully build in their studies leading to GCSE examinations.

¹ Similar school comparisons are made with schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

5. Pupils do well in Years 10 and 11, consolidating their prior learning and further developing their understanding of the subjects they choose to study during these years. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above average, as they have been for several years. The school's GCSE results have been improving at about the same rate as those nationally. Girls' results were better than those of boys in 2002, as they were nationally. However, boys performed relatively better than they did at the time of the previous inspection, when some concern was expressed about the relatively lower performance of boys. This improvement in boys' performance is a consequence of the school ensuring that teachers take account of the particular learning needs of both boys and girls. Details of overall GCSE results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Year 2002 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results overall

	2002			Standards compared to all schools 2002 are	Standards compared to similar schools 2002 are	Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total			
Percentage 5+ A*-C grades or GNVQ equivalent	79.0	87.0	81.6	Well above average	Well above average	Improving
Percentage 5+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent			98.1	Well above average	Well above average	Improving
Percentage 1+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent	100	100	100	Well above average	Well above average	Improving
Average total GCSE points score per pupil	50.4	55.1	52.4	Well above average	Well above average	Improving

6. The proportion of pupils gaining A* or A grades was well above the national average, indicating that the school is helping the most able pupils to achieve their potential. Pupils of all abilities did well, however, with the results being above average when the prior attainment of pupils is taken into account. When compared with similar schools, results were well above average in 2002. Detailed results for subjects in which examinations were taken are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Year 2002 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results by subject (percent A* to C grades)

Subject	School			National			Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
English Language	80.5	93.4	86.1	49.5	65.3	57.4	Improving
English Literature	76.9	92.3	83.7	54.5	69.8	62.4	Improving
Mathematics	77.1	85.9	81.0	49.3	50.0	49.7	Improving
Science (Double award)	84.3	91.0	87.0	48.8	51.6	50.2	Improving
Science (Single award)		64.0	48.8		18.7	16.2	Improving
Art & Design	77.5	90.2	84.6	53.4	74.4	65.3	Improving
Design and Technology	62.2	89.3	68.6	43.3	60.4	51.6	Improving
Geography	84.5	93.9	87.2	53.3	60.1	56.3	Improving
History	89.2	84.2	86.7	54.8	61.8	58.3	Steady
MFL French	38.8	78.3	57.0	38.8	54.8	47.2	Slight decline
MFL German	43.9	77.1	59.2	46.3	60.7	53.9	Improving
PE or Sports Studies	82.8	86.5	84.2	52.9	57.0	54.2	Improving
Drama	97.1	100.0	98.6	60.5	74.5	69.3	Improving
Music			92.0			67.4	Improving
Business Studies	77.3		76.3	51.8		54.1	
Information systems			18.2			56.3	
Religious education		75.0	78.6		63.3	57.2	Improving

N.B. Gaps in tables indicate that there were too few candidates to make reliable comparisons.

7. Pupils currently approaching their GCSE examinations are working at well above average standards in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Standards are above average in all other subjects except ICT where they are average.

In ICT, pupils make good progress, but are working from a relatively limited base of experience from their work up to the end of Year 9 and this has the effect of lowering the standards reached during the examination course.

8. The main reason why pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 is that teaching is good, being particularly focused on those aspects of the subject that will help pupils to do well in examinations. Slightly less well developed are pupils' skills and abilities in investigation and enquiry methods, particularly, though not exclusively, in subjects such as science and mathematics.
9. Throughout the school, pupils with special education needs make very good progress. All those pupils in the Year 7 and Year 8 corrective reading classes this year have improved their reading ages by more than their actual ages and pupils are regularly moved out of these classes as their skills improve to a level where they can work by themselves. In all subjects, they make at least good progress and it is very good in religious education and science in Years 10 and 11. In 2002, all pupils on the special educational needs register gained at least a grade G in five or more GCSE subjects and half gained at least a grade G in nine or 10 subjects. All of these pupils had taken part in the successful Year 10 and 11 skills development programme.
10. There are very few pupils in the school, who are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. They make satisfactory progress in their learning because teachers provide relevant materials to involve them in lessons. There is limited external support and there are no designated classroom assistants to add to this provision. Pupils, who are from minority ethnic groups, make satisfactory progress and the school keeps good records to track their achievements over time.
11. Standards in reading and writing throughout the school are very good by the time pupils reach the end of Year 11. Pupils read a variety of texts with confidence and clarity in many subjects. They understand the need to convey ideas through expression and intonation. Writing is above average in most subjects. Pupils are good at adapting the style of their writing to suit the needs of different tasks, so that they are analytical and concise in scientific reports and more measured and descriptive in their accounts of, for instance, the life of the Native American Indians in history. Spelling and punctuation are largely accurate and pupils quickly learn to organise their writing into logical paragraphs. Pupils are less inclined to develop their ideas orally in class because lessons in some subjects lack structured group work, with clearly defined outcomes in terms of improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. They thereby miss the chance to rehearse ideas that they could use in their writing. Overall, however, standards in literacy are very good in all classes.
12. Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils enter the school with above average number skills and the mathematics department further develops these skills as pupils move through the school. Those entering the school with less than National Curriculum Level 4 are given intensive help in special withdrawal groups in Year 7 and these pupils make very good progress. Number and graphical skills are well taught by mathematics teachers, with regular mental and written practice in calculation. The ability of pupils to apply mathematical skills helps learning in other subjects. Good examples were noted in science, where pupils displayed the ability to use formulae and graph skills and in geography, where pupils successfully converted data to graphs. Whole-school training in the development of mathematical skills, as part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, took place last year, alongside a review of the use of mathematics in other subjects. The impact of this review and training has not yet influenced schemes of work or teaching in all subjects. As yet, the school has no overall policy for the development of

mathematics across the curriculum, or arrangements for evaluating this aspect of the school's work.

13. The school has successfully met its targets for attainment in national tests and examinations in the past two years. The targets set for the coming two years are based on the school's knowledge of the prior attainment of the pupils concerned. Targets for performance at the end of Year 9 are reasonably ambitious in English, mathematics and science and the school has also set itself challenging targets for performance in ICT in 2004. The published targets for GCSE for the coming two years are lower than the actual performance in the most recent examinations and could be more challenging.

Sixth form

14. The school has a policy of admitting to sixth-form study all students that 'will derive a net benefit from being here rather than anywhere else'. Thus, the overall attainment of students on entry to AS and A level courses is above average. Students make steady progress in their sixth-form studies and achieve well. Results in GCE examinations in recent years have been above the national average and were better in 2002 than in the previous year. For the past four or five years, results have fluctuated, but standards are higher in the sixth form than at the time of the previous inspection.
15. Both male and female students make good progress in their learning. Results indicate that the most able students are doing well in relation to their prior attainment, with the number gaining A and B grades being above the national average in many subjects. There is some variation in overall performance from subject to subject. Recent results have been very high in biology and well above average in mathematics, physics, biology, business education, theatre studies, history, religious education, English language, English literature and German. In most other subjects, results have been above average, with those in some psychology examinations having been average. Comparisons between subjects need to be treated with caution, however, because the number entered for some subjects is relatively low and the ability of students starting courses varies from subject to subject. Full details of results for each subject are given in the table in Part E of this report.
16. Students currently working in the sixth form are making good progress and achieving well in relation to their starting points. This is because they are being taught well and are encouraged to take a pride and interest in their studies. Their achievement in lessons is particularly good where they are encouraged to be active participants in their learning. Teachers expect that students will work hard and students adopt a responsible approach to their work, both in lessons and in their private study. Teachers know their students well and take care to present tasks that are stimulating and challenging for each individual.
17. A significant feature of better overall standards in the sixth form is the improvement in subjects that were performing less well some time ago. Standards in history have shown steady improvement, for instance. In chemistry, where there had been a dip in results and a lower uptake of the course, students had shown less enthusiasm for their studies. This trend has been reversed, with the subject now more popular with Year 12 students, who are showing improved levels of enthusiasm for their subject. Performance in subjects is reviewed after each set of examinations and subject leaders are encouraged to review work, particularly where results are not as good as expected.

18. The school offers AVCE² courses in the sixth form in information and communication technology (ICT) and in art and design. In ICT, students are achieving well, given that they did not all have a good grounding in the subject prior to starting the course. Standards achieved are average for the course and this represents good progress. In art and design, students are achieving average standards for this course because teaching focuses well on their needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils have very good attitudes to their work and wider school life. Parents applaud these attitudes and recognise the impact these have on the standards pupils achieve.
20. Teachers encourage pupils to adopt a very purposeful and industrious approach to their studies by constantly reinforcing good work habits. This means that the school successfully harnesses the obvious willingness of pupils to commit themselves to their learning. Pupils have very good attitudes, working hard throughout most lessons. However, a subtle change occurs as pupils move through the school. Young pupils join in lessons eagerly and enthusiastically. Year 8 mathematicians in a lesson about area, for instance, challenged what was happening if they had a different answer. Such behaviour demonstrates that pupils are very capable of thinking for themselves. This characteristic is not as obvious higher up the school. By the time pupils are in Years 10 and 11 they are just as committed to their studies, but, in some lessons, are more passive. This is because much of the teaching in these year groups becomes more narrowly focused. This slows the development of pupils' potential to manage their own learning and think for themselves. They know their subject-matter, but they do not always get as involved in, or excited about, their learning as might be expected from their obvious loyalty and commitment to the school.
21. Many pupils participate enthusiastically in some form of additional activity. Pupils talk engagingly about the annual Wellsway Festival, held during the final week of the school year. They relish developing new skills and interests through their involvement. Pupils still glow with a sense of achievement and satisfaction, for instance, at their abseiling exploits. They enjoyed the animation activity so much during the festival that they persuaded school staff to continue this as an extra-curricular cartoon club. Teachers at the school believe that up to half of the students at Wellsway take part in lunchtime and after-school activities. Pupils describe the excitement of the many sports matches and tournaments provided. The school is rightly proud of its music and drama productions. Many pupils and students either performed or supported this year's production of 'My Fair Lady' and photographs around the school testify to the success of previous performances.
22. Wellsway school fosters a clear code of conduct and pupils behave very well. Only very rarely do teachers have to remind pupils how to behave, either in the classrooms or around the school. The inspection team saw no poor behaviour during their time in the school. The school keeps careful records of incidents of misbehaviour and these show that only a few pupils fail to conform to the school's high expectations. Pupils talk maturely about the consequences of any misbehaviour and comment that the school applies these fairly. They are adamant that the school deals promptly and effectively with the rare incidence of bullying. The school hardly ever excludes any pupils.
23. Positive relationships existed between pupils at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' relationships with one another and with adults are now very good because the

² AVCE – Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education

school promotes high levels of mutual trust and respect. Pupils often help each other in lessons, not least by listening carefully to the answers of others. In a Year 9 personal and social education lesson, for instance, pupils thought carefully about the reactions of others to disability. The care and concern that pupils show for the needs of others, who have challenges because of their individual circumstances, are impressive. Pupils recognise that some of their number have particular disabilities or illnesses and they make no fuss about them. Indeed, a group of students asked the school for information about a friend's specific medical condition in order that they could present an assembly about the illness and its implications.

24. Relationships between staff and pupils are relaxed and calm. Pupils comment that they like the staff and recognise that the staff value and respect them. This nurture means that pupils feel safe and secure in the school and everyone thrives in this environment.
25. Pupils carefully respect school systems because teachers constantly encourage them to recognise and value the purpose of doing so. This means that pupils consider others as they move around and take good levels of care for their environment. The school is almost free of litter, so that everyone has a pleasant environment in which to work. Pupils take good levels of responsibility for themselves and others. They volunteer for positions on the school's year councils and eagerly suggest improvements to school life. Year 9 pupils petitioned the school governing body so persuasively and persistently that the governors ultimately agreed to the pupils' suggested changes to the school uniform. Pupils praise the peer support system. They talk eagerly about their older 'buddies'³. Pupils care for the needs of others by working with children in local special schools and in care centres. Each year group arranges many activities to raise money for charities. Younger pupils support local charities and older pupils focus on national and international charities. This helps increase pupils' awareness of existing and emerging world situations.
26. The pupils enjoy their school so they only stay away for illness or holidays during term-time, the latter being a feature that the school actively discourages. Attendance is, therefore, very good and much better than in most schools with pupils of a similar age. It is a significant factor in helping the school maintain very good standards. Pupils arrive promptly to school and to individual classes so lessons begin on time and progress without interruption.

Sixth form

27. Sixth-form students show very good, responsible attitudes to learning and also to the wider opportunities offered by the school. They are keen to benefit from the choice they have made to enter the sixth form, so they are willing and co-operative in lessons. In addition, they develop good responsibility for the contribution that they make to provision for younger pupils in the main school.
28. Students show a good level of interest in learning in lessons. They know that they have to work hard to get good examination results and they follow the advice of their teachers willingly. In some very stimulating lessons, such as in theatre studies, they were very actively involved and learnt a great deal. When teaching is more mundane and there is less chance for students to be actively involved, their enjoyment of learning is less evident. In several subjects, such as English and chemistry, there is sometimes an over-concentration on teachers doing most of the talking, with students simply taking notes. As a result, students have less chance to express their views, values and

³ Buddies are sixth-form students, who act as mentors for younger pupils.

emotions in many lessons. There are times when they gain in confidence to volunteer ideas and talk about them, as well as to answer questions at length, but some lack of willingness to engage in discussion is evident. This is often the case even when students actually have a good grasp of the work in hand, such as in psychology. Students never, however, show any serious lapse in attention. They continue to be courteous and orderly and to get on with the work set. They readily help and support one another.

29. The capacity of students to work independently is inconsistently developed. It is evident in their sensible use of study periods or time at home to complete homework, but, in most courses, students are less willing to read widely around the subject, for example, to research beyond the immediate needs of their examination courses.
30. As at the time of the previous inspection, other aspects of personal development are good in the sixth form in response to the encouragement and the breadth of opportunities that are offered. Sixth-form students make an important contribution to the life of the whole school community through the responsibilities they accept. For instance, they help in lessons with younger pupils and organise various extra-curricular activities in areas such as sports and drama. They also reach out to help the wider community, for instance, in raising money for charity through several events, including a pantomime.
31. Attendance in the sixth form is very good. Students know they need to be in lessons and they rarely miss these without good reason. The very few, who occasionally miss lessons, are identified through a referral system, so that their tutor or the head of year can intervene. The practice of allowing students to register just once a day does, however, mean that those students, who miss the morning registration, are required to sign in. Those, who do not do so, however, are not recognised as being in school until the afternoon session. This means that the school cannot account for their presence should there be an emergency.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching is good in all year groups throughout the school and this enables pupils to learn well. Teaching and learning are very good or excellent in around a third of lessons and good or better in three quarters. Only rarely is teaching unsatisfactory. During the inspection, the proportion of good or better lessons observed was higher than in the previous inspection.
33. For pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching is very good in mathematics, science, physical education and religious education and is good in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is once again very good in science, physical education and religious education and is also very good in art. In all other subjects, the teaching of these older pupils is good. Teachers generally have a very good understanding of how to teach their subject. They are particularly skilled in interpreting and presenting the requirements of the examination course syllabuses. Lessons are planned well, with careful attention to providing activities that help pupils to gain good knowledge and develop skills in each subject. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and, in turn, pupils apply themselves very well to their studies.
34. Although teaching is good overall, there is a considerable range of quality, both within and between subjects. Whilst some teaching is excellent, some is also unsatisfactory and this variation means that not all pupils are guaranteed consistent chances to learn well. Currently, the school does not have clear guidelines for helping to improve consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in the school. This means that

teachers do not have a clear corporate view of what constitutes the most effective teaching. Some work has been undertaken to enable teachers to observe one another teach and this has helped stimulate discussion within departments about how to share good practice and to help pupils learn more effectively. This programme lacks rigour, however, and this has inevitably meant that improvements in teaching have been relatively slow.

35. Some of the most effective learning takes place when pupils are encouraged to take part in discussion and debate. This encourages pupils to take responsibility for what they are learning and helps them to pose questions and seek for answers. They can then apply what they have learned in other contexts. Very good examples of pupils working in this way were observed during the inspection in religious education, drama and history. Work in other subjects, including geography and physical education, was marked by a lack of such activities. In some lessons, pupils are able to investigate and explore ideas, but elsewhere a lack of these types of activity limits the overall progress that pupils make. In mathematics, for instance, the time devoted to developing pupils' abilities in investigation and extended problem-solving is limited and, hence, pupils are not as adept at these aspects of the subject. Similarly, in science, standards are slightly lower in the skills of scientific enquiry because teachers do not give enough attention to developing these with pupils.
36. At the time of the previous inspection, inconsistencies were identified in the marking of pupils' work. Good steps have been taken to improve the overall quality of this aspect of teachers' work. In English, for instance, teachers give pupils very clear feedback about how well they are doing, whilst in history, pupils are given effective guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Less helpful is the inconsistent guidance given to pupils about the levels they are working at. When pupils arrive at the school they have a good grasp of their National Curriculum levels, especially in English, mathematics and science. The practice of guiding pupils through the use of these levels is not generally continued in the school, however. This means that pupils do not have national benchmarks against which to measure their progress and some pupils report being confused about how well they are doing as a result. Pupils are not given guidance on how well they are doing in relation to national standards until Year 9, when teachers start to give pupils predicted GCSE grades.
37. Some work has been undertaken to introduce ideas from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. These include a focus on developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills across other subjects. One element of what the strategy advocates is, however, missing from lessons in several subjects. This is the practice of sharing the purposes of lessons with pupils, in terms of what they might learn, and then using these objectives to review progress during a lesson or a topic. By not doing this, pupils' progress is being slowed somewhat in several subjects and notably in mathematics and art and design. In geography, a review of the learning that has taken place is not a regular feature of most lessons. On the other hand, teachers of religious education make very constructive use of this technique, linking it with detailed questioning that helps pupils clarify and consolidate their learning. Because of this variable approach from one subject to another, pupils are not consistently able to gain a clear picture of how each lesson fits together to build an overall pattern of understanding in each subject.
38. Teachers encourage pupils to work beyond the classroom. In many subjects, trips and visits are a regular event that teachers use skilfully to enrich pupils' learning. Progressively, pupils are being encouraged to use resources such as the Internet to support their studies. Several subjects make good use of the library as a resource for learning, though this is not systematically built into departmental schemes of work.

Good use is made of homework tasks to develop learning in lessons. Teachers mark this work carefully and promptly and this encourages pupils to take the tasks set seriously and to work hard at fulfilling them well. Thus, homework tasks play an important part in helping pupils develop good study habits.

39. Careful attention is given to the needs of all pupils. In particular, pupils with special educational needs learn well as a result of sensitive and well-targeted teaching in the special classes provided to enhance their reading, numeracy and personal skills. Excellent teaching and learning were seen, for instance, in one mathematics withdrawal lesson where a teacher was using 'Springboard' materials⁴ with a small group. In subject lessons, the learning of pupils with special educational needs is good, especially when the pupils are supported by one of the very effective team of classroom assistants or specialist support teachers. In the skills development groups in Years 10 and 11, teachers enable pupils to make very good individual progress with pieces of coursework from their GCSE subjects. They also help them in the use of computers, both for topic research and to improve the presentation of their work.
40. The teaching of a range of basic skills is good. The good work of the English department to develop pupils' literacy skills is complemented well in other subjects. The teaching of the skills of reading and writing is good in geography and history, where teachers bring out word derivations in class discussions and provide a range of tasks for pupils to use different styles such as note-making and extended description. The same is true in mathematics, particularly with lower-ability pupils. These pupils are also supported by a judicious use of frameworks to guide their writing. Less emphasis on this occurs in design and technology, where little use is made of the ideas from the language across the curriculum element of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to extend pupils' understanding of language. Most teachers encourage pupils to take good care in their writing and, as a result, outcomes are often interesting and clear.
41. Some good work has been undertaken to train teachers of all subjects in how they can improve pupils' mathematical skills in the context of other subjects. Currently, however, this aspect of pupils' learning is restricted by a lack of close attention to the contribution each subject can make to the development of these skills. Good attention is paid in many subjects to helping pupils develop and apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. This is essential because, currently, the school does not offer pupils separate lessons in ICT. Teachers have worked hard to gain a better understanding of how ICT can contribute in their subject and many pupils are, thus, able to improve their skills well. The lack of a coherent programme for monitoring and evaluating the experiences of all pupils in ICT, however, means that not all pupils are able to learn these skills as effectively as others.

Sixth form

42. Overall, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is good, enabling students to learn well and make good progress. Teaching observed during the inspection was very good or excellent in over two fifths of lessons and good or better in four fifths. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the sixth form.
43. For the 13 subjects that were the focus of this inspection of the sixth form, teaching is excellent in theatre studies and is very good in religious education, sports and physical education studies and mathematics. It is good in all other subjects except psychology, where it is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and, thus, of students' learning varies

⁴ Springboard materials have been produced by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to support the work of teachers. The intention is that they will be used with pupils who have not reached the expected National Curriculum levels.

considerably both within and between subjects. The lack of clear guidelines for teaching and learning means that teachers do not have a common framework to guide them in attempting to improve the quality of their work. Some good progress has been made in developing a programme of teachers observing each other teaching. This has prompted discussion about ways of improving overall provision in subjects. This initiative has not had as great an impact as it might because it is not well coordinated or structured at a whole-school level and evaluation is not rigorous enough to bring about better consistency in students' learning.

44. The most impressive feature of teaching is the dedication that teachers bring to their work with sixth-form students. The hard work of teachers, who give generously of their time to support students, is the main reason why students are so well motivated. Students recognise the commitment that the teachers make in helping them do well in their studies. As a result, relationships between sixth-form students and their teachers are very good. This means that classrooms are relaxed, but purposeful, encouraging students to apply themselves so that they do the best they can. In turn, teachers have very good expectations of how well their students will perform in examinations.
45. Teachers of sixth-form students have a high level of understanding of the subjects they teach. This they have applied well, not least in dealing with the many recent changes in syllabuses as the pattern of sixth-form examinations has changed. This is the main reason why overall standards have been maintained during this time of change and uncertainty. Students are confident that their teachers will help them to organise their studies well and, thus, achieve the results of which they are capable.
46. Sixth-form students receive very good guidance from the marking and feedback that teachers give them. This aspect of the assessment of students' work is very thoroughly undertaken and teachers take great care with the comments they record on students' work. This is particularly a strong feature in mathematics, chemistry, business studies, history and English. Students value this support and use the guidance well in helping to shape their future assignments. This very thorough marking also helps teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of their students well and they are, thus, able to modify classroom activities to help meet individual needs. This helps all sixth-form students to make good progress. It also helps them to become more self-critical of their work and progress and this is encouraged in several subjects.
47. Because teachers know their students and the demands of the examination courses very well, planning is thorough and lessons generally are very productive, having a clear direction and purpose. It is the lack of this good level of planning that causes teaching in psychology to be less successful than in other subjects, mainly because resources are not well matched to the needs of the students.
48. In many lessons, teachers make very good use of challenging questioning techniques to help students think through issues. This enriches students' learning and helps them to make very good progress in those lessons. Such skilled questioning is a feature of much of the work in biology and in religious education. Some teachers encourage students to range beyond the confines of the examination specifications and this helps the students to put their learning into context and helps their overall understanding of the concept that they are dealing with. This is a strong feature of work in religious studies and theatre studies. Elsewhere, this is less common and the lack of encouragement or guidance to read and research beyond the requirements of the examination specifications limits the overall progress students make in subjects such as chemistry and German. In some subjects, teachers do not encourage students to develop their independent study skills through research, group work or independent reading. All of these features tend to limit this aspect of students' personal

development and do not help them to develop the study skills necessary for higher education.

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

49. The school offers its pupils an interesting and stimulating curriculum, with some choice in Years 10 and 11. However, because the school currently does not fully meet its statutory obligations in design and technology, information and communication technology, religious education or citizenship education, the overall curriculum provision is unsatisfactory.
50. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 covers most of the subjects of the National Curriculum, together with a course in philosophy and belief⁵ that meets local requirements. All pupils follow a course in drama and all study two foreign languages. Currently, the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is undertaken in other subjects. Whilst this helps pupils to see how ICT applications can enhance work in these subjects, it does not ensure that all aspects of the ICT course are fully developed and assessed. Recognising this shortcoming, it has been decided that ICT will be taught as a separate subject from September 2003, initially in Years 7 and 8, with an extension into Year 9 in the following year. This is an example of an outcome of a wide-ranging review of the curriculum that is being undertaken in the school during the current year. This review is also looking at the curriculum entitlement of pupils in Years 10 and 11, but has not yet completed this work.
51. Satisfactory progress has been made in introducing ideas from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This strategy is being introduced to all schools as a means of raising standards during the first three years of secondary education. The implementation of the English strand of the strategy has been satisfactory. The lack of focus on reading and writing for pupils in Years 7 and 8 in recent years had meant that they were not building on their earlier learning. Standards have improved this year as teachers are planning a more structured approach, using more ideas from the strategy to promote reading and writing, though there is still a way to go to reach consistency in all classes. Elements of the mathematics strand have been successfully introduced into work in Years 7 and 8, with the science strand currently being implemented in Year 7. Whilst all staff in these subjects have received training in methods advocated by the strategy there remains significant inconsistency in the quality of their implementation. Basic work has been done to promote the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning of these skills.
52. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to select their programme of courses leading to GCSE examinations from a wide range of subjects on offer. The programme provides for the most able pupils to take an enhanced number of examination courses, while the less able are given additional support through skills development courses. Guidance for individual pupils when making this choice is supportive and helpful, involving parents and pupils in meetings with teachers and tutors in order to help pupils make a sensible selection. Although a wide range of subjects is offered, not all pupils follow the courses that are statutorily required. Current requirements are that all pupils should follow a course in each of religious education, design and technology, citizenship and ICT. The school was not meeting the requirements for religious education, design and technology and ICT at the time of the previous inspection and has failed to deal

⁵ Philosophy and belief is the name the school gives to its course in religious education.

adequately with this shortfall in its provision. Hence, significant numbers of pupils have, for several years, been denied their entitlement.

53. Pupils in all year groups follow a course in personal, social and health education (PSHE). This course successfully provides for pupils' education in drugs awareness and deals well with sex education. The course enables pupils to explore a range of issues regarding their personal development and focuses on developing good study skills. This course is taught by pupils' form tutors and the quality of this teaching varies considerably from one tutor group to another. The school currently does not have the necessary processes in place to help identify the causes of this variation or to provide the support to tutors so that all pupils receive good-quality experiences in these lessons.
54. The programme of careers education and guidance offered within the school is good. Its success has led to national recognition⁶. This programme is embedded in the PSHE programme for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Pupils are well prepared during Year 9 for making their option choices. They regularly visit the careers library where they have good access to a further range of resources to guide their future choices of courses or careers through the use of computer software. All pupils in Year 10 have a valuable two weeks of work experience. In Year 11, all attend mock interviews that are co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and very dedicated governor. All of these experiences help pupils to make well-informed choices for their future pathways.
55. The school intends to replace the PSHE programme from this coming September with a course in citizenship education. Considerable preparation has been made for the introduction of this course and, in PSHE and other subjects, elements of the course have been taught for some years. Indeed, some of the teaching ideas developed in the school have been published in order that teachers in other schools can benefit from what has been done. The school has not, however, managed to get an adequate course in citizenship education in place for all pupils during this academic year⁷. Thus, in this regard also, the school does not currently meet its statutory requirements.
56. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for, in accordance with their statements, by a very well organised department. Strong support is given in subject lessons by a team of classroom assistants, by teachers, who always provide additional help, and, in many cases, by resources that are specially tailored towards the requirements of these pupils. Additional classes help those, who need to improve their reading and writing skills in Years 7, 8 and 9. The mathematics department also provides 'Springboard' classes to improve pupils' numeracy skills. In Years 10 and 11, skills development classes give additional support with work towards GCSE examinations. Sixth-form 'buddies' provide social support during two lunchtimes a week. Annual reviews of statements are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements, though provision is reviewed more frequently than this within the school to ensure that each individual pupil is receiving the best possible programme of care and teaching. The special needs co-ordinator gives a high standard of guidance to subject staff through training sessions and specially written booklets. Further support comes from a highly committed link governor. Arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils are very good.

⁶ The school has gained the Investor in Careers award. Year 11 pupils played a large part in helping secure this award.

⁷ All schools were required to provide a taught and assessed course in citizenship education for all pupils from September 2002.

57. The overall programme of enrichment activities offered in the school is excellent. A rich variety of enhancement activities is provided in a number of subject areas. Pupils are, for instance, able to undertake fieldwork in geography and some local study work takes place in history. They also take part in foreign exchanges. In several subjects, teachers provide additional sessions to support pupils preparing for examinations. Theatre visits are organised by the English department and pupils are able to take part in drama and music productions and performances. The contribution of physical education to this enrichment programme is particularly strong and has been recognised by the school being awarded SportsMark Gold status. In addition, the programme includes a wide range of clubs and activities that are offered at lunchtime or after school. A central feature of this programme is an annual event, the Wellsway Festival, in which all pupils participate. This festival augments the curriculum, enabling pupils to experience activities such as animation workshops, fencing, golf and photography. During this week, pupils are also able to make trips and visits to places of educational interest.
58. The extra-curricular enrichment programme includes clubs and other activities that take place at lunchtime or after school. Attendance at these activities is voluntary and not all pupils make the most of what the programme offers. This limits the overall potential of this element of what the school provides. This is particularly relevant in a school where the length of the teaching week is below national recommendations and, which claims that its lunchtime extra-curricular provision is central to supporting and extending the taught curriculum. The relatively short taught week was highlighted as an issue in the report of the previous inspection.
59. The school has some good links with other education establishments, but links with industry or business are less well developed. All the main partner primary schools are visited and primary school children visit the school as part of the preparation for their transfer. Some very useful bridging work takes place where pupils in science, for example, start some projects in Year 6 that they then finish in Year 7. This helps to ensure continuity in the pupils' education and has a very positive effect on standards. Close and developing links with Bath University, along with other higher- and further-education establishments, helps raise pupils' awareness of the potential for higher education, giving a good context for their current study. Many on-going links with the local and wider community, the church and several charities also help to stimulate pupils' interest and to enrich the curriculum.
60. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school, through its curriculum and teaching, makes good provision for pupils' personal development. The programme of extra-curricular activities has the potential to be a major contributor to promoting pupils' personal development. Activities in this programme help participating pupils learn very well about teamwork, individual confidence and social awareness. The school actively promotes social responsibility by, for instance, encouraging pupils to run sports teams and to represent the class on the Year and School Councils. Similarly, it successfully fosters moral responsibility by encouraging pupils to support local, national and international charities and participate in the environmentally aware Green Team. The school, therefore, gives very good support for pupils' social and moral development.
61. This commitment to promoting self-respect, tolerance and understanding and to valuing each individual is clear throughout school life. Pupils are very loyal to the school and to one another. This is because the school nurtures very good relationships throughout the community and helps pupils feel that they matter. Teachers devote considerable time and energy to identifying the needs of individuals. They also show how they expect pupils to behave by the way they relate to others. The code of conduct is clearly stated, understood by all and consistently applied. The school actively

promotes achievement and celebrates success. Newspaper articles, team and individual photographs, celebrations and a raft of awards presentations testify to the school's desire to promote and reward achievement and effort.

62. The personal and social education programme is well planned and represents a meaningful mechanism for promoting pupils' personal awareness. This programme deals well with many issues, including sex- and drugs-awareness education. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award in recognition of the success of this programme. The school places less significance on some aspects of the personal development of pupils within lessons. Schemes of work in other subjects do not routinely include detailed plans for fostering and nurturing aspects of pupils' personal development. Teaching styles increasingly focus on telling pupils what they need to know about within subjects, rather than on helping pupils to think about how they, and others, are developing as young people as they go about their learning.
63. The philosophy and belief department is a notable exception to this. In this subject, teachers constantly and consistently encourage pupils to respond in a variety of ways to wonder and joy in life and learning. These teachers also enable pupils to express their own feelings, opinions and beliefs so that the pupils develop a confidence and a candidness that is rarely as apparent in lessons in many other subjects.
64. Pupils are able, when given suitable encouragement, to express their feelings and views and to share their emotional responses. Inspectors attending an assembly, for instance, observed pupils showing a distinct emotional response to a teacher sharing her memories of her own baby's very serious illness. The image of the size of the surgeon's hand compared to the stomach of the three-month-old baby stunned the pupils. Most assemblies and form-tutor periods, however, only focus on pupils' moral, social or cultural growth. The school fails to comply with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship and this further restricts the potential for enhancing pupils' spiritual development. Because of this, the school's overall contribution to developing pupils' spiritual awareness is only satisfactory.
65. Most subjects enable pupils to think and learn about their own culture. Pupils studying art, for instance, visit local buildings whilst exploring their own architectural heritage. The school pays good attention to pupils' cultural education through, for instance, the study of literature, drama and music. Some subjects inform pupils about other cultures. Artists explore aboriginal art, for example, while historians consider the natives of North America. Education in multi-cultural awareness, considered good at the time of the previous inspection, has not moved on enough so that pupils currently in the school have only a satisfactory appreciation of the impact of living in multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic British society.

Sixth form

66. The sixth-form curriculum offers a wide range of modular AS (advanced supplementary) and A2 (advanced level) courses. The school is developing effective links with other local schools and colleges to extend provision further. As well as the more traditional subjects studied at advanced level, such as English, mathematics, biology, physics, art and history, the school also offers courses in psychology, sociology, theatre and media studies. The school also offers vocational-based courses in art and information and communication technology and a separate key skills course for some students. It has rightly decided to concentrate on providing a rich choice of academic rather than vocational courses that better suits the needs of the vast majority of its students. Teachers ensure that students, who would benefit from following more

vocationally oriented courses, are given good guidance during Year 11 about where they can go to study these.

67. The sixth form is large and growing, with approximately 275 students currently on role. The majority of students come from Wellsway's main school, with a small proportion drawn from other local schools. There is a published minimum requirement for entry, but this is applied flexibly in order to help fulfil the aim of recruiting all motivated students, who would derive benefit from joining. All students wishing to join the sixth form have to make a formal application, which successfully helps them to reflect on the implications of committing themselves to sixth-form study.
68. The school encourages students to think about and participate in activities beyond their studies. There is a well co-ordinated, wide range of support activities that enriches the sixth-form taught curriculum. This includes paired reading with younger pupils, sixth-form council officer roles and training in basic counselling skills to help more vulnerable pupils in the main school. Students are encouraged to develop their community awareness and leadership skills and to take more personal responsibility. They benefit from this provision. Most students participate fully, willingly and with interest. Work-based learning activities are also encouraged where the school is confident that these support learning.
69. There is a programme of weekly personal, social and health education sessions for all students in Years 12 and 13. The majority of these help students prepare for their progression from the sixth form into employment or higher education. There are few opportunities in the programme for exploration of wider personal, social and health issues, although students' suggestions for broadening the provision are often supported. For example, the school enhanced the personal and health education programme when students asked for additional sessions on health and welfare, such as the risks of cancer, and fewer on studying for examinations. Students have 20 minutes with their tutor on four mornings each week and there is a useful weekly sixth-form bulletin. Individual tutorials take place during this time, but for the rest of the students the time is not always well spent. The consistency and quality of tutor support is not monitored and, hence, not all students benefit from this potentially valuable session.
70. The school does not provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. In this respect, it does not meet its statutory requirements. In subjects such as media, art and Italian, students are able to discuss moral, social and cultural issues. The advanced level course in philosophy and belief provides a powerful deepening of spiritual understanding and self-awareness for those students, who study it.
71. The school helps sixth-form students become mature and responsible young people by nurturing their personal growth well. Teachers give students the freedom to attend school only for timetabled lessons. They guide students in their programmes of private study so that students feel good about their learning. They listen to the students' ideas and respond well to particular requests.
72. The Year 12 student officers have just been elected and led a delightful sixth-form assembly to promote the activities of the officer team. Sixth-form students lead some whole-school activities, such as the charities organisation and the debating society. One of the most significant activities is the buddy network. The school is currently investigating sports leadership awards because many of the students already help with sports activities.

73. The main concern indicated by students in their pre-inspection questionnaires is that they do not feel they are treated as responsible young adults. This is confirmed by observation, which shows that some of the teaching in the sixth form is too narrowly focused and restricts students' involvement and participation. Lessons tend to be 'delivered to' the students rather than allowing the students to take some control over the classroom activity, setting and ambience. Teachers regularly discuss work with students, but these conversations do not focus on how this is presented and taught. This characteristic further reduces the potential for students' independent thinking and working. Students are exceptionally co-operative, but this tends to be of a compliant and muted, rather than an exciting and challenging, nature.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

74. The school takes very good care of its pupils and students. This is an improved feature of school life and one commended by pupils and parents. All members of staff pay careful attention to the health and safety needs of the whole school community. Routine health and safety inspections ensure that buildings and equipment remain in safe condition, although the school does not require all departments to account for regular risk assessments. Teachers assess risks for school visits particularly carefully so that the arrangements for those going on a ski trip, for instance, are as secure as possible. Parents welcome and appreciate this high level of concern. The school uses correct child-protection procedures very sensitively.
75. The identification of individual need is a key element of the school's care procedures. Parents comment that staff know all pupils very well and instantly attend to needs as they emerge. They acknowledge the thread of kindness, care and concern binding this school together. Heads of Year and tutors generally remain with the same groups of pupils as they move from Year 7 to Year 11. Teachers, therefore, get to know each pupil and their parents very well and are alert to any change in the pupils' behaviour or attitudes. This ensures that pupils feel safe and secure and always have someone to turn to for help and support. Both teaching and support staff provide comfort to troubled or worried pupils and sensitively administer aid to pupils, who are sick or injured. The school has a very efficient and sympathetic counsellor, whose regular visits help individual pupils and students cope with particular difficulties or concerns. Members of the administrative support team make very valuable contributions to school life. They ensure, for instance, that they transmit information about pupils' needs very quickly to both teachers and parents. They have a high degree of involvement in many aspects of pupils' care.
76. Pupils attend the school regularly because they like the school. Teachers carefully promote the importance of regular attendance and the vast majority of parents are exceptionally supportive of this aspect of the school's work.
77. Pupils behave very well because the teachers promote a very clear code of conduct. Clear day-to-day routines, such as the stacking of chairs away after assembly or responding to warning bells before lessons, mean that pupils learn to respond positively. Teachers make their expectations very clear regarding conduct. They use short-term exclusions very carefully to ensure that pupils and parents recognise the requirements of the school's code of conduct. The school seldom excludes any pupil permanently. Staff work particularly well with those pupils, who find it difficult to conform to the school's high expectations. Individual help and support, both in lessons and at break-times, ensures that these pupils are included in all aspects of school life and helped to improve their attitudes and behaviour. Bullying or any form of harassment is rare because of this sensitive and consistent approach to behaviour management.

78. Procedures for supporting students' academic and personal development are better than at the time of the previous inspection and pupils now get good academic guidance. Teachers track the progress of each pupil across all subjects for achievement, effort and behaviour. These interim pupil reviews highlight any areas of concern that are then followed up. Each year group has a learning co-ordinator, whose responsibility is to help identified pupils. They prepare action-plans and meet with pupils daily as a means of helping them improve.
79. All pupils contribute notes on their own achievements prior to teachers preparing interim or annual reports, called records of achievement. Pupils are, in this way, actively involved in the evaluation of their own progress. Pupils also keep their own tracking record of the grades awarded for effort, attitude and behaviour. Teachers use the full one to five scale for achievement, with a predetermined number of students allocated each grade. This is not the case for effort and behaviour and this leads to some confusion for pupils and parents that potentially reduces the value of the scheme.
80. Year 7 pupils begin their time at Wellsway with a very good understanding of National Curriculum levels because of their experiences in primary schools. The school does not regularly use level descriptions with pupils and this lessens the understanding that pupils have of how well they are doing. It is not until Year 9 when teachers begin to give predicted GCSE grades that pupils have a clear indication of how well they are doing against national standards. The school provides good records of achievement, but with some variability in the quality of information provided. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and constructively, providing careful direction about areas of weakness and making suggestions about how they might be improved. Pupils and parents welcome these constructive comments.
81. Teachers also give good guidance on pupils' personal development. Tutors, year heads and the learning co-ordinators are the key people in this process. They all have very good relationships with pupils. They praise their successes at work and play and gently encourage them to try harder in any areas of weakness. Teachers use tutor sessions to foster these relationships. These times are often sociable and students enjoy the quizzes and discussions that are often a feature of these sessions. They are not sufficiently structured, however, to ensure that the best use is made of this regular time with pupils to promote their academic and personal development. Many students, for instance, participate in extra activities, but the school does not, through the tutor system, formally and rigorously record the participation levels or the impact of this involvement on individual pupils.
82. Assessment arrangements are now more consistent than at the time of the previous inspection. The majority of departments have clear procedures for marking and assessing pupils' work and use these well to identify improvement and to plan for future activities. Assessment is particularly good in art and design, religious education and geography, but is an area for improvement in mathematics, science, citizenship, music and physical education. In Years 7 to 9, assessment objectives based on the expected levels of attainment, which are shared with all pupils, would further improve the learning climate and lend rigour to on-going assessment and authority to end-of-year assessment.
83. Good procedures are in place for identifying pupils with special educational needs and arranging the necessary support and guidance for them. Arrangements for tracking pupils' attainment and progress in subject areas are good. Information from this tracking is used well to help review pupils' progress towards meeting their individual targets and to raise their standard of work.

Sixth form

Assessment

84. Arrangements for monitoring sixth-form students' academic performance and wider development are very good. Each student keeps comprehensive and regularly updated records⁸. These records track individual progress and form the basis of regular meetings with their form tutors to review progress. Additionally, Year 12 and 13 students have a learning co-ordinator, who is responsible for implementing the effective 'four step support system' for students giving concern. This works very well, quickly identifying and supporting students not making the expected rate of progress.
85. Year 12 and 13 students receive a statement of progress in mid-autumn, followed by a subject report in April. This is the first formal notification of their target grades. Although many students have become aware of their likely grades in some subjects, they and their parents would value earlier predictions. Many teachers' comments on reports do not set out useful objectives, which would help students identify how to improve.

Advice, support and guidance

86. Wellsway school takes very good care of its sixth-form students. As with younger pupils, teachers ensure that they provide very good support and maintain care for the individual as a priority.
87. Sixth-form students are proud of their school and the way it supports them towards high standards of achievement. They recognise that staff give them very good support. Very few students leave without completing courses and only a few drop courses during the year. This reflects the careful guidance, which teachers give to students about course options and content. Tutors, year heads, learning co-ordinators and teachers quickly develop very good relationships with the students that foster security and confidence. Subject teachers monitor academic progress very carefully and quickly identify any unexpected changes in students' performance. When this occurs, teachers and students create solutions and action-plans together, which ensures that learning continues without interruption. Tutors have informal knowledge of each student's development, but they do not systematically use students' subject assessment grades to inform individual tutoring. This limits their ability to provide focused support.
88. Teachers give very good personal support to any worried, stressed, unhappy or under-performing students. Students are, therefore, happy and loyal to their school, but are not quite as enthusiastic, self-possessed and assured as their academic results might suggest.
89. Sixth-form students value the provision of the sixth-form centre and its study areas. Inspectors agree with some students' concerns about the lack of computers, though computer provision for sixth-form students is better than in the main school. Students recognise that they receive very good guidance about universities and career options. The school publishes an excellent weekly bulletin for the sixth-form students, which informs them of many activities and successes. A particularly significant feature of this publication is the University News feature. Every week, students are given up-to-date information about Open Days, courses and special events and this means they are

⁸ Called personal progress files.

kept very well informed. Very few students choose other routes than university when they leave the sixth form and the school guides these students very carefully to appropriate training placements and employment opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. Parents rate the school exceptionally highly, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. They particularly value the school's high academic expectations and aspirations and they are, thus, highly committed to the school. The school is, therefore, always over-subscribed and parents eagerly support the school's aims, values and practice. The vast majority applaud the school's approach to homework, for instance. Inspectors agree that teachers use homework well to extend the pupils' studies at home and to help parents involve themselves in their child's education. They appreciate that their children like the school and are well cared for. Very few are critical of aspects of school life, though some are, unjustifiably, concerned that the school does not seek to work closely with them.
91. The school produces a weekly newsletter, the Ammonite, for all members of the school community and this informs parents exceptionally well about daily events. Teachers provide good annual reports, which detail pupils' achievements and development. Some, but not all, describe carefully and in detail what each pupil needs to do next to improve. Pupils and parents comment that they are familiar with National Curriculum levels as a result of their primary school experience. Some find it more difficult to track pupils' progress in the early years at Wellsway because the school uses a different system of grading, which is not linked to any external reference points until Year 9 when teachers begin to use GCSE grade predictions.
92. Many parents actively support the school. An active Parent Teacher Association organises very regular activities that other parents readily support. The committee is impressively large and many other parents offer help for specific events. Parents organise a gardening club, which complements pupils' work in their gardening club. Parents help complete particular projects and assist with routine maintenance of the school's gardens and grounds.
93. The school reports that there is very good attendance at parents' meetings and all school events. This is understandable because teachers work hard to ensure that, through good communications with them, parents are able to feel part of the education process. Staff organise lots of interesting activities for parents to attend in school. Art exhibitions, for instance, mean that parents can view their children's work, while concerts demonstrate the high standards that pupils achieve and the enjoyment they derive from participating in bands and choirs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

94. The headteacher provides strong leadership of the school. Under his guidance, support and encouragement, members of staff work hard to achieve what the school sets out to do. Teachers and support staff are confident in the headteacher's leadership and he has their trust and respect. They are very committed, with the headteacher and governors, to helping pupils and students achieve well and they have the capacity to do so. Overall, management is good, but long-term strategic planning is not sufficiently coherent and evaluation of some aspects of the school's work is not rigorous enough.

95. The school has a clear set of aims that focus well on the needs of pupils and students. These aims are regularly reviewed, both by teachers and governors. They highlight the importance of a strong partnership between the school and parents and include a clear commitment to equality of opportunity, which is lived out well in practice. The statement of aims provides a valuable framework around which to build an effective programme for development in the school.
96. A major priority in the school is to enable pupils and students to do well in public examinations and tests and, in this, the school is very effective. Indeed, in this respect, the school does well to meet its aim of enabling 'young people to achieve their full potential'. In many other respects too, the school is very effective in meeting its aims. It is, for instance, successful in 'fostering the development of personal moral values' and for developing 'a wide range of skills in communication'. It is less effective in dealing with those aims associated with developing some aspects of wider personal development. Elsewhere, for instance, the report highlights areas where more could be done to help pupils and students develop independence in their studies and develop greater spiritual and multi-cultural awareness.
97. The working relationships between the headteacher, the staff and the governing body are very good. There is a strong sense of common purpose that pervades the school. Governors are actively involved in helping to shape the direction of the school and many give generously of their time to providing support and encouragement to teachers and support staff. A very good example of this is the contribution that many make to the annual programme of mock interviews, organised annually, for Year 11 pupils as part of their preparation for adult life. Governors are, however, over-reliant on the guidance they receive from senior members of staff and are, thus, not challenging enough. This is well illustrated by the fact that they have not taken the necessary steps to ensure that the school meets all of its responsibilities. In particular, they have not ensured that the school meets all its statutory requirements for the curriculum and for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
98. The school runs very well on a day-to-day basis. There is an excellent working relationship between the teaching and support staff that is a strength of the school. Administration is very smooth, with careful attention being given to ensuring that teachers are able to devote their time to work related to the classroom, as opposed to administrative tasks. The establishment of a resource centre, producing materials of very good quality for both teaching and support staff, is just one illustration of the thought that has gone into seeking to make the school both effective and efficient.
99. The school's plan for development sets out areas of work for the current year. The development plan has been developed over time and provides a valuable outline of how the school has reached its current position. Each year a careful review is undertaken of progress on the tasks identified as priorities. Sections of the plan also helpfully provide guidance on cost implications of some activities, particularly those related to premises and site development. These, in turn, are useful in guiding the budget-setting process in the school. What is lacking in the plan is a coherent framework for long-term development, encompassing, for instance, departmental plans and a whole-school strategy for the development of information and communication technology. Such a plan would provide a context for work in the current year. The potential to generate such a framework is provided by a clearly articulated set of priorities, but these are not developed, however, into a comprehensive long-term strategy that would help to guide further improvement. In addition, the plan does not, against each activity, provide an indication of what the intended outcomes are in terms of improving quality and provision. As a result, the potential of the plan to provide a means of evaluation of school effectiveness is reduced. The lack of a long-term plan

has been a significant factor in slowing overall progress in the school and particularly in slowing work to deal with issues raised in the previous inspection report.

100. Teachers holding posts of responsibility in the school are given clear outlines of the tasks that they are expected to undertake. Members of the school leadership team complement one another well in their support for the headteacher in the leadership of the school. Similarly, middle managers are given good levels of encouragement to lead their subject and year tutor teams. As a result, the overall leadership and management provided by these middle managers are good, though there is significant variation in their effectiveness. This variation comes about because the arrangements for their accountability are not sufficiently robust. Although there is regular dialogue between senior and middle managers to monitor developments, this is not sharply focused enough on priorities within departments or year groups. An example of this is the slow response when standards in English tests started to decline. This decline lasted two years before being successfully arrested. Another example of the lack of structure to this accountability is the variation in the extent to which departmental plans fit with the whole-school plan for development. There is an intention, within the whole-school plan, for it to provide a 'framework for all departmental and year plans'. The fact that some departments are not, within their plans, dealing adequately with whole-school priorities tends to slow overall progress in the school.
101. Middle managers are not required to review and evaluate the work of their teams with the necessary rigour to bring about good levels of improvement. There is, for example, a wide variation in the overall quality of teaching in the school, partly because the reasons for this variation have not been identified. A programme of classroom observation of teachers at work is in place, involving observation by both other teachers and by members of the school leadership team. This programme does not systematically identify strengths and areas for development. Nor does it adequately provide the necessary support activity and follow-up review to help teachers improve. This lack of sharpness is also a limiting factor in an otherwise very good programme of performance management of teachers.
102. One area of very successful management is the provision the school makes for pupils with special educational needs. This department is very well managed by a knowledgeable and energetic co-ordinator, supported by a well-organised team of specialists and a clerical assistant. A link governor shows outstanding commitment to the department's work. Annual reviews of pupils with statements of educational need are properly carried out and all pupils connected with the department have appropriate targets and individual education plans. The new Code of Practice is fully in place and the school is well advanced with its plans towards meeting the requirements of the Discrimination and Disability Act. Newly established accommodation provides a very good base for the department. Pupils can visit the base at lunchtime if they want a secure place to work or socialise and pupils with special short-term difficulties can be found working there in a supervised, but sympathetic, environment. However, although the inside of this base is comfortable and well equipped, the outside is in a poor state of repair. The co-ordinator shows excellent leadership and, despite having a heavy teaching load outside the department, is intent on maintaining and improving the department's provision wherever possible.
103. The school makes good overall use of the resources available to it. Both teaching and support staff are managed well and have, in most cases, the necessary resources to enable them to work well. Teacher levels are relatively high. This, alongside the shorter than recommended length of the taught week, means that teachers do not feel too pressured. Governors are aware of this and are keen to maintain these good staffing levels. Not all governors are sufficiently aware, however, that the school

spends a much higher proportion of their budget on teaching staff than do most other schools. Because they do not ask such questions, their ability to make well-informed judgements about how to shape the school budget to meet all needs as best they can is compromised. Governors have not, for example, set out, within their planning, a strategy for improving the ratio of computers to pupils in the school, which is currently well below the national average.

104. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are well established, as required, and the school has successfully implemented a programme of performance management for support staff. Alongside this, good steps are taken to make sure that members of staff attend relevant courses and training to keep abreast of developments. This contributes well to making all members of the staff team feel valued. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of teachers new to the school or to the profession. The school provides excellent support for students undertaking initial teacher-training. Recognition of the care that the school takes of its staff has been given in the award to the school of Investors in People status. Less attention is paid to the rigorous evaluation of teachers' work in classrooms on a regular basis. As a result, not all teachers are performing as well as they could because they are not given enough guidance in how to improve. The identification of best practice is not sufficiently well identified and shared as a means of bringing about further improvement.
105. The school is well resourced, except in the area of computer provision. Teachers have the necessary books and equipment they need. Work in departments is potentially supported by a well-stocked and efficiently managed school library. The overall accommodation of the school is adequate, though there is little space to accommodate the anticipated rise in the number of sixth-form students. Good work has been undertaken, however, to provide a good sixth-form base that encourages students in their study. The quality of accommodation varies considerably, however. Governors are careful to build into budgets a rolling programme of basic maintenance and repair, but some areas remain not conducive to effective study. Whilst there has been good improvement in the accommodation for art and design, the accommodation for design and technology has not been improved since the previous inspection. Science teaching is somewhat restricted by the lack of sufficient laboratories for the number of pupils and students in the school and some aspects of accommodation for physical education are not good enough.
106. The school seeks to apply the principles of best value well. It regularly compares its performance with other schools and there is a degree of challenge in the targets that it sets itself. All members of the school community are consulted and this is a particularly good feature of work with parents, who feel actively engaged in what the school is trying to do. Careful attention is paid to gaining good value for work carried out on behalf of the governors in the school. Applying these principles, alongside seeking to provide an effective education for its pupils and students and paying careful attention to the management of resources, all help the school to give good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

107. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. There is a clear sense of purpose among all, who work for and with sixth-form students, with a commitment to helping students to achieve well. The entry policy is sympathetic to admitting into the sixth form all students, who are capable of making a success of their studies, and this is a good

illustration of the wider commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all sixth-form students.

108. The school's aims effectively cover sixth-form work. Alongside these aims, the sixth-form prospectus sets out a clear rationale for work with these students. The school identifies good priorities for development in the sixth form and takes action to bring these developments to fruition. This is well illustrated by the way that the school has sought to keep abreast of the many recent changes in the examination structure for sixth-form students. Indeed, the school has been frustrated by making what it believed to be an effective response to these changes, only for the national picture to change. A good example of this was the school's very good attempts to provide an effective course in key skills for all sixth-form students.
109. Arrangements for the rigorous evaluation of the impact of teachers' and tutors' work have a relatively low profile in the sixth form. Informal monitoring of teaching takes place, but this lacks the rigour to identify areas where further improvement is necessary. Linked to this is the lack of a well-established system for sharing best practice among teaching colleagues. As a result the quality of teaching varies considerably. Similarly, there is no planned review of the work of tutors. Hence, the degree of support and guidance received by students through the tutor system varies considerably and potentially compromises the commitment of the school to providing equality of opportunity. This lack of effective evaluation of teachers' work is a weakness in otherwise good sixth-form management.
110. Teachers with responsibility are given encouragement and support and, thus, are keen to do well. The school's plan for development has a valuable section focused on improvement in post-16 education. This highlights priorities, but lacks even an outline of the activity necessary to bring about what is intended. This makes it very difficult for teachers and managers to recognise the contribution they are making to this development and, thus, hinders a review of progress.
111. Governors are actively involved in promoting the sixth form. They are well aware of its strengths and of the overall positive impact that the sixth form has on the wider life and work of the school. They fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities. They do not, however, make sure that all students are able to follow a course in religious education or to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

Resources

112. Educational resources in the sixth form are supported through sound financial management. Care is taken to make sure that running the sixth form does not require use of resources or funds intended for main-school pupils. The sixth form provides a good focus for maintaining study and for preparing students for higher education. It is cost effective and gives good value for money.
113. The school is fortunate to have a staff with very good qualifications and experience for teaching in the sixth form. The match of teachers to the needs of the sixth-form curriculum is very good. Arrangements for performance management are good, but individual teacher targets are not yet fully linked to wider individual priorities for development arising from a detailed, rigorous and on-going evaluation of classroom practice. Arrangements for the induction of teachers new to sixth-form work are very thorough. Teachers receive effective support from members of the support staff team.

The school provides a very effective base for initial teacher-training students to experience sixth-form teaching as part of their training.

114. The accommodation available for sixth-form work is generally good. Effective work has been undertaken to establish a sixth-form block, which has encouraged a sense of identity in the sixth form and has promoted good work habits. Resource provision for the sixth form is good, with an adequate number of computers to sustain sixth-form study. The school is aware of the need for further improvement in this aspect of provision, especially as numbers are anticipated to grow in future years. As in the main school, good attention is paid to applying the principles of best value in sixth-form work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

115. In order to maintain and further improve overall standards and provision in the school, governors and staff should:

- Improve the curriculum in order to meet statutory requirements and to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement by:
 - Ensuring that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study all aspects of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology;
 - Enabling all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow a course in religious education that meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus;
 - Reviewing the school's approach to the provision of a design and technology course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11;
 - Providing all pupils and students with a programme of citizenship education in line with national guidelines.

(Paragraphs 41, 49, 50, 52, 55, 97, 145–147, 149, 175–181 and 213)

- Improve teaching and learning by reducing the variation in overall quality. This should be achieved by:
 - Developing detailed guidelines for teaching and learning that establish clear criteria to guide teachers so that they know what they are trying to achieve;
 - Developing a more rigorous and systematic programme of evaluation of teaching and learning;
 - Ensuring that teachers receive the support and help required to improve their practice.

(Paragraphs 34, 43, 100, 101, 104 and 109)

- Enable pupils to become more actively involved in their learning by:
 - Ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills and understanding of how to develop pupil independence in their learning;
 - Providing guidance to teachers on how to engage pupils more actively in investigative, experimental and research activity and in debate and discussion;
 - Ensuring that subject teachers have enough time to develop these approaches successfully.

(Paragraphs 17, 20, 62, 63 and 180)

As a means of supporting work to bring about these improvements, staff and governors should:

- Improve the coherence of long-term strategic planning in the school by:
 - Providing a detailed plan for development that looks beyond the coming year, bringing together the elements of forward-planning already in place in the school;

- Ensuring that the intended outcomes, in terms of improvement to standards and quality, are set out for each priority area;
- Defining detailed arrangements to measure the success of all actions taken to meet priorities.

(Paragraphs 94 and 99)

Sixth form

- Improve the effectiveness of tutors working with sixth-form students in order to make this time each day more relevant to students by:
 - Providing a clear framework of what is expected of tutors;
 - Developing a rigorous programme of evaluation and follow-up support for tutors;
 - Providing the necessary training to help tutors fulfil their roles effectively.

(Paragraphs 69, 84, 87 and 109)

- Enable all sixth-form students to take a course in religious education, as required.

(Paragraphs 70, 111 and 278)

In addition, governors should include in their action plan:

- Arrangements by which they will provide for all pupils and sixth-form students to be able to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

(Paragraphs 64, 97 and 111)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	147
	Sixth form	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		88

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	9	40	57	35	6	0	0
Percentage	6	27	39	24	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	26	24	16	0	0	0
Percentage	6	37	34	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1083	275
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	42	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	105	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	116	99	215

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	100	101
	Girls	85	85	83
	Total	171	185	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (84)	86 (88)	86 (89)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (45)	64 (68)	51 (56)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	98	98
	Girls	86	85	80
	Total	174	183	178
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (87)	86 (89)	83 (91)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (46)	67 (70)	50 (57)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	120	92	212

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	93	118	118
	Girls	80	90	92
	Total	173	208	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	82 (75)	98 (98)	99 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	52.4
	National	39.8

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year, who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	52	52	104

Average A/AS points score per candidate	Male	Female	All
	School	* (17.8)	* (17.8)
National	* (16.9)	* (17.7)	* (17.4)

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 is not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1297	21	1
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	12		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	11		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African	1		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2		
Chinese	3		
Any other ethnic group	5	1	
No ethnic group recorded	7		

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	108

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	22.2
Sixth form	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3 442 047
Total expenditure	3 540 621
Expenditure per pupil	2647
Balance brought forward from previous year	152 685
Balance carried forward to next year	54 111

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

18%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1358

Number of questionnaires returned

249

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	47	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	42	2	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	53	4	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	49	11	2	3
The teaching is good.	48	49	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	43	17	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	37	5	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	48	14	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	77	21	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	41	3	2	3

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were very positive in their views of the school. A small number were concerned that the school paid too much attention to the needs of the more able pupils and less to those with special educational needs. A small number of parents felt that the information given to them about the progress made by their children could be improved.

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

- Standards of writing at 14 and 16 are very high.
- Pupils enjoy reading and take advantage of the good resources available.
- Pupils use information and communication technology confidently to improve their written work.
- The very good marking by teachers significantly supports the progress of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Encouraging pupils to develop their ideas more extensively in class discussions.
- Building more rapidly on the progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8 by taking account of their prior achievements.

116. At the age of 14 there has been a marked improvement in standards over the previous two years. Pupils are now gaining levels that are well above the national average and are closer to those reported in the previous inspection. Standards in GCSE English and English literature continue to be high with a significant proportion of outstanding grades. The strong areas are reading and writing. Pupils listen very well, but some are reluctant to develop their answers orally despite having the vocabulary and ideas to do so. Boys and girls do equally well at the higher levels and grades. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and many achieve commendable results in GCSE.

117. Overall, progress of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 is good, but slower progress is made in Years 7 and 8 because teachers do not always take into account pupils' prior achievements. Consequently, some of the work is not well matched to their individual needs. At times, the more able pupils are really challenged to think both in class and for homework, for example, in the unit of work on the development of language where pupils have to trace the way that certain words change over time. Less able pupils struggle with this activity unless the teacher is close at hand. At other times, the more able are not challenged, especially to develop their ideas orally, and lessons run out of steam because the pace drops and the work for them is too easy. Pupils listen well and translate what they learn into good written pieces, but even in the older classes many are reluctant to extend their ideas if the teachers do not structure the lessons carefully. A good example of a well-planned lesson occurred in Year 10 where pupils devised a trial scene to judge the actions of characters in 'An Inspector Calls'. All pupils were fully involved and learned by developing their ideas alongside the views of others, often making skilful reference to the play to back up their viewpoint. The teacher subtly linked the discussions with adroit questions and by acting as a scribe for the class, capturing the key points on the board. More pupils would benefit from this type of activity throughout the school.

118. Reading is well above average and is a strong feature of the school. Teachers promote the importance of reading in many subjects. Pupils maintain good reading records, which serve them well from Year 7 and on into the sixth form. Teachers set varied and interesting activities to help pupils to extend their understanding and enjoyment of a range of different genres and authors. Sixth-form students act as

reading partners for those younger pupils, who find the task difficult, and help them to improve. This additionally promotes good social development. The library is full of attractive and appealing works of fiction suitable for all tastes and many pupils take advantage of this valuable resource. Pupils in all year groups read aloud with conviction and bring the pages to life. Most enjoy reading, apart from a minority of pupils in Year 10, who lack the self-discipline to organise themselves to make good use of the time set aside for silent reading. Younger classes show good skills in interpreting new words, such as when Year 8 pupils were asked to read out some Middle English extracts. Results in English literature are very good and reflect this focus on wide reading.

119. Standards in writing are well above average at age 14 years. This is despite the lack of challenge in some of the tasks set in Year 7. Pupils build on their obvious fluency in setting down their ideas and produce very interesting work by the end of Year 8 and into Year 9. Teachers encourage pupils to use skills learned in other subjects to give greater range to their writing. For example, they employ time-lines from history to show the development of character and plot in stories. All pupils have used information and communication technology to good effect, both in their research from the Internet and in word processing, as an aid to drafting their essays. They manifestly enjoy writing. Much of the writing captures the audience's imagination and creates good tension: "A hand was placed over my mouth. I tried to scream. Nothing came out. I saw a glint of silver. A knife". Teachers encourage pupils to try out new ideas and already in Year 9 pupils are developing good analytical skills in literary criticism. This is well illustrated in work on 'Twelfth Night' where more able pupils recognise the links between Viola's double-edged imagery and her double-identity.
120. Good writing continues into the older classes. Teachers' sharp and clearly focused marking helps pupils to see how they might achieve the high grades in GCSE. As a result, pupils write in clear, technically accurate paragraphs using some delightfully astute and alliterative comments such as: "Maybe 'Independence Day' is not a tribute to science fiction but is poking fun at far-fetched fantasies of the genre." Lower-attaining pupils are helped to do well by the careful writing frames that they are given and because teachers ensure that they are included in the questions that they pose to the mixed-ability classes.
121. Standards of literacy across other subjects are high. Pupils have many chances to read aloud in class and many subject teachers encourage them to write in different styles, including note-making, letters, diary entries and formal reports. In geography, there is often a focus on the ways that words are formed and pupils understand, for instance, that 'petroleum' is a blend of words of foreign origin. Pupils extend their understanding of technical words in essays of increasing complexity in science. Pupils write extensively in history and the quality of the presentation of work on Native American Indians, for example, is very good. In modern foreign languages and design and technology, pupils do not always show the same skill in applying their obvious literacy skills in their writing. Overall, however, pupils spell accurately and have a good grasp of a wide-ranging vocabulary.
122. The quality of the English teaching is good. There are not as many examples of very good lessons as reported in the last inspection. The department is largely new and is quickly establishing a consistent approach to planning and review. There are great strengths in the marking of pupils' work that helps pupils to see how to improve their writing. Teachers are more confident in their organisation of work for older pupils and they cater well for the range of abilities in the classes, with well-targeted questions to individuals during discussions and by offering clearly structured guidelines to those, who find writing difficult. In younger classes, teachers sometimes miss the chance to

set more able pupils the sort of work that allows them to speculate and work things out on their own. This means that they do not always build on the learning that occurred in the different elements of the literacy strategy in their primary school. Teachers provide well for lower-attaining pupils in withdrawal lessons and when there are support teachers in the room. There are good opportunities to promote pupils' social, cultural and moral development through the study of literature and the influence of the media.

123. The leadership and management of the subject are sound overall. Day-to-day organisation is thorough, but the long-term planning recently focused on GCSE and post-16 classes at the expense of developing the lessons learned from the literacy strategy. There are good systems for analysing results in Years 10 and 11 and for supporting pupils, who need extra help. A similar emphasis is now taking place in the younger classes. The department is working well as a team.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above national averages.
- A well-qualified team of teachers is led and managed very well by the head of department.
- The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship are dealt with well within mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching and learning, with increased monitoring and sharing of good practice.
- Greater range and variety of teaching and learning methods and improved assessment procedures.
- The spiritual dimension of mathematics to become more explicit.

124. Pupils enter the school with above average standards in mathematics and, with positive attitudes and hard work, make good progress. The very good teaching in Years 7 to 9, improved through developments recommended by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, has helped pupils achieve well. Preparation for external tests and examinations has also helped achieve success, to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 11.

125. Results in the standard assessment tests at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved since the previous inspection, with those in 2001 and 2002 being well above national averages. In 2002, results were above those in English, but similar to those in science. In 2002, boys achieved slightly better results than girls for the first time, particularly at the higher levels. The work of pupils currently in Year 9 is also well above average. The most able pupils in all years are being stretched and challenged, with extended and enriched work in lessons and for homework. Adapted resources, smaller classes and sympathetic teaching, sometimes with extra support in the classroom, help those with special educational needs to learn successfully. Number skills are developed well and algebra is a focus from Year 7 to develop understanding, with an additional class in Year 9 to help pupils improve their algebraic manipulation. Shape and space topics and data handling are taught well, with ICT integrated into mathematics lessons in Years 7 to 9.

126. GCSE results in 2002 were the best ever and were well above national averages. There has been a steady improvement since the previous inspection. The proportion of A* and A grades was very high compared to national averages. More pupils were entered for the intermediate level examination than before, leading to more pupils obtaining a C grade

through dedicated teaching and detailed preparation for the examination. Girls obtained better results than boys, but both were well above the national averages for girls and boys respectively. Results in GCSE in 2002 show good progress for these pupils, given their results in national tests two years previously.

127. Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils enter the school with above average number skills and they are developed further throughout all years by the mathematics department. Those entering the school with less than National Curriculum Level 4 are given intensive help in special withdrawal groups in Year 7 and, as a result, make very good progress. Number and graphical skills are well taught by all the mathematics teachers, with regular mental and written practice in calculation. The work of other departments is supported by pupils' good grasp of numeracy skills and good standards were noted in science and geography. Teachers were observed using formulae and specific graph skills in science and grid references and converting data to graphs in geography. Whole-school training in the development of numeracy skills in other subjects, as part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, took place last year, with a subsequent review of where, in other subjects, mathematics skills are used. The impact of this training and review has not yet influenced schemes of work or teaching and learning in all subjects and, hence, not all subjects are contributing fully to developing these skills. As yet, there is no overall numeracy policy, or monitoring of numeracy across the curriculum, to help guide further improvements.
128. Pupils in all years and all ability groups have positive attitudes to school and mathematics, although their interest and enthusiasm varies with topic and with teacher. In Year 7, stress is placed on knowing and understanding mathematical terminology, as observed in lessons on algebra notation and types of average. As pupils progress, they use key words well, discussing the work, methods and answers with their neighbours, although there is no structured discussion or group-work. Presentations by pupils to the class would benefit pupils' verbal confidence, but are rare, although an example was seen in Year 7 using data to give a weather forecast. The pressure of time in Years 7 to 9 tends to inhibit the use of investigative approaches to introduce and develop relevant topics, which limits pupils' skills at using and applying mathematics. Most pupils relate positively to their teachers and are usually polite and respectful, adapting well to different styles and personalities. Pupils refer well to their own textbooks and appreciate teachers' use of good-quality resources, such as the Year 10 lesson on scatter graphs and correlation where the teacher effectively used a laptop computer and projector to generate accurate graphical representations very quickly. Pupils use calculators very well, especially in work on trigonometry. Most pupils conscientiously complete homework and refer to teachers' marking. They value especially teachers' comments in their books about their achievements and they take note of any help on how to improve.
129. The quality of teaching is good overall, though varying from satisfactory to excellent. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Strengths of teaching include the knowledge and understanding of the subject and of examination requirements. Most teachers plan their lessons well, use relevant high-quality resources and mark homework carefully. The policy in the department is not to mark class-work, though to do so would encourage greater involvement from pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and most have good questioning techniques. The best teachers set and maintain a good pace to lessons, using a variety of teaching and learning activities. Few teachers share learning intentions with pupils at the beginning of lessons, although this would help pupils develop their self-assessment skills by enabling them to summarise their own learning against the objectives for the lesson. Assessment is by regular half-term tests, marked as a percentage, with records of these assessments kept and analysed, but National Curriculum level descriptions are not used to define what pupils know, understand and can do. This leads to some confusion for pupils, who have been used to knowing the level at which they are working from their experiences in primary schools.

130. All mathematics teachers are well qualified, with a good range of experience, and are well led and managed by the head of department. There is a clear set of aims and objectives and good, precise documentation. Schemes of work are developing well, fitting the Key Stage 3 Strategy recommendations into Years 7 to 9 and adapting to the revised GCSE requirements. ICT is taught well in, and through, mathematics lessons. Although the spiritual and cultural elements of mathematics are recognised by some teachers, they are not made explicit or included in the scheme of work and, thus, are not dealt with consistently well. Good examples were seen, however, of citizenship elements in mathematics lessons, such as the 'real-life' Year 10 work on tax and the 'Maths in the News' display. Display is very good in most rooms and plentiful resources are available. Accommodation is dispersed and varied, which hinders close co-operation between all members of the department. Informal monitoring and observation of lessons takes place, but inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning remains because of a lack of rigour in evaluating strengths and areas for improvement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards in national tests and examinations are well above average.
- Pupils make very good progress in science throughout the school.
- Pupils respond very well to the subject and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and the examination requirements is excellent, so that pupils are very well prepared for external assessments.
- Very good leadership and good management have ensured that high standards are maintained.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers identification of what pupils know, understand and can do at the start of a topic and planning to build on this.
- The range of learning activities and styles.

131. Pupils' standards in science on entry to the school are well above average. They make very good progress throughout the school, maintaining well above average standards in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11.

132. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above national averages and in line with those for similar schools. They represent very good progress, given pupils' standards on entry to the school. These results have improved slightly over the last three years, after a dip, and are at the same level as at the time of the previous inspection. Boys and girls do equally well. Results in 2002 were higher than in English, but similar to those in mathematics.

133. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above the national and similar schools averages. They were a significant improvement after several years of decline since the previous inspection. They represent very good progress from standards at the end of Year 9 two years earlier. They were equally good for boys and girls and were generally better than results in other subjects.

134. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm these well above average standards and very good achievement throughout the school. These good standards are the result of a well-organised curriculum, very good deployment of staff, highly

focused teaching and pupils' very good attitudes. By the end of Year 9, for example, virtually all pupils use abstract ideas or models to explain why objects move or stay still and to describe differences between solids, liquids and gases. Standards in scientific enquiry are not quite so high as these skills and are not given such prominence in the curriculum, teaching and assessment. For example, pupils do not routinely repeat readings, comment on how they might improve their accuracy or explain why some results do not fit a pattern. Pupils make very good use of a wide range of scientific vocabulary, they read and listen with understanding and write fluently and with a sense of purpose. When given the opportunity they can also express their ideas orally, though not in such depth as they are rarely asked to speak at length in lessons. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to gather data and interpret it. They also use graphs and formulae to help their interpretation and have high standards of numeracy. By the end of Year 11, about one third of pupils are working at standards indicative of top grades. They are confident in balancing symbol equations and can explain complex concepts such as negative feedback in the control of the menstrual cycle. Again, standards in investigative work are slightly less good and pupils make more limited use of ICT as the curriculum and teaching give these less emphasis.

135. Pupils' attitudes to science are very good. They are committed to learning and respond very positively to their teachers' instruction. Their high attendance, conscientiousness, well-organised approach and follow-up outside lessons contribute to their very good achievement over time. They show relatively less independence and initiative, as their learning is very tightly structured and organised, giving them little scope to develop these aspects of their work.
136. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Almost half is very good or excellent and only a very small minority is unsatisfactory. This is better than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and of the examination board requirements. This is very well used to support clear exposition, supplemented with regular examination questions and tests to check pupils' knowledge. Pupils are confident that they will be very well prepared for external assessments. Lessons proceed at a very good pace. Pupils respond well to this and work very hard. In the better lessons, a variety of activities are used to engage pupils. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, less able pupils set up an experiment to make a salt. While waiting for this to finish, a short, but very well focused, explanation enabled pupils to complete word equations for making salts before returning to evaluate their own salt production. Their learning was excellent. In some lessons, learning is less than good for two main reasons. Firstly, the work is not well matched to pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. This is a particular problem in classes where there is a wider range of prior attainment, but not confined to these. For example, in a lower set of Year 11 pupils with relatively weak literacy, complex technical vocabulary was used without explanation or definition, so that pupils were confused. Secondly, in some lessons, pupils are too passive and spend the whole lesson listening and copying. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, able pupils were asked to copy a very complicated flow-diagram. While they noted and remembered the facts, they did not understand the complex concept involved.
137. Leadership of the science department is very good. A clear sense of purpose and very good relationships secure excellent teamwork within the separate subjects and across the whole department. Teachers and support staff are fully committed to the work of the department. Management of the subject is good. Teachers are very well deployed, making best use of their strengths, and the use of trios of specialist teachers, who co-operate to teach each group in Year 10 and 11, is a significant factor in their success in GCSE examinations. The development plan is a living document linked to the school

priorities and is evaluated annually. The work of the department is monitored through observation of teaching, pupils' work and test and examination results. In some cases, action has been taken as a result of evaluation, such as the introduction of a new scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 following identification of some less good achievement for more able pupils in these years. This is not yet fully implemented and the most able are still not fully stretched, especially in dealing with open-ended problems. A recent audit accurately identified those aspects of the department's work that are less than good. However, progress in addressing these has been slow and systems are not yet in place to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching. Accommodation was identified as poor at the time of the last inspection. Some improvements have been made, but there are still insufficient laboratories for the demands of the curriculum, contributing to the relatively limited amount of investigative work. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11, with very good integration of theory and practical work.
- The subject is well led and this ensures clear direction for the department's work.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships and pupils benefit from high levels of personal tuition and guidance.
- Assessment is thorough and the support given matches pupils' needs and leads to good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9.
- A reduction of group sizes in Year 9 lessons.

138. Teacher assessment shows that attainment at the age of 14 is above the national average, with girls and boys performing equally well. The number of pupils at the age of 16 gaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 was well above the national average, with two fifths gaining A* or A grades. Although boys perform less well than girls at these higher grades, their results were still well above national averages. The trends of very good attainment in recent years have been maintained in GCSE examinations.

139. In the work seen during the inspection, standards by the age of 14 are above average. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. Pupils' achievements in Year 9 are good in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they enter the school, which are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good and pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They are supported well in classrooms and apply themselves purposefully. Pupils are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. Evidence from sketchbooks shows that pupils successfully demonstrate the skills involved in exploring and assessing information. Positive responses were seen when pupils were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their immediate learning objectives. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of ICT, although pupils sometimes use it in research for historical information. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, pupils were able to select images for a monoprint exercise and experimented well with the use of texture and had a good awareness of composition.

140. The work of pupils currently in Year 11 is well above average. This is a direct result of assessment procedures, which now ensure pupils have opportunities to discuss their achievement and to set targets for their future development. Achievement by the age of 16 is good and pupils are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. They develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work and demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. The range of media opportunities and development of personal interests have helped improve the level of boys' achievement since the last inspection. Design sheets for project research are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well.
141. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and are well motivated because of the teachers' enthusiasm and very good preparation of different levels of work, designed to cater to the levels of attainment found in the class. More able pupils are challenged to achieve their full potential. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils were working from direct observation and the shape, structure and form of musical instruments were being analysed well. Selection and enlargement processes were being developed and tonal considerations interpreted using pastels.
142. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. With older pupils, teachers use a greater range of teaching strategies and make better use of homework. In the best lessons, the pace of work is very good and the teacher reinforces the learning that has taken place from the activity. Teachers are very committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is very good. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing the work of the previous lesson enables pupils to build well upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. Teachers make very good use of praise to encourage the participation of all pupils and use question and answer successfully to ensure pupils are actively involved. In Years 7 to 9, teachers do not share with pupils clear assessment objectives, based on the expected levels of attainment for National Curriculum art. As a result, pupils are not aware enough of how well they are doing compared with national standards. Teachers pay attention to improving pupils' literacy skills, with design and research work revealing that pupils are given active support with the development of their reading and writing skills.
143. The integration of theory and practical work in Years 10 and 11 is very good. In a Year 10 lesson, for instance, pupils were developing direct observational drawing skills and connection with the work of William Morris was being considered effectively. Homework is used well to support project work in Years 10 and 11. A Year 11 lesson observed exemplified this with a well-structured examination preparation study in which all pupils were absorbed in their individual work.
144. The department is well managed by a head of department, who has established appropriate priorities for the development of the subject. His leadership ensures clear direction. Excellent schemes of work and departmental policies provide very good guidance for staff. The teachers work well as a team and give freely of their time to extending pupils' learning. The head of department monitors the work of the department effectively through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment is effective and informs planning well. There is very limited access to computers within the department. Although improvements since the last inspection in ICT have been good, its full potential as a learning aid has not been fully developed. Extra-curricular activities are very good. Visits to galleries and museums and the use of an artist in residence have a positive effect on the quality and range of pupils' work. Technical support enables the teaching of a range of media activities to be possible.

The library stock of quality reference books for art and design is good, meeting many of the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. Multi-cultural connections are now part of schemes of work. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good as a result of clear departmental leadership and very good teaching, which is well structured and challenges pupils.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Some areas of the curriculum are successfully taught in the context of other subjects.
- A range of extra-curricular activities helps reinforce citizenship education.

Areas for improvement

- A course that meets statutory requirements.
- Arrangements for the assessment of this subject.

145. The school does not currently meet the requirement to provide a taught course or to assess pupils' attainment and progress in citizenship. However, many aspects of its work within and beyond the taught curriculum contribute to pupils' skills and understanding of citizenship.

146. A thorough review, some three years ago, identified where the school was teaching aspects of citizenship in the context of other subjects. This review has recently been updated. This audit and information from subject inspectors during the inspection provides good evidence of many instances, both across the curriculum and in other activities, where pupils develop their understanding and awareness as citizens. Across a range of subjects, pupils develop their skills in justifying opinions and discussing issues. This is particularly evident within the teaching of philosophy and belief, where pupils successfully discuss, challenge and develop their views on a wide range of political, religious, spiritual, moral and social issues. Elsewhere, the characteristics of economic and political systems are developed. In a mathematics lesson, for example, aspects of taxation and its place in the economy were developed within work on percentages. In business studies in Years 10 and 11, those pupils following this course gain an extensive understanding of the world of business economics and methodology. In history, pupils develop their understanding of political systems and government.

147. The sixth-form buddy system provides an opportunity for senior students to put their skills as citizens into the practical context of supporting younger pupils. Beyond the taught curriculum, activities such as debating societies, team games and social functions also enable pupils to develop the wider skills of being good citizens and contributing to the life of the school. The school has gathered a comprehensive collection of such examples, which have been published, and has plans to provide a structured course of citizenship both in the main school and in the sixth form from September 2003. The intention is to incorporate aspects of personal, social and health education within this course. The details of this course and its assessment are not yet in place, but teachers have been identified to lead this subject and preparatory work is currently taking place.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The quality of what is provided in design and technology is good, but since not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a course in design and technology, as required, overall provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' specialist subject knowledge, which helps achieve GCSE results that are well above the national average.
- Good teaching throughout the school, resulting in pupils making good progress.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils, which contributes to their good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Strategic leadership and management.
- Curriculum development in Years 7 to 9.
- Access to information and communication technology (ICT) provision.
- Specialist equipment and resources in the workshops and specialist rooms.

148. Teacher assessments and inspection evidence show that, at the end of Year 9, pupils reach above average standards. The majority of pupils enter the school with average attainment in design and technology. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over their first three years in the school. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls and pupils achieve consistently well across all the specialist areas. The department has maintained the good standards in Years 7 to 9 achieved in the last inspection.
149. The achievement of pupils currently approaching the end of Year 11 is very good. After a slight dip in 2001, GCSE results in 2002 showed that the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was well above the national average, with girls performing significantly better than boys. Just over half of all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study design and technology. This means that the school continues to fail to meet the statutory National Curriculum requirements, as identified in the last inspection report. Attention to this key issue has been unsatisfactory as the school has continued to fail to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement in this subject.
150. Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are good. Pupils apply high levels of concentration and persistence. They take particular pride in their practical work, showing involvement and enthusiasm. This contributes to their good progress. They are very keen to talk about their work and are able to explain how they realised their designs. This strength is not fully exploited by encouraging pupils to take increased responsibility for their learning. Equipment and resources are used safely and with confidence. Behaviour is rarely less than good and pupils respect and use established routines to settle quickly, indicating good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils work responsibly, both individually and in pairs, giving advice and support to each other. The subject, thus, contributes well to pupils' social learning. Not enough is done to make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development through extending project content and approaches in design and technology.
151. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Teachers have high levels of specialist expertise, which is well used to give pupils access to a broad range of making activities and to support pupils' achievement of high public examination results. Teachers are effective in giving pupils individual verbal feedback on their progress in practical work and specific advice on how to improve. This is particularly effective when supporting pupils with special educational needs, who, thus,

make good progress in the subject. Where teaching and learning is best, teachers ensure that pupils know what is expected at the start of the lesson. This helps them link their activities to the intended learning and encourages them to make their own decisions and evaluate their own learning. Pupils value being given this responsibility and it leads to higher levels of motivation and learning. However, teachers do not actively involve pupils in lesson introductions or in summaries in order to assess and extend their understanding better.

152. Systems for assessment, marking and recording are effectively structured and teachers generally apply them well. Pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate their work and progress. However, the frequent changes of teachers in Years 7 to 9 that are necessary to ensure projects are taught by specialist staff limits teachers' ability to use assessment information to inform their planning and teaching so as to help pupils make even better progress. Therefore, not all pupils know how they can improve their work. National Curriculum level descriptions are not used and pupils, who come to the school with a good grasp of this means of assessment, cannot use their understanding to evaluate their current achievement.
153. Due to recruitment difficulties, there has been no overall leader of the design and technology curriculum for the last two terms. The subject is currently being managed as two distinct specialist areas, called core⁹ and food/textiles. This has worked well to maintain the good practice already developed, especially in Years 10 and 11. However, the strategic leadership needed to plan and co-ordinate school and national developments across the specialist areas in the Years 7 to 9 curriculum has not been effective and little progress has been made. Some evaluation of teaching and learning takes place within each specialist area, but approaches and findings are not yet shared effectively across the department, particularly to identify and build on good practice. The good use made of work scrutiny in Year 11 within specialist areas could effectively be used across the curriculum in the earlier years.
154. Staff have continued to work hard to overcome the limitations of old-fashioned workshops and specialist rooms, which remain under-resourced in terms of ICT and specialist equipment. However, some new building and refurbishment is planned in the near future, which should help to deal with current limitations.

⁹ The school refers to work in resistant materials, electronics and graphics as the core design and technology course.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching, which has very high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils achieve outstanding success in GCSE examinations.
- The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development.
- Lessons are planned to involve pupils of all abilities.

Area for improvement

- Greater links with English to help pupils develop their speaking skills.

155. Drama is taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and is an option subject for GCSE. Standards are above average at age 14 and very high at age 16 years. Nearly all pupils in a significantly large entry gained at least a C grade in GCSE examinations in 2002. Pupils make very good progress over time.

156. All lessons are characterised by enthusiasm, good pace and energy. Teachers make pupils work hard. They set challenging tasks, but provide a secure structure for them to gain confidence in their ideas. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher directed a scene using one group as performers and then asked the class to evaluate that performance. Others were then able to develop and adapt the scene. Younger pupils worked sensibly to create monologues from a joint study of traditional characters in nursery rhymes. They worked well in groups and pupils with special educational needs made significant progress in the course of the lesson.

157. In the older classes, the teachers build on earlier work by helping pupils to evaluate the performance of others so that they can learn from them. Boys and girls work very well together and explore important social and moral issues such as disability, bullying and group dynamics. Their sense of timing is effective and they interpret their roles convincingly. The teachers help them by demonstrating techniques in a helpful, but not over-directive manner.

158. The quality of teaching is very good. The strengths are the excellent relationships established that encourage pupils to explore sensitive issues with confidence. Pupils' questions are often subtly turned into class discussions to make pupils responsible for thinking through their own solutions. Teachers bring to lessons the enthusiasm and expertise that create an enjoyable and purposeful learning climate. Some pupils do not transfer their obvious ability to develop ideas orally into other lessons and drama teachers have a role to play in encouraging this more.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average.
- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Using National Curriculum levels to inform pupils in Years 7 to 9 about their progress.
- The monitoring and development of teaching styles.

159. Assessment of Year 7 pupils soon after their entry to the school shows that pupils' geographical skills and knowledge on arrival are above average. Standards are well above average by Year 9, both as measured by teacher assessments and from the work seen during the inspection. This represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9. The most able Year 9 pupils have produced some excellent assignments based on the Mount St. Helens volcanic eruption. They have developed very good geographical skills, for example, drawing cross-sections of river valleys and explaining such phenomena as weather systems and ecological cycles. Less able pupils have also produced good work, using maps and diagrams well, but they are not able to write extended explanations and descriptions to the same high standards. These very good standards are the results of high expectations and well-paced lessons, which lead to positive behaviour so that all pupils can benefit from the generally good teaching.
160. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average and there has been a steady improvement in results over the last three years. The numbers of pupils gaining the highest grades has been outstanding for the last two years. Girls' results have been consistently better than those of boys. Pupils entered for geography in 2002 achieved significantly higher results than the average for their other subjects and departmental targets were met.
161. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11, showing that pupils are building well on standards at the end of Year 9. The most able pupils have produced some very conscientious work that will assist revision towards examinations. They write very good extended responses that explain and describe causes and effects of interactions between people and the environment, supported by very good mapping and diagram skills. The work of less able pupils shows some lack of motivation rather than lack of understanding, with some unfinished pieces of work that will not serve them well when the time comes for revision.
162. In all year groups, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates because they are well known to their teachers. They are given additional attention in all lessons, though resources adapted to their needs are not often provided. Gifted and talented pupils are not specifically provided for in lessons, though the most able are sometimes, but not always, given extended work to do. They progress well where they are challenged by thought-provoking exercises.
163. Pupils are well motivated to work to the best of their ability where good teaching techniques ensure that all feel included and keen to participate. The majority enjoy their lessons. When lessons allow, pupils listen and discuss well and develop their social skills through group and pair work. However, some teachers do not involve and question pupils enough, thus, restricting pupils' ability to think for themselves. A very

good fieldwork programme enriches both social and geographical education, which is an improvement on the provision at the time of the previous inspection.

164. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection and several were very good. The better lessons were sequenced well and enabled pupils to undertake independent study through research-based homework. Weaker lessons were not well thought through so that there was no opening activity or summary to reinforce and assess learning. Not all teachers made the lesson aims clear to pupils or asked them, at the end of the lesson, whether they had achieved those aims, so that pupils were often unaware of their own progress. Improvements since the previous inspection have brought about better opportunities to read, speak and write in most lessons. Pupils use their numeracy skills well, as in a lesson where Year 10 pupils were using statistics to make up graphs showing the extent of global emissions of greenhouse gases.
165. Subject contributions to citizenship have been audited and a start has been made to exploit these in the teaching. Opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are present in the curriculum, but are not made explicit. The use of information and communication technology is written into the department policies and schemes of work and computers are well used, though there are sometimes problems with gaining access to them when required. There are many good examples in geography of word-processed project work and use of the Internet for research.
166. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed using a range of tests to measure pupils' knowledge and skills. Assessment results are used to track the comparative progress of different groups, leading to adjustments in schemes of work. However, pupils' work is not assessed against National Curriculum levels, which means that pupils are not able to track their own progress effectively against the National Curriculum programme of study.
167. Leadership is very good. The head of department is intent upon promoting good geography and improving standards and leads by example a team of highly committed teachers. Management is good, but monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all teaching is up to the standard of the best in the department. The department is well placed to maintain and even improve upon standards that are already impressive.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils learn well and their achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
- The good learning is promoted by the pupils' very positive attitudes to work and their very good relationship with their teachers.
- Teachers set high expectations, especially in developing pupils' analytical skills.
- Very good leadership promotes high standards within the department.
- Over the last five years, history has consistently had some of the best results in the school at the end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Strategic planning, so that lesson plans and the development plan more closely reflect the department's aims and the school's priorities for improvement.
- The more systematic use of computers to enrich lessons and develop history skills.
- Evaluation of teaching and learning through more regular classroom observation to develop and share good practice.

168. Pupils enter the school with standards that are above the national average and, by the end of Year 9, they achieve well and attain well above average standards. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 when pupils reach very high standards, as reflected in their GCSE results.

169. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. This matches the teachers' assessments for the last three years. This is an improvement on standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. Boys perform as well as girls. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school is, therefore, good. Pupils have very good factual recall and highly developed skills of enquiry, note-making and writing at length and in various forms. This was seen in the well-researched and fluently written accounts of Year 8 pupils on native Americans, which also displayed good skills of using computers to present work. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress in developing these skills as they are well supported by the teachers. The skills of analysing historical sources are very well developed as pupils begin these challenging tasks early in Year 7. More able pupils, especially, interpret evidence with much maturity; Year 9 pupils, for instance, effectively analysed sources on the quality of factory life in Robert Owen's 'New Lanark Mills'.

170. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average for the last five years and history has been the most successful GCSE subject in the school during that time. Pupils do better in history than in nearly all their other subjects. In 2002, over half of the pupils entered achieved A* or A grades, which is twice the national average. In the previous year, nearly all pupils gained at least a C grade. Girls and boys do equally well in GCSE examinations.

171. Standards of work of pupils currently in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9, which is well above average. Pupils have very good knowledge of key events and a very assured understanding of causes, change and continuity. Pupils' strong literacy skills are further developed with challenging tasks of writing empathetically, such as in the letters by Year 10 pupils recommending Galen, the outstanding Greek physician, as the father of medicine. All pupils, and particularly the most able, analyse and evaluate sources

very well. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs also progress well in recording evidence and effectively compare different periods, for instance, in their study of the history of medicine.

172. Teaching and learning in history are good throughout the school. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to teach at a good pace and with a greater variety of activities than previously reported. They involve pupils in stimulating enquiry work and analysis. Year 9 pupils studying the First World War, for instance, were fully engaged in pairs in prioritising reasons for the failure of the Schlieffen Plan and war poetry was imaginatively used to deduce soldiers' changing feelings about the war. More able pupils are challenged to think critically and analytically because teachers have consistently high expectations of them. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly and effectively. Pupils are regularly assessed and targets for high achievement clearly set both before and after each assessment. Marking is done frequently and rigorously, especially in Years 10 and 11, so that pupils know their weaknesses and are set clear targets on how to improve. Year 11 pupils are strongly motivated to do well as they are keenly aware of their current progress and predicted grades. The checking of pupils' progress at the end of each lesson is, however, less frequently done, reducing pupils' awareness of their progress through a topic.
173. Pupils' learning in lessons is good as a result of the good teaching they receive. Year 11 pupils develop important skills of enquiry, communications, interpretation and analysis very well. The pupils' very positive attitudes to work and their very good behaviour also promote good learning. This is indicated by the research and care in presenting, for instance, their detailed studies of the Roman Baths. The teachers' very good relationship with them and their high expectations of good behaviour and standards of work also contribute to good progress. Faltering of concentration occurs rarely and happens only when pupils are not involved in the learning because the teacher does too much for them. This occurred, for instance, when a teacher allowed Year 11 pupils to make a minimal contribution to compiling a revision diagram on medieval medicine. Pupils' literacy skills are reinforced by the use of glossaries, key words and drafting of project work. These particularly help those with special educational needs to reinforce and apply their writing skills. Pupils have good listening and speaking skills, but these are not always reinforced because group discussion is not commonly used in history lessons.
174. The department is very well led. An enthusiastic head of department has made an important contribution to the good level of improvements since the last inspection. Clear, strong direction is provided and high standards are set and expected, which reflect those of the school. The department is strongly committed to improvement and is well placed to move forward, with all teachers working well together. Management and organisation are good. Resources and staffing are efficiently managed. There is effective, informal sharing of good teaching practice, though its evaluation through classroom observation is less regular. As the subject is not made strongly accountable to senior management, its development plan lacks detail of the priorities and time-limits for achieving its good objectives. This tends to limit the potential for further improvement. The development of literacy and numeracy skills and the use of computer software are not regularly identified in lesson plans. Consequently, the use of information and communication technology is not happening enough to enrich the subject and provide pupils with their entitlement through history. There is a limited programme of outside visits to enhance the curriculum and to widen the pupils' interest in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good, particularly in science, history and mathematics.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to using computers.
- The GCSE course is taught well and enables pupils to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum time devoted to specialist teaching of ICT in order that all pupils develop knowledge and understanding to the depth required.
- More regular opportunities for pupils to use computers to support their learning.
- The number of computers to meet the growing demands of the curriculum.
- Accommodation to enable whole-class teaching using computers.

175. The school has, since the previous inspection, continued to develop the cross-curricular use of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7, 8 and 9. Whilst this is proving to be effective in supporting individual subjects in meeting their National Curriculum requirements, it does not guarantee enough consistent and regular experiences over time for pupils to develop their independent skills and knowledge in ICT. Specialist teaching of ICT is focused upon those pupils, who opt for a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. Here, standards are average. For other pupils in Years 10 and 11 their progress in developing skills and knowledge is more 'hit and miss' because cross-curricular planning is less systematic and affected by the difficulty of access to computers. As a result, the school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of adequate access to ICT for all pupils. This was the case at the time of the previous inspection and progress in dealing with this situation has been unsatisfactory.

176. Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Teacher assessments in 2002, based upon units of work in a range of subject areas, indicate that standards are close to the national average. Very few pupils, however, achieve the highest levels seen nationally at this age. The school has, through the good work of the cross-curriculum co-ordinator and of the subject teachers, enabled pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to make use of ICT to support their learning across the curriculum. Pupils make use of a range of software to present information, investigate data and carry out project work. Where teachers encourage pupils to make use of computers to develop their thinking and understanding by capturing and interpreting information, as happens for instance in science, this is very effective in supporting good subject learning. When they are able to make use of ICT, pupils are generally very positive. This development of cross-curricular use by teachers occurs against a background of pressure to move forward with national initiatives on limited curriculum time. Although pupils often produce individual pieces of work of above average standard they do not have sufficiently regular experiences or time to develop their skills at the highest levels and consolidate their knowledge and understanding. For many pupils their access to computers at home makes a significant contribution to the development of their independent presentation skills. The school has recognised the lack of specialist teaching time and, in the light of this and the introduction of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, it is proposing to introduce weekly lessons for all Year 7 and 8 pupils from September 2003 and for Year 9 pupils from 2004.

177. The school introduced a full GCSE course in 2001 and it did not, therefore, have any GCSE examination results in ICT in 2002. In work seen in lessons and coursework completed to date, standards for those pupils studying the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 are average. These pupils have regular access to specialist teaching that enables them to achieve well from a relatively limited base of experience at the end of Year 9. They can, for example, prepare a database structure and validation rules for different data types and search and sort data to produce reports. They learn how ICT systems are used within organisations and become confident in using a range of software.
178. The teaching on the GCSE course is good and provides a useful range of support materials for pupils to use. These enable them to develop knowledge and understanding in a systematic way and to gain confidence in their own ability to solve problems. In the best lessons, questioning and interjections by the teacher sustain the pace of learning and teachers challenge and check understanding regularly. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes as a result and this supports their learning. The use of project monitoring sheets and good evaluative marking is very effective in enabling pupils to understand what and how to improve. Some teaching of ICT takes place in double lessons. Although these get off to a good start, progress is sometimes slower because the teacher leaves pupils to get on with set tasks for too long without enough interjection or whole-class discussion and explanation of concepts to maintain momentum in pupils' learning. As the course develops, teachers are increasingly sharing examination criteria and marking schemes with pupils and this is particularly effective now in helping Year 10 develop their understanding of how to improve their coursework.
179. Elsewhere across the curriculum some departments have better access to computers than others. This affects the progress pupils can make and the depth of knowledge and understanding they develop in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are increasingly receptive to using computers both for learning and as an aid to teaching. Pupils make regular use of a range of software in business studies and also in design and technology for computer-aided design and manufacture. In subjects such as English, mathematics, philosophy and belief and science, pupils make some use of computers for research, investigative and project work. Pupils often make use of computer clubs at lunchtime and their own computers at home for the presentation of coursework. The use of ICT to present lessons in mathematics is developing well. Overall, the wider development of knowledge and understanding of ICT to higher levels is fragmented and below national expectations.
180. The leadership and management of ICT provision are satisfactory. The management of information and communication technology is divided between a co-ordinator for cross-curricular use and the organisation of GCSE courses that is under the leadership of the head of business studies. The leadership and management of the GCSE course have been very effective in developing teachers' understanding of the new course. An increasing range of resources is in place to support teaching and learning and there is a very good understanding of course requirements and standards. Teaching is very focused upon how to complete examination tasks and this tends to reduce the occasions when pupils are able to take more initiative when solving problems. Arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness and consistency of teaching and learning quality are underdeveloped. So, too is the development of and the use of resources to challenge and actively involve pupils in greater independent learning.
181. Cross-curricular co-ordination has been effective in establishing a clear framework for teaching and assessing elements of ICT within subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9 and subject

teachers have made a commitment to developing their own ICT skills. These units of work are planned effectively and assessed. Co-ordination has been less effective in Years 10 and 11 where no framework exists to monitor or report upon pupils' experiences or progress. The pressures of not enough computers and associated equipment and the limits posed by shortage of accommodation and time have also slowed the rate of development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils develop good speaking skills in both subjects.
- More able pupils do very well in the examination.

Areas for improvement

- The achievement of boys of middle ability.
- Variety in teaching in order to meet the needs of all the pupils.

182. By the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving above average results in both languages, with girls significantly outperforming the boys.

183. In 2002, pupils attained standards in the GCSE in French that were well above average, with a much larger percentage of pupils entered for the examination than in most schools. Girls did significantly better than would be expected, gaining a large proportion of the very highest grades. Boys attained results that were significantly below those of the girls and well below the grades they achieved in other subjects they took in the school. Over the past three years, results for the girls have stayed at a similar level, but the boys' results dropped in 2002. In German, the picture is very similar except that the overall results in 2002 were above average. Boys' results, which remain well below those of the girls, have, however, risen steadily over the past three years. Almost every pupil in the school does two languages in Years 7 to 9 and at least one language in Years 10 and 11. A small number of pupils study two languages in Years 10 and 11.

184. By the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving well as they make good progress during the three years of the French course and the two years of the German course. Girls make very good progress, whilst the progress of boys is satisfactory. Most pupils speak French and German with good fluency and pronunciation. They can hold conversations about their family and about what they did at the weekend. Girls, in particular, write accurately on these topics too, producing well-presented brochures, postcards and accounts. Pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding tapes, but much of the material that they read is short and simple. There is some evidence of pupils reading authentic materials from the Internet, such as details about hotels. Pupils are beginning to build up a good range of vocabulary, but do not always use their notes as well as they might to recall work that they have previously covered. Teachers do not always insist that pupils in the middle groups learn spellings as well as the meanings of new words. The most and least able pupils do well. It is a small proportion of boys, especially those of average ability, who do not do as well as they should. This minority of pupils is too often content with doing the bare minimum and this is not adequately dealt with by teachers.

185. By the end of Year 11, they continue to achieve well. Nevertheless, there is still a minority of boys in the middle-ability range, who do not perform as well as they should.

These pupils find it difficult to catch up on work that they have not learnt in previous years and continue to work at a basic level. They have some difficulty recalling vocabulary that they have previously come across and depend heavily on notes that the teacher provides for them without working from memory. All other groups of pupils have good spoken skills, they get plenty of practice in class and they are very well prepared for the demands of the examination. For example, they practise with the foreign-language assistant to improve fluency and pronunciation in their oral work. They are, however, less good at the more spontaneous use of language as they get little opportunity to do this. Higher-attaining pupils write well: they produce interesting pieces of work, describing their holidays and how to be fit and healthy, and can give their opinions on matters such as how their school could be improved. They show an ability to write both formal and informal French and German in letters and accounts, but they do little creative work that is not strictly related to the examination requirements. Reading is not as consistently developed across the year groups as the other skills. In some classes, pupils are given very challenging texts describing, for example, why people choose to work abroad. They are expected to understand these with the help of a dictionary. In other lessons, pupils rarely read beyond the short texts in textbooks.

186. Teaching is good in all year groups and enables pupils to learn well and make good progress in both languages. Many teachers teach two languages and there is a similar approach in both French and German. Teachers know their subject well and are particularly good at planning activities for pupils to practise speaking the language. Many pupils also benefit from the trips and foreign exchanges that are organised. They return with improved spoken skills and a good understanding of the French or German way of life. Teachers also use the foreign-language assistant well during class time to support the work of the teacher. For example, in two lessons, the assistant practised a short conversation that the teacher had just introduced with each pupil in the class, which enabled all pupils to have a turn at speaking. In another less successful lesson, the teacher did not allow each pupil to talk and concentrated on those with their hands up, who were mostly girls.
187. Teachers give clear instructions, pupils always know what they have to do and, because there are good relationships in lessons, pupils have no difficulty in asking if they do not understand. Teachers are readily available outside lesson time too and pupils are often to be found during the lunch hour asking about their work and finishing things off or improving the work. They use computers effectively both during and outside lessons to redraft writing and think about how work can be improved in terms of style and content. They also use software packages to improve the quality of their presentations on topics such as their school. Most pupils complete homework willingly and on time as they can see that it is relevant to the lesson and know that it will be marked and commented on. They learn well for formal tests, but they learn vocabulary less well as it is not always regularly tested and teachers sometimes say that they will not be marked on the accuracy of their spellings or the grammar. This tendency allows some boys to be content with the bare minimum.
188. Teachers prepare pupils extremely well for the demands of the examination, pupils get plenty of practice and they know exactly what to expect. Sometimes this can be at the expense of a more varied diet where they can say what they feel and express their personalities. In a very good lesson, however, pupils hugely enjoyed putting their own slant on the topic of holidays, adding in a wicked sense of humour by planning to send their teacher to Wales for several months in the winter with a group of school children and a budget. Many of the higher-attaining pupils are encouraged to write at length; they use tenses and give opinions well and they cover the requirements of the examination syllabus very well. All pupils are encouraged to record their work systematically, especially grammar, so that they can refer to it when revising and are

given helpful sheets from the teachers, which they can use at home. Vocabulary is less systematically recorded and some pupils, especially boys, have difficulty finding words that they need.

189. Although teachers give pupils clear instructions they do not always tell pupils the purpose of what they are doing, nor do they tell pupils what to expect to have learnt by the end of the lesson. In a few lessons seen, it was unclear exactly what the teacher was aiming at and, although the pupils did not misbehave, they were not enthusiastic and were simply 'going through the motions'. Indeed, several boys were mystified about why they were doing a particular activity. In marked contrast to this, in one lesson, boys and girls were working in groups on tasks where they knew exactly what they had to complete and learn by the end of the lesson. Among other things, they were allowed to listen to the tape on headphones and replay it as often as necessary and were encouraged to record their oral work from memory on to a cassette. This meant that all of them worked very hard all lesson, completed a great deal of work and said they had enjoyed the work.
190. Work is generally well matched to different pupils' needs and pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. Teachers plan lessons with plenty of support and break activities into manageable chunks, ensuring that pupils have plenty of individual attention if they need it. On occasions, however, some boys found the work set too difficult and could not complete it.
191. The leadership and management of the subject are good and progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The standard of pupils' oral work has improved, but their reading level remains the same. The number of pupils attaining the higher grades has risen over the past three years, especially for the girls, with a very clear focus on the requirements of the examination. The head of department has analysed the results and identified that some of the boys are not performing as well as they should be, but the changes planned have not yet been implemented. The plans include changing the syllabus to one that is more suited to the needs of the pupils and the setting arrangements so that boys do not dominate in particular sets. Work also remains to be done on eliminating the inconsistent variety of teaching approaches so that all of the boys do as well as the girls.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps pupils to learn well
- The use of information and communication technology enriches pupils' curriculum experiences.
- The very good relationships between teachers and pupils help generate a good learning atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels to assess progress.
- The engagement of pupils in their learning.

192. When pupils arrive at the school their standards in music are average. Pupils make good progress during Years 7 to 9 so that their attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. Pupils continue to make good progress on the GCSE course and the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 is well above average. The good standards identified at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

193. In Years 7 and 8, pupils perform confidently using their voices and instruments. Both boys and girls sing wholeheartedly. This is because the music is well chosen and teaching is carried out with enthusiasm. When using instruments, pupils can play in time with each other with a sense of pulse. In composing work, they can organise simple musical ideas. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand different styles and compose using a range of techniques. They continue to use their voices confidently and sing stylishly in group pieces. They evaluate their own work and the work of others. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, although sometimes the more able find the work too easy.

194. By the end of Year 11, pupils are able to compose extended pieces of music. This is because structured activities help develop their compositional skills in Year 10. They are confident in the use of computers to help them. Less able pupils can create melodies over chord patterns. The most advanced compositions demonstrate a good sense of personal style. Pupils write about how their music was composed. Progress is good because pupils are given a lot of individualised support. Teachers are committed to pupils' examination success. The number of pupils taking music in Years 10 and 11 has been consistently high since the time of the previous inspection.

195. Pupils behave well in music. Paired activity teaches pupils to collaborate and support each other. In a Year 10 lesson, for instance, a more able pupil helped a less able pupil as they explored a new style together. Teachers often spend too much time asking questions of the whole class. As a result, a majority of pupils are not engaged as they do not attempt to offer responses. Pupils are not always told why they are doing an activity and this lowers pupils' interest and commitment. In a Year 7 lesson, on the other hand, pupils' attitudes improved when the teacher stopped to explain to the class why the task was important. Pupils enjoy performing to others. These experiences of performance help pupils' personal development. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and this helps pupils to be enthusiastic about their work.

196. Teaching in music is good. Explanations are clear and there is good use of warm-up activities to engage the class from the very start. In Years 7 and 8, classes respond

rhythmically to the register. Lessons often start late because pupils have to walk a distance from the previous classroom. Teachers often have to finish lessons quickly when time runs out. This means that pupils are not given enough time in structured activities to think about what they have learned or to hear and discuss what others have done.

197. Pupils use a wide range of resources in their music making. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, both electronic and traditional instruments were successfully used together. Here, pupils of all aptitudes were thoroughly engaged in creating an atmospheric piece. This was because of the teacher's imaginative approach and allocation of tasks to suit individual pupils. In Year 9, pupils are successfully taught to use computers and synthesisers to record music.
198. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Teachers work well together, supported in an informal way by senior managers. The department is least effective in planning longer-term developments. The very good arrangements for assessment noted in the last inspection report have not been adequately reviewed to take account of changes in National Curriculum requirements. Teachers do not make proper use of levels of attainment in planning and assessing progress. As a result, assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 was too generous last year, giving pupils a false impression of how well they were doing. Improvements have been made to accommodation since the last inspection by the addition of a classroom. This room is in a noisy area of the school and this hinders concentration. Both music classrooms are large and are used flexibly to enable a wide range of activities to take place.
199. Instrumental tuition is offered on a range of traditional and popular instruments. The facilities in which teachers of these sessions operate are poor. The department offers a successful programme of extra-curricular activities, including the potential for public performance. Vocal and instrumental groups are well directed by departmental staff, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own groups.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that benefits pupils' learning.
- Pupils behave very well and adopt very positive attitudes.
- Standards of work are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The pupils benefit from excellent extra-curricular provision.

Areas for improvement

- Plan for more pupil discussions in lessons, in particular in evaluation of their work.
- Develop schemes of work to show expected levels of work.
- Develop assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 that better inform pupils of their levels of work and how to improve.
- Standard of accommodation.

200. Standards at the end of Years 9 are good and are very good at the end of Year 11, both in terms of pupils' skills development and in their understanding of concepts. This constitutes good progress, with pupils achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school.

201. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of the tactics used in team games. They can, for instance, explain how to move opponents around a badminton court and use a range of shots to win points. They have developed these skills well, with the most able pupils able to maintain lengthy rallies using a range of skills they have learned. Other pupils can maintain some rallies, but do not always use, for instance, the correct grip and, hence, are less skilful. Pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of fitness and health. For instance, they demonstrate a good level of understanding of what happens to the body during and after exercise and can identify different types of strength needed in sporting activities. Not all pupils are, however, aware of the main muscles that are exercised during their stretching exercises.
202. By Year 11, pupils are able to use their good knowledge to inform their performance in the local fitness studio as they carry out a range of circuit exercises designed to develop fitness and particular muscles. Considerable work is undertaken to enable pupils to improve their skills in games playing. Good attention is also paid to ensuring that pupils have a good knowledge of the rules of the games they are playing. The ability of pupils to discuss their strengths and areas for development are not well developed. In all year groups, pupils with special educational needs learn at expected levels and make good progress, mainly because teachers know their needs and adapt the lesson activities accordingly.
203. GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average, as they have been for several years. Pupils in Year 11 following the GCSE course develop a secure grasp of the rules and tactics of games. For example, they often show very good hand-eye co-ordination when passing in rugby. The less able show, however, that their awareness of the use of space is only at satisfactory levels. Theory work shows that pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of sport in a psychological as well as social sense. In their coursework, they successfully explain the various factors affecting sports performance levels, such as well-planned fitness programmes, a healthy diet and the use of modern technology.
204. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their work, presenting themselves well in lessons and applying themselves with determination. The mutual respect and high-quality relationships between the teachers and pupils help improve the quality of work produced.
205. The quality of teaching is very good, enabling pupils to learn very successfully. The teachers make clear their objectives, together with their high expectations of pupils' performances. The very good teachers' subject knowledge means that they are able to coach pupils well and make use of a good variety of activities. The use of written reinforcement of the main learning points is inconsistently used, however, and this means that some pupils do not retain what they have learned well. Many lessons are very teacher-led, with pupils being given too few chances to develop their questioning skills, or to discuss their performances. Marking is regularly carried out and contains good feedback that supports and guides pupils' development. Homework is set regularly and is usually well suited to the work in hand.
206. A good curriculum presents varied experiences to all pupils and allows them to repeat and improve their skills as they move through the school. Schemes of work are regularly reviewed and provide guidance for teachers to plan their lessons. The schemes lack the necessary detail to help teachers plan activities for pupils of different levels of ability. The schemes currently do not provide any guidance to teachers on where, or how, they could introduce elements of citizenship into their physical education lessons. A good recreational curriculum for non-examination pupils in Years

10 and 11 has been developed, leading to the presentation of a certificate of achievement for pupils at the end of Year 11.

207. A rich programme of extra-curricular activities has been a major factor in helping the school achieve SportsMark Gold Award status. Committed teachers run clubs and practices and arrange competitive games, which are well attended. Pupils enjoy considerable team and individual success in a variety of sports, both at county levels and beyond. The sports council in the school produces a monthly newsletter and helps develop the leadership skills of pupils, who contribute.

208. The subject benefits from very good leadership that has overseen good progress since the last inspection. Assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11 are very good and involve pupil self-evaluation. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have only limited knowledge of the level of their work and this restricts their knowledge of how to improve their performance. Monitoring of teaching takes place, with staff benefiting from sharing their skills with others in the department. The accommodation is just satisfactory. The condition of the showers and changing room, together with the standard of the office, is very poor and compromises the high standards that the subject teachers adhere to. Furthermore, the lack of a large sports hall not only causes accommodation problems in wet weather, but also restricts the degree to which pupils are able to understand tactics and use space in their indoor-games work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of what is provided in religious education is very good. However, the lack of curriculum provision for most pupils in Years 10 and 11 means that they do not receive their proper entitlement to religious education and, hence, overall provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in all years are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good, with many excellent features, enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Pupil management is excellent, contributing to a very good climate for learning.
- Excellent leadership and very good management providing a clear vision and direction.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are excellent and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.

209. In this school, religious education is taught under the title of philosophy and belief. This deliberate decision reflects the school's view that a philosophical approach to the study of religion and contemporary moral issues is the most meaningful and effective way to stimulate and challenge young people today.

210. Standards on entry to the school are above average in relation to the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement is good and, by the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE courses are also well above average. Pupils studying the subject make very good progress through Years 10 and 11. In 2002, results in both the full-course and short-course GCSE examinations were well above average.

211. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is well above average. Pupils achieve well and make very good progress, including pupils with special educational needs. There are many very good examples of pupils

developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In Year 7, through a very well developed lesson using images, pupils understand the idea of God as 'three in one'. Pupils use of imagination is particularly good and this enables them to demonstrate an understanding of religious concepts. In Year 8, the teacher's use of a variety of approaches, including video, challenges pupils to understand the difference between acts of God and nature through a well-developed study of the 10 plagues. In Year 9, as a result of a very good questioning session, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of Buddhist teaching. They are able to provide useful links between Buddhist truths and their own understanding of change. The use of key words, technical language, the development of skills of investigation and evaluation and very good discussion work are all useful aids to improving skills in speaking and writing. Overall, learning is very good and is better than at the time of the last inspection.

212. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment is well above the national average. In Year 10, GCSE pupils achieve well and all make very good progress. They show a very good understanding of issues such as euthanasia. Through an excellent pupil-organised debate, pupils produced profound and well-balanced arguments from different standpoints. They show a deep respect for the views of others and this enables all pupils to feel confident in expressing their opinions in an open and honest way. Year 11 GCSE pupils develop a very good understanding of Buddhist worship. The teacher's excellent use of religious artefacts enables them to make very good gains in knowledge and understanding of aspects of worship practised by Buddhists. Pupils demonstrate very good skills of critical analysis and the ability to present balanced arguments. In examinations at the end of Year 11, however, boys perform better than girls. The department is taking steps to address this issue.
213. The lack of a course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 means that the majority of pupils do not receive their full entitlement and statutory requirements are not met. This was also the case at the last inspection and the school has failed to deal adequately with this during the intervening six years.
214. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' behaviour makes a very positive contribution to their achievement and progress.
215. Teaching is very good with many excellent features. As a result, pupils achieve very well. The excellent knowledge of teachers ensures that pupils make considerable gains in knowledge and understanding of religious and philosophical concepts. Planning is very good and lesson aims are shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to learn from as well as learn about religion. This assists pupils to maintain their interest and develop an understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to a very good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to very good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed and these are very effective in contributing to pupils' achievement.
216. Assessment of pupils' work is very good and very helpful comments are recorded in exercise books. The procedures provide a very good basis for assessing what pupils

know and understand. Assessment is used very well to enable the planning of new work and to make changes to the curriculum.

217. Religious education makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, enabling pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs.
218. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The excellent leadership of the head of department ensures that pupils make very good progress. Pupils are provided with a very rich diet of religious education, especially in Years 7 to 9. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and a deep commitment to the pupils. There is excellent support from other departmental staff. The quality of display that celebrates pupils' achievement is very high.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National validated data for 2002 is not yet available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	50.0		0.0		1.0	
Further mathematics	1	100.0		0.0		2.0	
Chemistry	1	100.0		0.0		3.0	
Design technology	1	100.0		0.0		2.0	
Business studies	5	100.0		60.0		3.8	
Computing	4	100.0		0.0		2.0	
Art and design	1	100.0		100.0		5.0	
Geography	2	100.0		0.0		1.0	
History	6	100.0		66.7		3.5	
English literature	4	75.0		50.0		2.75	
French	1	100.0		0.0		1.0	
German	2	200.0		50.0		2.5	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100.0		71.4		7.7	
Art and design (AVCE)	2	100.0		0.0		5.0	
Biology	14	100.0		42.9		6.6	
Business studies	9	100.0		44.4		6.7	
Business (AVCE)	5	100.0		0.0		2.8	
Chemistry	8	100.0		50.0		7.3	
English language	26	100.0		34.6		6.2	
English literature	14	100.0		92.9		9.0	
French	11	72.7		18.2		3.1	
Full design and technology	6	100.0		33.3		6.7	
Geography	9	100.0		77.8		8.0	
German	5	100.0		60.0		6.6	

History	19	100.0		52.6		6.4	
Mathematics	25	96.0		64.0		7.4	
Further mathematics	7	100.0		42.9		6.9	
Music	2	100.0		50.0		7.0	
Media Studies	17	100.0		23.5		5.9	
Psychology	26	92.3		50.0		6.4	
Physics	15	100.0		60.0		6.8	
Religious studies	5	100.0		60.0		7.6	
Sociology	6	100.0		16.7		4.3	
Sports/PE studies	21	100.0		61.9		7.6	
Theatre Studies	8	100.0		100.0		8.8	
ICT (AVCE)	10	40.0		10.0		3.8	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus in this curriculum area was on mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- A level results are consistently high, especially for A and B grades.
- Teachers' depth of knowledge of the subject and understanding of examination requirements are very good.
- Students are very positive about mathematics and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Range and variety of teaching and learning methods and activities.
- The provision of a key skills or AS applied mathematics course to widen access to more students.

219. The school offers a good range of sixth-form courses in mathematics. A level mathematics is taught to three groups in both Years 12 and 13, spread over two option groups, which enables a wide range of choices of other AS and A level subjects. Further mathematics groups cater for those taking two mathematics A levels, in 12 different modules over the two years. GCSE re-take lessons are available for those not obtaining a C grade in Year 11. The school no longer offers the key skills application of number course.

220. Standards in A level examinations have been consistently high and have improved since the previous inspection, especially for the number of students gaining A and B grades. In 2002, results were well above average, as they were in the previous year, though more students gained A and B grades in 2002 than in 2001. All seven students, who took further mathematics in 2002, passed the examination. The success rate for GCSE re-sits was similar to that nationally.

221. This year there are only 3 students currently in Year 13 taking further mathematics, but all are working at high levels and each has been offered a university place to study a mathematics-related course. The number of students taking A level mathematics in Year 13 is lower this year than previously, but students are working well and achieving above average standards.
222. Standards of work being produced by current Year 12 students are above the national average. Teachers and students are both mindful of the pressure to complete the extensive syllabus and this sharpens the way they work together. In a fast-moving lesson on polynomials, for example, the teacher responded to students' queries about homework by recapping on polynomial work so far, simplifying the concept for the students as much as possible. One student with a 'feel' for quick ways of finding coefficients without expanding the whole expression helped to develop the understanding of other students, enabling the teacher to move on to the next stage. At all points, teachers relate new work to previous learning, thus, helping students to see their work in a wider context.
223. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, although it varies with teacher and topic. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and good familiarity with the external examination requirements. Most teachers have an effective questioning technique, often using humour to make a point. They know their students very well and monitor their academic progress continually. Relationships are very good between teachers and students and among students, who co-operate well. A level work in lessons typically follows the pattern of introduction of a concept, the teacher working through examples and then students working through exercises from their textbook. This is improved by lively teaching, including, for instance, one teacher using physical movement to demonstrate a mechanics calculation, and teachers circulate well around the class helping individuals. Research and presentation by students is rarely used, although such communication skills and personal development will be needed for most higher education courses and most future careers. Independent learning skills are not actively promoted, although most students demonstrated very positive attitudes, interest in and enthusiasm for mathematics. Students produce large quantities of work, usually of high quality, and teachers mark homework well, with detailed corrections and comments on what each student did well and how to improve standards further.
224. Discussion with students revealed that they are happy with the teaching methods used, especially the preparation for examinations through the provision of many past papers and model answers. Very good leadership by the head of department and good management by the teacher in charge of sixth-form work provides students with an effective A level course, which produces high grades in examinations. Textbook and paper resources are good, but little use is made of information and communication technology or active learning methods. Accommodation is in any room available and this does not help generate a cohesive feeling of working as a team. It also means that there is a lack of relevant display in some rooms.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average and improving.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is used well to prepare students for theory and practical examinations.
- Students are conscientious and committed to examination success.
- Good leadership of the subject has led to changes, which are improving retention rates, popularity and standards.

Areas for improvement

- Variety of teaching methods that engage and enthuse students in the subject.
- Development of students' responsibility for their own learning and independence.

225. Standards on entry to A level courses are above average with the majority of students having gained a grade A or A* at GCSE and no students currently studying the course secured less than a B at GCSE level. Results in 2002 were above the national average with all students passing and half achieving the higher A or B grades. These results were an improvement after a period of below average results since the last inspection. Numbers of males and females in each year are too small for reliable comparisons to be made. Over time, results for both reflect their standards at the start of the course and represent satisfactory progress. Standards seen in current Year 13 classes are also above average. For example, students confidently use mathematics in calculating unknown energy changes from sets of known data and they can explain reactions in terms of relative shifts in charges. Standards seen in Year 12 are well above average, reflecting their higher standards on entry and their greater interest in the subject.
226. Students are very conscientious in their approach to chemistry and are committed to success in their examinations. They work very hard in lessons and in their own time. They work well in groups and respect their teachers' knowledge and commitment. Chemistry has had a period of relative unpopularity, with retention rates below those seen nationally. Students in Year 13 lack enthusiasm and excitement for the subject. In Year 12, however, larger numbers have chosen the subject and they show greater interest.
227. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All teaching is characterized by excellent subject knowledge and very focused preparation of students for theory and practical examinations, leading to success in these. Work is well marked and corrected, with feedback on how to improve so students know what they should do next. Teachers use a good balance of theory and practical, in line with the syllabus, and ensure students receive comprehensive notes and skills practice. They set homework, which follows up the notes given with questions and examination practice, so students reinforce their learning in their own time. The predominant method for teaching theory is exposition and examination practice. This means that students are not always fully engaged with the subject-matter and even the most able do not explore beyond the confines of the syllabus.
228. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department provides a clear lead to a team of staff, who also teach the subject in Years 10 and 11, and they work well together. The scheme of work is well matched to the syllabus requirements and helps guide the teaching of individual teachers. Subject performance is monitored internally and the examination results compared with national profiles.

The progress made by individual students is not yet measured against expected outcomes given their prior attainment, so students are not clear about what they might reasonably aim for. Action has been taken to deal with the below average standards, decreasing popularity and retention rates that characterised work in chemistry until recently. This is now having a positive impact in Year 12, where all three have improved. The department is well placed to improve further.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are consistently very high.
- The overall good teaching results in good achievement by pupils.
- The very good leadership and management give a clear direction to the subject and foster strong teamwork.
- Relationships are very good and, consequently, students strive to do well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology.
- Extension of the most able students.

229. A larger number of sixth-form students follow AS and A level courses in biology, with very good retention rates. The majority of these students continue into higher education with courses that have an element of biology.

230. Standards are very high. Similar standards were seen at the time of the last inspection and they have been maintained. In 2002 and 2001, half the students, who took the A2 examination, gained A or B grades and all students passed, which is good. In 2002, fewer students gained A or B grades, but overall achievement was good.

231. Lessons seen and scrutiny of work show that the standards of students currently studying biology are high. Students write essays that show a good level of understanding of biological concepts. When writing about the support of the body, for instance, they explain details of collagen and the factors in bone that give both tensile and compressive strength. They also explain to a high level the role of the liver in the metabolic process. Students' microscope work has clear annotations and their practical work is of a very high standard. They write clear hypotheses, with predictions based on scientific knowledge. They are particularly good at evaluating, with clear explanations of inaccuracies. For example, during an experiment, one student wrote that titration would result in greater accuracy and that a greater volume would help. However, their individual research is of a lower standard than expected. For example, in their research on osteoporosis, detail of the bone structure was not included, nor the effect of bone loss. Students are not good independent learners. Students' work is always well presented, but little use is made of information and communication technology to help this.

232. Students are positive about the support that they receive and state that they enjoy the practical work and the physiology unit. They are enthusiastic about the fieldwork, even that which was held in the rain, stating that they learnt a tremendous amount in a day. However, they are surprisingly lacking in overwhelming enthusiasm for the subject, considering the good teaching that they receive and their achievement.

233. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and this, with their enthusiasm for the subject, motivates students to achieve well. All lessons are conducted at a rapid pace, so that much is covered. Questioning is very good. For example, when discussing the dilution necessary for an experiment, they were asked “is there an issue there?” This helped the students to think about the possible effects. Relationships are very good, so that students are comfortable in asking for help. This was seen when a student said that she was confused about aspects of measuring. The matter was explained until the teacher was certain that the student understood. Resources are well used and this was seen when a video on the eye was talked through, so that students learnt a great deal.
234. Leadership and management are very good and the head of biology is forward-looking. For example, during the inspection, he had already made plans to improve the quality of experiences for students. Although much classroom teaching is good, students are not expected to become independent learners. They are not encouraged to read around the topics and to become excited about biology. The more able students are not fully extended as they are not offered the opportunity to enter the extension papers, or take part in the biology Olympiad. Assessment is excellent and the excellent tick sheets used to grade every aspect of their work are valued highly by the students. Teamwork is very good and the teachers meet regularly, both formally and informally, which ensures that ideas are shared. Careful evaluation of results has led to additional time spent on the practical element of the examination. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology. This is due to a lack of hardware and relevant software.

PHYSICS

Overall, the quality of provision for physics in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work are well above average.
- Good teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, a good blend of theory and practical and good use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Students are enthusiastic and respond well to their teachers with whom they have very good relationships.
- Good leadership of the subject leads to good teamwork in seeking improvements.

Areas for improvement

- Feedback to students on how to improve and involvement of them in day-to-day assessment.
- Consistently active involvement of students in their learning.

235. Standards on entry to A level courses are above average with the majority of students having a grade A or A* at GCSE and no students with less than a B grade. Results in 2002 were well above average with all students passing and three fifths achieving A or B grades. Results have been consistently well above average and the high standards at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Numbers of females in each year are very small, preventing comparison with their more numerous male peers. Standards seen during the inspection are also well above average. For example, by the end of Year 13, students confidently use mathematics in calculations, identify all the sources of error in their experiments and, within these, make accurate measurements of physical quantities. All students make good progress in comparison with their prior attainment.

236. Students enjoy physics. They find the subject-matter interesting and are committed to their work. They are hard working in and beyond lessons. They respond very well to their teachers, enjoy very good relationships and are confident that they will be well prepared for external assessments.
237. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is characterized by excellent subject knowledge and very focused preparation of students for examinations, leading to success in these. Theory and practical work are well blended so that students are well prepared for the coursework investigations. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology and visual aids to enliven their teaching and to extend students. For example, in a very good lesson on lenses, students used a good software package to experiment with the effect of different lenses and were referred to a number of Internet sites for further information. Where teaching is less than good, it is characterised by a lack of pace and by students not being actively involved in their learning. For example, in another Year 12 lesson, the teacher worked through on the board the manipulation of equations while students copied this. Students were not encouraged to try this for themselves. Tests and examination questions are corrected and records kept. Less attention is paid to day-to-day feedback on what students are doing and how they might improve. They are not involved in self-assessment and, therefore, take limited responsibility for their own learning.
238. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator leads a team of teachers, who also teach the subject in the main school. They co-operate very well and a newly qualified teacher has been very well inducted into the department. Schemes of work are clear and helpful and teachers work together to find new and improved ways of meeting the demands of the syllabus. This has ensured that high examination standards are maintained and demonstrates the capacity of the department to improve further.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subject was focused on in this curriculum area. Work was sampled in design and technology. Here, standards are good. Students make good progress as a result of specialist knowledge and good teaching. They receive very good individual evaluative feedback and guidance about their work. This maintains their motivation and helps them improve.

BUSINESS

The focus in this curriculum area was on business studies.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and gain above average results.
- Good teaching by well-organised staff promotes effective learning.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Students are well motivated and they have very good relationships with teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The development of students' skills of critical analysis, so that they attain the highest grades.
- Evaluation of teaching and learning through more regular classroom observation to develop and share good practice.
- Business links, so that the curriculum is enhanced and the students' experience widened.

239. Standards at A level in 2002 were above the national average, with all students gaining at least a pass grade. Generally, students did better in business studies than in their other subjects. This maintained a trend of improvement in the results since 1998, although there have been fluctuations during this time in the proportion attaining the highest A and B grades. Results at AS level in 2002 were well above average and this represents a considerable improvement on the previous year. There has been no significant difference in the performance of males and females. Few students drop out during the AS course and nearly all continue with the A level.

240. Standards in work seen are above the national average. This is the same as at the previous inspection. Overall, this represents good achievement compared with students' GCSE results, especially as a number of students had not taken the subject before the sixth form. In particular, Year 12 students on the AS course have achieved very well in their first assessment on marketing, accounting and finance, with a number exceeding expectations. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the key business terms and concepts, for instance, in understanding factors influencing labour productivity on the AS course. Students have good skills of listening and speaking. More able Year 13 students fluently described examples from their own part-time jobs when examining the culture of a firm. The most able students display good skills of extended writing with thorough research, critical analysis and evaluation in their coursework, closely guided and monitored by the teacher's careful marking. One Year 13 student had thoroughly investigated reasons for under and overspending in two hospital wards and her carefully analysed conclusions were adopted by the hospital. These skills are less developed in students of other abilities. Some average and less able students also have weaknesses in applying their prior knowledge to new problems and in their written expression. However, the teachers are aware of this and are giving very helpful advice for improvement. Most students generally have good computer skills. This means that they confidently use spreadsheets, bar charts and pie graphs, as well as word processing and the Internet, to support their research. However, there is no evidence of students using commercially produced computer programs for presentations.

241. Teaching is good overall and in nearly half the lessons it is very good. This is broadly the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan a variety of challenging tasks with a range of resources. For example, a film of Henry Ford's early assembly line aptly conveyed the nature of labour productivity to support earlier class discussion in Year 12. Teachers generally have high expectations and encourage students to think critically with challenging questions. The lively pace and questioning stimulate strong interest and response from the students, especially when students are involved in their own learning. Year 12 students were fully engaged in groups in devising assessment tasks for recruits to a firm. Very thorough marking tracks their progress and guides improvement, especially in critically reviewing their coursework. Students expressed strong appreciation of the support and guidance provided by their teachers. Checking students' understanding of key business terms during the lesson, and against clearly set aims at the end, is less frequently done and this tends to limit both students' and teachers' understanding of the progress being made.
242. This good-quality teaching produces good learning, with productive gains in students' knowledge and skills. Effective learning is also promoted by the good attitudes of the students to their work. Students cooperate very well with each other and the teacher, with whom they have very good relationships. They also display the maturity and strong motivation to take on the responsibility of working by themselves. Learning is less effective if the teacher's lengthy exposition does not allow them to engage sufficiently in analytical and challenging tasks by themselves or in groups.
243. The department is well led and managed. A clear educational direction is provided for the subject by the head of department. There are good assessment procedures with information of students' prior attainment well used to set targets and track progress. Students are fully aware of their progress and know how to improve. Assessment and examination results are well analysed by prior attainment and gender and the outcomes of this analysis are used to guide teaching. Recent staffing problems have been resolved and all teachers are well qualified and experienced. Lesson plans are thorough and provide good guidance for planning, though the use of information and communication technology is not adequately identified and planned for. Although accommodation and storage are still widely dispersed, as reported at the time of the previous inspection, it is not adversely affecting standards. Regular and mutual classroom observation is not well developed as a way of monitoring teaching and sharing good practice. There is a limited programme of visits for students and local business contacts are not yet used well to enhance the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No subject was focused on in this curriculum area. Work was sampled in the AVCE course in information technology. Here, standards are average, though with significant numbers of students reaching above average standards. Students make good progress overall as a result of coursework being monitored very effectively and evaluation that helps students understand how they can improve.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus in this curriculum area was on sports and physical education studies.

SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very good standards of work because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Teachers provide very good feedback to students on how well they are doing.
- Excellent relationships and positive student attitudes help create a good learning atmosphere.
- Excellent extra-curricular activities are on offer for all students.

Areas for improvement

- The development of more subject-specific learning objectives in schemes of work.
- More consistent use of discussion and times of reflection in lessons.

244. The students, who take AS and A level courses, are generally those with good prior attainment in the subject at GCSE level. The results in both A and AS level examinations in recent years have followed a consistent pattern of good overall achievement. Results in 2002 were well above the national average and this represents good progress for those students.

245. The students following the AS level course build well upon the knowledge and skills acquired in their GCSE course. When discussing skills acquisition, students are able to judge the role of long- and short-term memory as aids to coaching. They use increasingly sophisticated language and learn best when they are able to link their theory to practical sporting examples, as in their anatomy and physiology work. The majority of students have produced very good coursework. They have written some detailed explanations about how to develop a personal performance programme. Using video analysis of their own performance, students have made accurate judgements about their strengths and what they need to develop. They have then devised a programme that would increase the level of their performance and the most able write in detail about a wide range of factors.

246. Overall, students currently in Year 13 produce some very good work and achieve well. In theory work, students make good progress in increasing their knowledge of physiology in sport. In revision lessons, they show very good knowledge of the historical background to the development from amateur to professional rugby. They consider such things as the effect of railways and urban growth on the development of mass spectator sports. The quality of students' coursework is very good. In their written work, they use technical vocabulary well, have a good grasp of principles and evidence exists of the good use of the Internet for researching international sporting organisations.

247. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure good levels of learning throughout the sixth form. Teachers have high expectations and the pace of lessons is kept up through the use of some very good questioning by teachers. The students are keen to answer questions, although time for further detailed discussion is limited. Teachers' marking contains supportive comments

and the quality of feedback to students is very detailed, informing them well about how to improve their work. Students' knowledge and understanding is well reinforced by regular testing and feedback on their strengths and areas for development.

248. The students are highly motivated and adopt a very mature approach to their studies. They work well together and excellent relationships are established. All are very appreciative of the support and encouragement given to them by teachers. The students find that they are more confident when studying the more defined areas of study such as anatomy and physiology. Relatively speaking they find more difficulty when handling the history and contemporary issues modules, where there is a need for more consideration of a wide range of social, political and economic factors in order to write detailed answers to questions.
249. A good, optional programme of sport is provided for all students in Year 12. Again, the students are very positive about their experiences and work hard. In a rounders lesson, for instance, students demonstrated their commitment as they carried out their own warm-up and stretching exercises prior to participating in a match where they showed good striking and fielding skills. All students are able to avail themselves of the excellent extra-curricular provision and many do. Some act as sports helpers, acting responsibly and contributing positively to work in extra-curricular activities. This allows pupils to extend and put into practice their citizenship skills and this will be further extended by the plans to introduce a sports leadership course. There is a strong tradition of success in many sports at county and district levels and beyond.
250. Leadership of the subject is strong and there is a shared commitment to improve the standards of work in the sixth form further. More developmental work is required to improve the present schemes of work, which do not adequately identify subject-specific learning objectives.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subject in this curriculum area was inspected.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus in this curriculum area was on music and theatre studies. Work was also sampled in art and design. Here, standards were above average in the advanced level course and average in the AVCE course. Students were learning well because teaching focused on their individual needs.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The commitment of teachers to the students' learning.
- The use of information and communication technology to support students' learning.
- The very good relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- The facilities for teaching.
- The range of courses on offer to students.

251. The department offers an AS and an A level course in music. The progress that students make is good. Because of small numbers it is not appropriate to compare results with national standards. Students attain standards in music, which are similar to their standards in other subjects.
252. Students compose confidently, supported by computer technology. In Year 13, students show imagination in their work and understand the subtleties of harmony. They produce ambitious pieces, but do not always understand the limitations of the instruments and voices that they are writing for. They know how to present their work to publication standard. Attainment in aural perception is more varied in both years. Students' written work demonstrates a developing understanding of the musical styles being studied. They write convincingly and coherently.
253. Students are keen to work, but are reticent when engaging in discussion. The use of class questioning stifles rather than stimulates response. Students are highly committed to the course. This commitment is demonstrated by their presence in the department during private-study times, working on their compositions. The relationship between students and teachers is very good.
254. Teaching is good and there are some very good features. Teachers offer high-quality advice and demonstrate passion for the subject. In a Year 13 lesson, for instance, a teacher provided advice on preparing for a public performance, drawing effectively on her own personal experience. Teachers support students individually in their practical work, both within and outside lesson time. They are committed to enabling the students to achieve success in their examinations.
255. Teaching is shared between the three teachers, enabling them to work to their individual strengths. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The marking of work is thorough and gives students clear guidance on how to improve. A strength of the department is the use of information and communication technology to support music making. The department has considered offering a music technology course in the sixth form, but does not have a planned strategy to enable this to happen. One third of teaching takes place in a temporary classroom. This room is cramped and uncomfortable. The quality of resources that are available for use in this room is poor.
256. Extra-curricular activities enable students to develop their skills further. In particular, an unaccompanied choir helps members to develop their musical ear. Good occasions are provided for students to showcase their compositions and to develop in confidence as performers.

THEATRE STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision for theatre studies in the sixth form is **outstanding**.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment reached in AS and A2 examinations in 2002 were well above the national averages.
- Teaching is excellent and is rooted in the teachers' thorough knowledge of what they teach.
- A very high proportion of students continue their involvement with the subject in college and university courses.

Areas for improvement

- The use of students' language to develop further their skills in analysis and evaluation.

257. Standards are well above average and are beginning to reflect the high levels of attainment in the 2002 A level examinations when all students gained at least a B grade, with over a third gaining an A grade. This represents significant improvement over the last four years. Students achieve very well in relation to the levels of attainment they bring to the courses and almost all, who start the courses, finish them. The reason for the high retention rate is that the students experience their work as eminently relevant to the next step in their education, to their intended careers and to their growing interest in the theatre. The courses tend to attract male and female students in equal measure and they reach equivalent standards of attainment. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their earlier attainment and are supported very well in achieving to the best of their capabilities.
258. In lessons and in work, students reach well above average standards and make very good progress in the sophistication with which they tackle the different course requirements. This sets them clearly on course to repeat or come close to the overall standards of the previous year. The success of these courses lies in the evident way that teachers value the courses and settle only for the students' very best efforts. Coursework is well organised and shows that the students acquire good skills in reading and writing. Most students make good use of information and communication technology to support their learning.
259. Teaching is excellent. What strengthens teaching, above all else, is the extent of the teachers' knowledge of the theory and practice of theatre. This fires students' imaginations and interest. A further strength is the teachers' success in raising students' expectations and in giving them the will to exceed the grades expected, based on their results in the GCSE examinations, and many do so. The students do not feel they are working for the teachers, but for themselves as they see the point and purpose in their lives of the courses they follow. Teaching is occasionally slightly weakened when students' ideas are not used well enough to extend their language into more complex forms of analysis and evaluation.
260. What is immediately striking is the students' commitment to their studies and their diligence in practising and refining their work, often to the point of perfection. This was a strong feature of the work on production ideas in Year 12. It was obvious that the students had investigated ideas well beyond the minimum requirements of the course. The work seen in Year 13 is perceptive and evaluative with a few pieces that are of very high quality. Students in both Years 12 and 13 use their time well in independent study, for instance, when recording, refining and improving their devised pieces and in their improvisations.
261. Assessment is continuous and accurate. There is a very high rate of agreement between the teachers' grades and those of the external moderators. The teachers are generous in the time they spend with individual students in helping them to develop their work or in accelerating the progress of those, who fall behind. A real strength lies in the quality of preparation of students for examinations. Students are helped to untangle some of the ambiguities in possible examination questions, with the consequence that they feel less threatened by examinations.
262. Leadership and management are very good. The high standards reached are clearly traceable to the clarity of vision and belief of the head of department and his colleagues in the significance of the courses for the students and in their shared love for the theatre. The department forms a cohesive, self-critical community of skilled teachers and generally works very effectively through mainly informal systems of exchange. More secure formal systems are being created in order to support future developments.

The department supports the personal development of the students very well and is diligent in ensuring that all students are included in the full range of what is offered and that they feel at ease with their work. It is very effective in helping students to value their own thinking. Teachers frequently encourage students to reflect on the deep personal significance for them of many of the ideas they meet in their work.

263. Accommodation is just adequate for current needs. There is just one appropriately equipped area for working at the technical level required for A level courses. There is a good supply of properties and books to support students' work.

HUMANITIES

The focus in this curriculum area was on history, religious education and psychology. Work was also sampled in sociology and geography. In sociology, standards are above average. Students are more successful in those lessons where they are encouraged to become active participants in their learning. In geography, standards are well above average. In the one lesson observed, students in Year 13 were working at above average standards. They were achieving very well as a result of very good teaching.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average at both AS and A level.
- Students achieve well and often exceed their targets.
- Good teaching encourages good learning, especially in giving the students the skills and confidence to work effectively by themselves.
- Students are very well motivated and work well with each other and the teacher.
- The department is well led and managed, promoting high standards and the subject's popularity.

Areas for improvement

- To encourage students to work even more by themselves by using a wider range of teaching strategies.

264. Standards in the GCE A level examinations in 2002 were well above the national average both for the average points scored and for the proportion gaining A to B grades. Standards have significantly improved since the last inspection when they were average overall. There has been no marked difference between females and males in the last three years. AS results for 2002 were well above average, as they were in the previous year. All students passed and most achieved above expectations. Retention rates are good with nearly all of the students, who set out on the two-year course, continuing onto A2 in Year 13.

265. Standards in work seen are well above the national average. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Of the 17 Year 12 students on the AS course, 12 gained A grades in their first module on Italian Unification. They have a very good understanding of the main concepts of the periods under study. For example, Year 12 students have a strong grasp of the causes of social tensions in 1920's America, while those in Year 13 firmly understand the divisions in the Chartist movement in 19th century England. Their very good speaking skills enable them to articulate their views fluently and clearly. Most have the

confidence to support their judgements and to challenge each other and even the teacher in discussion, encouraged by the frequency of challenging oral work. They analyse sources well for reliability and usefulness, although not all follow up their very good oral response to these with relevant and accurate written analysis. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson when some students failed to evaluate precisely their written response to evidence of the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819. More able students in Year 13 have very mature skills of writing well-structured, analytical essays with good supporting evidence from a variety of historians. This has been encouraged by the high expectations set by the teachers in developing enquiry and analytical skills and the very thorough feedback provided on essays. This is also helping middle- and lower-ability students in Year 12 to overcome initial weaknesses in writing essays of irrelevance and inadequate expression and structure.

266. Teaching overall is good and is leading to good learning. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan stimulating activities based on the students' own enquiry and which challenge their thinking. There is a brisk pace to lessons, time is used well in setting deadlines and questioning checks understanding and stretches students' thinking. Students are very productive in their work, as they know exactly what to do, and good book resources are available. Students can work well by themselves, but strategies for encouraging this are limited. For instance, group work, using students' already good speaking skills, to reinforce their understanding and to organise themselves collaboratively and independently of the teacher is underdeveloped. Learning is also less effective when the teacher's exposition is too long and students are not fully involved.
267. This good learning is also promoted by the very good relationships with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to give time to plan lessons and to monitor and guide the students' progress. Marking is done very thoroughly, with very helpful review sheets so that students know their weaknesses and how to improve. Students respond enthusiastically as they enjoy the subject and have very positive attitudes to work. They also work well together when enabled to do so and listen respectfully to each other's views. They use time well and most are productive in their work. Students expressed strong appreciation for the enthusiastic support and guidance given by teachers, for instance, in providing extra lessons in the lead-up to the AS examination.
268. The good leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. In displaying good organisation and a strong commitment to the subject, the head of department sets high expectations of standards and effort. Both students and staff respect this and respond well. Schemes of work are clear and challenging in their tasks, although they do not identify the potential for more student involvement by working on different tasks on their own. The setting of clear targets for students after assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement, to which the students readily respond. A wide range of resources, including Internet access for research, provides the students with stimulus and support for detailed, private study.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of what is provided for religious education in the sixth form is **very good**. However, arrangements for ensuring that all sixth form students can follow a course in religious education are **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in AS and A2 courses are well above average.
- Very good teaching with some excellent features contributes very well to students' attainment and progress.
- Excellent student management contributes very well to students' achievement and progress.
- Departmental management is very good with a clear sense of purpose and direction.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of religious education for all students.

269. In this school, religious education is taught under the title of philosophy and belief. This deliberate decision by the school reflects their view that a philosophical approach to the study of religion and contemporary moral issues is the most meaningful and effective way to stimulate and challenge young people today.

270. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above the national average in both the AS and A2 examinations. In 2002, three fifths of students obtained A or B grades and all students gained a least an E grade. Almost all students currently in Years 12 and 13 obtained A or B grades in AS level examinations.

271. In lessons and work seen in Year 12, attainment is well above average. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of philosophical and religious concepts. They show their ability to produce well-structured and balanced arguments. Teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgements from a number of philosophical standpoints. In one lesson, for instance, students explored the utilitarian theories of Bentham and Mill as they apply to moral issues such as abortion, in-vitro fertilisation and cloning. A very good critique of the Utilitarian approach demonstrated that students are developing their analytical and evaluative skills very well. The teacher's very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contribute very well to students' ability to think independently.

272. In Year 13, attainment is well above average. Students demonstrate their ability to use ethical language. Through the teacher's challenging and enabling approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Discussion enables students to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Excellent teacher intervention enables students to challenge the traditional wisdom and expand their understanding of topics such as the application of ethical theory to the treatment of the natural world. Teachers have high expectations of students and, as a consequence, students have equally high expectations of themselves. They achieve well and make very good progress. Overall, learning is very good. The popularity of the subject has risen considerably since the last inspection and standards have improved.

273. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with

each other and work at a productive pace. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Their behaviour makes a very good contribution to students' achievement and progress.

274. Teaching is very good with many excellent features. This teaching has a significant impact on pupil achievement. Planning is very good and this helps students to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims are shared with students in all cases. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that challenge students to learn from as well as to learn about religion. Teachers enable students to develop their own independence in learning and the quality of student research is high. This assists students to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage students' behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used very well to extend students' understanding of philosophical and religious principles and concepts. Teachers have clear expectations of students and challenge them to succeed and these are very effective in contributing to students' achievement.
275. Assessment of students' work is very good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a very clear basis for assessing what students know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning-cycle and the planning of new work. The department sets clear targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, students are very clear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.
276. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, enabling students to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing students for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
277. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Students are provided with a very rich diet of religious education. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She is supported extremely well by one other specialist. Planning and documentation are very good and policy documents are closely linked with the school's aims. The department monitors the work of students very well. There are regular formal meetings of the department. These form the basis for the discussion of important issues relating to pupil attainment and progress. The work of teachers is well monitored by the head of department through classroom observation.
278. At present, the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students in both Years 12 and 13 is not met. This was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. Plans to introduce a shared approach to religious education with other local schools are being developed.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students' standards are supported by the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Many students have well-developed personal and learning skills and are effective independent learners.
- Students make very good intellectual and creative effort in their commitment to their studies.
- Students have positive attitudes and a very strong commitment to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Lesson planning and the diagnosis and provision for individual learning needs.
- Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress.
- The leadership of the subject.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance.
- Accommodation and learning resources.

279. Students currently studying psychology are achieving above average standards in Year 12 and average standards in Year 13. However, due to the poor diagnosis and provision for individual learning needs, standards have fluctuated quite widely from year to year. By the end of Year 12 in 2000, students attained average standards. By the end of Year 13, they were below average. In the 2001 examinations, students achieved above average standards at the end of both Years 12 and 13. In 2002 examinations, results were above average, with a far higher number of students gaining A grades by the end of Year 13 than previously. Results at the end of Year 12 in 2002 were below average. The school's own analysis of its results for students by the end of Year 13 shows this trend¹⁰.

280. In Year 12, students show a good awareness of the main authorities that have written on developmental psychology, individual differences, disorders and the influence nature and nurture have on our up-bringing and the way we function. Students use their A level textbook and their comprehensive range of notes and further readings and research well to further their understanding. Teachers effectively lead discussions, for example, to distinguish how psychologists measure the strength of attachment between parent, brothers and sisters and strangers. This was one of the lessons seen where the teacher took care to provide resources to further aid the students' understanding. Here, their awareness was greatly heightened with the good range of illustrations the teacher provided. Supported by video input, the students were able to examine in practice the ways attachments develop. Teachers too rarely provide resources of this nature, however.

281. In Year 13, students usually achieve well in relation to predictions based on their AS results. The teacher has high expectations and satisfactorily supports the students' learning. For example, students give thoughtful and reasoned answers to questions such as, "what is the nature and nurture debate?" Here, they produce good evidence of their understanding and applied learning. The teacher gives relevant explanations showing a good applied subject confidence. Examination of the students' files and previous work shows them to be well prepared and presented. Students show a very good awareness of how published studies in psychology indicate the various ways

¹⁰ Since the inspection, examination board remarking has resulted in some upward re-grading of results for almost all these students.

people behave. They translate this awareness into their well thought out written descriptions. Many are starting to attribute ideas in their answers with a wide and relevant range of references to authorities and researchers that have published their work.

282. Students show good attitudes towards their work. They listen and use their time well, trying to give of their best and work effectively to complete taxing and challenging tasks. Their high levels of self-motivation and their good independent learning styles support them very well in their learning, both in school and at home. Most show high levels of enthusiasm and application, learning effectively.
283. Both teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Students are given relevant sources of information to further their studies. However, the approach used by the teachers is far too dependent on the students finding out and researching information for themselves. In lessons, little thought is given to the preparation of previously prepared resources, informed by an assessment of the students' individual needs. There is a poor analysis by their teachers of what students should do to raise their standards. Many students succeed because they have an innate ability to learn. The style of teaching adopted by the teachers where the students are given notes to copy during lessons, written by the teachers on the whiteboard, or dictated, does not suit the students, who cannot use this type of input effectively.
284. The leadership of the subject does not provide clear educational direction. This leads to varying standards, to a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance, with effective remedial action, and to a lack of diagnosis of and provision for individual learning needs. Systems are too informal and are not effectively monitored by senior members of staff. There is no specialist room for the teaching of psychology. This means that the opportunities to use interactive displays to celebrate and to further inform the students' learning are limited. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. There is inadequate access for students to relevant information and communication technology. The department has little computer software to support this means of learning and there are not enough books for students to use, other than the set texts for the examinations. The subject was not reported on at the time of the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus in this curriculum area was on English and German. Work was also sampled in French. In this subject, standards are well above the national average. Students are achieving well given their previous GCSE results. They develop strengths in arguing their case persuasively, both in writing and in speaking. Students do not often read beyond the requirements of the French examination and this restricts their learning.

ENGLISH

English language and English literature are taught in Years 12 and 13 as two separate subjects. Both subjects were inspected.

English Language

Overall, the quality of provision for English language in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- Students produce some outstanding pieces of imaginative writing.
- Students show good knowledge of how language develops through carefully constructed and written reports of individual investigations.
- Well-planned teaching encourages students to adopt a systematic approach to linguistic analysis.

Areas for improvement

- Encouraging more students to initiate discussions in class.

285. Apart from a dip in 2000, results at AS level and at A2 level have been above average. Students achieve well and maintain high standards from GCSE English. The range and quality of their written work is good. In Year 12, students produce very convincing pastiches based on the American crime novel. They understand the way that different authors utilise humour and local colour and the students themselves are able to extend these devices in stories of their own that have pace, ingenuity and energy.

286. Students show a sound understanding of the necessary technical terminology when analysing language development in class. Many rely on the teacher to keep the lesson moving, but are prepared to show more involvement when left to work in groups. The teacher cleverly builds up the intensity of questioning throughout the lesson so that, by the end, students are being challenged to think by increasingly provocative prompts: "Why do you think that? Have you the evidence? Develop that idea more."

287. By Year 13, students are more ready to take part in lessons and the teacher often acts as an annotator of their ideas, guiding them when necessary to ensure key points are covered. In a detailed analysis of the development of children's language, students showed a growing awareness of the technical structures that very young children have to grasp. Students were quick to point at the way in which we learn to manipulate language and recognise the signifiers of developing language, such as when we become clear about the difference between subject and object pronouns. The teacher ensured that students have a firm basis to their arguments by setting homework that brings them into contact with linguistic researchers such as Skinner and Chomsky.

288. Many students apply their theoretical understanding of linguistics to individual research, for example, to investigate how speakers of English as an additional language exhibit certain characteristics influenced by their first language. Students learn to develop hypotheses and use strategies such as annotated transcripts of speech to test these out.

289. Teaching is good overall and at times it is very good. The marking of work shows that teachers have a detailed understanding of the subject and they give students very good ideas on how to develop their thinking. Lessons are conducted in a lively and interactive manner and work best when students take the initiative, such as posing questions for the teacher, for example, to clarify the meaning of the term "heuristic".

The teacher ensured that this question formed a strand in the thinking of all students for the rest of the lesson.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Teachers provide challenging work to extend students' knowledge.
- Many students gain the highest grades at A2 level.
- Students show a detailed understanding of their set works and their cultural and historical context.

Areas for improvement

- More thought in the organisation of classrooms to encourage continuous involvement of students in their own learning.

290. Results in examinations in English literature in the sixth form are very good. Students maintain the very high standards achieved at GCSE. The teaching is at best lively and engages the students. In Year 12, students appreciated the humour of the 'Wife of Bath' and drew out the significance of the language to identify the key themes running through the poem. The teacher managed to involve all students by posing questions directly to individuals and by sensitively responding to their answers. The effectiveness of this approach is seen in the way that students are developing their writing at AS level. Essays are sharp and analytical with succinct judgements such as 'Malvolio is not the lone offender in Twelfth Night, the play is littered with similar examples'. Students use imaginative devices to show the way in which characters affect the audience, such as a graph charting the waxing and waning popularity of Shylock.

291. Older students continue to respond well to challenging work and learn to base their ideas on a careful examination of a range of different critical viewpoints. They engage in seminars to explore the cultural influences on writers, such as feminism in Shakespeare and whether the ideas of Marx are applicable to a study of 'The Merchant of Venice'. Presentations are well thought through and students collaborate well in the preparation and presentation of the seminars.

292. The quality of teaching is good. Some lessons are very good, especially when teachers give students the major responsibility for leading discussions. The marking is also very detailed and helpful because it makes students think for themselves how to follow up ideas and improve their work. Classrooms are often rather bare, however, and there is a lack of forethought in setting up some of the rooms. This does not encourage students to engage in eye contact when discussions are developing.

GERMAN

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

Strengths

- Lessons are well planned using recent and relevant resources.
- Students are very well prepared for the demands of the examination.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not read extensively outside the classroom.
- Students are quite dependent on the teacher to guide them in all aspects of their work.

293. In 2001, students achieved results in the A2 level examination that were well above the national average. In 2002, students attained results that were as good as this, but the numbers taking German were low and, therefore, statistical comparisons are not reliable. In 2002, students performed well at A2 level, given their results in the GCSE, and did as well in the AS examination as would be expected.
294. Most students complete the course, but numbers taking up German have decreased over recent years. For the current Year 13, six students started the AS course and three have continued to A2. In the current Year 12, there are only three students.
295. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in files during the inspection shows that students in the current cohort are achieving well given their results in the GCSE examination. However, the numbers are too small to make any meaningful comparisons with previous years. By the end of Year 12, their spoken language is good and for some of the most able it is very good. Students practise with the foreign-language assistant in order to improve their spoken work and are frequently able to talk in class about controversial issues such as abortion. They can often express their own points of view well, especially if they are given time to prepare this in advance or put their ideas into writing. For example, they wrote well about the war in Iraq, comparing the different standpoints of Germany, England and the USA. They also work on improving their grammatical knowledge and they widen the range of expressions that they use significantly during Year 12 so that, by the end of the year, they are able to write in more depth and understand tapes well on these matters. Students are beginning to read beyond the texts studied in class, mostly using articles on the Internet as a basis for research into topics, which they have to study in more depth for their coursework.
296. By the end of Year 13, most students are able to present their arguments clearly and accurately and can argue their case convincingly in writing. They continue to improve their spoken skills by working with the foreign-language assistant and use the Internet to ensure that their knowledge of current events in Germany is up to date. Students in Year 13 are making good progress. They understand discussions in German on topics such as homelessness and they can discuss these issues lucidly.
297. The teaching of sixth-form German is good. Teachers transmit their knowledge of Germany and the language very well. They use current materials to good effect. For example, in one lesson, students had to understand the different viewpoints surrounding the issue of teenage pregnancy. Lessons are well planned and allow students to build up their understanding of both the factual content of the topic and the vocabulary and structures to be able to speak about it fluently. Students work hard during lessons and complete a lot of work. They are, however, quite dependent on the

teacher to guide them and show little independence in reading widely beyond that, which is required for their coursework.

298. In Year 12, the course is planned so that students cover less-complex topics, such as the role of the family and the education system in Germany, before moving on to more difficult areas such as politics and racism. Teachers do not, however, exploit students' own interests by choosing topics that fire their enthusiasm and encourage them to move beyond the narrow confines of the examination requirements. Students are, nevertheless, very well prepared for the demands of the examination, although the AS examination is new and teachers are, therefore, less sure of the requirements here.
299. Students are given realistic amounts of work to do at home, often writing essays on what they have been studying in class. The marking of written work is very good. Errors are signalled and detailed suggestions are made to students about how they might improve both content and style. Teachers know the small number of students well and target their comments carefully to ensure that all students are encouraged to do their best. There is a mutual respect between teachers and students, which contributes to students' desire to work hard in the subject.
300. The leadership of the sixth-form course is good. Provision is similar to that at the last inspection and progress is, therefore, satisfactory. The course is well planned to meet the requirements of the examination as teachers know the syllabus well, but the number of students taking the course is dropping. There are plans to address this issue by combining with the sixth form of another local school.