

INSPECTION REPORT

FULLBROOK SCHOOL

New Haw

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125313

Headteacher: Mr R Elms

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th February 2003

Inspection number: 249964

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: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Selsdon Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: The Reverend G Holliday

Date of previous inspection: 20th – 24th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Registered inspector	Child development Sociology Leisure and tourism	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31329	Ms K Barratt	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
30941	Mr K Brammer	Team inspector	English Drama	
1759	Mr G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32115	Mr J Foster	Team inspector	Latin Spanish Modern foreign languages (support)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education	
14691	Mrs J Hall	Team inspector	Science	
32118	Mr J Jackson	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12890	Mr T Jardine	Team inspector	Chemistry	
2521	Mrs S Killman	Team inspector	Psychology	
20527	Mr B King	Team inspector	Mathematics (support)	
1240	Mr J King	Team inspector	Art and design	
32340	Mr P McKay	Team inspector	Geography	
4757	Mr D Morris	Team inspector	Music Expressive arts	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16950	Dr C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French English as an additional language	
16930	Mr J Plumb	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form)	
18032	Ms I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
3731	Mr W G Robson	Team inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion, including race equality Option support	
10053	Ms J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design (sixth form) Business	
12972	Mr A Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fullbrook School is located in New Haw, Surrey. It provides education for girls and boys aged 11 to 18 years. The students come from many primary schools in a wide area, but mainly from the area around Weybridge and Woking. The school was formerly grant maintained, and has now chosen foundation status. It is comprehensive and much bigger than most secondary schools; 1641 students attend, of whom 229 are in the sixth form. Boys outnumber girls in each of Years 7 to 11 and, in total, 76 more boys than girls attend the school in these year groups. More girls than boys are in the sixth form. The school is very popular and the number of applications each year well exceeds the places available; the number of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 exceeds the current admission number of 280 per year. Since the last inspection six years ago, 343 more students attend the school. About six per cent of the students have minority ethnic backgrounds. A few more than is usual have a language other than English as their first language, but very few are at an early stage in learning English. The number of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual ages of 11, 16 or above is below average. The percentage of students who claim entitlement to free school meals is also below average. The percentage identified by the school as having special educational needs, including statements of special educational needs, is below average. The main categories of special educational needs are learning, emotional and behavioural, and physical impairments. Proportionately, more students have behavioural difficulties than in 1997. On entry to the school, students' attainments span the full range and are above average overall. The school gained DfES achievement awards in 2001 and 2002. It holds the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards. It is an associate of the Technology Colleges Trust and is an Investor in People. Application is being made to gain the status of a specialist school for mathematics and computing. There has been considerable change of teaching staff during the last two years and the school has had difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers in several subjects.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fullbrook is a good school. Students attain well above average academic standards and they have positive attitudes to learning. Teaching is good. The headteacher leads the school very well and leadership and management are good overall. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students attain well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations.
- The teaching is good and much is very good. Teachers have good relationships with students and enable them to make good, and often very good, progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good and they behave well in most lessons.
- The headteacher's leadership is very good and good leadership and management overall ensure that the quality of teaching and learning remains the highest priority.
- The school is very effective in the training and induction of new teachers.
- The school rightly has the confidence of parents that it is providing their children with a good education.

What could be improved

- The behaviour of a small minority of students is not good enough in lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9; when they are not directly supervised, some students' behaviour is intimidating to others who are reluctant to report such incidents.
- Many students on the register of special educational needs do not have clear enough targets to direct the work of teachers, or to enable them to evaluate the progress that these students make.
- Initiatives to provide additional courses and support for students who have learning and behavioural difficulties are not co-ordinated, monitored or evaluated well enough.
- The accommodation is inadequate for the numbers of students in the school. Students cannot always be accommodated in specialist rooms when this would be helpful to their learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in January 1997. The school has maintained well above average standards. The quality of the teaching of students of very wide-ranging competence was a key issue of the last inspection. Teaching is now good overall, and usually enables students to make very good progress, especially across Years 10 and 11. Strategic planning has improved and is now very good. Assessment data are used much more effectively to support students' progress. The National Curriculum is fully provided in Years 10 and 11. Although religious education is now well provided for in Years 10 and 11, sixth-form students do not receive their entitlement to it. Assemblies are held regularly, but students do not receive their entitlement to an act of collective worship every day. Risk assessment is now satisfactory. Overall, the school has maintained standards and the quality of teaching very well, although in the last two years, the provision of specialist teaching staff has been increasingly difficult.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11, and by sixth-form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores* in GCSE, AS-level (Advanced Subsidiary) and A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) examinations.

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by students at GCSE and A-level; it is often considered the best measure of a school's overall performance.

** Reference to similar schools is to those with students of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country.

*** 2001 is the last year for which national A-level comparisons are currently available. Sixth-form examinations changed in 2001, and it is not possible to make comparison with 2000. Reference is made to 2002 results in the text below. There are no similar school comparisons at A-level.

Students' progress from entry to the school in Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is good. In 2000, 2001 and 2002, they attained well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in comparison with all schools. Their performance was average in comparison with that of similar schools. The trend in the school's results has been in line with the rising national trend.

Overall, students make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. In GCSE examinations in 2002, 2001 and 2000, overall, students of all levels of competence and ethnic background attained well above average standards in comparison with those of all schools. Their performance was well above average in the attainment of five or more grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations. In 2002, results were in line with those of similar schools, but in 2001, a year group of higher academic potential attained standards well above those of similar schools. The boys did not attain as well in 2002 as they did in 2001 but they were a group of lower potential; they achieved the standards that could reasonably be expected of them. In all recent years, students attained impressive standards in modern foreign languages, and almost gained a grade higher in French and Spanish than in their other subjects. In business studies, where there have been difficulties in ensuring continuity of specialist teachers, students attained lower standards than those reached in their other subjects.

The school sets itself challenging targets to reach in GCSE examinations. In 2002, the target for the average point score was reached, but a less competent year group, overall, did not repeat the performance of 2001, the school's most successful performance ever in GCSE examinations.

In the work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 11, students of all levels of competence, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language, achieved well. In English, students' writing was imaginative and creative. In mathematics, students were skilled in mental calculations. They participated well in practical activities in science and extended their scientific vocabulary well.

In the sixth form, students attained average A-level and AVCE standards in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are validated. Girls and boys attained broadly similar standards. In 2002, A-level results were higher; almost all candidates passed the examination and about half the grades attained were A or B. Performance in the three modern foreign languages and psychology was especially strong. Results in business studies were below those expected. Between 2002 and 2000, evidence of the value added, from the standards that students attained in GCSE examinations to those that they achieved in A-level examinations, was very strong in psychology. Results in the Year 12 AS-level examinations in 2002 and 2001 indicated that the value added to students' GCSE examination results was questionable in several subjects, but students were able to continue their studies to A-level with confidence. Overall, students achieved well in the work seen during the inspection. However, in the 73 lessons observed in the sixth form, significant levels of absence were noted, especially in Year 12 and, although some absence was for good reasons, many absentees lost the benefit of the very good teaching and learning experiences that more regular attenders received. Consequently, a minority of students do not achieve as well as they should and, overall, standards are not as high as they could be.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students have positive and often very good attitudes to learning; they mostly enjoy the learning in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Students usually behave well and often very well in lessons. However, behaviour in some lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, is unsatisfactory. Although most students behave well when not directly supervised, some students' behaviour is intimidating and inconsiderate to others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. A large majority of students work well together and co-operate well with teachers. Some students, especially in Years 7 to 9, are unkind and inconsiderate.
Attendance	Almost all students in Years 7 to 11 attend regularly and very few absent themselves without good reason.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good throughout the compulsory school years, and much is very good. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Overall, it meets well the needs of girls and boys of differing levels of competence and ethnic background. Students with special educational needs withdrawn for special help are very well taught and they are helped effectively to make good progress in mainstream lessons. English, mathematics and science are well taught in Years 7 to 11. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. Teachers know their subjects well and their use of assessment data is effective in helping students to make good progress. Some inexperienced teachers' management of students is insecure and, in these lessons, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The three modern foreign languages are very well taught, especially Spanish. History, economics, performing arts, psychology, sociology, theatre studies, and art and design in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, are also very well taught. The teaching seen in film studies was excellent. No subject is unsatisfactorily taught overall, but the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 9 lacks sufficient challenge for students of high potential. Overall, students learn successfully from the good and often very good teaching that they receive and they concentrate on their work in lessons. Occasionally, students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are unsatisfactory and they do not make the progress that they should.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Time for personal and social education is not generous in Years 7 to 9. A programme for citizenship has started well. Intermediate level courses are not, currently, available to sixth-form students, nor do they receive their entitlement to religious education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The teaching of those withdrawn from mainstream classes for special help is very good. They receive good personal care from committed staff. Some students do not have clear enough targets to guide the work of teachers and learning support assistants and, consequently, students' progress cannot be accurately evaluated.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The few students involved achieve their potential and some do very well.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Students' moral and social development is well provided for. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. They have many opportunities to enrich their experience of European culture, and provision for learning about non-European cultures is also good, especially in art and design, textiles and religious education.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory overall. Students are well supported to raise their academic standards. Staff are caring, but some students are not confident enough to tell them about the intimidating behaviour of others.
Partnership with parents	Very good. Parents have considerable confidence in what the school does to help their children to achieve their best.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher's leadership is very good. He rightly has the confidence of parents, governors and the local education authority, all of whom recognise that students receive a good quality of education. He and key staff have ensured the maintenance of well above average standards since the last inspection, and have largely overcome considerable difficulties in the recruitment of specialist teachers and the increased numbers of students attending the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive of the school and oversee all key decisions. They inform themselves effectively of the quality of teaching and learning. They do not provide students with the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day.

Aspect	Comment
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Management checks carefully on the standards of teaching and learning and teachers' services are not retained if their work is not good enough. Data are used effectively to measure school performance and to target improvement. Rigorous means to evaluate success in reaching planned targets are identified and applied.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used effectively. Management works tirelessly to maintain the quality of staffing which is satisfactory. It has improved the accommodation, some of which is very good, but, overall, is unsatisfactory. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, but the provision of computers is not generous. The school applies best value principles very well; results are compared closely to those of all schools and to those in the local education authority. It challenges its practice of teaching and learning and maintains good quality, overcoming difficulties in the recruitment of staff. Parents and students are consulted through questionnaires, meetings and a school council system. Competitive tendering arrangements ensure very good value for services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents have great confidence that their children are helped to do their best. They can approach the school with confidence with any concerns about their children. The teaching is good. The leadership is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents think the school does not work closely enough with them. Homework. Information on their children's progress. Behaviour.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views stated above. They consider that parents are well informed about their children's progress by written reports and parents' meetings; however, some interested parents want more opportunity for consultation. The parents' meeting expressed concerns about homework, largely in Years 7 and 8. During the inspection, homework was set regularly for students in these year groups and the work was, generally, suitably challenging, but some students' recording of homework indicates some inconsistent practice. The school regularly consults parents by questionnaire; meetings are convened when curricular changes are required. Overall, the school does its best to work with parents and to inform and involve them when significant decisions need to be made. Most students behave well, but the behaviour of a small minority is unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form consists of 229 students among whom are 33 more girls than boys. There are currently 36 fewer students in the sixth form than at the last inspection in 1997, and numbers have fluctuated each year. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Students have a good choice of AS-, A-level and AVCE courses. They have the opportunity to participate in the Surrey Sixth-Form Graduation Programme and to study key skills and citizenship. Students are expected to have gained at least five or more grades C or higher in GCSE examinations to undertake advanced courses. GCSE grade B or higher is stipulated for entry to some advanced courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall, the sixth form is effective in meeting students' needs and enabling them to achieve the standards that could reasonably be expected of them. Standards attained in A-level examinations are average, overall, and have been sustained at this level since the last inspection. The teaching is very good and students make satisfactory progress overall. Leadership and management are good and provide students with a cost-effective education.

Strengths

- Overall, students achieve the standards at A-level that could reasonably be expected.
- The teaching is very good overall, and students make good and often very good progress in lessons.
- Leadership and management ensure that students are provided with a good, cost-effective education.
- Relationships among students and between students and teachers are very good and help to make learning successful.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning in lessons.

What could be improved

- Standards at AS-, A-level and AVCE could be higher still.
- Checking on students' attendance and reasons for absence from lessons and on their use of private study time is not rigorous enough.
- Accommodation is barely adequate for the numbers of students.

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 13 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	Satisfactory. Satisfactory teaching enables students to achieve as well as expected. Teachers are working well as a team to improve standards.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Chemistry	Good. A-level results were below average in 2001, but improved greatly in 2002. AS-level results declined between 2001 and 2002 because of inexperienced teaching. Current standards are above average for both courses and students are achieving well. The teaching is good.
Design and technology and textiles	Satisfactory. Very good relationships between students and teachers support sound progress in lessons but some students do not achieve as well as expected. The impact of ICT and new teaching appointments is improving standards in both subjects. The number of students opting for the subjects has risen significantly.
Business studies	Good. The department has overcome recent staffing difficulties well. Standards are now above average and good teaching enables students to achieve well.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Satisfactory. Students' standards in Year 13 have improved since the results in their AS-level modules. Their teachers support them well so that they meet deadlines and know how to improve their work.
Physical education	Good. Teachers' very good, specialist knowledge helps students to achieve well.
Art and design	Very good. Very good teaching enables students to achieve well, especially in practical work. Teachers give students very good information about the progress that they are making and how to improve further.
Geography	Good. Standards of work are in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are good and enable almost all students, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well. A small minority of students underachieves because of absenteeism and an immature attitude to work.
History	Good. Very good teaching enables students to achieve well, although they do better in examinations than in their coursework.
Psychology	Very good. The very good teaching and very good departmental management ensure that students attain well above average A-level standards, enjoy the subject and make very good progress.
English and English literature	Good. Standards are above average and achievement is good in Year 13 because of good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students.
French	Very good. Results are consistently well above average. Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes ensure that they learn very well.
Spanish	Excellent. Outstanding teaching results in very high standards and excellent achievement. Students develop very good independent learning skills.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was nearly always at least good, and some very good teaching and learning were seen in economics, sociology, performing arts and theatre studies. In one film studies lesson, the teaching and learning were excellent. In AS- and A-level examinations, students' achievement is generally satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students are well supported on their courses. They are helped very well to choose courses in higher education, and careers advice for those seeking employment at age 18 is satisfactory. The checking of attendance and use of private study are not rigorous enough to ensure that all students work as hard as they might.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are good. They ensure that students receive a good, cost-effective standard of education and best value principles are satisfactorily applied. Difficulties in providing specialist teachers have been overcome by imaginative initiatives. Planning has recognised the need to provide courses at Intermediate level. Currently, students have equal opportunity to achieve well. However, they do not receive their entitlement to religious education or to a daily act of collective worship. Common room and private study accommodation is barely adequate – given present requirements on attendance. Learning resources provided specifically for use by sixth-form students are satisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They consider that the courses meet their needs well. • They are helped very well to settle into the sixth form. • Teaching is good. • Teachers are willing and available to help them on request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for learning outside their main courses. • Careers advice and guidance. • Information on the standards they reach on the courses that they follow.

The inspection team agree with students' positive views. The demands of AS-level courses restrict time for other studies, but students often do not take up the opportunities that are available to extend and enrich their learning beyond their main subject courses. Careers guidance for those seeking employment at age 18 is satisfactory. Those applying for entry to higher education are very well provided for. Students receive good information on their standards, for example on review days.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth-form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by students in Year 9 National Curriculum tests or in GCSE examinations; it is often considered the best measure of a school's overall performance.

Reference to similar schools is to those which contain a similar proportion of students who claim entitlement to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with students of similar backgrounds.

1. When students enter the school, their attainment spans the full range, but it is above average overall. During Years 7 to 9, students of all levels of competence and ethnic background achieve well and make generally good progress. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002, 2001 and 2000, students attained well above average standards in comparison with results in all schools. Their performance was average when compared with that gained in similar schools. In 2002, results in English were not as high as in mathematics and science, and fewer students reached Level 6 in the English tests than in the other two subjects. Students' skills of literacy and numeracy are above average. During the last five years, the trend in performance in the National Curriculum tests has been in line with the national upward trend.
2. During Years 10 and 11, from the evidence of the standards that students attain in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests to those that they reached in GCSE examinations two years later, all students achieve very well. Their rate of progress increases and they attain well above national average standards in GCSE examinations. In 2002, 2001 and 2000, students' average point score attained in GCSE examinations was well above the national average. In 2002, standards were in line with those of similar schools. In 2001, standards were well above those of similar schools, the school attained its best ever GCSE results and students' rate of progress from the end of Year 9 to the 2001 GCSE examinations was very high. The school was rated among the top five per cent of schools in the country on this measure of progress. In 2002 and all recent years, students' attainment of five or more GCSE grades A* to C has been well above average. However, the result in 2002 was not as high as in 2001 because the boys were, overall, a year group of lower potential compared with that of 2001. In 2002, the provision of a wider range of courses and opportunities, in addition to the GCSE courses, reduced the percentage of students attaining one or more GCSE examination grades to below average. Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently very good in modern foreign languages, geography and history and students usually attain higher standards in these subjects than in the others for which they enter. Lower results were gained in business studies in 2001 and 2002 because of difficulties in providing specialist teaching. The upward trend in the school's performance over five years in GCSE examinations by 2002 was in line with the national rise in performance.
3. The school sets itself challenging targets to reach in GCSE examinations. It is usually successful in achieving these or comes close to the target.

4. In the work seen during the inspection overall, students were attaining above the standards expected nationally in all years, and achieving well at this half-year point in their courses. Standards were well above expectations in Years 7 to 9 in Spanish, geography and history and students were achieving very well in these subjects. The standards seen were at the nationally expected level in design and technology and music, where there has been discontinuity in staffing which, although now resolved, has affected standards adversely. Standards seen were below the national expectation in ICT in Years 7 to 9 because, although students' skills in use of computers were satisfactory, they were unable to apply these well enough in different contexts. In particular, students of higher potential in the subject did not reach the standards that they should, given their above average standards on entry to the school. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11 overall, standards were above average and students were achieving well. They were achieving very well in English, geography, history and the three modern foreign languages, and well in most subjects. Achievement seen in design and technology and music was satisfactory. Students achieve well enough in ICT in Years 10 and 11 when they use computers in their other subjects. There is no longer a GCSE examination course in ICT itself.
5. Students' creative and imaginative writing seen in English in Years 7 to 9 was very good, and in Years 10 and 11 they applied their skills to analyse and compare different texts well. However, some had difficulty in using English accurately and competently and the boys' handwriting and presentation of work were sometimes unsatisfactory, as they were also in art and design. In mathematics, students were able to explain their mathematical thinking effectively in Years 7 to 9 and they applied their skills to solving problems with growing competence in the GCSE course. However, their skills in using mental calculations were insecure, including in Years 10 and 11. In science, they were competent with practical work in all years and acquired a scientific vocabulary successfully. However, some had difficulty in explaining their reasoning in speech, and lacked the skills to work independently of teachers. Higher attaining students analysed and evaluated their scientific work well in Years 10 and 11. In modern foreign languages, the oral and written skills of competent students were impressive and, in Spanish in particular, students' knowledge of grammar and range of vocabulary were outstanding.
6. Of the different groups of students in the school, boys' record of performance in GCSE examinations is more erratic than that of girls but, in 2002, although boys did less well than girls, their prior attainment indicated overall lower potential. In the lessons seen, girls and boys achieved equally well. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others, and often do very well. Of the 84 students known to use English as an additional language, very few are at an early stage of learning English. Good progress is made by these in the three lessons of support each week with the co-ordinator of special educational needs or with a classroom assistant who has qualifications in this field. Other students with English as an additional language make the good progress that they should in mainstream classes. Subject departments have recently identified students known to be gifted or talented. In the lessons seen, these students achieved well, except in ICT in Years 7 to 9, where lessons did not give scope for them to extend their skills independently enough. Across the curriculum in general, students who are highly competent achieve well and, for example, the attainment of grades A* and A in GCSE examinations is regularly well above national results.
7. Students who experience learning difficulties make good progress overall. Most achieve GCSE pass grades in several subjects. Students with more severe literacy difficulties make very good progress, especially in lessons where they are withdrawn for additional help with reading and spelling in the learning support base. Students who have special educational needs because of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties make

satisfactory progress overall. However, some do not achieve as well as they might. Plans for managing these pupils' behaviour are not precise enough and do not set pupils clear targets for improvement.

8. Since the last inspection, overall, standards have been well maintained.

Sixth form

9. Students attained average standards in A-level and AVCE examinations in 2001, the last year for which validated national comparisons are available. Although national results for the 2002 A-level examinations are not yet validated, based on the attainment of grades A and B and the overall pass standard, the school's 2002 A-level examination standards were higher than those of 2001. In 2002, 97 per cent of A-level subject entries reached the pass standard, and 43 per cent were at grades A or B. In the 2001 Year 12 AS-level examination results (for which no overall nationally validated comparative data are yet available), 86 per cent of subject entries reached the pass standard, of which 28 per cent were at grades A or B; the result in 2002 was very similar. The value added to students' attainments, from the standards that they reached in GCSE examinations to those gained at A-level, is satisfactory. Overall, at age 18, students achieve the standards that might reasonably be expected of them on the basis of their attainment at age 16. A-level standards were reported as average at the last inspection, and they have been maintained at this level. In 2001, the last few students following an Intermediate leisure and tourism course completed their courses and their results were above average.
10. The work seen during the inspection was generally of a higher standard than the average standards of recent A-level examination results in most subjects. Of the 13 subjects inspected in full and reported in Part E of this report, standards seen were above average overall. In French, Spanish and psychology, students were seen to be achieving very well. Of the other subjects reported in full, their achievement was good, with the exception of product design where students were achieving satisfactorily. The teaching of these courses is, overall, very good and, from the evidence of their work and the 73 lessons seen in the sixth form, students are progressing very successfully. There is a discrepancy between students' average standards in previous A-level examinations and the overall above average quality of work seen during the inspection with good progress in lessons. The difference arises from both the inadequate commitment of a minority of students and the insufficient direction and guidance that they receive. The vast majority of students complete their courses and take the examinations. However, some students have erratic attendance during their courses, for example one in every four students was absent from the Year 12 lessons seen during the inspection, and one in six was absent from the Year 13 lessons. Students' use of private study time is not monitored closely enough to ensure that all are using their time well enough to meet the considerable organisational and intellectual demands of their advanced courses. Consequently, standards in examinations, overall, are lower than they could be. The students who are well motivated to achieve their best and attend regularly receive the very good teaching that enables them to achieve well.
11. In lessons seen, boys achieve as well as girls, but results over time indicate more erratic performance by boys. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is not their first language achieve at least as well as others, and often reach higher standards. Talented students usually do very well. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teachers take their needs into account when planning their lessons.

12. Students have the opportunity to gain qualifications in key skills. The majority gained these qualifications in 2002, many at the higher Level 3 standard, although they did not complete their portfolios. Provision for the key skills of communication and number is through individual subjects. In the current academic year, lessons have been timetabled for ICT. However, many students have not attended these and, consequently, the number of lessons provided has been reduced because of the low rate of attendance. In the Year 12 lesson seen in the key skill of ICT, students attained standards sufficient to support their learning in their advanced courses. Their skills of communication and number are also good enough to enable them to achieve well in the subjects of their choice.
13. Since the last inspection, the trend in performance has been to maintain standards on the advanced courses at the average level reported in 1997.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The attitudes of students towards school are good. Students' positive attitudes towards learning enable them to make the most of the good teaching that they receive and reach well above average standards in external examinations. In 44 per cent of lessons, students' attitudes were at least very good and sometimes excellent. Most students work hard and are determined to succeed.
15. Students are keen to take part in events organised by the school, such as the forthcoming production of 'Oliver'. A significant number from all year groups are taking part in this production, not just as performers but also supporting through stage management and designing the sets. Many students represent the school in sporting competitions and other events. Students have a sense of pride in their school.
16. Relationships between students and staff are generally good. Students are happy to approach members of staff if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work. Relationships among students themselves are good. There are many opportunities to work with others in classes and in small groups, and students willingly share ideas and support each other in learning activities. Year 11 students worked very well together in small groups to extend their understanding of how diseases spread. Students express their feelings in discussions on a wide range of social and moral issues; others listen with sensitivity to views and opinions that may differ from their own.
17. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Some boisterous behaviour takes place in narrow corridors but, in general, students move about the school in an orderly manner. Students behaved well and often very well in most lessons seen. However, in nine per cent of lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, behaviour was unsatisfactory and, on a few occasions, poor. In these lessons, the quality of learning of all students was adversely affected. Some teachers, often those least experienced, lacked the competence to manage behaviour well enough and did not apply the school's procedures for managing behaviour effectively. A small minority of students present challenging behaviour to other students and sometimes to staff, and consistently fail to respond to the school's procedures for the management of behaviour.
18. Overall, students with learning difficulties have positive attitudes to their work and concentrate well, even when there is a lack of variety of teaching methods in lessons. Some with more severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are not willing to concentrate or pay attention in lessons and disrupt the work of others when teachers' class control and management are weak.

19. The number of fixed-term exclusions were considered to be 'quite high' at the last inspection. The percentage of students temporarily excluded from school in 2001 to 2002, the last full academic year, was well above average. Of the 93 students involved, 48 were on the register of special educational needs. There has been no significant progress in reducing these figures since the last inspection. In the current academic year, the number of fixed-term exclusions has been reduced. The number of students permanently excluded is below the national average.
20. Incidents of oppressive behaviour, when brought to the attention of the school, are generally effectively dealt with, although some students were not happy with the response of a minority of staff. Students from all year groups expressed concern about the amount of bullying that goes on in the school out of sight of staff on duty. An anti-bullying policy has been in place for several years and has been regularly reviewed, but many students said that they did not know how it was intended to work. Students expressed concern that, if they reported incidents to staff, they would be further victimised; they were also afraid that if they responded vigorously to intimidation, they themselves might be temporarily excluded.
21. Students' use of initiative and sense of personal responsibility are good. They develop into confident and articulate young people during their time in school. They express their feelings and concerns in a mature and sensible manner. Both year and school councils enable students to air their views and make a positive contribution towards improving the school environment and facilities, and they take these responsibilities very seriously. The Year 11 year council is particularly active in organising a range of social and fund-raising events for students. They have raised £8,000 for the school's overseas link school in Kenya. Students in Year 11 have volunteered to act as mentors to the incoming Year 7. Many students volunteer to help at parents' evenings. Students willingly take up the opportunities to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and gain maturity from the experience.
22. Students attend regularly and, in the last full academic year, 2001/2002, their attendance was well above the national average. The vast majority of students are punctual in arriving at school and for lessons.

Sixth form

23. Most students have positive attitudes to school and behave well. In two out of every three lessons seen, students' attitudes to learning were very good or better; in one in every six lessons, attitudes were excellent. Most students are motivated to learn and work hard to achieve their best. Higher attaining students are determined to get the grades that they need to enter higher education and follow their chosen career. However, a minority do not attend lessons regularly enough and, therefore, show a lack of commitment to their studies. During the inspection, the attendance rate in the 73 lessons seen was 76 per cent for Year 12 and 84 per cent for Year 13. Erratic attendance is unhelpful to students' achievement.
24. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and those among the students themselves are equally so. The sixth-form council organises social events and the annual leavers' ball. Some students support teachers and work with younger students in lessons in the main school. However, most sixth-formers have little contact with the main school and there is, therefore, little opportunity for them to present themselves as positive role models for younger students.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

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.

25. The teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good, overall. It was very good or excellent in one in three lessons seen and most lessons are well taught. The teaching of Years 10 and 11 was somewhat better than that of Years 7 to 9, where most of the few lessons that were below satisfactory were seen. In these years, five lessons were of unsatisfactory quality and one was poor of the 93 observed. Most of these lessons were taught by inexperienced or temporary teachers who were unable to manage the students involved (some of whom had special behavioural needs) well enough for learning to be satisfactory. The teaching was excellent in eight per cent of lessons across Years 7 to 11. These were highly impressive and inspiring learning experiences and managed with consummate skill by experienced teachers. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was very good in history and Spanish but unsatisfactory in ICT, where the most competent students were not challenged enough to increase their understanding of the subject. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching was very good in art and design, history, French, German, Spanish, sociology and expressive arts. The teaching of ICT was at least satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In no subject across Years 7 to 11 was the teaching unsatisfactory overall.
26. The good teaching that students receive ensures that their needs are well met. Girls and boys were able to learn equally well in most classes. However, in art and design, some teaching did not meet boys' learning needs as well as those of girls because in some lessons, boys needed more direction than they received in how to structure their work in order to learn successfully. Students who have minority ethnic backgrounds learn and achieve as well as others from the good teaching that they receive. Teachers of students for whom English is not their first language are aware of their stages of acquisition of English and take account of their needs. Talented students are usually well taught and learn successfully.
27. Overall, the teaching of students with special educational needs is good and enables them to learn well. The teaching of basic literacy skills in the learning support centre is very good. Teachers use a good variety of methods and resources to give students plenty of practice with basic skills. They target each student's needs precisely by making very good use of prior assessment to set appropriately challenging work. Grouping students on grounds of their attainment helps subject teachers to meet students' needs well in most lessons, as they are able to set work at the right level and provide effective individual help for those who need it. Learning support assistants provide satisfactory extra support in the lessons to which they are allocated. However, as noted in the previous inspection, teachers still do not involve assistants enough in lesson planning and they are, therefore, less effective than they could be. Some less experienced teachers lack the strategies required to manage effectively the challenging behaviour of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
28. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good in English and mathematics respectively, but most other subjects do not contribute as much as they could to extending students' experience in using these basic skills.
29. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. For example, modern foreign language lessons are always conducted in the foreign language and teachers' confident use of it encourages students to use it well themselves. In an excellent Year 7 mathematics lesson for students of average attainment, the teacher's

excellent subject knowledge enabled the students to understand the links between fractions and ratios very successfully. Teachers plan their lessons well, and the time allocated to different activities is usually well judged. For example, in an impressive Year 8 history lesson, the teacher set students clear lines of enquiry to analyse the priorities of the social classes in the French Revolution of 1789. These themes were resolved very well, particularly in the final part of the lesson, when good timing brought the different lines of enquiry to a very successful conclusion. Occasionally, teachers misjudge the timing of the ends of lessons, and students are expected to take in too many instructions, sometimes involving homework, in too short a time.

30. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers have suitably high expectations of students. The work challenges them to extend their knowledge and understanding well. For example, in a very good Year 7 religious education lesson, the students worked in small groups to reconstruct aspects of the life and identity of Jesus from the evidence available; the work involved was very challenging for students of all levels of competence and they greatly enjoyed the experience of learning in this way. Equally, revision of work in a very good Year 11 mathematics lesson was made effective by the teacher's challenging questions; all students were expected to apply their knowledge and understanding to different situations, and they did so successfully and enthusiastically. Resources to support learning are well chosen in many lessons and enable students to extend their thinking and ideas effectively. For example, in Year 11 drama, images from paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec and Birkoff were merged with modern music to stimulate the students' imagination.
31. Teachers use a good range of methods skilfully. Questioning is often used effectively to prompt discussion. Teachers present topics well and their explanations are usually very clear. Students are expected to show initiative and are often helped to work without direct supervision. For example, in a Year 11 art and design lesson, very good teaching enabled the students to research and develop an expressive and personal response to their work with confidence and skill. Some teachers include use of the mini-whiteboards that are the back covers of record books very well to check students' understanding and ideas in some lessons, but this technique is not used enough by some staff. Teachers are particularly skilled in using assessment data effectively to guide the work that they provide for students and their marking of work is helpful and often gives good advice to students on how to improve. Homework, a concern of parents with children in Years 7 and 8, was set regularly during the inspection. Students' work seen indicated good practice by teachers in the use of homework, for example in mathematics. However, the record books of students in Years 7 and 8 indicated inconsistent practice in the setting of homework; the students themselves in these years consider that they have work set regularly, but it often requires little time and effort. However, plenty of homework is set to extend learning by some teachers, especially in art and design.
32. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers manage students well and lessons are orderly, effective learning experiences. Good, and often very good, relationships among teachers and students are apparent in most lessons and make management of students effective. However, in some lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, some inexperienced teachers have difficulty in managing students' behaviour well enough for learning to be as effective as it should be. Students lose concentration and do not apply themselves to their work well enough to make the progress intended.
33. Since the last inspection, the key issue set for the school to improve the teaching of the higher and lower attainers has largely been resolved. There is now much more very good and excellent teaching.

Sixth form

34. The teaching in the sixth form is very good. Almost half of the lessons seen in Years 12 and 13 were of very good or excellent quality. More than four out of every five lessons seen were at least good. Of the 13 subjects inspected and reported in full in Part E of this report, the teaching of Spanish was excellent and that of art and design, history, French, physical education and psychology was very good. Business studies, chemistry, design and technology, English, geography, ICT and mathematics were well taught. Of the sixth-form subjects sampled in the inspection, the teaching of economics, performing arts, philosophy, sociology and theatre studies was consistently very good. The one film studies lesson seen was excellent. In other subjects, teaching was good, overall. Sixth-form students themselves appreciate the very good quality of the teaching that they receive. They find subject staff very supportive where students encounter any difficulties with work.
35. Sixth-form students of all ethnic backgrounds and levels of competence learn equally well from the very good teaching that they receive. Students for whom English is an additional language achieve the standards that they should, and are very well supported. For example, effective teaching seen in AVCE business studies helped a Year 13 student to learn successfully from the individual guidance provided as follow-up to a very well-marked assignment. Girls and boys progressed equally well in the lessons seen. The most talented students have opportunity for independent and creative work. For example, talented Year 13 students in an ICT lesson on constructing websites were not only taught the necessary skills, but also had a clear view of what was the most appropriate style of website for a range of different purposes.
36. Teachers meet the needs of students with learning difficulties very well. They take their needs into account by explaining difficult terms clearly, helping them to contribute to class discussions and sensitively providing extra support for the completion of work when required. As a result, students learn successfully, as illustrated by students' fluent, accurate presentation of findings in an excellent Year 13 history lesson on Hitler's foreign policy in the 1930s.
37. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to interest and challenge students to learn. In a Year 13 mathematics lesson on statics, an investigation into the friction between a ruler and a table was extended effectively by the teacher's subject knowledge which ensured that students' findings could be challenged and questioned. Teachers plan their lessons well and ensure that a sequence of learning is provided to guide students' work. However, learning objectives are not always clarified enough at the beginning of lessons. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson, analytical techniques for the literature to be studied were emphasised so much by the teacher that the students lost sight of the main objective of understanding the author's purpose in addressing particular audiences. Teachers use a very good range of methods to assist students to learn effectively. In a very good Year 12 psychology lesson, for example, theories of developmental psychology were illustrated most effectively by the teacher's use of simple, but illuminating, practical examples – changing the shape of doughballs and quantities of water in containers of differing size illustrated very well Piaget's theory of how children think at different stages. Teachers generally encourage students to learn independently and, for example, a very good Year 12 philosophy lesson set students the task of researching St Augustine's views on God and evil for themselves – from use of the ICT resources available.
38. Relationships are generally very good between teachers and students. Consequently, teachers have little difficulty in ensuring that lessons are very good learning activities.

Most lessons are made challenging learning experiences for students. For example, in a very good Year 13 physical education lesson on glycolysis, and the impact of the build up of lactic acid on physical performance, a group of students presented information on the topic to the rest of the class in a challenging learning activity in which all gained greater knowledge and understanding of the biochemical process. In all subjects, teachers assess students' progress and performance very well and their marking of work is very helpful in enabling students to appreciate how they can improve their standards of work.

39. At the last inspection, teaching was good. It is now very good and students gain greatly from the lessons that they attend.

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

40. The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. Statutory requirements are met, including for religious education. The full National Curriculum is provided throughout Years 7 to 11. The required curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is extended by drama, citizenship and one hour of Latin (for Year 9). ICT is provided as a separate subject in Years 7, 8 and 9 and through other subjects in Years 10 and 11. In Years 10 and 11, in addition to the requirements of the National Curriculum, there is a good range of optional subjects, including a second modern foreign language. The percentage of students who take two GCSE courses in modern foreign languages is above average. Latin is also offered for examination at GCSE, but provision is outside the normal timetable. Provision for science is particularly strong, with alternatives of three separate sciences, and double or single GCSE courses.
41. Lessons in citizenship and personal development are provided in Year 8 and in Years 10 and 11. They cover study skills, careers, health, relationships, sex education and drugs prevention. However, the absence of lessons in Years 7 and 9 restricts provision in Years 7 to 9 to the minimum that is acceptable. Provision for careers education is very good. It is supported by outside speakers and industrial visits. Careers education raises students' awareness of making appropriate choices when deciding which subjects to study for GCSE examinations, or in further education or when entering the world of work.
42. The school itself organises work experience for the whole of Year 11 towards the end of the autumn term. Students for whom a work-related curriculum is more suitable have extended work experience. There is a wide range of recreational activities on offer as part of the physical education programme in Years 10 and 11.
43. The school is developing effective strategies for motivating potentially disaffected students to complete their secondary education successfully in Years 10 and 11. A GNVQ course in leisure and tourism was provided for identified students for the first time this year. Further work-related courses are planned for introduction next year. The Youth Award Scheme has also been introduced for some students in Years 9 and 10. This involves a residential element, which gives students the opportunity to develop teamwork, leadership skills and independence. Twenty-four students in Years 9 and 10 also benefited from the eight-day STEPS course, a project designed to develop their inter-personal skills.
44. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. There is an appropriate mix of teaching for students withdrawn from mainstream classes and in-class support. In some cases, teachers do not make the best use of support assistants

in lessons because of insufficient planning. In Years 7, 8 and 9, several students are withdrawn from all lessons in a modern foreign language for extra literacy tuition. This is effective initially, but the system prevents them from returning to their modern foreign languages class, even when they have made good progress with reading and writing in English. The school does not follow the required procedures for disapplying the few students who do not study any modern foreign language. In Years 10 and 11, some students follow an 'option support' course instead of studying another GCSE examination subject. This enables them to spend more time completing work from other subjects and often helps them to achieve higher grades as a result.

45. There is currently good support for students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. They take one less examination course and receive extra support in English. All other students for whom English is not their first language have complete access to the National Curriculum and to a wide range of option courses in Years 10 and 11.
46. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. For example, the house system involves many students in creative and competitive events, such as drama and sporting contests. Sport is a strong feature of the school's extra-curricular provision. There are many school teams, and students are often selected for teams at both county and national levels. There are also dance groups and visiting dance companies. More than one in ten students are following the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which is offered at bronze, silver and gold levels, and the time that teachers devote to it at weekends is much appreciated by parents. Individual tuition in various musical instruments is provided for over 100 students. There are two bands, a pop choir and a choral group. The school stages regular concerts and dramatic productions. Subject and special interest clubs run at lunchtime, for example in science, mathematics and languages, as well as Christian Union, debating, environment, astronomy and computer clubs. There is open access to design and technology workshops. There are occasional visits to theatres, museums, exhibitions and concerts, as well as frequent residential trips and study courses in this country and abroad, including regular foreign language trips and exchanges.
47. The school's links with its partner primary schools are very good, especially in science, mathematics, English and ICT, and summer schools are run for Year 6 students transferring from primary schools, to give extra support in literacy and numeracy. Links with teacher-training institutions and with higher education in general are very good. Regular visits take place from members of organisations in the local community and extend students' experience well.
48. The curricular matters identified as key issues at the time of the last inspection, regarding the provision of religious education and design and technology in Years 10 and 11, have been resolved.
49. Overall, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and of similar quality to that provided at the last inspection. However, much of this is incidental rather than planned, as several subjects do not identify opportunities for such development in their schemes of work. The school policy is under review but, as yet, teachers do not have a clear enough picture of how the school as a whole promotes students' personal development.
50. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is very well fostered in religious education and history. For example, Year 9 students reflect on the sanctity of life and the scale of death in World War One, in lessons and through a visit to Ypres. In

religious education, students are asked to reflect on the concept of infinity by discussing the 'big bang' theory and the creation of the universe. They consider how Christian values are challenged in present day society and, in Year 7, discuss Jesus's identity and purpose. In English and geography, students are encouraged to reflect on the concept of the quality of life as opposed to the standard of living. However, in most subjects, teachers do not take full advantage of opportunities to encourage spiritual development, even when they are identified in schemes of work. In year assemblies, students are asked to think about values and beliefs, such as how we define truth. Although assemblies provide well for students' moral and social development, there is no time set aside for reflection or prayer. Morning registration time is concerned with organisational matters, and the opportunity for spiritual reflection or prayer is again missed. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

51. Provision for students' moral development is good. The school expects high standards of behaviour from students and an agreed code of conduct is displayed in all classrooms. In most lessons, this is reinforced through good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers encourage respect for the views and opinions of others although, in a minority of lessons, they have difficulty ensuring that this happens. Several lessons were seen which contributed well to moral development. For example, in geography, students argued for and against development on the green belt, and considered moral issues related to world trade through a trading game that they thoroughly enjoyed. Year 9 science students studied the moral considerations of global warming and the effects of industry on this. There are many opportunities in religious education and history to consider moral and ethical issues. Year 11 students discussed the concept of a 'just war' in religious education and Year 9 history students were asked to rehearse arguments for and against slavery.
52. Provision for students' social development is good. The house system encourages good relationships among students from different year groups. Sixth-form students act as house captains and help organise a variety of social events, such as discos, barbecues, ice-skating, 'Star for a Night' competitions and a leavers' ball. There are many opportunities for students to discuss and work collaboratively in all subjects. A 'buddy' system, where Years 10 and 11 students mentor individuals in Year 7, supports the younger students' transition from primary to secondary school very well. Despite this good provision, some students are reluctant to report occasional incidents of bullying. An anti-bullying policy is in place, but not all Year 11 mentors are aware of what the policy requires.
53. The school provides good opportunities for students' cultural development. The expressive arts curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provide students with good experience of European culture. More than 100 students study a variety of musical instruments and the school enables them to perform in a big band, blues band and choir. Years 10 and 12 performing arts students recently contributed to a youth dance showcase at a local theatre and a large cast of students will soon perform 'Oliver' in local primary schools. These opportunities are further extended by residential and exchange visits for modern foreign languages students to Spain, France and Germany. Several subjects offer the chance for students to extend their understanding of other cultures and traditions. In religious education, students study six major world faiths and their countries of origin. In Years 7 and 8, students experience African music, Indian Tabla music and Indonesian Gamelan. English offers the usual opportunities to study poetry from other cultures in Years 10 and 11, but makes little reference to them in Years 7 to 9. Each year, the school holds a 'diversity week', during

which reference is made to the range of ethnic groups to which students in the school belong and helps them to celebrate Britain's cultural diversity.

Sixth form

54. A good range of advanced courses is provided. Entry to these courses is restricted to students who have gained five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations. No courses below advanced are currently provided. Those students who do not attain the entry standard are, at present, directed to courses in neighbouring institutions. However, there are plans to expand the curriculum, with an Intermediate level course in leisure and tourism, supplemented by GCSE courses, to meet the needs of students who do not attain five GCSE grades A* to C but who wish to stay on into the sixth form.
55. Students themselves consider that the courses offered in the sixth form are suitable to their needs and that the transition from the main school helped them to settle well. They were less happy with the opportunities provided for them outside of their academic studies, the careers advice and guidance they received and the information they received about the standard of work they were achieving. Inspectors found that the careers advice and guidance were freely available to students, but they had to take the initiative to access it.
56. Most students study the challenging, and increasingly common, subject course combinations of four AS-level subjects in Year 12, followed by three A-level subjects in Year 13. Provision for the key skills of communication and number is delivered through individual subjects. The key skill of ICT is provided on the timetable for all students who enter the sixth form, although these sessions are not well attended. This year, the school has adopted the Surrey Graduation scheme, for which students compile their individual portfolio of key skills achievements, using guidance provided by the school. The scheme has operated for a short time and it is not yet possible to evaluate its impact. Year 12 students have five or six lessons of unsupervised private study and Year 13 students have ten or eleven. Facilities for private study and its monitoring are inadequate for the number of students in the sixth form. Students are allowed to study at home when they have no timetabled lessons.
57. Work shadowing and work experience are available for sixth-formers in Years 12 and 13, but few take up the offer. Students who leave the sixth form after Year 12 receive appropriate advice on careers, and have the services of the locally-provided careers officer. Guidance on entry to higher education is very good. Visits are arranged to universities and colleges and there are close links with local universities. There is a full range of prospectuses, and information is also available on computer.
58. Most students complete the course they have started. In 2002, almost all students who began examination courses took the final examinations. In the current year, fewer than one in ten Year 12 students have discontinued the courses that they started. Two-thirds of Year 13 students go on to higher education courses.
59. There are few students with special educational needs in the sixth form, but they are well provided for by subject teachers who know and respond sensitively to their needs.
60. The school provides a good range of opportunities to support students' personal development. Some respond very well to this. Those with the most positive attitudes consider that their experiences at the school and the way in which teachers encourage them to undertake responsibilities provide an excellent preparation for higher education and future life. Others are more reluctant to take advantage of opportunities. One third of

responses to the students' questionnaire considered that the provision for extra-curricular activities was inadequate. Their views are justified to some extent, as no recreational activities are provided as part of the curriculum, and there are few opportunities for sport. Most students tend to go home immediately after lessons and so do not take part in the extra-curricular activities that are available. Many of them have part-time jobs. However, there are opportunities to take on responsibility.

61. Students have good opportunities to develop moral and social responsibility. For example, they can take on the mentoring of younger students, organise charity events, participate in community service or help in the school's learning resource centre. The head girl and head boy attend governors' meetings. Several students have achieved the gold standard of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and now help younger students with their challenges. The sixth-form council is open to all Years 12 and 13 students. Students have organised the creation of an environmental playground and they have raised money to buy benches for the sixth-form garden. As house captains, sixth-form students are encouraged to organise a range of social events and competitions for younger members of the school. Sixth-formers organise numerous charity events. For example, they recently supervised the collection of items for Christmas hampers which they then distributed to needy families in the area. Their social skills are further supported in all subjects through regular group and pair work that develops their skills of co-operation. There are also good opportunities for cultural development, especially through the raising of students' awareness of life in other countries. For example, history students participate in biennial visits to Russia. A number of students are currently raising funds to visit Borneo through the sale of sweets and food in school.
62. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. There is a spiritual dimension to much of their work in subjects where they are encouraged to explore and reflect on the values and views of others. For example, in English, they reflect on the emotions of characters and their impact on relationships in the literature that they study. Philosophy students grappled with the concept of the existence of God alongside evil. Occasional sixth-form assemblies encourage reflection on major world events and issues. For example, during the inspection, students reflected sombrely on the folly and enormity of war as they viewed newspaper photographs. However, the school makes no formal provision for religious education and does not attempt to introduce an act of collective worship or thought for the day for sixth-form students in morning registration.
63. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to provide a good range of advanced courses. The Intermediate level courses provided to 2001 have been discontinued on grounds of cost, but they are offered again for students to choose for September 2003.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

64. The educational support and guidance that students receive are satisfactory overall. Good care is taken to ensure smooth transfer of students from primary schools. Year 11 student mentors make a significant contribution towards this. The school tries to give students the same tutor year-on-year to help support good relationships and tutors' understanding of students' needs and personal development. However, the significant turnover in staff that the school has experienced in the last two years has also involved changes of tutor – to the detriment of relationships between students and tutors. Some students have had several tutors during their first three years in the school.
65. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The computerised recording system is efficiently used and data enables students' attendance to be tracked. Rewards are given for 100 per cent attendance. The school attempts to

contact parents on the first day of absence if notification has not been received. However, this task is hindered on occasions by parents who do not notify the school of a change in contact telephone number. Relationships with the education welfare service are good and it provides effective support for students and the school.

66. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Most students know and understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Clear behaviour management procedures are part of the induction programme for staff new to the school. However, not all staff adhere to the system and this leads to lesson disruption and a reduction in the pace and quality of learning. A range of strategies, such as daily reports and support plans, are in place for students who do not behave well enough. Heads of year monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The care committee identifies students whose behaviour is becoming a cause for concern and recommends strategies to support these students.
67. The school's anti-bullying policy tells students what to do if they are subjected to oppressive behaviour. It makes clear the partnership that has to be established between staff, students and parents. However, in separate discussions with a small representative sample of students chosen by the school from each of Years 7 to 11, and in discussion with the pupil-representatives of the school council, pupils expressed concern about bullying that takes place out of sight of staff on duty. When reported to staff, students considered that effective action was often taken in a sensitive manner and matters resolved, but this was not always the case. Some students were unclear about how the anti-bullying policy worked. In discussion, students said that they were reluctant to approach staff with their concerns about others' behaviour towards them in case it made matters worse or they became victims.
68. The procedures for child protection are good. Several senior staff are fully trained. Child protection procedures are included in the induction programme for new staff. Procedures to monitor and review the progress of looked after children are not fully in place. A good range of healthy food is available for students at lunchtimes. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. Some minor matters were brought to the attention of the health and safety officer.
69. There are many initiatives to provide more opportunities for students who have learning and behavioural difficulties, sometimes involving external agencies, but these initiatives lack co-ordination and evaluation of their impact. For example, some students who have been given fixed-term exclusions are identified on the register of special educational needs as needing support, whereas others are not. The 'inclusion room' is used for a variety of purposes that send out confusing signals to students. For example, students following alternative curricular arrangements in Years 10 and 11 are often timetabled to study in that room; it is further used for the reintegration of students after exclusion or for those who have had a prolonged period of absence; it is also where students who are disruptive and removed from lessons are placed.
70. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and for guiding the work of teachers are good. The school keeps good records of assessment of students' progress and performance and uses this data to help with the planning of work and of the curriculum. Targets are set for individual students to aim for from the use of commercially produced analyses of performance in addition to the data that the school provides for itself. Where students are in danger of underachieving, additional monitoring is introduced which involves teachers, parents and students. Students value the twice-yearly academic reviews with their tutor, although parental opinion is divided on this matter. Termly interim reports enable heads of year to monitor the effort that

students are putting into their studies and identify any that are underachieving or having difficulties. The achievement group in Year 11 helps students to improve their prospective GCSE examination grades. Parents of these students were invited to attend their academic reviews to help with the setting and monitoring of targets for improvement. The school is considering extending this opportunity to other parents.

71. Assessment data are generally used well by subject departments but practice varies. For example, in ICT, regular end of module tests are set but the results are not used well enough to show students how to improve. Good practice was seen in mathematics, where the individual whiteboards on students' record books are used to enable teachers to assess students' level of understanding during whole-class teaching.
72. The initial identification and assessment of students with special educational needs are efficient and ensure that all subject teachers have useful information about students' individual needs. Annual reviews of students with statements of special educational needs are carried out efficiently and involve students, parents and representatives from a range of external agencies. Individual education plans are prepared for students at the 'school action plus' stage of the special educational needs Code of Practice. However, the targets on these plans are not specific enough. Subject teachers and students do not know the targets well and teachers are unable to evaluate students' progress. Targets for students with behavioural difficulties are very vague and do not link closely enough with targets set by heads of year and other teachers. When students with learning and behavioural difficulties do not have individual education plans, teachers lack sufficient advice on how to meet their needs.
73. Some students for whom English is an additional language have not yet been fully interviewed and assessed. There is also further scope for assessing the needs of students who are not at an early stage of learning English, but who are not yet totally fluent in English.
74. Since the last inspection, the use of assessment data has greatly improved. A significant improvement has also been made in the monitoring of students' progress. Health and safety arrangements have improved and are now satisfactory. The larger year groups entering the school in recent years have a wide range of needs, including behavioural difficulties, and students express concerns about the intimidating behaviour that they encounter.

Sixth form

Assessment

75. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and for guiding curricular planning are good overall. Targets are set for individual students using commercially produced analyses of prior performance in addition to school-generated information. However, practice varies between subjects. For example, in mathematics, assessment in some lessons does not tell students clearly enough what they have to do to improve. However, in art and design, there is good practice in individual tutorials where the teacher and student discuss ways that the students' work can be improved in response to the criteria set by the examination board.

Advice, support and guidance

76. Students receive good educational and personal support and guidance. The head of the sixth form and tutors know students well. Students said, in discussion, that they considered themselves well supported and that they were confident to seek help with their studies if needed. The twice-yearly academic review sessions that are provided are valued by students and keep them fully informed on how they are progressing with their studies. Staff are very supportive of students.
77. The monitoring of attendance is currently not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that students are present for all of their lessons. Students are required to attend for lessons and occasional tutorial sessions. Because of the restricted accommodation in the sixth-form building, most undertake private study at home. Many lessons during the inspection had numerous absences and this was not unusual. The introduction of a swipe card system this term to record attendance has yet to be developed into an effective monitoring tool.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

78. The parents are very positive about the quality of education that the school provides. Forty-four per cent of parents, a substantial proportion, completed the questionnaire, and 65 attended the meeting before the inspection to give their views.
79. Parents think that their children enjoy school. They are overwhelmingly of the view that the school expects their children to work hard and that they make good progress. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school if they had any concerns. The concerns expressed were about the amount of homework that children receive, information about their children's progress and how well the school works with parents. Seventeen per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed concerns about the behaviour of some students.
80. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. Inspectors consider that the setting of homework is satisfactory and generally extends well students' learning and their skills in working independently. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about the progress of their children, is good. Parents receive an annual report followed by a consultation evening. Annual reports are helpful and informative. They give parents a clear picture of what their children have studied, how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. However, there is inconsistency between teachers in the quality of written reports, particularly in science. Letters are sent home when concerns arise about attendance or behaviour, as well as letters of congratulation when students have achieved well. The inspection found the reservations of some parents about behaviour partially correct. (Of the 739 returns of the parental questionnaire, 76 per cent thought that behaviour was good or very good; 17 per cent expressed reservations. See Part C of this report.)
81. The school's links with parents are very good. Parents are informed when difficulties concerning their children arise and they are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Parents are able to contact the school at any time if they have concerns. Some parents wanted more time for discussion at parents' meetings than they get. This year, parents of students who are identified as needing to raise their achievement were invited to attend the academic reviews and to be involved with the process of target setting to raise achievement. Information evenings help parents to support their children in making appropriate subject choices. Of particular value is the revision evening for parents of Year 11 students. All events are well attended by parents. The parent teacher association is an active organiser of social and fund-raising events;

of particular note is their hard work in raising the required funding to support the school's bid for specialist school status.

82. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps parents fully informed about the support that the school provides for their children.
83. Since the last inspection, parents' confidence in the school has been maintained and they are rightly convinced that the school is providing their children with a good standard of education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

84. The school is well led. The headteacher's leadership is very good. He rightly has the confidence of parents, governors and the local education authority. He has given the school the essential continuity of effective, good-humoured and supportive leadership which inspires confidence in others. The headteacher and key staff work very well together and some heads of faculties, who are currently members of the leadership group, are extending well their experience of school leadership at the highest level. Major challenges of recent years have largely been effectively met. More students have been admitted to the school and more have special behavioural needs. Recruitment of specialist teachers has become increasingly difficult, but this has largely been overcome by imaginative methods. For example, the school has purchased property to provide accommodation for new staff, and its training of teachers is very good, and recognised by the renewal of its status as an Investor in People. However, despite more difficult circumstances, well above average academic standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved. There is clear vision for the school's future development in school improvement planning which relates closely to the key purposes of the school.
85. The governors provide the headteacher and school with their full support. They use their professional expertise freely on its behalf. Their committees are well led and their system for chairs of committees to share findings and perspectives enables them to reach decisions effectively. They visit the school, observe lessons and meet staff to monitor the work of the school for themselves. Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to overcome the difficulties of providing subject-specialist staff. Although assemblies are conducted regularly, governors do not provide all students with the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship.
86. The school is well managed. Monitoring and evaluation of performance are effective. The school uses the considerable data available to it very effectively to check students' performance, to identify where improvement is possible and to manage the systems to enable students to make even better progress. The monitoring of behaviour and relationships is satisfactory. However, students' reluctance to report bullying incidents, a reservation expressed by several individuals in interviews and repeated by several school council student-representatives, indicates a loss of confidence in the systems to manage behaviour by these individuals, at least. Teaching has been monitored well and some teachers whose work was unsatisfactory have been dismissed. Performance management works well and assists the school in monitoring the quality of teaching. Planning for change involves all staff and governors, and students are involved through their representative year councils and the school council. Clear criteria are set to enable the school to evaluate the progress made.
87. The leadership and management of subject departments are good and, in many subjects, very good. Heads of faculties and departments have maintained well above

average standards in most cases in all recent years, despite considerable difficulties in ensuring continuity of staffing.

88. The management of provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. There are frequent opportunities for professional development for learning support assistants and teachers in the special educational needs department. The special educational needs policy meets statutory requirements. However, many subject teachers are not aware of the requirements of the new Code of Practice. Although the school improvement plan identifies important areas for development, for example the monitoring of progress of students with special educational needs, there is a lack of precision in how this is to be carried out. Clearer procedures are required for managing the wide range of available provision for students with behavioural difficulties. Although much care is taken of individual students, insufficient help and guidance are provided to enable less experienced teachers to manage skilfully enough some students with behavioural difficulties. Requirements are not followed to disapply some students from a subject of the National Curriculum.
89. Provision for students with English as an additional language is managed satisfactorily by the co-ordinator for special educational needs. There are profiles of students with English as an additional language, but records of their attainment and value-added performance over time are not yet complete. The school has tried to appoint a qualified specialist teacher for these students, but without success. Current support for the very few students at an early stage of learning English is managed well. Support takes place in the attractive and welcoming large learning support centre.
90. The school uses the funding available to it very effectively. School management has worked successfully to maintain the quality of staffing when the retention of experienced teachers has been very difficult nationally, and even more difficult locally. In recent years, the school has done very well to obtain additional funding to improve the accommodation. The school applies best value principles well. Close comparison is drawn with the results of other schools, both nationally and within the local education authority. The school challenges its practice of teaching and learning to maintain performance of good quality, overcoming difficulties in the recruitment of staff; its curricular provision is good and extra-curricular opportunities are very well provided for. Special grants are used well to provide additional learning opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 who find the mainstream curriculum unsuitable to their needs. Questionnaires, meetings and a school council system enable the school to consult with parents and students. Competition for the services that the school purchases is very well managed, and financial procedures are tightly controlled and overseen by governors.
91. Overall, staffing is satisfactory. As a result of very efficient recruitment over the past two years, the school is now fully staffed, and it is working hard to retain teachers. There is a good match of teachers to their subjects with the exception of some non-specialists in mathematics and ICT. Recent high turnover of staff has adversely affected learning and standards in the past, but these difficulties are now largely overcome. Conversely, the recruitment and retention of teachers of high quality has had a positive effect on learning, for example in history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. A thorough induction programme prepares new, and the many newly qualified teachers, very well for work at the school. Teachers taking up new roles of responsibility are very well prepared for their duties. Newly qualified teachers are sometimes not supported well enough in dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour, to the detriment of learning. They are well supported and monitored with regard to the curriculum.

92. All staff receive very good access to training that is linked to school and departmental priorities. Such courses are now, unlike at the last inspection, monitored and evaluated. The school's expertise in performance management is shown in the care taken for identification of individual teachers' developmental needs. Expertise in training of staff has been developed well through involvement in initial teacher training and graduate training programmes. As a result of its very good training and support for staff, the school has Investor in People status. The number and quality of technical, administrative and support staff are good, allowing teachers to concentrate on developing students' learning.
93. The accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. Deficiencies remain in spite of the substantial progress made since the last inspection. Areas for improvement have been prioritised and action taken. Many weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been overcome. New buildings have greatly improved the accommodation for art and design, music, modern foreign languages and physical education. The accommodation specifically for special educational needs provides a pleasant and functional environment. There are some improved rooms for specialist technology teaching, although the subject's accommodation is scattered and unhelpful to departmental co-ordination. Most subjects now use suites of rooms. Health and safety risks identified at the last inspection have largely been resolved. A rolling programme of refurbishment has improved some areas and good overall management of the site and well-considered accommodation projects are evident.
94. However, there are shortcomings in several areas. Some science lessons are taught in general classrooms rather than specialist laboratories and this is unhelpful to teaching and learning. There are insufficient rooms for the teaching of ICT and for the teaching of it across the curriculum; some rooms are ill-designed for teaching purposes, with design that makes the observation of students by the teacher difficult. Although some design and technology teaching rooms are of good standard, there is no separate provision of ICT, and some large classes create cramped working conditions. Some lessons in textiles are taught in rooms that are far apart; some are not suitable for practical work and involve the transfer of materials and equipment, placing unnecessary demands on the teacher. Several subjects, for example religious education, are taught in prefabricated huts, and the electrical heating for these often overloads the power supply causing phases of the school to be temporarily without electricity. In some rooms used for the teaching of English and geography, access and exit are through other classrooms and involve the disruption of other lessons. Despite good provision for indoor space in physical education, the gymnasium is a cold and unwelcoming learning environment for the teaching of gymnastics and dance. There is no dedicated theory room for physical education so that staff have to transport texts and resources around the school site.
95. Many teaching rooms are worn and shabby and present an uninspiring environment. The presence of litter in some classrooms detracts from the sense of a stimulating learning space. Many corridors are narrow and increase the likelihood of misbehaviour. Dining facilities are so restricted that students have to carry hot food outside, across a courtyard to the hall, to be able to eat it. There is no access for disabled people to most of the school buildings, where there are many steps. Successful management of the cramped site is dependent upon the extra vigilance and close supervision of the whole staff.
96. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, but the provision of computers, although much improved in recent years, is not yet sufficient to meet all students' needs well.

There is a good range of resources in the library, including network-linked computers, a good stock of books, magazines, newspapers and videos, and a file of clippings of current news and affairs maintained for reference purposes. The library is used well by students and teachers.

97. Since the last inspection, leadership has met well the challenges of increasing numbers of students entering the school with a wider range of needs. Difficulties in staffing have been tackled and largely overcome through very efficient practices for recruiting and retaining staff so as to provide stability for students' learning. Despite considerable improvements to the accommodation, the demands on it make overall provision unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

98. The leadership and management of the sixth form, in the context of the whole school, are good. Students have the opportunity to achieve the academic standards that might reasonably be expected of them and, overall, they reach this level. Standards of attainment on advanced courses have been maintained at the national average since the last inspection, and results improved further in 2002, although the school has had increasing difficulties in the recruitment of specialist teachers. Many inexperienced teachers have taught advanced courses in the sixth form during the last two years, but they have been well supported by departmental and school management, and students' standards of work have been maintained in most subjects. Effective management has ensured adequate recruitment of specialist staff, and the quality of teaching in the sixth form has improved, overall, since the inspection of 1997. Then it was judged good; now it is very good. The head of the sixth form leads a committed team of tutors to provide day-to-day management of students.
99. As the accommodation is insufficient for all students to be present in school when they do not have a timetabled lesson, they are not expected to be present when they do not have a lesson on their timetable. This leads to difficulties in managing the sixth form. Formal morning and afternoon registrations do not take place and attendance is recorded by subject teachers in lessons. The school was in the process of introducing a system of electronic registration during the inspection; this was not fully operative. During the inspection, an absence rate of one in four students in Year 12, and one in six in Year 13 applied across the 73 lessons seen. Many students were absent from the scheduled tutorial periods seen during the inspection. As most students do not remain in school when they do not have lessons, the monitoring of their use of private study time is insecure. The management of the sixth form recognises students' responsibility to themselves to achieve their best and provides regular reviews of progress to inform them of their standards. However, not all students have the maturity to commit themselves to academic work to the extent required to ensure that their results in examinations match the very good quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons. The monitoring of students' attendance and use of private study time is insufficient for management to be certain that students are using their time well enough to achieve their best.
100. Although students in the sixth form currently have equal opportunity to undertake the advanced courses available, the school recognises that more opportunity should be provided through the curriculum. Currently, only advanced courses are available; the school has offered an Intermediate level course for September 2003 to extend opportunities for Year 11 students.

101. Governors contribute well to the leadership of the sixth form within the context of the school as a whole. They are concerned that the numbers of students have declined in recent years. One governor now has specific responsibility for the sixth form and monitors developments on behalf of the governing body. Governors do not meet the statutory requirements to provide students with religious education, nor do they provide them with the opportunity for an act of collective worship each day.
102. The school manages sixth-form funding well. A good, cost-effective standard of education is provided for the sixth form. The priority to maintain staffing of good quality has been well managed. Best value principles are satisfactorily applied overall. The sixth-form's performance in examinations compares satisfactorily with local and national results. The curriculum provides good challenge through the advanced courses, but lower-level courses are not yet available and recreational and work-related opportunities are few. There is regular consultation with students through questionnaires and the school council. Competition for services is very well managed as it is in the main school.

Resources

103. Staffing of the sixth form is very well matched to the demands of the curriculum. The relatively high proportion of newly qualified teachers taking classes in the sixth form is well supported by departmental colleagues and by senior mentors. Teachers all have very good access to training relevant to their sixth-form courses. Staff taking sixth-form classes are monitored as part of performance management and well supported by colleagues within their faculties.
104. Accommodation for the sixth form is inadequate overall. Although the current study and social areas provide accommodation of good quality, they are inadequate in size for the numbers of students, were they expected to be present in school when not in lessons. Current provision allows the curriculum to be taught, but much teaching takes place in rooms not specifically dedicated to particular subjects. For example, business studies sometimes lacks access to computers on occasions when specialist rooms are needed by other subjects. Physical education has no dedicated theory base for texts, journals and other resources. Overall, the provision of computers, books and other learning resources provided specifically for the sixth form is satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. To raise standards in **the 11-16 school** and the quality of educational provision further, the school should:
- (1) Improve students' behaviour where it is unsatisfactory in lessons and where it intimidates others by:
 - (a) further training of teachers, tutors and all staff in managing students' behaviour; and
 - (b) by more support and encouragement so that students are confident to report to staff their concerns about the behaviour of others that they find intimidating or oppressive.
- (See paragraphs: 17, 18, 20, 27, 64, 67)

- (2) Provide more guidance to staff on how to manage and evaluate the progress and behaviour of students with special educational needs by giving clear targets and more specific advice to direct the work of teachers.
(See paragraphs: 7, 18, 72, 88)
- (3) Better manage the many valuable initiatives to provide additional courses and support for students who have learning and behavioural difficulties by closer co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives. (
(See paragraph: 69)
- (4) Continue to extend and improve the accommodation by providing more working and social spaces overall, by grouping subject rooms more closely and by providing more specialist rooms for science.
(See paragraphs: 93, 94, 95)

In addition to the key issues for improvement stated above, the school should consider including in its action plan the following issue **for the 11-16 school**:

- Provide the opportunity for all students to have the opportunity for an act of collective worship each day.

(See paragraph: 50)

Sixth form

- (1) Raise standards further in AS-, A-level and AVCE examinations by ensuring that students attend regularly and use the time allocated for private study effectively.
(See paragraphs: 10, 23, 77, 99)
- (2) Check students' attendance, reasons for absence and use of private study time by making the electronic registration system fully effective and by ensuring that the time when students are not required in lessons is consistently used well.
(See paragraphs: 23, 99)
- (3) Provide more accommodation for the use of sixth-form students, particularly for private study, by all available means.
(See paragraphs: 99, 104)

In addition to the key issues for improvement stated above, the school should consider including in its action plan the following issues **for the sixth form**:

- (1) Provide students with their entitlement to religious education.

(See paragraphs: 62, 101)

- (2) Provide the opportunity for all students to participate in an act of collective worship each day.

(See paragraphs: 62, 101)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Latin

Overall, provision in Latin is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Latin enriches the curriculum for gifted students.
- The course supports students' study of modern foreign languages, by developing their literacy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Year 9 students are not stretched enough and many are not motivated to finish the course.
- Few students follow a GCSE course in the subject.

106. Latin is offered for one hour per week to over 100 of the more talented linguists in Year 9, and the study of the language is taken up by half of them. However, 20 of the students who began the course this year have given up their studies, either because they found them too difficult, or because they found it problematic to catch up on work missed in other subjects, while they were in Latin lessons.
107. The achievement of those who continue to the end of Year 9 is satisfactory overall. However, homework is optional and time allocation is restricted, and this results in slow progress and modest attainment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are sometimes hurried because of the need to cover much ground in a short time. There is little room for enrichment; this leads to some dull lessons, and the more gifted linguists not being stretched enough.
108. Nevertheless, the course makes a positive contribution to students' literacy skills. It supports their study of modern foreign languages by, for instance, raising awareness of how languages develop and the function and similarities between them. The study of Roman life enhances students' cultural education.
109. A small number of students continue to study the language in Years 10 and 11 and follow a course to the GCSE examination. One hour-long lesson is provided weekly after normal lessons. In 2001 and 2002, a total of nine students were entered for the GCSE examination and attained above average results. Most of them attained grades A or B, and only one failed to gain at least a C grade. They achieved well on such a small number of lessons.
110. At present, nine students are studying Latin in Year 10 and three in Year 11. Throughout Years 10 and 11, students gradually extend their range of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. They achieve well and are currently on course for the A* to C grades in GCSE examinations. Success relies heavily on the commitment of the few who continue their studies, and this is very good. These students enjoy lessons, like and respect their teacher, and she and they work hard to ensure successful progress. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. Lessons are well planned and challenging work is set. It is rare to find Latin taught in comprehensive schools and parents appreciate very much that this unusual opportunity continues to be provided for their children.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	174
	Sixth form	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	14	41	63	48	7	1	0
Percentage	8.1	23.7	36.4	27.7	4.0	0.5	0.0
Sixth form							
Number	7	27	27	11	1	0	0
Percentage	9.6	37.0	37.0	15.1	1.4	0.0	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 students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1412	229
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	60	0

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	197	1

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	43

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28
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Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) 2002

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	154	126	280

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	119	128	132
	Girls	116	112	103
	Total	235	240	235
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (81)	86 (80)	84 (83)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (39)	64 (56)	51 (45)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	135	129
	Girls	100	114	103
	Total	190	249	232
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (65)	89 (86)	83 (77)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (32)	48 (56)	51 (44)
	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) 2002

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	115	132	247

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	65	106	108
	Girls	94	128	128
	Total	159	234	236
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	64 (76)	95 (96)	96 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	48.1
	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) 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	67	69	136
	Average point score per candidate	14.1	16.4	15.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	62	67	129	15	4	19
	Average point score per candidate	12.5	16.2	14.4	11.2	10.5	11.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1534	182	2
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
122	0	0
28	2	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
4	0	0
38	0	0
3	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 - Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	103.5
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.9

Education support staff: Y7 - Y13

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	587

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 - Y11

Key Stage 3 (Y7 to Y9)	26.7
Key Stage 4 (Y10 and Y11)	23.4

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	4,868,502
Total expenditure	4,929,790
Expenditure per student	3,075
Balance brought forward from previous year	255,351
Balance carried forward to next year	194,063

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	75.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	68.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1641
Number of questionnaires returned	739

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	59	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	58	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	56	13	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	58	19	5	2
The teaching is good.	20	68	7	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	55	16	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	51	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	51	5	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	52	21	4	1
The school is well led and managed.	27	61	5	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	58	8	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	53	12	2	9

Other issues raised by parents

In general, parents were very supportive of the school and considered that their children were helped to achieve well. Concern was expressed at the considerable changes in teaching staff; some new teachers were seen as lacking the skills and qualities of those who had left.

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 in GCSE examinations in English are well above the national average.
- Achievement is good overall.
- All students follow courses in both English and English literature in Years 10 and 11.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Areas for development

- The percentage of students gaining Level 6 and above in Year 9 National Curriculum tests could be higher.
- The attainment of boys in GCSE English literature could be higher.

111. Standards in national tests for students aged 14 were well above national expectations in 2000 and 2001. In 2002, boys and girls were above average. However, fewer students gained Level 6 or above in the National Curriculum tests and, therefore, overall results were below those attained in schools taking students from similar backgrounds. Standards were not as high as in mathematics and science.
112. Over the past three years, students in Year 11 have achieved well and attained above average standards in GCSE examinations in English and English literature. Unlike in most schools, nearly every student makes enough progress to be entered for both examinations. In 2002, the percentage of A* and A grades in English was very high and showed good improvement on the 2001 figure. The percentage of boys and girls gaining A* to C grades was well above the national average. Girls' results in English literature were also well above average, whilst boys' results were just above, because their writing is often inaccurate and many do not read enough.
113. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is above average. It is well above average in Years 10 and 11. Students' achievement is good. Speaking and listening are well developed and above average because students are given frequent opportunities to use talk to discuss and share ideas. In Years 10 and 11, they are able to evaluate texts, their own work and a variety of issues arising from their reading. They also give presentations and speeches, though there is some lack of confidence and awareness of audience by boys and girls of all levels of competence in the subject.
114. Standards of writing are above average in Years 7 to 9. They are well above average in Years 10 and 11 because the teaching is stronger. Many students write fluently and with enjoyment for a good range of audiences and purposes. They have a good vocabulary and their creative writing in particular is often lively and original. The most competent in Year 9, who are studying Ayckbourn's 'Gosforth Fête', show a good understanding of farce as a theatrical convention and also produce very good empathy and argumentative work on 'Animal Farm' and 'Macbeth'. The less competent can write stories, diaries and letters, successfully using simple sentence structures, but there are many technical errors and some untidy work, especially from boys. In Years 10 and 11, the most competent write with controlled assurance. They are able to use imagery to enliven their personal writing and show good critical and analytical skills in their

responses to literature and media texts. Some students of lower competence use language inappropriately and have great difficulty in sustaining arguments or opinions.

115. Standards of reading are above average and improving because of the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Students are encouraged to read in all years and have additional opportunities in form time. A new range of fiction and non-fiction texts has been introduced in all years especially to encourage boys to read more; the well-stocked library with its good collection of newspapers and magazines effectively supports the work done in classrooms. By the end of Year 9, most students can read for pleasure and to discover information. The less competent have difficulty interpreting texts for themselves because their deductive and inferential skills are weak, but many readily volunteer to read aloud in lessons. By the end of Year 11, reading has improved further because all students are taught the skills necessary for interpreting texts for GCSE examinations.
116. Students for whom English is a second language and those with identified special educational needs make good progress because teachers provide additional support for them in literacy. In many classes, these students also receive valuable help from their peers.
117. There are good opportunities for all students to use ICT for writing and research. Students' learning is also enhanced by a number of extra-curricular opportunities, such as summer schools for literacy, a Shakespeare day for Year 9 and a reading club. All students have a drama lesson in Years 7 to 9, but there are no regular theatre visits.
118. All areas identified for action at the previous inspection have been addressed. Because of very good management of recruitment and staffing difficulties, achievement and standards are now higher. Improvement, therefore, is very good.
119. Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where students are more committed. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan relevant and interesting activities and have high expectations of students' behaviour and achievement. In a Year 11 lesson, students' commentaries on their own work proved a very effective stimulus for small-group discussions of high quality. A newspaper article reporting the testing of drugs on animals introduced a Year 10 class to controversial and fresh ideas which challenged their own views. In less successful lessons, immature attitudes are not well managed by inexperienced teachers and the pace of learning of the majority is spoiled by the behaviour of a few. Additionally, learning objectives are not always made clear, starter activities not well linked to the rest of the lesson and, at the end of lessons, teachers sometimes tell students what they have learned, instead of asking them what they need to do next or what help they still need. A strength of teaching is the good quality of marking. Students know how they are doing against national standards and what they have to do to improve. Teachers' comments are positive and helpful.
120. The leadership and management of this large department are very good. Considerable staffing problems have meant, for example, one class being taught by six teachers in two years, yet GCSE examination standards have risen. The use of examination data to set improvement targets is good, teaching and marking are effectively monitored, responsibilities appropriately delegated and new teachers well inducted into the department. The subject leader sets a very good example of commitment and hard work and maintains team morale in difficult circumstances.

Literacy across the curriculum

121. Although above average standards of literacy are attained overall, standards in speaking and listening are not as high as expected, given most students' backgrounds. Boys and girls readily join in discussions in whole-class and small group sessions and volunteer to read aloud. However, arguments are not always fully justified and presentations and readings often lack polish and awareness of the intended audience. Lesson planning does not regularly identify opportunities for students to share ideas, make decisions, solve problems and use evaluative skills through talk. Therefore, the importance of these skills is not always recognised or valued by all students. However, there is some very good work in developing these skills in modern foreign languages, history and geography.
122. Standards of reading are above average. By the end of Year 11, even the least competent have learned to skim and scan texts for information, but opportunities for reading are inconsistent. In religious education, art and design, history and science, for example, students are encouraged to research topics and interests using the library and the Internet. However, in some subjects, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of reading.
123. Standards of writing are above average. Most subjects provide good opportunities for a range of writing, and some allow students to be creative whilst developing their understanding. For example, a Year 9 history class wrote letters from the point of view of an opponent of the abolition of slavery in the United States before their Civil War. The quality of students' extended writing varies between subjects. In many, prompts and frameworks guide the less competent in structuring and developing their writing but, in others, there is still work to be done. All teachers help students to improve their knowledge and use of specialist vocabulary, through displays and use in lessons, although not all correct errors or insist on the highest quality of presentation.
124. The National Literacy Strategy has been well implemented. Progress units and a summer school now support students with literacy problems. However, practice differs within and between subjects. Teaching methods are satisfactory overall, and include some very good practice, but not all departments have literacy policies and objectives, or plan regular opportunities to enhance literacy skills in lessons.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is much team spirit and commitment to improve standards further among staff.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient sharing of good practice with the non-specialist teachers of the subject.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

125. Standards attained in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002, 2001 and 2000 were well above the national average. Over time, they have improved in line with the national

upward trend in results. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of students at both Levels 5 and 6 and their average point score are in line nationally.

126. In GCSE examinations in 2002, 2001 and 2000, the percentage of grades A* to C and A* to G attained was above average. Since the last inspection, results have risen in line with national trends. The attainment of both girls and boys is well above the national average for their respective gender groups. In 2002, a similar proportion of girls and boys gained a GCSE examination grade A* and C, but nearly half of the girls achieved a grade B or higher compared with only one third of boys.
127. In Years 7 to 11, the standard of students' work seen is above average and students of differing potential achieve what they should. Students contribute well to lessons and are able to explain their reasoning when asked to do so by the teacher. In lessons where the electronic interactive whiteboards are used, students confidently go to the front of the classroom to make predictions and to demonstrate their solutions to problems to the teacher and to the other students present. Written work is generally well presented and involves a good mix of students' notes and answers to questions.
128. Achievement is good across Years 7 to 11 and students make good progress. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the ongoing development of the departmental scheme of work have improved achievement. Structured, well-planned lessons provide a wide variety of opportunities for students to succeed.
129. Students from all ethnic backgrounds and those who use English as an additional language are well integrated in classes and achieve well with others. Those identified with special educational needs achieve the standards that could reasonably be expected of them. A lower attaining class in Year 9, for example, with several students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, made very good progress because of the teacher's insistence on what behaviour was acceptable; this teacher's enthusiasm swept the class forward.
130. Since the last inspection, the percentage of students achieving A* and A grades in GCSE examinations has increased, with a greater rise in girls' performance at this level. However, a GCSE statistics course is no longer offered as an additional opportunity for the most competent mathematicians. Teaching and learning have improved and appropriate standards are set for students using the National Numeracy Strategy as a guide.
131. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and much is very good. It was excellent or very good in almost half of the lessons seen and satisfactory or better in all but two. In the lessons where teaching is excellent, students are engaged in a variety of activities, including opportunities to investigate, to explain reasoning and consolidate new skills. Assessment is ongoing and varied and students regularly contribute answers using the individual whiteboards on the back of their record books. In lessons that are satisfactory, there is less variety of activity and, at times, teachers instruct students to acquire skills rather than help them to gain understanding. The faculty policy on assessment is applied well and understood by most students. A few students, however, are unsure which of the grades relate to effort and which to attainment. Some very good marking informs students what is good about their work and how it could be improved.
132. The use of ICT is excellent in some lessons and underdeveloped in others. The department does not follow the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy to explore geometry using ICT. Other opportunities are missed to enhance the students'

understanding of mathematics, such as the use of data logging equipment and graphics calculators to explore time and distance graphs. In the lessons where ICT is used exceptionally well, interactive electronic whiteboards are used to help students to learn. For example, in a lesson on the use of ratio, students were given the opportunity to investigate the topic and then to demonstrate their understanding to the rest of the class using the interactive whiteboard.

133. The head of faculty evaluates the work of the department effectively. He has a clear idea of priorities for development and he is ably supported by the four teachers in the faculty who have specific responsibilities. Accommodation is adequate with six specialist rooms and a resource area. Work space for staff encourages the sharing of good practice, but non-specialist teachers of the subject are not involved enough to benefit. Two of the rooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards. The department is satisfactorily resourced but does not have sufficient access to computers to ensure that students learn mathematics in the most effective way.

Numeracy across the curriculum

134. Standards of numeracy are in line with national expectations. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7 to 9 and the resulting focus on teaching and learning in these years have led to students of all levels of competence achieving higher standards in mental arithmetic. However, in Years 10 and 11, the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy has not yet had time to have the same effect as in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, classes in Years 10 and 11 are not yet given sufficient practice in basic numerical skills and they are over dependent on the use of a calculator.
135. Basic numerical skills are taught well in mathematics lessons. Standards have improved since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Use of the recommended 'starters' in lessons (regular, short, sharp practice in basic skills at the beginning of each lesson) has resulted in faster and more accurate recall of number facts and often of mathematical terminology. This improvement is most evident in Years 7 and 8, for students of all levels of competence, but the approach is now beginning to have a beneficial impact on standards in Years 9 to 11 as well.
136. Students have the numerical skills that are required for all areas of the curriculum. However, in some lessons, such as the teaching of the rate of recovery of the heart following exercise in physical education, there are missed opportunities to apply numerical skills in real contexts. In science, students' numeracy is sufficient for accurate measurement of time and weight and correct manipulation of formulae. In geography, students' learning is enhanced by their capacity to calculate in percentages and to interpret graphs and charts.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, and excellent and very good teaching was observed in Years 10 and 11.
- Girls and boys generally have positive attitudes to the subject. They behave well and relationships are good.
- The faculty is very well led and managed and standards have been maintained during a period of extreme instability in staffing.

Areas for improvement

- Average and lower attaining boys and girls do not achieve high enough standards in spoken and written explanations of their work.
- Teachers do not always leave enough time at the ends of lessons to assess students' learning or to clarify homework.
- Insufficient provision is made to meet the needs of students with special educational needs.
- Students do not use computers enough in science.

137. In 2002, Year 9 students attained standards in line with those of similar schools in the National Curriculum tests. They achieved broadly the same standard as in mathematics and above those gained in English. The science results were well above those typical of most schools. The measurement of value-added by the end of Year 9 is above average compared with all schools, and average compared with that of similar schools.
138. In Years 7 to 9, students make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average overall. Higher attaining students in Year 7 can plan and carry out an experiment to separate salt from sand. Year 7 students can write creatively, for example about the planets in the solar system. They use new scientific vocabulary with confidence. In Year 8, higher attaining students apply their numerical skills well to draw graphs of the melting and boiling points of elements. They can plot negative and positive temperatures, and interpret the graphs to identify the solid, liquid and gaseous states of the elements. In Year 9, higher attaining students investigate exothermic and endothermic chemical reactions and record and interpret the temperatures of the reactions. They can write at length to present the advantages and disadvantages of smoking. Lower attainers also achieve well. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on microbes, a statemented student with a very low level of literacy benefited from good lesson planning and from good learning support to give him access to practical work and to new scientific vocabulary. In a good lesson for lower attaining boys and girls in Year 9, they were able to set up electrical circuits by following circuit diagrams. They confidently named the components of the circuits that they constructed and inserted voltmeters into circuits to record and compare the voltages.
139. In the 2002 separate biology, chemistry and physics GCSE examinations, boys and girls attained above average results at grades A* to C and at grades A* to G. Girls attained higher standards than boys, especially at the A* and A grades in all three sciences. The 2001 results were similar, except that boys achieved slightly higher than girls in physics. In 2002, the relative performance in the separate sciences was not significantly different from that of other subjects in the school.
140. Results in the 2002 GCSE double science examination were slightly below the national average at grades A* to C, and slightly above average at grades A* to G. However, the average point score matched the national average. This is good achievement given that the highest attainers are not included in the calculation because they study separate sciences. In the last three years, girls attained above boys at grades A* and A. In 2002, the relative performance of boys and girls in double science was below the standards that they attained in their other subjects. Although girls reached higher than boys in double science in 2002, their relative performance in science was lower than in all their other subjects.
141. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good and standards are above average overall in the work seen. In an excellent and very interesting Year 11 biology lesson on the transmission of disease, students were highly motivated and mature; teamwork during practical work was very good. In a lower attaining Year 11 class, students gained

understanding of the reactivity of elements from a good demonstration. They enjoyed work with the interactive whiteboard and with mini whiteboards so that all could participate in the question and answer session at the end of the lesson. In Year 11, average and lower attaining students have experienced several changes of teachers. Lower attainers are very dependent on their teachers. Their subject skills are not well developed, and a significant number waste time in lessons when they have to work independently, especially girls. The highest attaining students in Year 11 produce coursework investigations of an excellent standard. Other Year 11 students frequently have difficulty providing spoken and written explanations and evaluations of their work. There is very little evidence in the work seen of students' skills in use of ICT.

142. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Progress in lessons is now better, and higher attaining students achieve very well. Assessment methods are good and the head of faculty analyses and uses assessment information very well.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and, in Years 10 and 11, teaching is occasionally excellent and very good. Teachers' knowledge of science is consistently very good. The planning, preparation and use of resources are very effective, as is the support from the technicians. Overall, students and activities are managed well and relationships in lessons are good. Time is not always used well enough towards the end of lessons to assess students' understanding and to discuss homework. Teachers do not always adapt their questions to meet the learning needs of higher and lower attaining students in the same class. A small amount of unsuccessful teaching and learning seen in Year 8 and Year 11 was the result of inexperience in managing large classes, and unsatisfactory attitudes to learning by a small minority of students. Girls and boys, minority ethnic students and students whose first language is not English, learn equally well. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress. However, a few students are not receiving the additional learning support that they need. Teachers do not always show in their planning how they will meet the range of learning needs in a class, especially those of the lowest attainers.
144. In the last two years, recruitment and retention of specialist teachers of good quality have been a major difficulty. Of 17 science teachers, most have been recruited within the last year or so, and five are newly qualified. There is now a mainly young and enthusiastic team who are very well led and managed by the head of faculty, ably supported by the second in department.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good** for the girls and **satisfactory** for the boys.

Strengths

- Most girls learn very well and attain above average standards.
- Girls' research and development work in sketchbooks is frequently very good.
- The teaching is good and learning is equally good.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment and achievement are lower than they should be in Years 10 and 11.
- A disproportionately low number of boys choose the subject in Years 10 and 11.

145. Overall, standards achieved are above those expected nationally at the end of Year 9. Girls' achievement is very good and boys' achievement is as expected. Girls' work shows a confident use of media and good painting and collage work, but some of the

boys experience difficulty with observational drawing and they generally make less effort with their investigative work. The highest achievers, who are mainly girls, undertake very extensive research in their sketchbooks; they obtain information from books, the Internet and from direct observation. They experiment with a wide range of graphic media, collage techniques and painting methods. Boys' response is generally less adventurous. National Curriculum teacher assessments, though not externally moderated, are above average and confirm inspection findings. Students with learning difficulties, minority ethnic students and those who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good progress and achieve satisfactory standards.

146. At the end of Year 11, students' attainment is above average overall. Girls achieve very well, and the achievement of boys is satisfactory. In 2000 and 2001, GCSE examination results were above average but, in 2002, standards fell and were in line with the national average. In 2002, girls' GCSE examination results were above average and those of boys were below. Not only was the gap wider than it is nationally but there were approximately three times as many female candidates. Inspection findings show that attainment is now higher than 2002 GCSE examination results indicate but, as before, significantly fewer boys are pursuing the GCSE course and their attainment is lower than that of the girls; some underachievement of boys is therefore evident. Girls' research and development work is very good and they link their work meaningfully to artists' work; boys frequently make less effort and consequently achieve lower standards.
147. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. It generally results in good learning, but this ranges widely in quality. Learning is frequently good, sometimes excellent, but on occasion it is unsatisfactory. The inconsistency is directly related to the extent to which teaching meets students' learning needs. Good rapport, probing questioning, good demonstration and effective management of students result in them being highly motivated, industrious and creative. For example, in a Year 8 lesson preparing students to make a bas-relief based on examples of non-western art, students had undertaken extensive research in their sketchbooks for homework. The teacher drew answers from students on challenging questions, such as, 'what actually is a pattern?' and then demonstrated techniques of building patterns using both manual methods and ICT. This met with an enthusiastic response from the students. Teaching places due emphasis on literacy with students discussing and writing about art. Sometimes, teaching makes insufficient provision for the full range of students' subject competence. This results in students of lower potential losing concentration and making slow progress. Provision for the most talented students is good because they can explore and develop their own ideas. Extended project work suits the needs of the girls more than the boys, who do not sustain their involvement as well.
148. Standards observed during the inspection are now similar to those reported in the last, very positive, inspection. Work in small groups, the use of ICT and three-dimensional work have all improved. Improvement since the last inspection has therefore been good.
149. The department benefits from generally sound leadership and management. The curriculum is planned in some detail, but it focuses mainly on fine art, and places less emphasis on design and craft. Consequently, the curriculum fails to attract sufficient boys to study the subject in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students, particularly boys, are not made sufficiently aware of the vocational opportunities related to art and design. Assessment arrangements are good. The inconsistency in teaching indicates the need for more monitoring and support for it.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- There is good leadership and management.
- The curriculum in Years 8, 10 and 11 is good.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of provision varies too much between different teachers.
- Provision across subjects is of inconsistent quality.

150. The school is implementing citizenship education across the curriculum and in most year groups through the provision for personal, social and health education. There is good planning of separate citizenship lessons in Year 8 and these lessons, together with some drama in Year 7, are currently intended to deliver most of the requirements for Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, there is a well-planned course which emphasises citizenship in a rotating timetable arrangement, which also includes careers education and personal development. Units of study in Year 10 include producing the news, Europe, and how the economy functions. In Year 11, students learn about human rights, racism and global issues.
151. Some subjects, particularly geography, history, religious education and science, have begun to identify areas of relevant knowledge successfully. Several other subjects, for example modern foreign languages and physical education, contribute particularly well to the development of responsible action by students. Satisfactory additional contributions are made in form tutor time across the school. However, other subjects make little effective contribution to extending students' knowledge or to enabling them to communicate their ideas on the subject.
152. Students' standards of knowledge and understanding are broadly average in lessons seen across all year groups. For example, in a very well-planned lesson, good teaching enabled Year 8 students to learn about the leisure services provided by the local council. They were encouraged and able to evaluate critically the impact of these services. Within the same unit of exploring democratic institutions, another Year 8 group was able to use selected newspapers effectively to identify attitudes to a current international problem.
153. Well-planned lessons and teachers' confident knowledge of the subject enabled Year 11 students to form clear opinions about breaches of human rights. These students gained a good understanding of children's rights. However, standards are inconsistent in Years 10 and 11 and, in some lessons, below average. For example, in two lessons seen in Year 10, teachers' subject knowledge was insecure and lesson planning was inadequate to help students to learn what was intended about consumer law and the European Union. Inexperienced teachers lacked knowledge and understanding of the topics themselves because they had not contributed enough to planning the work, having only recently joined the school. The work was not well enough adapted to the range of students' needs, and many students lost interest in the subject. Consequently, students did not achieve as well as they should in these lessons.
154. Skills of enquiry and communication were effectively developed in Year 8 as students completed an on-line questionnaire about council leisure services, and in the use of ICT in modern foreign languages in Year 10. Students' development of participation and responsible action were seen in the planning for a community event, charity work in

Year 8 and the promotion of its own charities website. Good opportunities to represent the school in sporting events, to reflect upon performance and to share in a flourishing programme of international exchanges also give scope for participation in the community of the school and locality. The year and school councils also provide good opportunities for responsible participation and students have opportunities to communicate their views on issues concerning the effective running of the institution.

155. Leadership and management are good. A clear scheme of work has been planned for the subject to direct its development. However, lessons are not always well enough adapted yet for the range of students' needs and there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Some subjects are not yet identifying topics, and teaching these to extend students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results in textiles are well above average and students achieve very well in this subject.
- Recent appointments of a new head of faculty and heads of department are taking the subject forward well.
- Teachers give students much individual support with work.
- The standards of work benefit from students' use of ICT, such as CAD and CAM.

Areas for improvement

- Students in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient continuity of learning because of rotating curricular modules of work.
- Work and resources for lower attaining classes are not well enough adapted to meet students' needs.
- Planning lacks precise time-scales, evaluation criteria and stated responsibilities.
- Risk assessments are not in place for each practical activity.

156. Students' standards on entry to the school are at the nationally expected level. The National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above expectations in 2002. Girls' results were above those of boys. In work seen, standards were variable across the material areas that collectively provide the National Curriculum. Standards were generally similar to national expectations and, although sometimes above this level, somewhat lower than the school's assessments.

157. In students' work seen, standards were average. Students do not consistently apply the skills acquired in earlier work to new design-and-make activities in the work seen in Years 7 to 9. Common features across different units of work within a rotating curriculum of different activities are usually not identified well enough. However, students use a broad range of resistant and compliant materials, including food and electronic components, well enough. Research, generating ideas and evaluation are used effectively for designing and making, for example in an 'underwater' theme in textiles. Here, students tested and evaluated a range of techniques for surface-decoration, including tie-dye, diffusion spray and fabric sticks, before making cushions of good quality. In graphics, students successfully designed and then made a range of celebration cards as well as a vacuum-formed mould to produce a chocolate gift. Most students have positive attitudes towards the subject and clearly enjoy practical work, for example in the control of simple programs to switch motors and lamps on and off at

pre-determined times. Overall, in Years 7 to 9, students of differing competence achieve satisfactorily.

158. The percentage of students attaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2002 was above the national average and very similar to the overall school average. The results in graphics have remained similar to national averages since 1999. In resistant materials, electronics and food, results were well above average in 2000 and 2001, but fell heavily in 2002 to average and below average, respectively. Results in textiles, a subject taken mainly by girls, have remained very high throughout the last three years.
159. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards differed across the subjects but were average, overall. Students achieve satisfactorily, and their progress quickens throughout Years 10 and 11. The use of ICT is beginning to improve the depth of research, understanding and presentation of students' work. This was seen in electronics, for example when students designed and modelled electronic circuits on the computer. Higher attaining students consolidate their skills through good research, organisation and evaluation of their work to produce coursework of a high standard. For example, in textiles, impressive cushion designs with multicultural themes were inspired by a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Some students underachieve in resistant materials. One Year 11 class seen showed insufficient breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding of processes when shaping and joining materials.
160. Since the last inspection, GCSE examination results have fluctuated. However, significant changes in the curriculum and personnel make direct comparisons with results in 1997 unreliable. Indications are that the faculty is very well placed to improve further.
161. Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is at least satisfactory and occasionally good. In lessons which were satisfactory or of better quality, the main strengths were teachers' good management and organisation of their classes. Teachers set appropriately high expectations and all students receive high levels of individual support. As a result, students' attitudes and behaviour are often good. In some lessons that were satisfactory overall, students did not learn quickly enough. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, there was a lack of organisation, inappropriate management of students and insufficient pace to challenge or inspire. As a result, the students learned very little in these lessons.
162. Students' attitudes and behaviour are often good. Students show good levels of independence and work well together, for example in food technology when they select materials and equipment and share the use of cookers. Students with special educational needs are often proud of their results and this has a positive impact on their confidence and learning. However, in a few lessons, some students' immature behaviour disrupted teaching and impeded the learning of the rest of the class. Some lower attaining groups lack much-needed in-class support. Schemes of work, teaching methods and management of students in these groups are not effective enough to ensure a good pace of learning.
163. Leadership is good; management is satisfactory. The relatively new head of faculty leads well by example and has worked hard to review policy and practice across all departments. However, planning lacks precise time-scales, evaluation criteria and stated responsibilities. Co-ordination of the subject is made difficult by classrooms sited on different floors and in different blocks. In some areas, the accommodation is at a very basic level and has an adverse impact on the quality of education provided.

Although no health and safety issues were observed during the inspection, risk assessments are not in place for each practical activity.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students attain above average standards and make very good progress.
- The teaching is very good and ensures that students achieve very well.
- Assessment procedures, especially in Years 7 to 9, are very effective and support learning very well.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for gifted and talented students could be better.
- Students' literacy skills could be further developed to support their learning.

164. On entry to the school, students' subject knowledge and understanding, particularly of physical and environmental geography, are what is usually expected at this age. In Years 7 to 9, they make very good progress, and the Year 9 National Curriculum teacher assessments in 2002 show them to be well above the nationally expected level. Work seen during the inspection reflects these standards. Students in Year 7 develop a good knowledge of specialist vocabulary and use it confidently, for example when they use map symbols to write a weather report. Year 8 students use maps and graphs effectively to present the results of their investigation into local shopping areas, and offer clear, written explanations of comparisons made. Progress is slower in Year 8, however, because students have only one lesson of geography per six-day timetable cycle. Year 9 students combine information from maps, video and eyewitness accounts, as well as their own knowledge of volcanic activity well, to write a safety report on the effects of the Montserrat eruption. However, in all years, students' knowledge of places other than those being studied is insufficient. The writing of some students, even those of average attainment, is not always fluent or accurate enough.

165. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make very good progress by adding depth and breadth to previously acquired knowledge and skills. These are applied successfully to a range of more complex case studies and issues. Year 10 students' playing of the Trading Game, for example, not only develops an understanding of the principles of world trade, but also leads them to make judgements about its fairness. Year 11 students, in drawing conclusions about sensitive issues such as quality of life, are aware of the dangers of stereotyping and cultural bias. The 2002 GCSE results were well above average at grades A* to C, with all students gaining at least an A* to G grade. This continues a trend of improvement over the last three years. Students taking geography attained results half a grade higher than they reached in their other subjects. Girls performed significantly better than boys in reaching the higher grades, although fewer girls have taken the subject in recent years. Although boys' results are better than average, some are put off by the extended writing involved in coursework, for which the department is now providing extra support and guidance.

166. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards are well above average across the age range. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 now offers more challenge for higher attaining students, particularly in the common assessment tasks that allow them to reach the highest National Curriculum levels. Marking now includes clear targets. Fieldwork, including use of the local area, is now integrated into schemes of work for all years. Schemes of work have been reviewed to indicate the

contribution of geography to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to citizenship. However, these references are not yet sufficiently explored. ICT is used in all years, but there is insufficient access to computers outside the department.

167. Teaching overall is very good and is rarely less than good. Teachers plan well-structured lessons and communicate clear objectives to students. Teaching provides a range of challenging tasks matched to the needs of most students, although there is a need to cater for the most competent students who complete work quickly. Lessons take place at a very good pace, with no time for students to lose attention. Students with special educational needs are helped by a combination of individual attention and specially prepared materials. A particular strength is the very skilful questioning by teachers to extend students' knowledge; teachers draw on their own personal experience very effectively. Marking is consistent. Homework is set and marked regularly. A further strength is the department's policy for equal opportunities; the attention teachers give to different groups of students is very well balanced and is an important factor in their progress. Teaching is of a lower standard where students spend too long on routine tasks or where there is a lack of visual focus to illustrate or reinforce what is being taught. Students respond very well to the quality of teaching. They behave very well, work productively and show interest in what they are doing. They listen well and show a respect for the views and opinions of others.
168. An able and enthusiastic head of department provides very good leadership and management to ensure all teachers maintain common standards. Good working relationships and a strong sense of teamwork lead to the sharing of good practice in planning lessons and classroom management. Detailed schemes of work and excellent assessment procedures have contributed to the high standards achieved.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good and enables students to make very good progress.
- The curriculum is very well suited to students' needs.
- Subject leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is insufficient to extend students' learning in history.

169. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002, 2001 and 2000 were well above average in the attainment of grades A* to C. Almost all students attain a graded result. A high percentage of candidates attained GCSE examination grades A* and A in 2002; a standard well above the national average. The National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were also well above expectations, and work seen during the inspection indicated that these standards are being maintained.
170. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that students are attaining well above the nationally expected level by the end of Year 9. They continue to do so by the end of Year 11. Progress is very good across Years 7 to 9. Students in Year 7 are able to offer good reasons why men and women wished to become monks and nuns within the mediaeval church and to understand aspects of this lifestyle. Higher attaining students in Year 8 understand the social structure of pre-revolutionary France and the particular issue of taxation. By Year 9, middle and lower attaining students can give good reasons for the high death rate in trench warfare and higher attaining students can

rapidly draw conclusions, from a wide range of evidence, about the conditions faced by the soldiers in World War One. Students' achievement is very good by Year 11 because they are able to analyse in depth the key features of the societies that they study, and present very good reasons for historical developments, for example the origins of the current Arab-Israeli conflict.

171. All areas for development identified in the last inspection have been managed very effectively. Teaching is now consistently of a very good standard and assessment procedures are very effective. Future development should build further upon current use of ICT to support learning, and especially independent learning, by students.
172. Teaching is very good throughout the school. Lessons are very well planned to include carefully selected, stimulating resources. The activities, which engage the students directly, are very well chosen and very effective in helping students to understand the past. The miming of messages by silent monks in Year 7, and very good Year 10 presentations, with a quiz devised by a student on the main themes of the 'American west course', were very successful learning experiences. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and manage students very well by exciting their interest in the subject. Students contribute to their own achievement by their perseverance and positive attitudes to the subject.
173. Leadership and management are very good. The very good curriculum provides good insights into, for example, the French Revolution in Year 8, the black peoples of America in Year 9 and the Cabinet War Rooms in Year 10. These units contribute to the overall very well-planned provision made for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, as do the educational visits to World War One battlefields and to a local castle. The subject makes a very good contribution to the knowledge and understanding of citizenship, by consideration of changing societies and by extending students' communication and literacy skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- The standards attained in GCSE examinations were well above average to 2002.
- The use of ICT to support learning in almost all subjects across the curriculum is good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient challenge for average and higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9.
- Too many classes are taught by non-specialists, who have insufficient knowledge of the subject.
- Co-ordination between the ICT department and other subjects is inadequate.

174. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below national expectations. Achievement is unsatisfactory, since students enter the school with at least expected levels of attainment. Attainment in ICT lessons is lower than expected because students are restricted to following step-by-step instructions throughout Years 7 to 9. Consequently, students have a satisfactory knowledge of basic skills in the subject but they have insufficient opportunities to apply their new learning independently to different contexts. Girls are more systematic and careful than boys. The most able students are not challenged by the demands of the course. Heavy guidance supports the learning of

lower attainers and students with special educational needs, whose progress is satisfactory.

175. By the end of Year 11 in 2001 and 2002, students' achievement was good. However, although ICT is used across the curriculum in the present Years 10 and 11, there is no longer a co-ordinated and systematic approach to raising or measuring attainment. Work seen in other subjects shows that achievement in use of computers is satisfactory when students are allowed to use their own judgement. Year 11 students use computers appropriately, but usually, simply to support their learning in other subjects. For example, the most competent use spreadsheets well in mathematics to model and analyse equations, but most students use them only for simple calculations or to draw graphs. Girls and boys are equally confident; girls work more accurately on the whole, whilst boys are more adventurous, but inaccurate. Students use the Internet confidently for research but only the most competent evaluate information on websites well. Presentation is good in the display of work around the school. Students with learning difficulties and lower attainers use computers effectively to present their work. All students' standards are often defined by the need to serve host subjects rather than by developing advanced ICT skills. Standards in the combined business studies and ICT GCSE examination course in 2001 were well above average, both in relation to national results and also in comparison with the same students' other results. There was a slight decline in 2002, the last year that the course was followed in the school.
176. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 have declined, and the good improvement in standards in GCSE examinations has been lost as the course is no longer provided. However, the extent to which ICT is used across the curriculum, especially in the teaching of control technology, has improved.
177. Teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen, but the overall impact of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers do not adapt their very detailed lesson plans to the existing knowledge and understanding of the students. They assess factual knowledge but do not identify students' capacity to apply ICT independently. In Year 7, for example, over half of the students can send e-mails in more sophisticated ways than they are taught. Year 8 students revisiting the use of spreadsheets, are given basic formulae; they are not asked to work them out for themselves. Year 9 students learning to detect bias in websites do not use the more developed skills learned in English and history. The head of department has begun to develop more challenging tasks, but these are not yet in place.
178. Although there is little challenge to talented students in lessons, there are good opportunities for learning outside the formal course. The head of department has set up an extra-curricular group of gifted students from all years to research and design the school website. They have made substantial progress recently in learning how to use the software and to identify appropriate layout. They are independent and work at levels well above expectations in planning and decision-making. In addition, students of all levels of competence make good use of computers at lunchtimes to help their work in other subjects.
179. The nature of the work provided gives most students a sense of security, but the more talented are frustrated, while students with a poor attention span behave badly. Most students continue to apply themselves in most lessons in spite of these problems but, in some lessons, the behaviour of a few disrupts learning.
180. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory and places constraints on the effectiveness of the new head of department's leadership. Rigid teaching materials

were needed this year because, in the lower school years, only two teachers are specialists. Consequently, the teachers' knowledge and experience have a negative impact on the standards achieved. The resources provided do not give enough scope to support learning well enough. Although the network is very reliable, there is limited space for students' work and so they cannot keep many files so as to develop them. The provision of computers is just below national expectations; departments report difficulties in booking rooms for all classes in a year group. The teachers use interactive whiteboards well but, in two of the computer rooms, the students' view is restricted so that it is difficult for teachers to hold their attention. The school is taking steps to solve these problems through the work of a network management group.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

181. The use of ICT across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It now meets the requirement of Curriculum 2000 in almost every respect. The head of department has raised the knowledge and skills of all staff through well-organised training to the extent that all can use computers in their teaching. Students, therefore, use ICT in almost all subjects with confidence. In English, teachers encourage students to evaluate Internet websites, analyse text and develop their ideas with independent use of wordprocessing. Mathematics teachers contribute to the use of spreadsheets for modelling. They generate equations from curves and encourage students to use software independently in their GCSE projects. Science covers the curricular area of data measurement and analysis, although opportunities for hands-on experience are limited by the shortage of equipment. The design and technology faculty makes a good contribution to students' learning by teaching CAD (computer aided design) in textiles, electronics and graphics. These staff are beginning to use computers to control the making of objects such as jewellery moulds and casings for circuit boards. Geography, history and sociology departments use the Internet well to support learning. Students studying art and design are encouraged to use ICT independently, manipulating scanned images that are photographed by students or retrieved from the Internet.
182. There are limited resources in music, and the availability of computer rooms is a constraint on free use of ICT for subjects without their own equipment. There is some inefficiency in that the ICT department is not working closely enough with other subjects to ensure that they know the areas and levels of capability that students have reached. Nor are other departments informing the ICT department sufficiently about contexts that they could use to support other subjects. Nevertheless, every student spoken to uses computers in almost all subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in the modern foreign languages of French and German is **very good**.

In Year 7, all students begin French and either Spanish or German as a second modern foreign language. They do French alone for half the year, and either Spanish or German for the other half. In Years 8 and 9, all students, except a very small number with special educational needs, continue with two languages (French and Spanish or French and German). The statutory National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are reported to parents for French only, as this is the language that all students have studied. In Years 10 and 11, almost all students continue with one or both of the languages that they have learned up to this point. Most students choose only one language in Year 10, but the percentage of students who study two modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 is higher than the national average for comprehensive schools. The modern foreign languages

faculty has its own head. There are heads of department for each of French, German and Spanish.

French and German are reported immediately below.

Strengths

- GCSE results have been well above average over the last three years.
- Teaching is very good overall; it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- Students largely behave very well and their attitudes are very positive.
- The range of trips and exchanges contributes very well to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- French is not always used enough in the classroom to convey simple instructions.
- Teachers do not encourage pupils enough to present their work well or do follow-up corrections.
- Some timetabling leaves long gaps between lessons, which is unhelpful to learning.

183. Results in the National Curriculum teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2002 in French were well above average. They were considerably lower for the previous Year 9. The 2002 results were slightly too generous, given the relatively low allocation of lesson time to French in Years 7 to 9, compared with national recommendations.

184. Standards in lessons in Year 9 in both French and German are above average. Students achieve well to gain such standards. The higher attainers, including the gifted and talented, have a good understanding and knowledge of tenses when they write, and can recognise them when they hear questions. They are less confident in using tenses when they answer questions, especially those who study French. Higher attainers' written work in both French and German is often detailed and accurate, especially so in German. Middle attainers try hard to reach similar levels of fluency, but their written work is shorter and less detailed, and they do not always achieve the same degree of accuracy. No student is required to write corrections or to re-draft work, nor is good presentation always insisted on. Lower attaining students would benefit particularly from more rigorous practice in this area. Their work can be very untidy and incomplete when they are not reminded continually to do better. Lower attainers also find recalling vocabulary difficult in reading and listening, unless they are given much guidance and repetition. In the smaller classes created for them, they have good opportunities to make progress in reading and writing; even so, many still lack the confidence to participate fully in speaking. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make as much progress as others in their classes.

185. Results in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are well above average and have been so for several years. In 2002, girls did exceptionally well in both languages, and the difference between the performance of boys and girls was greater than is the case nationally. In German, boys performed much less well than they had done in previous years. Nevertheless, all students performed better in modern foreign languages than in almost all their other subjects. This pattern of very good performance extended across the ability range because, unusually, compared with most schools, virtually all students in the year groups take an examination.

186. Standards in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are well above average in both French and German. Students achieve very well to reach these standards through a combination of interest, hard work and very effective teaching. The higher attainers, including the gifted and talented, are confident in their listening and speaking skills, but more so in German than in French, because of the German that they hear continually in every lesson and to

which they are expected to respond. Students' written work develops very well in both languages. They gain a very good understanding of using tenses and can reuse many structures and expressions that they hear. Their vocabulary is generally wide and they tackle both reading and listening activities well. Because of teachers' very high expectations, middle attainers often achieve higher than expected standards in all linguistic skills. With careful and purposeful teaching, most lower attainers make good progress and achieve very well at the level expected of them. Students with special educational needs and the minority who use English as an additional language achieve very well in both languages.

187. Since the last inspection, very effective development of teaching and learning has led to good improvement in the quality of work and examination results.
188. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is especially effective in Years 10 and 11. The principal features are: very clear planning, taking into account all levels of students' competence and the purposeful use of the modern foreign languages by teachers. This enables students to practise systematically the grammar and vocabulary that they are taught. Teachers generally manage their students very well. They maintain good relationships and often introduce a sense of fun and humour in the games that they play to help students' learning of the language. In German, particularly, there is firm emphasis on developing and practising the language and maintaining students' concentration throughout lessons. Computers are underused, but a beginning has been made in this area. Occasionally, in French, teachers do not use the foreign language enough, even when giving simple instructions. Nor do they always manage students firmly enough, and this leads to some immature behaviour. In general, teachers do not share learning objectives enough with students, nor discuss what has been learned to full advantage in plenary sessions. Occasionally, more attention should be given to students' performance in listening and reading skills.
189. The quality of leadership and management of the faculty is very good, with some excellent features. The head of faculty inspires his team of very committed teachers by his own outstanding teaching and energy. He ensures that good practice is increasingly shared throughout the department. The leadership and management of both French and German are very good overall, although in French there is not yet quite enough reciprocal observation of teaching to ensure that inexperienced teachers are fully aware of the best teaching practice. Some timetabling leaves long gaps between lessons that have adversely affected standards in Year 11.

Spanish (a required special feature of this inspection) is reported below.

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching inspires students to achieve very well.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Leadership is very good and has clear vision for the development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Spanish is not used often enough for routine communication in class.
- Students do not read for pleasure enough.
- There is insufficient observation of each other's lessons by teachers and good practice is not shared enough.

190. GCSE examination results in Spanish were well above average in 2000, and improved further in 2001, when seven in every ten students gained grades A* to C. In 2002, there was a substantial increase in the number of candidates compared with the previous year; the results were outstanding because of the marked improvement in the performance of boys. More than three-quarters of the boys attained grades A* to C, equalling the performance of the girls. Girls still gained more of the highest grades; half the girls entered attained A* or A grades. Both boys and girls achieved very well and did much better in Spanish than in their other subjects.
191. Standards in Spanish are very high by the end of Year 9. Students begin their studies in Year 7, where half the year group learn Spanish for one and a half terms. They enjoy their course and make very good progress. They continue with the language in Years 8 and 9 for two lessons a week and, by the end of Year 9, their attainment overall is well above national expectations, despite the limited allocation of time for lessons. Higher attaining students, in particular girls, have a thorough grasp of grammar. They write fluently and extensively, with few errors. Middle attaining students write pieces of 100 words or more and can express themselves clearly and accurately. All students write confidently and express opinions, likes and dislikes well. They acquire a wide vocabulary, largely because of their careful compilation of the key language of each unit of study, which they keep and use throughout the school.
192. Students' understanding of Spanish spoken at native speed and their oral fluency are impressive. They all cope well with challenging recordings of native speakers and have no inhibitions about speaking the language. However, they do little reading for pleasure, as this means of developing independent learning skills is rarely recommended to them.
193. Students' attainment is well above average by the end of Year 11. The 60 or more students who choose to carry on with Spanish in Years 10 and 11 continue to achieve very well. They speak very fluently about their own experiences and plans and can talk about past and future events confidently and accurately. They produce challenging written work of very high standard. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent, as was their behaviour in all lessons seen during the inspection.
194. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Achievement is better and the proportion of grades A* to C in GCSE examinations has more than doubled. ICT is now used more prominently to support learning in the department's new computer suite.
195. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, are expert linguists and transmit their enthusiasm to their students, who work hard, concentrate and enjoy learning. Teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly and use a variety of interesting activities in careful sequence to ensure that all students can follow and remain focused. In some lessons, the teaching is outstanding. For example, in one Year 7 lesson, the teacher presented new material brilliantly, using a variety of skills, including acting, mime, gesture, games and real objects. Students were not only very well entertained, but also learned the new material rapidly. The teaching is well adapted to students with special educational needs, who make very good progress. Teachers frequently enable students to work in pairs, and this practice is used very well to encourage independence and to give students more chance to practise speaking.

Homework is used very well to extend and consolidate classwork, although it is sometimes not set for Year 7 classes. Marking is regular, thorough and helpful.

196. Students are used to hearing their teachers speaking Spanish. In the most successful lessons, both teacher and students speak a great deal of Spanish and use the language for routine communication, which creates an authentic atmosphere and further develops students' listening and speaking skills. However, this is not always the case and teachers and students still sometimes use English unnecessarily, and miss opportunities for practice.
197. Over 50 Year 10 students go on the annual study trip to Spain, and this is a timely boost to their learning.
198. The leadership and management of Spanish by the head of the modern languages faculty are very good and there is clear vision for the development of the subject. There is a very strong team of teachers, who are committed to improving provision still further. Monitoring of teaching is carried out through the school's performance management procedures, and teachers share good ideas informally and at departmental meetings. However, they would benefit from watching each other teach on a more regular and systematic basis.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good and enables students to learn successfully.
- Good instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities extend students' learning very well.

Areas for improvement

- Students' skills and techniques in playing keyboards in Years 7 to 9 are underdeveloped.
- There is insufficient access to, and use of, ICT, which is not used enough in creative work.

199. Currently, by Year 9, students' achievement is barely satisfactory. Their progress was adversely affected in part by the unsatisfactory provision when they were in Year 8. The present rotating timetable in Year 9 also deprives them of half the entitlement to lessons that is usually found in schools. In these circumstances, achievement is satisfactory. Students' attainment in Year 11 is average and represents good achievement, given the inadequate teaching when they were in Year 10.
200. National Curriculum teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2002 show 94 per cent of students achieving Level 5 and above. This is remarkably high and does not match inspection findings which indicate average attainment. In the 2001 GCSE examination, all students attained grades A* to C, well above the national average. However, in 2002, the A* to C grades gained fell to 64 per cent, considerably below the national average.
201. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Compositions such as variations on the theme of 'Frere Jacques' show inventiveness. For example, students exploited the imitative possibilities of the tune well when done as a round. Performing that requires knowledge of where the notes are on keyboards, and linking this to notation, is not as well developed as should be expected. Lack of

continuity in the provision of specialist teachers last year adversely affected students' progress in both performing and composing. Knowledge of composers and styles and applying such knowledge in listening activities are satisfactory.

202. Students' standards in work seen by the end of Year 11 are average. Compositions are well presented, although the content is often somewhat static, for example only one chord per bar in the lower parts. Performance of students' own work is good, often reflecting good skills acquired from instrumental lessons. In the best work observed, a guitarist had composed a good rondo showing good melodic invention which was well performed by the composer and two other guitarists.
203. Approximately 100 students extend their learning of music with additional instrumental lessons on a good range of instruments, and also with singing lessons. A growing number enhance their musical attainment further by participating in the good range of extra-curricular groups, which include the big band, the blues band and the choir. Around 150 students are currently involved in preparing a production of 'Oliver' to be presented in a few weeks' time.
204. In judging improvement since the last inspection, it is important to state that the teachers in the department at the time of this inspection have been in post for only five months. Up to the time of their appointment, frequent staff changes in the academic year 2001 to 2002 had resulted in the loss of students' confidence in, and esteem for, the subject. There were deficiencies with equipment, incomplete coursework, and students' lost work and documentation. Since 1997, good new accommodation has been built for the music department. Although GCSE examination results dipped in 2002, they have usually been good. After a period of considerable difficulty, referred to above, the department has achieved a remarkable improvement in a short time, making improvement since the last inspection good overall.
205. The quality of teaching and learning is good at all stages. Students' behaviour is very good and they are well managed. Attitudes to the subject are now positive. All of these factors provide a good basis for the delivery of the well-planned lessons and the good extra-curricular activities. Basic musical skills are well taught. Assessment is good and students' needs are well known. They acquire skills, knowledge and understanding of music well and lessons are very productive. Because of good methods of assessment, students know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve to make further progress. Appropriate work is given to students with special educational needs and to talented students. Teaching provides well for the needs of students of all levels of competence. Teachers have worked exceptionally hard to bring about this good state of affairs. Good schemes of work have been written and gaps in students' GCSE examination work have been filled.
206. The department is well led. Most resources for music are good. However, the computers are old and the students cannot, therefore, fully exploit the possibilities of ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Achievement in all year groups is good.
- Most teaching is good and much is very good or excellent.
- Positive relationships are supported by teachers' high, but realistic, expectations.
- The curriculum helps students to pursue activities in depth and enables them to achieve higher standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students' understanding of the principles of attack and defence in a range of games is not always secure.
- The attainment of students when they join the school is not closely assessed so that measuring their rate of progress is, consequently, uncertain.

207. Students' achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good. Standards in fitness work, a range of games, gymnastics and dance in these years are, generally, in line with age-related expectations. Students show a wide range of skills in badminton. Some play with good technical accuracy, while others who lack controlled execution have some understanding of how to outwit an opponent. In gymnastics, students have a good range of ideas. Some perform with poise and control, but others are less assured. Boys attempt more challenging movements and balances, but often without poise and control. Girls exhibit more refinement and style. In dance, girls are starting to combine gymnastic motifs with music successfully. An understanding of the 'principles of play' in attack and defence across a range of games is less well developed, and students are not easily able to apply these, therefore, across different games. Girls and boys move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently.

208. Students achieve well over Years 10 and 11 and their standards of performance across a range of activities are at least in line with age-related expectations. Some students exceed expectations for their age and demonstrate a high level of skill. Many students, both boys and girls, have a high level of technical skill in passing and creating space in netball. In basketball, football and rugby, standards of attainment are good and reflect the depth of experience of students who are allowed to select their own choice of activity. Individuals also have the opportunity to extend their understanding by coaching and organising team strategies. In these situations, talented students demonstrate levels of exceptional performance. Most students know how to prepare properly for physical activity. Their knowledge of rules is generally good. It is rare to be able to distinguish students with special educational needs from others and most make good progress in practical work.

209. Apart from a Year 11 group of lower potential following the GCSE examination course in 2002, the percentage of boys and girls gaining GCSE A* to C grades is regularly above the school and national averages. This represents good progress for these students over five years at the school. There is no marked difference in the overall results for girls and boys but the number of girls taking the GCSE course has been low. In theory work, the understanding of key concepts and use of specific terminology linked to the circulatory system are developing well. There is good reinforcement of theory in practical sessions. This enables students to relate theory to practice and understand what happens to blood-flow during exercise.

210. A large number of students of all ethnic backgrounds develop and refine their skills in the extensive extra-curricular sports programme. Participation in many activities, for example fitness club, basketball, badminton, netball and trampolining, is good. Opportunities to take part in inter-house as well as inter-school competitions benefit a large number of students.
211. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The curriculum has expanded very well because of new accommodation and facilities. More choice of activity in Years 10 and 11 allows students to specialise and learn activities in depth. This presents them with the greater challenges called for at the time of the last inspection.
212. Teaching is good and much of it is very good or excellent. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching is good where there are challenging objectives outlined at the start of lessons and teachers provide stimulating demonstration and planned progressions at a brisk pace with a variety of tasks. In Year 7, teaching is very good when it sets realistic tasks adapted to students' levels of competence, so that, for example, they understand the context of outwitting opponents in badminton, as well as developing the skills of hitting and receiving. Distinctive features of the teaching are teachers' good command of subject knowledge and their very good understanding of their students' needs. These enable teachers to give students the accurate feedback from which they can improve their performance. Teachers encourage students working in pairs, small groups or teams to adopt the right attitudes to either competitive or co-operative activities, and this supports their learning very well.
213. The department makes the best use of the good indoor and outdoor accommodation. However, the lack of a dedicated resource space for the teaching of the theoretical aspects of the GCSE examination course is unhelpful to teaching and learning. There is minimal non-participation of students in lessons. A strong team of teachers is well led. There is considerable reflection, planning and review of performance. A strong team ethos ensures vigorous curricular debate within the department. Currently, the lack of information about attainment on entry prevents the teaching team from accurately monitoring individual students' achievement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The imaginative teaching produces good achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The introduction of the GCSE examination short course is helping to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Students' techniques for tackling the GCSE examination are underdeveloped.
- Some talented students are not identified and, therefore, not challenged enough.

214. The overall standard of students' work seen by Year 9 is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. They achieve well across Years 7 to 9. Students sustain interest because of the good variety of tasks that enables them to learn in ways that do not always involve a lot of writing. This encourages boys and, consequently, they achieve broadly similar standards to those of girls. Students use

specialist vocabulary well. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on Christian values, when they used a prompt sheet to discuss matters that are relevant today. However, average attainers do not always give full oral answers or read aloud fluently.

215. The overall standard of work seen by Year 11 is above average and students achieve well. The GCSE examination short course that is followed by all students brings rigour to the subject. Students work hard to gain the qualification, and this helps to raise their standards. Students develop their thinking skills and they can apply knowledge to different circumstances. Students of average competence do not always write extended pieces well enough, and their understanding of the techniques required for the GCSE examination is underdeveloped. Talented students in the subject are not yet formally identified and they are sometimes insufficiently challenged. The GCSE examination short course results for 2002 were above the national average and in line with results in the local education authority. However, they were not as good as the exceptional results of 2001. Girls performed better than boys in 2002.
216. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The new locally agreed syllabus is fully in place. The GCSE examination short course is well established. Teaching has improved. Lower attaining students now achieve well. The subject's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has developed further and is now a real strength.
217. The quality of teaching is good. It is consistently at least good, and some is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. They create a positive learning environment by having high expectations and clear objectives. They use the time in lessons well, and reinforce learning in effective plenary sessions. They use imaginative approaches that engage students in their learning, such as the use of a party 'popper' in a Year 10 lesson to demonstrate the big bang theory of the creation of the universe. When students are actively involved and take responsibility for their learning, they make the best gains in knowledge and understanding. This was observed when a Year 11 class worked in pairs to sort statements establishing the criteria for a just war and then applied these to the Second World War. Work is usually well matched to the competence of the students. This enables lower attainers and students with special educational needs to make good progress. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher used an overhead projector to help lower attainers to write notes by emphasising the important points in bold print. Appropriate homework is regularly set and helps to extend and consolidate learning. Most students come to lessons eager to learn. However, some students, especially boys in Years 8 and 9, lack self-discipline. The introduction of the use of assertive management techniques by a few teachers helps to contain their behaviour.
218. The subject's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Students have many opportunities to reflect on the existence of God. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, they prepared scripts for a trial to test the identity and purposes of Jesus. They consider moral issues such as a just war and the Holocaust. They work in pairs and groups and develop their social skills. They learn to empathise with different people; for example, they wrote a diary from a Jewish standpoint on life and death in a concentration camp. Students listen to each other and respect others' views and efforts. The study of aspects of major world religions extends their cultural development very well. Students show respect for the beliefs, views and traditions of others. In a Year 7 lesson on the prodigal son, they were aware of the problems for a Jew forbidden to eat pork having to work with pigs.

219. Leadership and management are good. A full scheme of work is in place for the new locally agreed syllabus. Full lesson plans are being developed to complement this in order to support new teachers. Good management has ensured the continuity of learning during a period of rapid changes of staff. Performance management is well established.

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS IN YEARS 10 and 11

Overall, the quality of provision in the optional subjects in Years 10 and 11 is **good** overall, and in expressive arts, it is **very good**.

Strengths

- In expressive arts, very good teaching ensures that learning and achievement are equally very good.
- Teaching and learning in business studies are satisfactory, following a period of staffing difficulties.
- Child development provides a good opportunity for students with particular interests in this subject.
- Drama is improving after a period of difficulties with provision of staff.
- The leisure and tourism course is providing a valuable additional opportunity for lower attainers.
- Sociology is very well taught and students attain well above average standards.
- The option support system works well.

Areas for improvement

- Some younger students have immature attitudes and behaviour in drama.
- Too many teachers share the teaching of the leisure and tourism course and accommodation and provision of computers and other technology for it are poor.

Expressive arts

220. Attainment in expressive arts in Years 10 and 11 is above average. GCSE examination results in 2002 at grades A* to C were above average. Lessons were sampled in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11, students' attainment was average. Students have good spatial awareness but in an exercise in dance that required them to count 'eight, eight, four, four, two, two, one, one' and then step and turn at each change of number, the need to internalise these numbers daunted many, especially as the numbers became smaller. When set the task of creating the illusion of movement to 'Windmills of your Mind', students made willing responses but found some of the sequences, for example spirals and figures of eight, very confusing. Year 10 students showed very good natural ability. They understood time very well and they were able to reproduce complex patterns of movement with ease in, for example, seven-pulse measure. They readily grasped the notion of a still image, and the use of appropriate dynamics. Very good progress was made in developing a sequence of movements, an activity which was evidently very enjoyable too.

221. Teaching is of very high quality – sharp, quick and deft. Lessons are well planned so that a sequence of well-thought-out activities flows naturally from one to the next at a good pace. The teacher is well aware of individual needs and gives support and encouragement appropriately. The quality of learning is very good. Students respond very well to very good teaching and acquire their knowledge, skills and understanding according to their levels of competence in the subject well. Students of all levels of competence and ethnic background are equally well involved in learning.

Business studies

222. The subject is a popular option in Years 10 and 11, especially with boys. Difficulties in provision of specialist staff have adversely affected results, but the staffing situation is now stable. In 2001, GCSE examination results were above average; two-thirds of the 74 candidates gained grades A* to C, and all gained a graded result. In 2002, average results were gained in the GCSE examination, but students did not do as well in this subject as in the others for which they entered.
223. Standards seen in Year 11 were average. The students, most of whom were boys, produced written and oral work showing a wide range of competence in the subject, but average overall. The necessary curricular content has been covered and students are achieving the standards that might reasonably be expected of them. In the Year 11 lesson seen, satisfactory teaching enabled students to make satisfactory progress when working in small groups. Higher attaining students made useful links between the quality control of production and the influence of technology on workers' motivation. Lower attainers found it difficult to concentrate without the direct supervision of the teacher and could not readily expand on their short, single-word answers to problems. Curriculum coverage is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the examination. ICT is readily to hand in the rooms used and students use computers appropriately in their work.

Child development

224. This course leads to the GCSE examination and is taken mainly by girls, but a few boys also take the subject. Some students take fewer examination courses than the majority of students in their respective year groups; some lower attainers take an entry level certificate in child care. The course provides valuable experience and opportunities for students with particular interests in this subject area. More students are following the course in Year 10 than in Year 11.
225. Results in GCSE examinations are usually below average, as in 2002. In the two lessons seen, standards in Year 10 were broadly average across a group of widely differing attainment, and students were achieving well. Standards in the Year 11 lesson seen were below average for most of the students present, but some higher attainers were reaching very good standards. Most students have the skills to research information for themselves in both years, and higher attainers' work in Year 11 was thoughtful, well informed and very well presented. In Year 11, students undertake an individual case study of a child and most find this a challenging and absorbing experience.
226. The teaching and learning are good. The Year 10 lesson seen was well planned and provided a good range of resources for students to research in small groups. They responded well. In the Year 11 lesson, the teacher provided good support for individuals who were concluding their case studies. Overall, students worked well together and the lessons extended their social skills well.

Drama

227. Drama is a subject in transition. Staffing and recruitment problems mean that two recently appointed and relatively inexperienced teachers do most of the teaching. The acting head of department is newly qualified, yet she has had the responsibility of writing teaching plans which should have been in place on her arrival. Achievement and

standards, especially in examination classes, have suffered. However, the new teachers are trying hard to recover the situation.

228. Results in the GCSE examinations have been well above the national average for the past three years; however, the standards of work seen do not reflect this. Owing to the restricted curricular time allocated to the subject, the immature attitudes of a number of students, particularly boys, who see drama as a recreational opportunity rather than as a discipline, and their lack of regular contact with subject specialists, students' standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average. Standards in classes in Years 10 and 11 are average at the moment. The two teachers are working well together to ensure that Year 11 students have covered all the work that they should have done and that they have good opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of theatrical conventions, theories and styles, such as physical and experiential theatre. The students are being challenged and are responding well.
229. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 10 and 11 because the students are committed and want to do well, but this is not always the case in some junior classes. In a good Year 11 lesson, the two teachers helped students to devise and extend their coursework presentations based on 'Victorian decadence'. Extracts from the film 'Moulin Rouge' proved an excellent stimulus, and students received good advice on body language, movement, gesture and audience awareness. As a result, their pieces improved considerably. Although all lessons are well planned and are interesting and relevant, the full-time teachers have insufficient methods for dealing with the immature attitudes of a few younger students. Inappropriate interruptions and poor listening slow the pace of learning in some lessons; consequently, not all students are effectively developing their acting skills or their knowledge of the theatre. Additionally, they are not developing the social, interpersonal and team-working skills which are essential to drama and so important both in and out of school.

Leisure and tourism

230. This GNVQ course in leisure and tourism was introduced for the first time in September 2002. One group of Year 10 students was selected to follow the course, which is intended to provide an additional opportunity for students who find the usual mainstream curriculum too demanding. Most students have a wide range of special educational needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties.
231. In the two lessons seen, standards were below average for the course. Some students have below average literacy skills and, although they can express themselves fluently in speech, this is sometimes not sufficiently to the point. Most were able to write accurately when given close direction, but some writing lacks basic accuracy in use of capital letters and accurate spelling of basic words. In the lessons seen, students showed satisfactory understanding of the content for the guide-book that they were being helped to plan.
232. The teaching in the two lessons seen varied from very good to satisfactory. The better lesson showed very good management of the students by effective leadership and high expectations of behaviour and effort. Effort was made to use the basic furniture as well as possible to meet the needs of the group. The task set was well adapted to the students' levels of understanding and they made good progress. In the other lesson, management of students was just satisfactory because the work and the organisation of the room were not adapted fully enough to the needs of this demanding group of students, and learning was barely satisfactory.

233. The course provides a good additional opportunity for some identified students. However, despite valiant efforts to provide a display of subject materials in the temporary classroom provided, this room is shabby and inadequately equipped. There is no ready access to computers and other technology essential for a course of this kind. The working situation does not create a sense of course identity so essential for the needs of the particular students involved. Too many teachers share the lessons and the same topics and, as a consequence, students' learning becomes fragmented.

Sociology

234. Standards in the GCSE examination are consistently well above average. A large majority of candidates usually attain grades A* to C in GCSE examinations, as in 2002 and 2001. The standards seen in a Year 11 lesson, for the lower attaining of the two classes in this year group, were broadly average. In a Year 10 lesson for a group of mixed potential, standards were above average overall. In this lesson, students were able to apply very well their understanding of sociological concepts learned earlier to the new topic of crime and deviance. In the Year 11 lesson, most students attained the standards to be expected at this stage of the course; however, some students' behaviour distracted them, but not others, from the work and prevented them from achieving as well as they could.
235. The teaching was very good in both lessons seen. Very good management of students, especially in the Year 11 lesson, ensured that learning was at least good. Students were well challenged in both lessons and the pace of learning was brisk, especially in Year 10.

Option support

236. Some students, for whom a full range of mainstream GCSE examination courses is excessive, take fewer examination courses than most students. In the time generated by not following the full range of courses, they receive extra support for the examination courses that they are taking. A good Year 11 lesson in option support was seen in which students were well supported in a range of other subjects by good teaching. The teacher was well aware of students' individual needs, and good relationships ensured that they gained much from the help provided. Their attitudes were positive and they behaved very well. The good, relaxed, working atmosphere enabled them to make good progress.

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 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE A-level, AS (Advanced Supplementary) and AVCE results for 2001

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	23	100	96	48	46	7.1	6.6
Biology	15	80	88	13	34	3.7	5.3
Business studies	18	83	92	0	32	3.0	5.5
Chemistry	11	91	90	27	43	4.6	5.9
Communication studies	33	79	93	39	31	5.1	5.5
Economics	14	86	89	29	36	4.7	5.5
English literature	17	100	95	29	37	5.9	5.9
French	8	100	89	75	38	7.5	5.6
Fully design technology	5	60	91	0	30	1.6	5.4
Geography	29	86	92	34	38	5.6	5.7
German	4	75	91	50	40	5.5	5.8
History	20	95	88	40	35	5.5	5.5
Mathematics	33	70	87	45	43	5.2	5.8
Other social studies	44	98	87	41	34	6.4	5.3
Physics	26	81	88	27	40	4.5	5.7
Sociology	13	100	86	46	35	6.9	5.3
Spanish	11	100	89	82	39	8.6	5.7
Sports/PE studies	9	100	92	11	25	4.2	5.1
Art and design (AS)	1	-	83	-	23	-	2.3
Biology (AS)	3	-	52	-	2	-	0.8
Mathematics (AS)	6	50	62	17	15	1.3	1.5
Business (AVCE)	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.2	10.4

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

In all subjects, almost all students complete the courses that they begin.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and chemistry but biology, human biology and physics were sampled. One Year 12 biology and one Year 13 human biology lesson were observed. The quality of teaching and learning in both these lessons was good. In Year 13, students applied their understanding of genetics to solve problems about the inheritance of human characteristics. In Year 12, students are developing a good understanding of the need for transport systems in flowering plants. Standards in A-level biology in 2001 were below average and remained at a similar level in 2002. Too few students studied human biology to compare with standards nationally.

In physics in the 2001 examination, A-level results were below average. Students achieved the standard to be expected from their previous performance in GCSE examinations. Teaching in a Year 12 lesson was satisfactory, but students had difficulty keeping up with some of the work because the teacher tried to achieve too much in the available time. In a Year 13 class, the teaching was good. Careful preparation and the teacher's good knowledge of the subject enabled students to increase their understanding of magnetic fields and changes of polarity.

Mathematics

Overall, provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- Teachers work well as a team and are committed to improving standards in the subject.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of learning in AS- and A-level lessons is inconsistent.
- There is not enough use of ICT to support the teaching of the subject.
- There is a lack of courses for students below A-level studies.

237. Results in A-level examinations in 2001 were average. The results achieved by girls and boys have varied over the last four years, with boys doing well compared with the results that they achieved in their other subjects; girls have achieved as well as they have in their other subjects. Since the last inspection, results have improved faster than national trends. They improved further in 2002, when all students who sat the examination passed at this level and well over half attained grades A or B. In the Year 12 AS-level examinations in 2001, ten of 29 candidates did not attain a pass grade, and few gained the A or B grades. In 2002, five of the seven candidates did not pass.

238. Standards of work seen are in line with the national average and students are achieving well, judging by their prior GCSE examination results. In some lessons, students show that they are able to investigate in mathematics, model real-life problems and apply the skills that they have learned to new situations. In other lessons, an over-reliance on techniques for answering examination questions means that students cannot transfer their knowledge to areas of mathematics that are new to them. Students are good at taking notes and, in some lessons, are happy to contribute to whole-class discussions.

239. Since the last inspection, A-level standards have remained in line with the national average. The time allocated for students to re-sit their GCSE examination has been reduced and currently only two students follow this course. Teaching methods still do not fully exploit the learning opportunities provided by having few students in some classes.
240. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but lessons vary from excellent to unsatisfactory. In the lessons where teaching is good or excellent, students are challenged to investigate mathematics, to construct reasoned arguments and to apply their new skills to different situations. In one lesson, students experimented with rulers leaning against a wall to discover the effect of making the angle steeper, they then modelled this situation mathematically and so developed a good understanding of the principles involved. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, opportunities to investigate mathematics, both with and without ICT, were missed. In general, ICT is not used sufficiently to investigate and demonstrate mathematics at this level. Occasionally, teachers' assessment of what students know is poor. In one lesson, information was given to students to extend their knowledge beyond A-level, but this information was incorrect.
241. The head of faculty manages the subject well and acts as a good role model for other teachers. He provides good support for less experienced teachers. Further mathematics is offered as an option, but currently no students follow this course in Year 12.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching gives rise to good learning and enables students to achieve well.
- Teachers support students' independent learning well.
- Very good management is improving standards and achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work are underdeveloped.

242. A-level results in 2001 and 2000 were below average. The proportions of A and B grades and A to E grades gained were also below average, although the results in 2001 were better. The 2002 results were markedly better; all candidates passed and the proportion of A and B grades was far higher. In the AS-level examination in 2001, all candidates passed and an average proportion obtained A or B grades. The AS-level results in 2002 declined steeply due to inexperienced teaching and some students who lacked commitment. One in five candidates did not pass and only a quarter attained an A or B grade.
243. Students' achievement in Year 13 based on value-added data for the period 2000 to 2002 was satisfactory. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. In spite of the below average results in 2001 and 2000, students were still able to fulfil their personal goals of progressing to higher education.
244. Current students on A-level and AS-level courses achieve well. They are on target to achieve results in line, or better than, those predicted from their performance in the GCSE examination. Four higher attaining students are taking the Advanced Extension

award in order to improve their chances of gaining entry to leading universities. Retention rates on both courses are high. The majority of students want to proceed to higher education and most have already been offered a provisional place.

245. Students in both A-level and AS-level courses can recall information well and show a good understanding of scientific ideas and concepts. They are less good at applying their knowledge and understanding to new situations. AS-level students can recall prior work on redox reactions successfully. They are able to write ionic half equations and work out the definition of an oxidising agent and a reducing agent with some help from the teacher. During practical work, they observe carefully and record their results accurately and most can draw the correct inference. A-level students are able to analyse data critically in order to predict the feasibility of redox reactions. They can recall the techniques needed to identify anions and cations. They are able to identify an unknown chemical using a sequence of chemical tests by observing carefully, carrying out procedures skilfully and recording and making the correct inferences.
246. The quality of teaching and learning, in the lessons seen and the students' work scrutinised, is good. The principal features of the teaching are enthusiasm, very good subject knowledge and understanding, high expectations and clear explanations. Practical work extends students' knowledge and understanding and resources are used effectively to help students to learn. There are some weaker aspects to the teaching. Learning objectives are not always made explicit to the students or reviewed fully at the end of the class. Attempts to match work to students of differing ability are limited to questioning, and the degree of support offered and students' understanding is not often extended and deepened by asking, 'what if?' or 'why is?'.
247. Students' attitudes to learning in lessons are very good. They behave very well and co-operate fully with the teachers. They are attentive and some show scientific curiosity in class. Some of the students, especially girls, lack confidence in their ability. They work well together in pairs and small groups and, in so doing, learn from one another. The quality of students' files varies but most contain a good range of work that is well presented. Students find independent study hard but standards have been helped by the students' handbook which contains helpful information on areas where students' misconceptions are most common. It provides good advice on writing formulae, balancing equations, simple calculations involving the mole, practical techniques and exemplars of important practical exercises.
248. The schemes of work for AS- and A-level are underdeveloped. For example, there is no reference to work for students of different levels of attainment, opportunities for use of ICT or reference to spiritual, moral, social or cultural matters. Assessment is good. Students take a test under examination conditions each half term and the results are carefully marked using course grades to indicate the level of attainment reached. Students take part in regular assessment and marking of their own work which helps them understand how well they are doing and where they need to improve. Students are well supported by their teachers who are readily available to provide individual help. Those who are falling behind also have access to after-school classes.
249. Chemistry is very well led and managed by the head of department, who provides clear direction, monitors teaching and students' work well, works closely with other teachers of chemistry and has taken effective action to improve standards and achievement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The school's two courses in this curriculum area were inspected at AS- and A-Level: art and design (textiles) and design and technology (product design).

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The department has been restructured and three key senior staff, including the head of faculty, have been recently appointed.
- Teachers' good knowledge of their students helps them to meet their individual needs.
- Students have good and often very good relationships with teachers and each other.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work.

Areas for improvement

- A programme is lacking to improve the skills of students who did not follow the GCSE course.
- There is insufficient co-ordination between teachers.
- Links with higher education and industry are not well enough developed.
- Some students' attendance is erratic and this adversely affects their progress.
- The scattered accommodation is unhelpful to subject management and sharing of resources.

250. Results in textiles have generally been well ahead of those in product design. At A-level in 2001, standards in product design were very low. In AS-level product design in 2001, three of the nine students attained grades A or B; one did not pass. Of the six students who continued their course of study to A-level and took that examination in 2002, one gained grade B and all passed. In the 2002 Year 12 AS-level examination, nine students passed but none at grades A or B. In textiles, the two Year 12 students entered for AS-level textiles in 2001 attained A grades, and subsequently gained grades A and B in the A-level examination in 2002. In 2002, there was a significant increase in the numbers of students taking AS-level textiles, and of the 20 students, all of whom were girls, half gained grades A to C.

251. Standards of work seen in product design were, at best, in line with what is usually expected at this stage of the course. However, some students lack confidence and show little initiative. These students lack a sound understanding of construction and materials technology, and this indicates that they are not achieving well enough in aspects of the course. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on the design and modelling of a portable display system, students' understanding of the design process, and research skills with reference to size and locking arrangements for each unit, were satisfactory. However, they did not understand well enough the requirements to complete all manufacturing prior to final assembly of the product. In Year 12, students are achieving in line with their previous GCSE examination results. However, as all students have not followed an identical course of study for the subject to age 16, some students' skills are not well enough developed for the advanced course. No programme is yet in place to help these students to enhance their basic skills.

252. Standards seen in textiles were much higher than in product design and students were achieving potentially at the higher grade levels. Students analyse problems to create, innovate and take risks when designing, for example students' 'hats' research in Year

12. The effective use of ICT and the Internet is beginning to show in students' good standards, presentation of work and depth of research.
253. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, following a difficult period of instability in staffing. In all lessons, teachers know the students well and relationships are good. The better lessons are planned satisfactorily and are suitably challenging. They enable students to move to a deeper level of understanding through a series of well-timed interventions by the teacher. For example, in a Year 12 textiles lesson, the teacher helped the students to investigate a new program for drawing on the computer, alongside their ongoing individual work. Where teaching was just satisfactory, methods and organisation did not enable students to consolidate information from earlier work well enough; learning was confined to acquiring facts instead of the application of this knowledge. In one lesson observed, some students were given a single commercial product to stimulate their analytical design task. They lacked a good range of artefacts or display materials to stimulate their creativity and enhance their awareness of product design and manufacture. Links with industry and higher education, for example in industrial design, are currently insufficient to stimulate, motivate and extend learning opportunities.
254. Students' work is marked regularly. Comments are helpful. Students know their standards of work and what aspects they need to concentrate on to improve. Formal procedures for monitoring independent work, however, are not rigorous enough across the teams of teachers involved in the different courses. Teacher teams do not meet formally enough to agree the regular guidance and direction to be provided for each student. A consequence of the present situation is that examination standards are at least one grade below those for coursework. Some students' progress is hampered because their attendance is erratic.
255. The leadership and management of both courses are satisfactory. The new heads of faculty and departments have identified the right priorities for development. These should now be incorporated within a detailed short-, medium- and long-term improvement plan, with clearly identified and measurable outcomes stated. Some teachers have to move from room to room, and resources and reference materials are not always easily accessible. Staff are flexible in sharing resources, but present arrangements result in a waste of time and resources because subject rooms are in different parts of the school, a situation unhelpful to the management and co-ordination of the subject.

BUSINESS

The school's provision of A-level and AS-level business studies has ceased. Results on these courses in recent years have been well below average and students' achievement was weak. A GNVQ Intermediate course has not run for several years. There is provision for AVCE courses in business studies. In Year 13, single (one A-level subject level equivalent) and double (two A-level subject equivalents) courses are running. In Year 12, only the single option is available. These courses are reported in full below.

One Year 13 economics lesson was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. The teacher used a good variety of activities and provided students with up-to-date information and data. These enabled students to understand how the government might make reasoned decisions about taxation and expenditure.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in the AVCE business studies courses.
- Excellent assessment procedures enable students to understand clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Students' own work experience is used well to place their theoretical learning in context.
- The department has been well managed through a period of staffing difficulties and teaching is now good.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient external links with businesses, other than those in the service sector, to give students direct experience of workplaces.

256. AVCE course results were well above average in 2001, a significant improvement on the two previous years. A small number of students took the AVCE course in 2002 and published results included many who had left the school long before the examination, and who appear as ungraded. Those who completed the course gained an average range of grades and achieved as expected. Year 12 AVCE results in 2002 showed a similarly average spread of grades, and most students achieved at, or above, predictions based on their GCSE examination performance.

257. In the present Year 13, only two students have chosen the double option course. A larger group is doing the single option and attainment across both groups shows the full range expected for the course. All are achieving well, with the needs of a student with English as an additional language well met through good teaching. The department has undergone a period of staffing difficulty, but this has not severely impacted on achievement in Year 13 because the head of department successfully helped with the teaching. The school has elected to continue with its most successful business studies course, the AVCE, and students say that they chose the subject for its intrinsic interest, not because it is a vocational course. Year 12 students are already achieving well by comparison with their GCSE examination results. Lively interactions in the smaller option group in a lesson about business communication show a good level of understanding. Students are able to work well, independently. They use their skills in ICT and communication well in their work. In a Year 13 discussion, for example, students clearly explained their individually researched product-marketing proposals to others in the group. They dealt effectively with questions from their peers and the teacher.

258. Teaching and learning are good overall, and there is some very good teaching in Year 12. A great strength of teaching is the excellent assessment of students' work, which gives very detailed written analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use this very effectively to feed information back to students individually in classes. Students therefore have an even more focused oral assessment of what they need to do to improve. Very mature levels of discussion with staff during these sessions show students' developing understanding of how to achieve higher grades in their work. Newly qualified teachers are very well supported and make a strong contribution to these assessment opportunities. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject enable them to summarise helpfully near the end of lessons. Their knowledge of the examination requirements is also very good. Work experience is limited to students' own paid part-time jobs, and is almost exclusively within the service sector. Teachers effectively encourage students to relate their theoretical learning to this experience.

However, students lack a wider dimension for reference, for example to the primary and manufacturing sectors. Wider experience of work places, for example through visits, speakers and other means is, therefore, lacking. Although the constraints of the timetable make it difficult for business advisers to attend Young Enterprise sessions regularly, insufficient access to such experienced professionals reduces the effectiveness of students' learning.

259. Management of the department through recent difficulties has been good, enabling Year 13 students to progress with minimal adverse effects. After a difficult time, staffing has become stable. Difficulties still exist with the allocation of classrooms, and several lessons take place in inconvenient locations, but all parties manage this well. The range of business studies courses has greatly reduced since the time of the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The only course provided in this curriculum area is reported below.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- The curriculum is very relevant to the needs of students.
- Clear organisation of coursework helps students to meet deadlines.
- Assessment practices help students to improve their coursework.

Areas for improvement

- Year 13 students are too dependent on their teachers.

260. Year 12 AVCE results in 2002, the first year of entry for the course, were below those that students achieved in their other subjects. No top grades were attained. Very few girls study the course, but they do as well as the boys. Almost all students have continued to study the subject into Year 13 this year.

261. Year 13 students' work seen during the inspection shows a distinct improvement over their work in Year 12. Their achievement is good. Students are more disciplined in their approach to the work, and they take more care over their work as a result. They have looked at the shortfalls in their coursework and have acted to improve it. Some, particularly boys, have very good technical ability, but the few girls have a more systematic approach to research, planning and explanation of their decisions. Students planning websites during the inspection are conscientious in their research of the customer's requirements, but their evaluation of examples is not firmly based on established criteria with regard to their impact. Their approach is still too descriptive and narrative, rather than explanatory and evaluative.

262. The work of current Year 12 students bears out the improvement noted in the standards of Year 13. Their coursework shows that they have benefited well from their teachers' clear assessment and explanation of improvements needed. They meet interim deadlines, so there is no sign of poor work resulting from a last minute rush. The most competent show good understanding of the structure of the business systems that they are designing and almost all have the skills needed to produce all of the required features.

263. The teaching is good. Teachers work well as a team, sharing the course so that they are teaching to their areas of greatest experience. They have good knowledge of the sections of the course that they teach and deal with it in appropriate depth. They give clear messages about course requirements. Teachers encourage self- and peer-evaluation to broaden students' perspectives and improve their understanding. Although teachers offer appropriate help when students meet a problem, they encourage the students to work out solutions for themselves, but with teachers' help available, so that students understand and can apply these solutions in different contexts. In Year 13, the students designing websites are less accustomed to thorough research and more inclined to value the practical outcome than the planning and evaluation, but their teachers have organised the tasks in such a way that they have to follow the recommended route to their solution. Teachers have broken down the modules into small sections with clear deadlines so that students do not fall behind.
264. Teachers give immediate feedback on the actions necessary for improvement. Students, therefore, all keep up with the work but, especially in Year 13, they are too dependent on the teachers. They appreciate their teachers' guidance, enjoying the challenge presented to them, coupled with support, and work hard throughout lessons. They appreciate their ability to reach their work on the school system from home, and work hard at home to maintain their pace of learning.
265. All Year 12 students have an opportunity to develop their ICT capability by following a key skills course, but only a few still attend the classes. Those who do so are working at the appropriate level for Level 3 certification; they consider that the course will help them in higher education and in their careers.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The only course provided in this curriculum area is reported below.

Physical Education

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

Strengths

- All students have passed the examination in the last three years.
- Some of the teaching is very good and staff have very good specialist subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- The need for students to research topics thoroughly is not always made clear.
- The monitoring of students' responses to follow-up work is patchy.

266. At A-level, there has been an upward trend during 2000 to 2002 and all students have, at least, passed the examination. This represents good progress for most students during the two-year course. There is no marked difference in the overall results for girls and boys but there is some evidence of underachievement by students of average competence.
267. Standards in the work of Year 13 students observed during the inspection are above average and show that they are achieving well and in line with their predicted grades. Students show good knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting performance. In a Year 13 lesson, students were introduced to the topic of 'drive theory' and 'apprehension' and it was noticeable that they were able to make appropriate links to previous learning. In Year 12, students show too passive an

approach and are not yet positive enough to follow up work. For example, they have not researched topics thoroughly enough or contributed a sufficiently informed view on issues such as 'stereotypes' or the effect of 'participation' in sport. While they were very respectful to teachers, they did not make enough of the opportunity to investigate some of the key issues in participation in sport and development.

268. The teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and some of it is very good. In the very good lessons, outcomes are clearly outlined at the start. Teachers provide stimulating examples and demonstrate very good subject knowledge. They know their students and, in Year 13, are able to direct questions appropriately in order to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. In studying the effects of lactic acid build up, the teacher was able to use the students themselves to clarify essential features of the complex process. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers' expectations of their students are not high enough and greater demands should be put on students, particularly in Year 12. At present, teachers do not encourage enough of a culture of research. Students do not use their individual files enough to research each topic independently and provide evidence from the media relating theory to practice. At times, teachers do not monitor students' responses to follow-up work closely enough.
269. The department makes the best use of the accommodation but a dedicated base for the teaching of theory is needed to encourage the use of resources and wider reading. There is currently no recreational physical education programme, and the involvement of sixth-form students in general in the sporting life of the school is minimal.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Courses in art and design are reported in full below. Music, theatre studies, film studies and performing arts were sampled.

In the two music lessons that were observed, the teaching and learning were good. In the Year 12 class, students achieved good standards and consolidated their understanding of the rules of correct harmony. Only two students are studying music in Year 13. The teacher made good use of individual tutorial work to ensure that both students were able to learn effectively at their own level. No students followed music to examinations in 2002.

In a Year 13 theatre studies lesson, students made very good progress because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge and incisive questioning about the play they were studying. A Year 12 class made good progress with their interpretation of Sarah Kane's play 'Psychosis' because the teacher helped them to evaluate their own performance, again through the use of good, probing questions. All six candidates passed the A-level examination in 2002, with grades of B to E.

The school is running an AS-level course in film studies for the first time this year, in response to students' requests. One lesson was observed, in which students discussed the film 'Went the Day Well?'. The teaching was excellent and enabled students to learn at a fast pace, so that at the end of the lesson they had a much clearer awareness of ideas about national identity at the time of World War Two.

Two performing arts lessons were observed, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Standards were above average in both classes. The teaching and learning in the Year 12 class were very good. Students improved their performance of a scene from Steve Berkoff's 'Decadence', through repetitive rehearsal and self-critical evaluation during which the teacher provided very good guidance and advice. In the Year 13 lesson, good teaching helped

students analyse different styles of dance, by comparing key video extracts from Matthew Bourne's 'Carmen' with vertical take-off and landing style. Seven students entered the A-level examination in 2002; all passed with grades of B to D.

Art and Design

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Very effective one-to-one 'mini-tutorials' in lessons give students very good assessment and feedback.
- Very good, efficient teaching of the joint Year 12 AVCE/AS-level class leads to good independent learning.
- Students view the vocational and academic courses as equally worthwhile.

Areas for improvement

- Middle and lower attaining students do not integrate critical studies into their records of practical experiments as well as they should.
- There are insufficient contacts with art-based work places to help AVCE students to place their learning into context well enough.

270. Currently, students can follow AVCE courses in art and design in Years 12 and 13. Alternatively, they can study for AS-level in Year 12 and A-level in Year 13. In Year 13, there are more students involved, so AVCE and A-level groups are taught separately. Year 12 has attracted smaller numbers and the two courses are taught as one class.

271. A-level results in 2001 were above average and the small number of students all attained A grades. Achievement was good, with all achieving above predictions. Year 12 students achieved a wide spread of AS-level grades in 2002, some above and some below the standards predicted by their results in GCSE examinations.

272. In all courses, students' strengths lie in their practical work. They achieve very good, creative, visual explorations and final pieces in two- and three-dimensional media, which show high levels of technical competence. Students mix media together very effectively into lively, interesting compositions. They employ unusual mixes of techniques using, for example, photography, textiles, inks, dyes and a rich range of other materials. Relative weaknesses lie in students' written work, particularly in ongoing, reflective annotation of their sketchbooks and work journals. Despite great emphasis on this area in teaching, it has taken students on both courses a long time to understand and begin to meet these expectations.

273. Students' current attainment in Year 12 matches the range expected for both courses. Although they are now achieving as they should be, some have ground to make up in their learning of how to incorporate critical studies into their practical explorations as seamlessly as is required by the course. Many find these areas difficult because their overall prior attainment, for example in literacy, was not as high as their attainment in art and design itself when they entered the sixth form.

274. In Year 13, a similar weakness in achievement can be observed in some AVCE and A-level students' records of performance. Higher attaining students had no difficulty in maintaining good standards in all aspects of their work, including the written elements. It took some time, however, for middle and lower attaining students to understand the need to link practical work and critical analysis in their portfolios. All understand this

now, and so they will re-visit their work before the examination to ensure that analysis and reflective elements are appropriately embedded. All students do not yet fully integrate these elements smoothly from the start of their course, so as to avoid a disjointed, 'bolt-on' impression when they add a written commentary on their learning and experimentation later. Practical work in Year 13 is above average and students' attitudes to their work are very positive. They show the capacity to strengthen the weaker aspects of their portfolios. If this is done successfully, standards by the end of Year 13 seem likely to be above average overall.

275. The teaching in lessons and over time is very good. Students have learned good levels of technical and practical skill from their earlier experience in the school. They launch successfully into the high levels of practical and personal response to ideas expected in the sixth form. Teachers effectively encourage students to use and combine imaginatively the wide range of media available. All staff teach the sixth form, and this gives new teachers useful experience. Students learn well how to create exciting, stimulating sketchbooks and journals of their visual experiments. Although teachers place great emphasis on annotation, this is not used as well as it should be. Very effective methods of teaching include well focused one-to-one 'mini-tutorials' with individuals in lessons, which provide very useful opportunities for discussion and assessment. In Year 12, the teaching of the two courses together is highly successful, with clear identification of the different examination objectives. Because the teacher often works separately with each group within one lesson, a good sense of the importance of independent work for the others is engendered. Retention on the courses is good and students speak highly of the enjoyment they derive from the very good relationships with their teachers. Students on the two courses work effectively together, learning well from one another.
276. Good departmental management has maintained the high standards described in the last report. The new teacher is very well supported by the experienced teachers, both of whom have been head of department. Students use the sixth-form studio well, outside lessons, to continue their work in private study. There are insufficient contacts with arts-based work places to enable the AVCE students to understand the relevance of industrial contexts for their work. Many past and present students continue their courses into higher education and some use the department's good contacts with the local university.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and psychology are reported in full below. Two sociology lessons were sampled. A-level results in sociology are consistently well above average and students achieve well. In a Year 13 lesson, very good teaching enabled students to learn very well. The teacher's very good planning, clear explanations and skilful questioning helped students to understand the interactionist labelling approach to crime and deviance. A Year 12 class made good use of their ICT skills to prepare presentations about the relationship between gender and academic success. Very good teaching ensured that students were very well prepared for the activity.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Almost all students achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities to develop students' spiritual awareness.
- Teaching strategies do not meet individual special educational needs well enough.
- A lack of focus on key geographical words hinders students' progress in literacy and, in particular, their ability to spell correctly.
- Systems for formal monitoring of teaching and learning, including more focused monitoring of students' files, are not fully in place.

277. In 2001, examination results at A-level were in line with the national average. They improved significantly in 2002. At AS-level in 2001, the subject was the most popular option with students; one in every three candidates attained grades A or B, and 80 per cent passed the examination. Results in 2002 were similar.

278. Standards of work seen in both Year 12 and Year 13 are average overall. All students who apply themselves and attend lessons, including a student with semantic and pragmatic language difficulty, make good progress as measured against their prior attainment. Analysis of students' files indicates that where underachievement occurs, it is due to the students in question having careless and immature attitudes towards their work and also absenting themselves from certain key geography lessons. The geography department has been robust in endeavouring to deal with this problem, even to the extent of making an immediate telephone call to a student's home when that student has been absent from a particular lesson.

279. In Year 12, students have a good knowledge and understanding of the relationship between rainfall and run-off, and they understand why some rural areas of the United Kingdom are experiencing a permanent decline in population. Analysis of students' coursework indicates that they have very good investigative skills and that they form hypotheses at a level appropriate for their age. Higher attaining students in Year 13 demonstrate high order mathematical skills, which are likely to support them in attaining the highest A-level grades. All Year 13 students in a lesson on the positive and negative impact of the El Nino Southern Oscillation cycle around the world demonstrated that they had a very good knowledge of all the issues under consideration. Year 13 students can discuss in an erudite manner the problems that emerge for a country, such as Italy, which is experiencing a significant population decline.

280. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher's good subject knowledge and very brisk pace of teaching resulted in all the students making good gains in the skills required to answer a typical AS-level examination question. However, five out of 13 students who should have been present in this lesson were absent and so missed this very valuable learning opportunity. Good relationships between students and teachers result in students having the confidence to ask their teachers questions and so deepen their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to promote students' spiritual development. At times, they place insufficient emphasis on the teaching of spelling of key geographical terms to support students with weaker literacy skills. Students who have difficulties with

their writing would benefit from more advice about how to structure their work. The teaching of numeracy and ICT skills is strong and contributes to students making very good gains in these important skills in geography. However, the lack of access to an interactive whiteboard in the department hinders the development of students' ICT skills.

281. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has successfully enabled a group of very competent teachers to work effectively as a team. Management systems are good, but there is room for improvement. There is no formal procedure for monitoring teaching and learning in order to share good practice. Although the marking of students' work is good overall, there are inconsistencies. Some teachers point out in a much crisper manner what students need to do to improve their work than do other teachers. Because of the lack of formal monitoring by the head of department, these inconsistencies are not picked up.

History

The quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and enables students to learn well.
- The curriculum allows Year 13 students to build well on their work in Year 12.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient emphasis on the promotion of independent learning.
- Students do not achieve as well in their coursework as they do in examinations.

282. Results at A-level in 2001 were in line with the national average. Nearly all students gained a pass grade and the percentage gaining grades A and B was slightly above average. In 2002, results were similar, although fewer students studied the course than the previous year. At AS-level in 2001, 12 out of 13 students passed at grades B to E. In 2002, all but one of the 24 students passed the examination and five achieved A or B grades, an improved set of results compared to those of 2001. The results over two years show that students achieve as well as predicted from their performance in GCSE examinations. Most students continue their studies from AS- to A-level and about half of the current Year 13 say they intend to study the subject at university.

283. In work seen during the inspection, standards were just above average in both year groups. Year 12 students are able to analyse early 17th century sources of evidence to establish the importance of the king's favoured courtiers in the struggle for power during the reign of James I. They can offer informed reasons for the success of Stalin's bid for leadership of the communist party and produce plans for essays of an average standard to support coursework on this topic. Year 13 students can use their knowledge of mid-17th century British political ideas to analyse evidence from the period which depict a range of royalist and revolutionary perspectives. They produce detailed critiques of the actions and motives of the great powers in the inter-war period. They are able to analyse the evidence for the different views of historians as to the timing of decisions made by the Nazi Government regarding the onset of the Holocaust. However, students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning and could make better use of ICT and the good range of periodicals and text books in the library. Students with special educational needs make good progress in their studies and all students show perseverance in class and work well together.

284. Teaching is very good overall and, of the six lessons seen during the inspection, two were excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Excellent, in-depth knowledge was seen in two Year 13 lessons. In the first, issues affecting the timing of the Holocaust, as viewed by contemporary historians, were clearly introduced. In the second, the teacher gave very informed comment upon students' research into the inter-war period by noting, for example, the changes in British foreign policy in the 1930s which affected the role of the League of Nations. Teaching ensures that students have an active learning experience in all lessons and a sample of students from both year groups stated that learning with others in structured activities is valuable, enjoyable and well provided.
285. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership is particularly good regarding the direction and support given to recently qualified teachers. The promotion of the biennial visit to Russia contributes significantly to the students' spiritual and cultural awareness. The curriculum is well organised and offers good continuity. Both the British and Russian topics at A-level are selected to build upon students' understanding from AS-level. The curricular topic on 19th century ideology is demanding but it gives all students a very good background to the in-depth work on the Holocaust. Recent results show that this makes a significant contribution to students' achievement. The department has worked effectively with the examination board on the re-marking of coursework for AS-level results in 2002. However, it remains a concern that students achieve better in examinations than they do in coursework.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Results are above average and students achieve better than they do in their other subjects.
- Students make very good progress during the course.
- Teaching is very good, with some outstanding features.
- Work is regularly and thoroughly marked so that students know what progress they are making.
- The department is very well led and managed; it regularly evaluates its effectiveness and ensures that consistently high standards are achieved.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough help for lower attaining students to improve their writing.
- ICT is not yet exploited fully.

286. Psychology is a popular subject and currently there are 39 students in Year 12 and 23 in Year 13.
287. Standards at A-level were above average in 2001 and results were similar in 2002. These results show very good achievement when compared with the students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations. High standards have been sustained since the last inspection. At AS-level in 2002, students achieved as well as had been predicted by their results in GCSE examinations, but most students in the current Year 12 are performing beyond what might be expected at this stage in the course. Over a quarter of the students go on to university to study the subject in greater depth. This is a high proportion and reflects the sustained popularity of the subject. The writing skills of a few less competent students are not good enough to enable them to achieve the higher grades.

288. The standards of work of current students are also above average, and students are achieving very well. Much of the work seen includes a thorough coverage of psychological theories, case studies and practical experiments. In Year 12, students understand different methods of investigation and explain the related theoretical rationale very well. Most construct suitable hypotheses for investigation and understand the purpose of the null hypothesis. However, in this latter respect, a few lower attaining students do not always use the correct terminology. In Year 13, most students write lucidly, and are able to debate relevant psychological theories to support their arguments. For example, when investigating the possibility that chimpanzees might talk, a higher attaining student drew on evidence from Gardner and Gardner to illustrate his argument succinctly. Another student sensibly weighed up the evidence of Margaret Mead and other theories to explain possible reasons for childhood 'delinquency'.
289. Teaching and learning are very good overall and some aspects are outstanding. Teachers are highly skilled and plan lessons with considerable flair. They structure task and information sheets very well and encourage students of all levels of competence to participate fully. For example, in one Year 12 lesson, the teacher provided students with an envelope of cards with different psychological methods – 'observation', 'case study', 'laboratory', 'field' – written on them. They then had to sort these into rank order of priority to carry out an investigation, and subsequently established differences in behaviour in a road traffic situation. The level of debate was lively and purposeful, with much of it related to gender and age factors. The teacher ensured that just sufficient time was given to the task so that students worked at a rapid pace without becoming bored. She then carefully analysed and repeated students' answers, guiding them and praising their efforts. In another Year 13 lesson, students were required to synthesise information relating to profiling criminal behaviour. Key bullet points were covered rapidly using an overhead projector. The students were then required to match relevant evidence to a profile of a serial killer. Once again, the time allocation was perfect and students worked through the task with speed and thoughtfulness, resulting in a high level of participation and commitment throughout the lesson. This very well-structured approach gives students confidence when presenting their ideas, and adds to their enjoyment of the subject. Teachers also provide very good guidance to students in making and organising notes. This is extremely helpful to them when revising for their regular modular assessments. Homework makes a valuable contribution to helping students consolidate their knowledge and plan for future lessons.
290. Most of those who began the course with well above average GCSE grades are stretched still further through extension work that probes their understanding and powers of analysis at a much higher level. In addition, considerable help is available to students outside of school hours for them to discuss their concerns or iron out any misunderstandings they may be experiencing with their work. The teachers mark work thoroughly and provide constructive feedback sensitively, helping students to move forward with confidence in their learning. Although some use is made of the Internet for research, not enough use is made of computers, particularly to help the weaker students improve their written work.
291. The department is very well managed and has secure systems in place for students' self-evaluation and target setting. Planning is very thorough with clear guidance on syllabus coverage and the timing of lessons. Staff development has a high priority and clearly contributes to the consistently high level of provision. The departmental budget is spent wisely and resources are well chosen to help improve standards. There is a lower proportion of boys to girls on the course, despite efforts to market the course to both in earlier years in the school.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on the combined English and English literature course, French and Spanish. English literature, communication studies and German were sampled.

One Year 12 English literature lesson was sampled and written work examined. This new course began in 2002. There is one group, all female. Standards of writing and speaking in the lesson, in which students were sharing their research on 'A Streetcar named Desire', were average and teaching good. The most competent students were not in school. The writing sampled indicates average overall standards. Most of the written work is on Ian McEwan's 'Enduring Love', which the group has obviously enjoyed. However, many do not synthesise their critical commentaries and quotations well, and some of the less competent produce narrative responses, instead of analyses, to questions about characters.

Results in the 2001 A-level examinations in communication studies were in line with the national average. One Year 13 lesson was observed, in which students made individual presentations about Marxist or post-modern views of popular culture. Teaching and learning were satisfactory, although opportunities were missed by the teacher and the students to explore why some presentations were better than others.

Not enough students study German in most years to make meaningful comparisons with national results. In the current Year 13, four students are following the A-level course and one of their lessons was observed. Teaching and learning were satisfactory, although the pace of the lesson was rather slow, partly because students were not enthused by the topic of death and the discussion of a German text about euthanasia.

English

The provision for combined English and English literature is **good**.

Strengths

- The standards of work seen in Year 13 are above average.
- Students' very positive attitudes to the subject and good teaching contribute well to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' critical awareness is not always acute enough to enable them to reach higher standards.

292. The standards attained in AS- and A-level examinations have fluctuated over the past three years. In 2000, they were well above the national average and average in 2001. No national benchmark figures are yet available for 2002, but the school's results were similar to those in the previous year. Few boys take the subject and, therefore, comparison of their performance against the national average is unreliable. Of the 31 candidates at AS-level in 2001, one in three gained grades A or B and three did not pass the examination. The 2002 results were similar. Many students do not do as well in English as they do in their other subjects.

293. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average and achievement was good in Year 13. Standards were average and achievement satisfactory in Year 12. The most competent students have a good working knowledge of technical and critical terms and can identify the main linguistic features in a range of literary and non-literary

texts. Their essays are well structured and often show flair and independence, especially when students are interpreting hidden or implicit meanings in texts. Many Year 12 students and lower attaining students in Year 13 pay insufficient attention to the impact of writing upon readers or an audience and do not analyse the cumulative effect of writers' techniques. These students also fail to see characters in novels or plays as literary constructs, and they write instead as if they are real people with an existence outside the page. They do not consider how to detect and separate the views of authors from those given by their characters. This was particularly evident in their writing about Raymond Chandler's 'The Big Sleep'. All students research texts, authors and contexts using the Internet. However, although some of the material discovered is of dubious quality, some students accept it without proper critical evaluation.

294. Most students use talk very effectively to develop, refine and share their ideas. They challenge each other and work well together to solve problems and interrogate texts. A good example was seen in a Year 13 lesson in which students worked in pairs to examine the language of President Reagan's speech immediately following the Challenger crash in 1986. They were able to see how, through the judicious use of language, a national disaster can be turned into propaganda for political advantage, and also to consider the ethics of 'spin'.
295. The course, which has been introduced since the previous inspection, is very well planned and it provides excellent opportunities for students to study a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. They find it stimulating, interesting and enjoyable.
296. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students' positive attitudes and very good relationships also contribute well to their learning. In one very good lesson, students were constantly challenged. They had to justify every interpretation, support it with evidence and use the correct linguistic terms. The teacher made very good use of questions to make students think more deeply about the elegy they were examining and to draw out personal responses from them. Consequently, they gained the skills and confidence to make independent judgements. In the best lessons, teachers make all students well aware of the assessment objectives for each piece of work in order for them to address each one and thus ensure access to the highest grades. In the less successful lessons, students are allowed to start analysing texts before they have thought carefully about the writer's purpose and target audience. They do not recognise the genre or historical context of the writing because, in some cases, they are so busy deconstructing texts that they fail to look at them as a whole. They do not, therefore, see that the power and effect of writing is in the sum of its component parts, not in the parts themselves. This was seen in a lesson in which students were examining the opening page of Dickens's 'Hard Times'. The students did not see the passage as a piece of satire, or consider the author's standpoint, because they were too eager to start identifying the linguistic features which it contained. Marking is thorough and helpful to students, but there is some variation in the amount of assessed work in the folders of different groups.
297. The management of this popular subject is good. There is very thorough planning for improvement, and work for the five teaching groups is well co-ordinated. Teamwork is good and students' progress is well tracked.

French

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

Strengths

- Results have been consistently well above average over the last three years.
- Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Students have effective extra support in developing their speaking skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not keep logs of their independent reading and listening work so that their progress can be better evaluated.
- Students are not required to redraft their work after careful marking.
- There are no trips or exchanges for Year 12 this year.

298. In 2001, A-level results were well above average. Results have been similarly high in recent years, and the unvalidated results for 2002 are again high. Nearly all students completed their courses and achieved above the predictions based on their GCSE examination grades. In 2002, all seven students gained a pass grade in the Year 12 AS-level examination, and three with high grades have continued to the A-level course. This continuation rate was unusually low because of staffing difficulties that year. Although girls consistently outnumber boys, boys achieve the standards to be expected from their GCSE examination results.

299. The standards of work in the current Year 12 are above average overall. Students are achieving well and making good progress from their previous results in GCSE examinations. Nearly all show a good understanding of grammar and structure and absorb effectively the vocabulary they meet in new areas. For example, in one lesson, students successfully tackled a range of exercises and made very good use of a text on smoking that they had just read. The most gifted can already re-use appropriate expressions to link ideas in their essays when, for example, they describe family relationships or compare differences between the French and English education systems. However, a few students find it difficult to maintain the self-discipline of speaking French all the time. These students should set themselves more rigorous personal targets in speaking and listening.

300. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Students achieve very well as a result of very effective and purposeful teaching that demands much of them. Lesson structure and activities focus students' learning. In one lesson, which began with a brain-storming session, the students drew well on their already wide vocabulary. This allowed the teacher to elicit carefully, and then extend, the students' vocabulary on the rights and wrongs of capital punishment. Students went on to exploit this new knowledge, by describing the meaning of a provocative cartoon and, finally, by expressing their ideas and opinions in debate. Their writing is well developed and covers a wide range of themes. The most talented student writes with real flair and imagination and others have a secure command of grammar and expression. As in Year 12, students do not correct or redraft their carefully marked work. They have, however, profited greatly from the close study of grammar and opportunities for extra speaking sessions offered to all students from Year 12. Year 13 students have very positive attitudes towards the subject and participate fully in all activities.

301. Teaching is very good overall. The principal features of the teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk and purposeful pace and a wide range of methods and

approaches to bring about learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and, with two native speakers in the team, students have excellent opportunities to develop high standards of pronunciation. Teachers provide interesting materials on French life and society, drawing well on the Internet. They encourage their students to do independent work in both reading and listening. This work is currently not logged by students or monitored sufficiently by teachers, and several students in Year 12 would benefit from a more systematic approach to this aspect of their work.

302. Students generally learn very well in response to the supportive teaching. The vast majority are very attentive and productive in class and appreciate the different teaching styles that they experience. They mostly take part very well in work with a partner and support one another by listening maturely in open discussion. A few of the less talented students in Year 12 are the exception to this, overall, very high standard of participation and commitment because of some erratic attendance and completion of assignments.
303. The subject is well led and managed. The team of teachers is highly committed to building on what has already been achieved and keeping up established high standards. The scheme of work effectively reflects the subject requirements, and teachers have developed a wide range of materials, much written by themselves. No visit to France is on offer this year, because of difficulties in the French exchange school. Target setting is well established, but the targets of some students in Year 12 are not focused sharply enough.

Spanish

Overall, the quality of provision in Spanish is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Inspirational teaching ensures that students make excellent progress.
- Results at A-level are consistently very high.
- Students' personal development and independence are very good.
- Students acquire an exceptional range of vocabulary.

Area for improvement

- There are insufficient contacts with young people in Spain, through study visits or work placements.

304. A-level results in 2000 and 2001 were well above average and candidates achieved very well. In 2001, students attained very high standards in the examination; seven of the 12 entered gained grade A. The high standards of the previous two years were maintained in 2002, and most students gained A or B grades. At AS-level in 2001, four of the nine candidates attained grades A or B, all passed and students reached their predicted grades. In 2002, attainment was less high. In most recent years, many more girls than boys have taken the subject. However, currently, almost half the students are boys.
305. Overall, standards in the present Years 12 and 13 are very high, and achievement is excellent. In Year 12, students write very well. They translate difficult texts accurately. They compose long and well-argued essays on a regular basis. They express mature ideas about a range of challenging topics. They collect and learn topic vocabulary, idioms and structures with great enthusiasm. By Year 13, higher attaining students have developed a thorough knowledge of grammar, which they apply very accurately. Others, though less consistent in the accuracy and quality of their writing, can nevertheless communicate their ideas very clearly.

306. Students in both Years 12 and 13 are very fluent orally and have excellent debating skills. They are highly independent learners, who make excellent use of dictionaries, reference books and their own meticulously compiled notes. Already in Year 12, students are developing outstanding listening skills. Frequent practice and total immersion in the spoken language ensure that their comprehension of Spanish spoken at native speed is excellent. They are able to use this skill to extend the range and sophistication of their speaking and writing of the language.
307. Students develop their reading skills through a well-planned programme of extension reading. They read and report back on a number of short novels in Year 12 and a longer novel in Year 13. They are accustomed to using the Internet for research purposes and to downloading Spanish reading material.
308. Teaching and learning are excellent. The teacher's energy, drive and enthusiasm for the subject are contagious. Students enjoy lessons, work hard and are challenged to think deeply and develop new, independent methods of study. The teaching uses a range of ingenious ideas to extend students' skills and knowledge, including interpreters' techniques, co-operative classroom tasks and language games. The teacher's expertise in the language, excellent subject knowledge and personal charisma inspire students and ensure that progress is rapid and their interest and focus is maintained. The teaching is constantly stretching students of all levels of attainment, praising, encouraging and challenging them to achieve even higher. Lessons are exceptionally well planned and sequenced. Students know that each lesson will begin with a lively discussion, and all participate enthusiastically, energised by the good-humoured and idiosyncratic approach of the teaching, even at the end of a long day. Homework is demanding and regular, and marking is excellent. All aspects of the work are assessed and clear indication is given on how to improve.
309. The course is very well managed and long-term planning is good. However, its strength lies in the teaching, which is principally the work of one teacher. The two lessons given by a second teacher did not fall during the inspection period. There are few contacts with Spanish schools. Although students have benefited previously from school study visits to Spain, there is at present no opportunity to take part in an exchange or an extended study visit. Work placements are offered, but rarely taken up.