

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. CUTHBERT'S HIGH SCHOOL

Gretna Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE15 7PX

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108535

Headteacher: Mr. J.G. Murphy

Reporting inspector: Mr. C.T. Hemsley
1609

Dates of inspection: 23rd to 26th September 2002

Inspection number: 250632
Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: Gretna Road,
Newcastle upon Tyne.

Postcode: NE15 7PX

Telephone number: 0191 2744510

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev. Fr. K. Gallagher

Date of previous inspection: 28th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
1609	Mr. C.T. Hemsley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and achievement
				How well are pupils and students taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
			Equal opportunities	
11358	Mrs. V. Lamb	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English	
1549	Mr. T. Robshaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
16422	Mr. J. Crossland	Team inspector	Chemistry	
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography	
8751	Mr. J. Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology	
16359	Mr. J. Farrow	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How well does the school care for its pupils and students?
			English as an additional language	
32087	Mr. J. Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education	
17765	Mr. J. McElwee	Team inspector	French	
			Information and communication technology	
8248	Mr. C. Riches	Team inspector	Business education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Cuthbert's High School is a large boys' voluntary aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school educating 1100 boys aged 11 to 18, including 178 in the average sized sixth form. The school is very over-subscribed and few pupils move school during their career. Most pupils come from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the catchment being economically, socially and ethnically very mixed. Increasingly pupils come from the city rather than beyond. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals - 16%, is broadly average. Most pupils are white, a small number – 44, are from Pakistani, Indian and other minority ethnic groups, including 5 refugees. Attainment on entry is average and has improved since the last inspection but not as rapidly as the national rate of improvement. There are more pupils than expected who have attained higher levels. An above average number of pupils - 45, is learning English as an additional language, although most are already fluent in English. The number of pupils in school with special educational needs (SEN) - 45, is well below average, including 9 with statements, a below average number. This is a Beacon School, focusing its activities in modern languages (ML), English, boys' achievement and the management of information and communication technology (ICT). It is a member of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Excellence in Cities (EiC) Partnership and is a Partnership Promotion School for excellence in Initial Teacher Training.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This very good school effectively fulfils its mission statement. Some features of its work are outstanding. Good and better teaching and learning work alongside a very positive ethos and very good responses from pupils to produce good and very good academic achievement. Very good leadership and management from governors, the head teacher and the leadership team effectively promote and support teachers and pupils in their achievements. The school is inclusive in its approach and provides very good individual support. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve good and very good academic standards.
- The school effectively develops very good attitudes and behaviour, and relationships that are often excellent, through the very positive school ethos.
- Teaching and learning are good and often better, with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Very good leadership and management successfully promote achievement.

What could be improved

- Share the very good approaches evident in a significant number of lessons to improve the opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and develop their own ideas.
- Teaching, learning and management of geography in the sixth form.
- ICT to support learning in other subjects in the sixth form.
- Careers education and guidance in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the school was inspected in 1997. There has been at least satisfactory and some good progress in all nine of the key issues identified at that time, although further work to develop ICT across subjects in the sixth form is needed. Standards across the school have risen. The quality of teaching has improved with considerably more very good and excellent lessons and a major reduction in the level of unsatisfactory teaching. Leadership and management have improved as a result of greater consultation and delegation and a coherent approach to school improvement. The school is making effective use of national and local developments, partly through EiC funding.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	C	B	C	

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

Results in tests at the end of Year 9 are above average, rising faster than the national trend and pupils' achievement is very good compared with their standards when starting this school and well ahead of similar schools. Year 11 results have improved faster than the national trend and in 2001 the pupils' achievements were outstanding, being in the top 5% of similar schools nationally. The school was identified as one of the most improved schools nationally on those results. Governors have set appropriate targets and the school has been able to exceed them, partly because of the mentoring arrangements and focused support for specific students. In recent years the school has been successful in improving the achievements of middle and lower attaining pupils without any decline in the achievements of others. Pupils across the school make at least good progress in literacy and numeracy. Standards seen during the inspection confirm the attainment and the very good achievements.

In the sixth form the 2001 A level results were average, but above the attainment of boys nationally. Results have risen over recent years, with 2001 a lower level than previously, but attainment rose again in 2002. Results in vocational courses show varying success, with business education AVCE being discontinued and ICT courses developing rapidly. Overall standards seen during the inspection show that students in the sixth form achieve better than might be expected, having begun the sixth form with an overall average level but with a wide range of attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show a good deal of pride in their school and its accomplishments. They are well motivated and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very polite and listen carefully to their teachers. Their behaviour has a significant and positive effect on their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop mature and confident approaches through the commitment of staff and students in ensuring the school's positive ethos. Relationships are very good, often excellent. Teachers treat pupils with respect.
Attendance	Good. Above average. Most reasons for absence are known and there is a below average level of unauthorised absence.

Pupils' attitudes and values play a significant part in the school's ethos and their own learning and make an important contribution to the standards they achieve. The number of exclusions has risen but

arrangements are usually agreed by governors and accepted by parents.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Nearly one-third of the teaching is very good and better, there are individual examples of outstanding teaching and almost none is unsatisfactory. Even where teaching is satisfactory it is effective in ensuring sound learning. The teaching of English in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The teaching of mathematics in Years 7 to 11 is good. The teaching of science in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. High quality teaching, sometimes outstanding, occurs in ICT, history and science subjects. Pupils are insufficiently challenged in sixth form geography. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils, and excellent relationships. As a result pupils' learning is good and frequently better. Pupils work at a good pace, try very hard, concentrate very well and show a good level of interest. They put in a lot of intellectual effort to their work. Teaching meets the needs of the variety of pupils on most occasions although learning would be better if teachers provided more opportunities for thinking and discussing subject problems and issues, by spreading the approaches used in the very good lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The broad curriculum meets pupils' needs and is enhanced by extra subjects and activities. Very good provision for ensuring equal opportunity.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory with good features. Significantly improved since the last inspection. Pupils with SEN make at least satisfactory progress. Where teachers recognise the needs of pupils there is good and very good progress. There is an inclusive ethos for pupils with diverse skills and attainments.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school has a positive and effective approach to individual pupils' learning needs, which enables these pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Some outstanding features of spiritual and moral education. Good social provision, particularly through the maturity of relationships and links with the community. Good and improving provision for cultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Teachers show very good concern for individuals and know them very well, effectively supporting and guiding them.

The curriculum is enhanced in the main school with choral lessons and provision of alternative second languages and the opportunity for separate sciences. The sixth form curriculum meets the needs of students mainly through A level courses and enhanced programmes. The school has strengths in sport and extra-curricular activities. Although there is no separate provision for personal and social education formal requirements are met and the school has audited provision across the curriculum, including provision within religious education (RE).

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The school's values are explicit in all aspects of its work. Excellent leadership from the head teacher provides a clear focus for development and ensures very good participation in decision-making and delegation within a collegiate framework. The knowledgeable and committed senior management team and the many good features evident in middle management support developments very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors know the school very well and are very committed to its long-term strategic developments, in particular the position of the sixth form. They are active in holding the school to account and have high expectations of the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school evaluates its own performance very well and makes good use of external evaluation and support. Strategies for improvement are mostly very good and followed up by senior management and governors.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The balance between sixth form and main school spending is appropriate. Very good use is made of extra funding, such as EiC. Strategies to achieve the school's priorities are well costed into development plans. Spending is monitored and evaluated. Use of resources is mainly good although access to teaching resources is sometimes difficult.

Sixth form staffing is good, resources and accommodation are adequate. There are some difficulties with accommodation and its use more generally. Coherent school development planning focuses on areas that lead to the most improvement. It effectively integrates financial allocations, performance management, staff development and review. The school follows the principles of best value and consults carefully before making major decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's ethos, shown in the attitudes and values the school promotes, in particular the very good relationships and the work in the community. High expectations of pupils, the progress made and the standards reached. How well teachers know individual pupils and can provide information about them, shown in their accessibility and how comfortable parents feel about approaching the school. The commitment and hard work of the teachers and the quality of their teaching. The standards of discipline and behaviour. The quality of leadership and management. 	<p>A small number of parents expressed some concern over the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well they are informed about their child's progress; The amount of homework; The range of activities outside of lessons; How pupils may be detained at the end of the school day.

Inspectors agree with the positive statements made by the parents who responded. Information for parents is at least sound and has many good features. The amount of homework is typical of most schools. The range of activities is better than many schools and relies upon the voluntary commitment of many teachers. The school's procedures for discipline include the facility for teachers to keep pupils immediately after school for ten minutes. The school recognises that this could lead to difficulties with

home-school transport and is reviewing its arrangements.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is attended by 178 boys and is of average size. It forms a continuation and extension of pre-16 experience, with almost all students having been educated at St Cuthbert's. The range of attainment on entry to the sixth form is wide, but overall around average, and the school operates a very open approach to course entry in most subjects. More students than average are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with SEN is below average. Only a few pupils speak English as an additional language although this proportion has been increasing. Most courses are for AS and A level examinations, reflecting students' needs and choices.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good, successful and cost-effective sixth form. Students achieve better than expected given their prior attainment. Results in 2001, although average overall, were above those of boys generally. They represented a dip in a rising trend and in 2002 results rose again. Teaching is good and often very good. The sixth form forms an integral part of the school and is very well led and managed. The curriculum effectively meets the needs of the school's students, the majority of whom go on to higher education.

Strengths

- Students achieve better than might be expected given their prior attainment.
- Students have excellent attitudes to school resulting in a high level of commitment to learning in and out of lessons.
- Relationships are excellent and make a major contribution to the individual support given to students.
- Teaching is good overall and a significant amount of teaching is very good or outstanding. Teachers support students in learning beyond time-tabled lessons.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and so can prepare students very well for examinations.
- The range of courses meets students' needs and wishes and is adapted as circumstances change.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very effectively promoted resulting in a very positive ethos of learning and achievement across the sixth form.
- There are very good procedures for supporting individual pupils, as their work and progress is very well assessed.
- Leadership and management are overall very good with a real commitment to equality of opportunity, high quality provision, learning and achievement.
- The provision for and teaching of ICT as a discrete subject has significantly improved.

What could be improved

- How well students are given opportunities to think independently and develop their own ideas, by sharing the good and very good practice evident in many lessons.
- Teaching, learning and management of geography.
- ICT to support learning in other subjects.
- Careers education and guidance.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Attainment has been average but 2002 results showed a significant increase. Attainment is in line with what would be expected from students given their GCSE grades. Students are carefully inducted onto the course. Teaching is sound and effective, often using worked examples and based on teachers' good subject knowledge. Students need more opportunity to work independently on extended problems and make better use of ICT.
Chemistry	Very Good. Despite a dip in results in 2001 attainment is improving and results in 2002 were as high as the 2000 results which were significantly better than average. Students achieve better than might be expected given their prior attainment. The subject is becoming increasingly popular. Very good teaching, based upon very good subject knowledge and high expectations is backed up with effective departmental leadership and support for individual students. ICT needs to be used more effectively to improve further students' progress.
Design and Technology	Good. Results are average and students achieve sound results in relation to their attainment at GCSE level. The number of students is relatively small and fluctuates annually. Good teaching from very experienced and knowledgeable teachers, working in good accommodation, support learning effectively. Students need better support for design activities and thinking, materials and products and the integration of ICT.
Business	Good. Results have been below average but improved in 2002. Teaching and learning are good. National changes to courses have resulted in the school focusing on the A level route, which reflects the wishes of students, at the expense of vocational routes. Students would benefit from greater direction in the use of ICT.
ICT	Good. Attainment and achievement are improving because the school has provided appropriate new courses that match students' needs. This has led to the much increased popularity of the subject. There is very good challenging teaching from subject specialists with effective use of time and students taking responsibility. Improvements to the scheme of work in Key Stage 4 are needed to prepare students better for the sixth form courses.
Physical Education	Satisfactory. Results are above average with achievement reflecting students' previous attainment at GCSE. Teaching is sound but students of all abilities need to be given more challenging work to improve their achievement, since few students achieve the higher grades.
Geography	Unsatisfactory. Attainment is below average, in 2001 well below, although recent AS/A level results show improvement. There is some under-achievement. Teaching varies between satisfactory and unsatisfactory but overall there is insufficient challenge for students. Students need more use of ICT. There is insufficient department planning to improve standards. The department is in a period of transition and the school has appropriate plans for improvement.

English	Good. Attainment is average overall in subject courses and students achieve better than might be expected based on their GCSE grades. The subject is becoming increasingly popular. Courses are well organised and supported by sound effective teaching, which in some cases is good or very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are committed and enthusiastic, having good effects on students' achievements. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their own ideas and research to further improve achievement.
French	Good. Attainment is above average and students' achievement is good. Good, well-paced teaching, based on excellent subject knowledge, ensures good learning from the students, who have excellent attitudes to the subject. As a result the subject has grown rapidly in popularity. The absence of wider approaches to teaching, using practical resources and ICT, prevent progress from being even better.

Teaching and learning in other subjects sampled across the sixth form were good. Particular strengths were seen in teachers' subject knowledge, their expectations and their relationships with students. Students concentrate hard and have very good interest levels and attitudes to learning. They are confident in their approaches and make good use of previous learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Teachers provide detailed advice and guidance for sixth form and higher education courses. They know their students very well. There is very good monitoring of and support for academic progress. There is no separately planned programme of careers education although students are prepared well for entrance to higher education. There is no work experience for A level students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good leadership and management strongly integrate the sixth form within the school's ethos. Teachers are dedicated to ensuring individual attention to the needs of individual students thereby ensuring very good equal opportunity and an inclusive approach. The team critically reviews its own effectiveness and focuses on the success of students.

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"> • Range and choice of courses. • Clear guidance from a range of accessible staff. • Support for higher education applications. • Voluntary and sporting activities. • Induction into the sixth form. • Relationships with staff and younger pupils. • Academic achievements. • Quality of teaching and challenge given. • How well work is assessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were very few negative responses and these did not follow a common pattern of areas for improvement.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments given by the students.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve good and very good academic standards

1. An average number of pupils start this school with the expected level of attainment for 11 year olds, Level 4. More pupils than average have also reached the higher Level 5. By the end of Year 9 attainment is above average overall and is much higher than similar schools. By the end of Year 11 results at GCSE are well above average and very high compared to similar schools, better than 95% of those schools. Students who choose to enter the sixth form have a wide range of attainment and by the end of their courses attainment is above average. Pupils and students of all levels of attainment make at least sound progress, overall achievement is very good in the main school from Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
2. The pattern of attainment on entry has changed since the last inspection. At that time it was judged to be well above expected levels for 11 year olds. Since then, the area that the school serves has changed, centred increasingly upon Newcastle upon Tyne itself. While the attainment on entry has actually risen, it is no longer significantly above the national average, which itself has risen during that time. More pupils than previously have SEN and there is a small but increasing number of pupils learning English as an additional language, including a small number of refugees.
3. By the end of Key Stage 3 in Year 9, pupils' attainment in 2001, the last year for which comparable data is available, was above average in all core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and well above similar schools, a reflection of the good teaching in this key stage. Pupils' results were well above average for Level 5 English and Level 6 science. This attainment in Level 6 science was in the top 5% of similar schools nationally. The trend over a four-year period was of an improvement in results better than the national trend. Individual subjects showed annual variations, particularly so in English. Results in 2002 were sustained in English and improved in mathematics by 5% at Level 5 and in science by 3% at Level 5 and 7% at Level 6, noteworthy increases. Targets set by the governing body have been attained as a result of the school's emphasis on improving academic results.
4. In Year 9, in the work seen in English, pupils are reaching above average levels, for instance they successfully write in a range of styles for different audiences. Middle attaining pupils use a mixture of sentence styles which are mainly accurate, engage the reader with interesting paragraphing and structure. The most able pupils in the school are working well above the expected level for this age. They have a good awareness of the drafting process in writing and how writers make choices, for instance when working on a Wilfred Owen poem "Anthem for doomed youth". They read out to others with confidence in several subjects. Their skills in literacy are an important element in their achievements across the range of subjects.
5. In mathematics, work seen in Year 9 during the inspection was well above average and pupils' achievement is very good. By this age all pupils work confidently with number, including the lowest attainers who were not always accurate but showed a range of sound approaches in mental calculation work. Other pupils were able to make good use of algebra and use formula accurately. They had good knowledge and understanding across all areas of the National Curriculum in mathematics.

6. Very good or good achievement occurs elsewhere in Key Stage 3. In Year 8 some pupils studying music compared two recordings of the "Keel Row" song, checking for the meaning of the vocabulary and singing with very good skills. A Year 9 class studying science made very good use of correct scientific terminology, recognised everyday concepts such as "friction can waste energy", and were able to identify the nature of variables in experiments.
7. By the end of Key Stage 4 in Year 11 pupils have continued to make very good progress and achieve much better than expected, partly as a result of the very good teaching during Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2001, the last year for which there is comparative data, were overall well above average. A well above average number of pupils gained 5 or more higher grades (A*-C), this being in the top 5% of similar schools nationally, an above average number gained A-G grades in at least 5 subjects and an average number gained a grade in at least one subject. Results over a four-year period rose faster than nationally and the school gained a national award, being in the top 99 schools nationally to show improvements. One reason for this was the emphasis that the school placed on supporting those pupils of middle to lower ability. Over a three-year period the school raised the achievements of pupils in those categories without affecting the sound to very good achievement of others. In comparison with other subjects in the school pupils achieved better results in French and computer studies. The results in 2002, although not able to be compared with national data, show that attainment was maintained in relation to a number of criteria.
8. In English by the end of Year 11, attainment is above average. Pupils in Year 10 show a skilful use of language in a variety of styles. In coursework, to compare and contrast two poems, pupils give detailed personal responses. Pupils in Year 11 read well and they can discuss characters' feelings with perception and understanding. Literacy skills support work in other lessons successfully and most pupils have little difficulty in using texts in other subjects.
9. In mathematics by the end of Year 11, attainment is above average, higher attaining pupils show well above average knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, they were easily able to recall and then use information about similar triangles, and when working with simultaneous equations they confidently rearranged algebraic expressions in coming to the solution. In the samples of work seen there was further evidence of high level work on algebraic fractions and quadratic equations.
10. In both key stages, from Years 7 to 11 most pupils make very good progress overall. The school is inclusive in its nature and is trying to ensure that pupils with SEN and those learning English as an additional language make sufficient progress. Progress for pupils with SEN is satisfactory, with some good features and for pupils with English as an additional language progress is good. Pupils with lower prior attainment enjoy access to a broad and balanced curriculum that is usually well matched to their individual needs by their placement in small sets. In the best lessons seen, for instance in science and history, teachers are able to make the curriculum vibrant for them despite their limited basic skills and therefore they access higher order skills such as synthesis and deduction. The heads of the department in science and history are leading the way to introduce effective teaching and learning for the lower sets. This meets the needs of these pupils very well and represents a source of in-school expertise well worthy of more widespread dissemination. Pupils who have been identified in the school as gifted and talented make better progress than the majority of pupils but would benefit from more attention to developing research skills within subjects where teaching is not already good.

11. Attainment is above average in the sixth form and students achieve better than might be expected. Standards in the sixth form are dealt with in the annex.

The school effectively develops very good attitudes and behaviour, and relationships that are often excellent, through the very positive school ethos

12. The response of pupils and students is very good, often excellent. This is due to the very positive school ethos within which the school's mission statement is effectively brought to life. The school's strengths in these areas have been maintained since the last inspection.
13. Pupils and students enjoy school. They are keen to learn. Attendance is good, above average. Very good behaviour plays a very positive part in the learning possible in lessons and the order within school. The rate of exclusions has increased since the last inspection but the process is accepted in most cases by parents and governors.
14. Attitudes to school are very good, frequently excellent. Pupils and students are proud of their school. When one group of pupils across the age ranges was asked what they liked about school they immediately referred to the academic achievement, discipline and behaviour, sporting accomplishments and relationships with and support from teachers. Responses in lessons are consistently positive. During the inspection on no occasion was attitude or behaviour unsatisfactory. Significantly, in around three-quarters of all lessons these were very good or better, including around one quarter of lessons where the pupils' responses were excellent. Pupils are polite both in and out of lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers and make suggestions in class when appropriate.
15. Relationships are very good, often excellent. Pupils work very well with each other, offer support and advice and are positive in their speech. They relate very well to their teachers and recognise the importance of learning. Pupils and students appreciate the guidance they get from their teachers and are confident to consult staff on academic or personal matters.
16. Much of the strengths in pupils' response come from the school's ethos and the ways in which it fulfils its mission statement. The school is very effective in its provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and strives to enhance it wherever possible. Approaches to assemblies are positive about what pupils should be able to do, optimistic about life generally, and ensure that pupils think carefully about others both socially and emotionally. The school's fundraising and its contributions, financially and in kind to the community around the school and beyond are strong features.
17. Equality of opportunity plays a major part in developing pupils' responses. The school emphasises the importance of treating pupils as individuals and does so in day-to-day practice. Parents recognised how this approach was a continuation of the ethos from partner primary schools. The inclusive approach of the school ensures very good equality of opportunity and effective multicultural and anti-racist provision.
18. Sixth form students display a mature attitude to school across a range of their work. Further detail is given in the annex.

Teaching and learning are good and often better, with some examples of outstanding teaching

19. Teaching across the school is good overall. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good. In nearly one-third of lessons teaching is very good or better, in Years 10 and 11 over half of lessons are very good. There is outstanding teaching in about one lesson in twenty overall. Particularly good teaching is evident in science subjects, ICT and history. In these subjects teaching is frequently very good or in some examples outstanding. Teaching is rarely less than satisfactory, geography being the exception. Pupils' learning is characterised by very good intellectual effort, rapid acquisition of skills and knowledge, a high level of interest and concentration, and very good, often excellent behaviour. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with significantly more good and very good teaching and considerably less that is unsatisfactory.
20. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects. They know the details of their subjects, mainly teaching within their specialisms, and how to relate subject expertise to the range of pupils and students. Teachers are particularly knowledgeable about the requirements for external examinations and prepare lessons with these in mind. They share this information with pupils and students so there is a common sense of purpose in lessons. The school more generally is using target setting and teachers are increasingly able to relate this process to individual lessons. For instance in an English lesson in Year 12 the teacher used a good technique to get pupils to consider specific criteria in relation to given examples. In a Year 7 French class the teacher encouraged pupils to assess each other's knowledge, so reinforcing their own expectations of what they should know.
21. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. For instance, when pupils are taught in non-specialist rooms it is expected that there will be no delay in starting one of the single 35-40 minute periods and that pupils will work hard and quickly during the lesson. Similarly, teachers usually provide challenging activities for pupils. For instance, in a Year 11 biology lesson the teacher consolidated pupils' study skills by a teaching strategy that expected pupils to demonstrate personal planning, investigation, reporting, using scientific terminology and linking knowledge to predictions. Similarly, in a Year 10 French lesson, on the theme of town and country, the teacher worked through a revision exercise and allowed pupils to amend their homework before handing it in. This was a very good approach because it stressed the importance of getting things right, going for quality, and in this case it exemplified high expectations.
22. The very good and often excellent relationships make a major contribution to excellent class management. Teachers know pupils very well and adjust their teaching to take account of individual needs, largely by their actions. In some lessons teachers make full use of a range of skills to support the range of attainment. There are opportunities to develop and extend the good and very good practice in school and these form part of the school's improvement planning process.

23. A number of features are present in the lessons where teaching is outstanding. Planning is very clear. In a chemistry lesson in Year 13 a simple approach to planning ensured realistic and achievable targets for the lesson, shared with students. There is an excellent pace. In a history lesson about the Second World War in Year 11 the teacher worked quickly and achieved a fine balance between active engagement and firm control operating at a pace suitable for the practical activities, pupils' learning, and the length of the lesson. The period of study was very effectively brought to life through an excellent resource sheet. Teachers ensure that literacy and numeracy skills are used effectively to support the learning within the subject. This was especially true in a Year 10 biology lesson with a lower ability set studying cell membranes in plants. Teachers allow pupils time to talk about the topic, to probe and ensure understanding. In a history lesson about the Reformation in Year 8 the teacher used pupils' talk effectively to help them develop effective note-taking strategies.
24. Further details about the strengths in teaching in the sixth form are in the annex.

Very good leadership and management successfully promote achievement.

25. The leadership and management of the school are very good and have improved since the last inspection. The governors, head teacher and leadership team succeed in promoting the school's own mission statement. This statement emphasises the spiritual, moral, academic and personal growth of the individual, equality of opportunity, contribution to society and the building of a faith-based community.
26. Excellent leadership from the head teacher is shown through the clear focus provided for the school's work and the very good systems for consultation and delegation, in order to empower individuals and teams and to ensure commitment to progress and change. He is achieving this very successfully without losing the traditions in which the school takes pride. The work of the school's senior leaders sets the tone and conditions for the mission statement to be fulfilled in practice. The leadership team has recently changed in response to the school's developing needs and it is made up of a strong, committed and knowledgeable group of teachers. The team is well structured, for instance in the way in which responsibilities for practical administration and the use of data are shared between three people, and in the overlapping pastoral and academic responsibilities. Lines of management to pastoral and academic teams have been effectively reorganised to work from the strengths and experience of individuals. The head teacher acknowledges first class support from the senior management team.
27. The school has very good systems of monitoring and evaluation and makes good use of external evaluation from the local education authority. Individual departments are reviewed in a supportive joint manner and from these reviews come action plans, followed up later through the governing body. The leadership team has wisely included itself in a review and has received a very positive report on which it will act.

28. The school has improved its development planning by focusing on a longer time scale, greater consultation, financial integration and links with professional development. The current plan focuses on improvements in the classroom, rightly indicating that the efforts of everyone working in school should be centred on supporting the teacher in the classroom. The planning shows that there is no complacency. Areas for development include work in which the school is already successful, such as behaviour management and the school's ethos. Continued work is planned on self-review, curriculum development, inclusion, ICT and the development of the site. The plan demonstrates that the school is well aware of the significant features involved in maintaining and improving standards and provision.
29. The governing body knows the school very well. Governors appreciate the improved consultation and reporting since the last inspection. As a result they have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They receive regular reports from the head teacher and other staff and make good use of their committee structure. Minutes are very well kept and made available to the full governing body. Governors have a very good commitment to the school, for instance at least one governor attends every appointment interview for staff. They have a very good long-term view of the school, cherishing its traditions while recognising and taking account of changes taking place in schools and society. They have high expectations of the school's performance.
30. The school makes very good use of its resources. The balance of spending between the main school and the sixth form reflects the relative income levels. Very good use is made of new funding arrangements, for instance the improvements to art accommodation and associated ICT facilities will benefit both the school and the community. Support from the EIC initiative has been integrated into the previous developments, for example in mentoring, and has been successful in raising standards. The school is aware of some difficulties with accommodation, the use of non-specialist rooms, access to resources including ICT, and the level of resources in the three libraries and is currently involved in significant planning for improvement through bidding for external funding.
31. The school operates very well on a day-to-day basis and administrative procedures are effective. The calm and professional approach of administrative support staff helps to set a very positive tone for visitors, parents and students.
32. Further information about leadership and management in the sixth form, which are very good, is contained in the annex.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

33. Share the very good approaches evident in a significant number of lessons to improve the opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and develop their own ideas

There are a significant number of lessons where teaching approaches are very good. In these lessons pupils and students are encouraged to think for themselves and develop their own ideas. Although the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, there are still lessons where pupils and students are too passive and do not have sufficient opportunities to investigate topics in a way which will confirm and extend their learning. The school is in partnership with the Teacher Training Agency; it employs two “Advanced Skills” teachers; many other teachers demonstrate very good practice, and the school has recently gained Beacon School status. The strengths that are evident need to be shared and developed further to bring more teaching up to the high standard that exists in some areas.

34. Teaching, learning and management of geography in the sixth form

This area is described in detail in the annex.

35. ICT to support learning in other subjects in the sixth form

This area is described in detail in the annex.

36. Careers education and guidance in the sixth form

This area is described in detail in the annex.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. In order to further improve the good and very good standards and provision the school should do the following:
38. **Share the very good approaches evident in a significant number of lessons to improve the opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and develop their own ideas: (Paragraphs 23, 33, 56, 96, 109, 114, 133, 134, 143, 155, 166)**
- through identification of examples of very good practice;
 - through dissemination of best practice through documentary guidance and the planned peer observations which are already part of school practice within subjects.
39. **Sixth form**
- a. **Improve teaching, learning and management of geography in the sixth form by: (Paragraphs 51, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147)**
- observation of good subject specific teaching of geography;
 - improvement to curriculum planning to include sufficient challenge in activities;
 - improving the planning for the progressive development of fieldwork skills;
 - improving the resources available for research, including ICT;
 - setting and monitoring targets for improvements to departmental management.
- b. **Improve the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects in the sixth form by: (Paragraphs 59, 97, 104, 110, 115, 144, 169)**
- identification of ICT opportunities in subject curriculum plans;
 - planned access to ICT for individual subjects in association with the school's current school improvement plan.
- c. **Introduce a planned programme of careers education and guidance by: (Paragraphs 68, 73, 75)**
- an audit of current provision;
 - the introduction of a set of specific planned activities and opportunities;
 - involvement of the school's careers adviser.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	46
	Sixth form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	4	12	20	9	0	1	0
Percentage	9	26	43	20	0	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	10	14	16	2	0	0
Percentage	2	23	33	37	5	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 [enter Years 7 – 11 and for the sixth form here as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	920	178
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	174	16

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	45	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	45

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.8
National comparative data	90.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.34
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	178	0	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	143	141	138
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	143	141	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (80)	79 (74)	78 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (38)	62 (51)	53 (46)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	144	137	148
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	144	137	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (80)	77 (74)	83 (75)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (38)	62 (52)	60 (31)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

School percentages in brackets refer to the year (2001) before the latest reporting year (2002). Note national figures are for 2001 and (2000)

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	181	0	181

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	110	168	176
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	110	168	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (64)	93 (92)	97 (92)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

School percentages in brackets refer to the year (2001) before the latest reporting year 2002. Note national results are for 2001 and (2000)

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.8 (47.5)
	National	n/a (39.0)

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

Note national results are for 2001 and (2000)

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

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

2001 data

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	70	0	70
	Average point score per candidate	15.1	n/a	15.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

		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	77	0	77	10	0	10
	Average point score per candidate	14.5	n/a	14.5	6	n/a	6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1054	114	7
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	4		
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	13	2	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean		1	
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	15	2	
No ethnic group recorded			

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	427

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

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

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	22
Sixth form	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,910,986.00
Total expenditure	2,854,845.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,570.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	97,312.00
Balance carried forward to next year	153,453.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	902
Number of questionnaires returned	242

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41.1	48.1	8.8	1.3	0.4
My child is making good progress in school.	43.8	48.3	4.5	1.2	2.1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38.4	48.3	7	3.7	2.5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27.9	47.9	15.4	5.8	2.9
The teaching is good.	39.7	53.3	2.1	1.2	3.7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	46.2	20	2.5	1.2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47.1	44.2	5	2.1	1.7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66.4	28.6	2.5	1.7	0.8
The school works closely with parents.	23.1	49.2	20.2	3.3	4.1
The school is well led and managed.	46.2	47.1	2.1	2.9	1.7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48.8	42.6	4.5	0.8	3.3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38.1	39.3	11.7	3.8	7.1

Other issues raised by parents

A small number of parents expressed some concern over how pupils may be detained at the end of the school day.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

40. Results in 2001, the last year for which there is comparable data, were average when compared with all schools. Compared with all boys nationally they were above average. The general trend in results in recent years has been upwards and 2001 was a dip, clearly related to the standards of students on entry to the sixth form, attainment having risen again in 2002. Students currently studying in the sixth form have above average attainment. In 2001 attainment varied between subjects, from above average to well below. In many subjects the numbers are small and statistical analysis is open to interpretation, with some subjects such as design and technology (DT) varying significantly in the numbers and standards on entry of students studying the subject each year. New vocational courses in business and in ICT were examined for the first time in 2002, with attainment showing that students made good progress in their studies. Results from AS examinations in Year 12 are not nationally comparable but indications are that students are increasingly successful with many 100% pass rates in 2002. 67% of students in 2001 went on to higher education. The retention rate is high. The school has set challenging targets for individual students and is on course to reach them. Both attainment and achievement are better than at the time of the last inspection.
41. Overall, students are achieving better than might be expected given their attainment on entry. The school has an open policy to enrolment to its courses. The result is that more students than might be expected are drawn from both lowest and highest attaining groups. Only in geography is there evidence to indicate students not achieving their potential.
42. Students have good knowledge and understanding of most of the subjects they study. For instance, in chemistry they make good use of information from previous lessons and similar topics to explain a series of complicated processes involved in chemical reactions. In history they know about events associated with public rebellion against the monarchy to be able to explain changes in people's thoughts. Students studying ICT are quick to learn new approaches, in PE they know about links between physiology and psychology, in English students recognise religious imagery in texts and in French higher attaining students speak fluently and ask complex questions. The school knows well the areas that students need to improve upon, for instance grammatical structure in French, knowledge of agencies involved in sport, or some theory background in ICT. Students studying geography do not know enough about the subject. This is because they have too few opportunities to be challenged in their thinking; they are not given tasks to take them beyond an overview of issues.
43. Students have good and very good subject and learning skills in their work. They work maturely at their studies. Examples are evident through a range of studies. In mathematics, students apply previous techniques to new and complex calculations, in chemistry they handle equipment safely and well, in ICT lower attaining students have sound practical skills. There are areas of their work where students' skills could be improved and the better teaching is focusing on these areas. Some students in ICT need to improve research skills, in French to improve their grammar, in geography students need to develop skills in analysis and evaluation, in DT the making of good quality products could improve.

44. Across a number of subjects students have few opportunities to develop and use skills in ICT, this is partly because of the limitations of resources and accommodation which make access to equipment difficult, but also because of the relatively few occasions when ICT is planned into the learning. Similarly in some subjects students do not have opportunities to develop verbal skills of analysis, evaluation and presentation of ideas. When the opportunities are provided, in the better lessons, students make good use of these skills.
45. The school has previously taught and assessed key skills as discrete areas of learning and these are now developed through normal course work and school activities. Students make good progress, for instance in communication skills and handling number in preparation for A level examinations. Their skills in ICT improve well where the individual subjects make provision. They are very mature when working with others and enjoy improving their own performance and working to solve problems where the opportunities arise.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

46. Sixth form students are mature learners who have an excellent attitude to their own academic development and preparation for future life. They have a great deal of pride in their school and go out of their way to support it. Students appreciate the quality of teaching and support that they receive, in particular how teachers are available for them beyond the normal lessons and how they are known as individuals. They are frequently seen working outside of lessons in non-teaching rooms preparing work. Strengths have been maintained since the last inspection.
47. In informal meetings with adults, students are polite and approachable, being very ready to answer questions. This is a reflection of the excellent relationships evident between students and teachers. They are willing to help younger pupils and act as role models both academically and socially. Many students support the school in community and wider service such as fundraising and contribute to Masses and whole school events, being trusted by staff to represent the school very well.
48. Students' personal development is very good. They appreciate the induction into new sixth form courses and how some curriculum alternatives have been developed in response to their views and interests. Students demonstrate a high degree of self-confidence and apply themselves diligently to their studies, especially when opportunities arise for contributing to discussions and for working independently to extend or consolidate their knowledge. In those lessons where the teaching is not as good as normally, where students have less opportunity to be involved in discussion, they tend to be passive learners, accepting ideas and information without sufficient questioning or investigating to ensure that they fully understand the topic.
49. Virtually all students join the sixth form from the main school and are familiar with the school's values and what is expected of them in order to meet the high expectations set. Students appreciate the continued encouragement of self-discipline within very good relationships with staff and peers. In particular, students recognise the importance of twice daily registration and attendance levels are good. Students are punctual for lessons and remain on site during the working day unless there is a time-tabled activity outside, such as community work.
50. Their attitudes, relationships, personal development and values play a very important part in students' learning and make major contributions to their many successes.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

51. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. It is rarely less than satisfactory. Lessons judged to be satisfactory still ensure effective learning. Almost two-thirds of lessons are good or better and around one quarter are very good or better. There are examples of outstanding teaching. The quality of teaching is much improved since the last inspection, with more very good teaching and considerably less unsatisfactory teaching. Good teaching is evident in almost all subjects and very good in around half of inspected subjects. The teaching of geography is unsatisfactory overall, varying from satisfactory to unsatisfactory, largely because students are not challenged enough in their work.
52. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is very good and in some areas excellent. This was evident in one chemistry lesson observed where the teacher's in-depth knowledge enabled the explanations to be very clear and, when students were charged with explaining the processes involved in a chemical reaction, the teacher could forecast where any individual student understood or not the next part of the sequence and so could intervene at just the right time. Similarly in an English lesson where students were studying Chaucer the teacher generated enthusiasm by encouraging and involving students in working on the sounds of the text. The good and better lessons are marked by the high expectations of students. Not only do teachers expect students to work with academic rigour, they expect close attention to the topic. This is reflected in the excellent management of pupils. There is a clear tradition of expectations of the approach that students should take and this is reflected in the very good behaviour and intellectual effort from the students. There were no examples seen of any behaviour or attitudes that interfered with the lessons. In a minority of lessons observed, some of those where the teaching was satisfactory rather than good, some pupils played little part other than listening and so were rather passive, with a consequent effect on learning.
53. Teachers plan well. This is not always formally written down in detail, but good experience, supported by schemes of work, enable lessons to flow well, with both teachers and students knowing what is to be achieved and why. Presentations are clear and accurate. For instance, in one physics lesson that revised topics such as oscillation and harmonic motion, a well chosen demonstration successfully related resonance to everyday applications and environmental phenomena.
54. The time is used well in lessons. Teachers and students arrive on time and there is a sense of urgency in lessons. This is often seen in the 35 or 40 minute periods where a great deal of work is covered. On some occasions, such as some lessons in French and geography, the shortness of these lessons causes difficulty, in other subjects it is the right time span. The difficulty can be where a topic needs in-depth analysis to develop concepts.
55. Students are well known to teachers. Their work is marked regularly and in detail and supportive and constructive comments are returned. This supports students' learning in class. For instance in an ICT lesson where students analysed tests and readability, the teacher circulated and intervened effectively according to individual needs, while students worked independently. Teachers recognise the uniqueness of individuals and in the better lessons teachers vary the course of their questioning so that different individuals can contribute at their level. This is one of the ways in which the school ensures an inclusive approach, very good equality of opportunity and effectively meets the needs of the range of ability.

56. The methods used in lessons have improved since the last inspection. Students have more opportunities for discussion and involvement and there is a better variety of approach. In some individual lessons where the teaching was very good or outstanding the lesson was based upon a process of ensuring students had to think very hard about the topic under discussion, associated with excellent questioning technique. This was clear in a history lesson where students had to consider differences between approaches to rebellions. The school still needs to make more use of those approaches to raise the standard of the satisfactory teaching. In those lessons where teaching is not as strong as elsewhere it is sometimes because the teacher follows a line of demonstration and explanation without sufficient involvement of students in thinking or investigating. While that approach is right at some times for specific content or as part of a sequence of lessons, at times it prevents good learning.
57. The combination of the strengths in teaching, together with students' excellent attitudes leads to good learning. Students acquire knowledge and understanding very quickly and apply very good effort to their learning. This learning takes place beyond the formal lesson structure and the mixture of extra lessons, extra-curricular activity, informal contacts, mentoring and excellent relationships make a significant contribution to the level and style of learning. Students show a high level of interest and concentration. They have sound knowledge of their own learning and this is being reinforced by the mentoring systems and the teachers' assessments. The school is rightly strengthening its approach to short-term target setting within subjects.
58. Homework is well used, with work being set which is often a natural progression from the lessons. This is well followed up. For instance in one mathematics lesson with Year 13 related to forces, homework had been challenging and not been fully completed by all students but by the end of the lesson very good progress had been made.
59. Access to resources and difficulties with accommodation sometimes prevent learning from being better than it could be. For instance, in one good French lesson, where students worked from an essay about French regions that they had written, students found it difficult to place the work in context because the lack of visual aids reduced efficiency. The school is aware of the need to improve its library provision for independent study. Teachers do not have easy access to ICT and this restricts the range of approaches they can use.

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

60. The school provides a good quality and broad curriculum. It is developing and changing the curriculum to appeal to and best meet the needs of students. Statutory elements of the curriculum are in place. The commitment of teachers to provide the extra lessons out of school hours when necessary enables this wide range to be made available. The school continues to make decisions about the availability of courses based on what it does well and what students need and show interest in. Sound developments in the curriculum have occurred since the last inspection.

61. The curriculum is very well matched to the needs of the vast majority of its potential students, almost all of whom continue their education from the main school, and provides for a wide range of pupils of differing previous attainment. Students find that the courses offered meet their needs, and are able to study what they want, to progress well and to fulfil their aspiration to move onto higher education. Most courses lead to A Level/AS level although there is some provision for vocational education, a particular development being in ICT. Students with 5 A*-C grades at GCSE are offered places on A and AS Level courses with entry to a particular subject generally requiring pupils to have at least a C grade at GCSE and for mathematics and sciences a B grade. The school's arrangements to provide courses to meet the ability range of its intake, together with its policy on access to appropriate courses of study, mean that the school has an inclusive approach to provision. For instance, students with below the recommended grade for mathematics or sciences are given extra support to repeat the GCSE examination to make the A Level courses easier to manage.
62. The school's provision for equal opportunities is very good and there is a very good match of courses to the aspirations of the students. This is because the school treats students as individuals. Teachers are committed to supporting learning beyond time-tabled lessons.
63. In 2002 twenty-one subjects were offered at A Level, one of which, psychology, is offered through collaboration with a neighbouring school. Key skills are not taught as an identifiable assessed course but the skills that are promoted in such a course are developed in some subject areas. However, provision of these cross-curricular learning opportunities through this "within the curriculum" approach is not guaranteed for a student's particular combination of subjects, for instance where ICT is not as well developed in a particular subject.
64. The students' chosen courses are supplemented by a good range of courses to broaden the sixth formers' education. In Year 12 a course entitled "Enhanced Programme" is part of the routine timetable and encompasses a "Young Enterprise" module to provide for personal development and widen their experience. General studies to A Level and critical thinking AS are offered as extra voluntary courses. Although there is the opportunity for students to take sports studies or to take part in after school sport there is no general time-tabled provision for PE and sporting activities. There are opportunities to re-sit GCSEs, but there is no time-tabled teaching provision.
65. The school recognises that it cannot provide a complete range of courses and therefore concentrates on those subjects in which it is experienced and successful. It develops new courses in response to national and local changes and students' needs. It guides students to alternative institutions where their needs may be met. A small number of students indicated that they would have to have attended other schools if they had wished to study courses such as music technology, media studies or design and graphics.

66. The sixth form curriculum is very well managed, evaluated, and subsequently revised to ensure it best meets the needs of the students. The school will no longer provide business studies as the changed advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) course does not meet the needs of many of those who were following the previous advanced GNVQ. However, it has recognised that the ICT AVCE had the potential to meet a need and so the school has appointed staff and enhanced resources to provide this course. The progress in provision in this separate subject is a strength of the school. The head of sixth form is looking to further develop the curriculum by offering free-standing mathematics units, for example statistics to support students' work in other subjects, and courses to build upon the leisure and tourism and engineering courses provided or planned in Key Stage 4 in the main school.
67. The school works hard to ensure an appropriate timetable for teaching. Some teachers ensure access to courses by teaching extra lessons outside of normal hours. The school has consulted over the length of individual lessons following the last inspection and has retained 35-40 minute lessons, frequently time-tabled as double periods. The 35-40 minute lessons often demonstrate a good pace but on a minority of occasions the time is insufficient to develop understanding. Conversely the time-tabling of three consecutive periods of a MFL can affect concentration.
68. A deficiency in the curriculum offered is the lack of a careers education guidance and work experience programme. Students are very well provided with advice for higher education entrance but there is not enough advice about career opportunities and choices beyond that.
69. The school's provision for spiritual and moral development is very good and there are some outstanding features. Some of the provision comes from the involvement of all students in RE and collective worship. Excellent relationships make a major contribution to moral education, where students are encouraged very successfully to consider others and the effect of individual actions. Staff and students experienced a difficult time during the inspection because of the death and funeral during the week of a well-respected and recent teacher. Teachers and students' responses to this greatly impressed the inspection team, emotional responses being accepted and understood, with mutual sharing of the developing understanding of staff and students' responses to this event.
70. Provision for social and cultural development is good. Good support is provided for learning outside the school day. Extra-curricular activities, in addition to the extra subject support provision, include a wide range of sporting activities, visits to universities and some theatre visits. Activities in recent years include visits to India, Italy and Botswana, links to major companies, sponsored events, magazine production, indoor and outdoor games and retreats, fitting in with the school's ethos and mission. Students are positive about the opportunities provided, although a small number of students said that they miss the opportunity to participate in a school production since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. The school has reviewed its curriculum provision more generally and has made a number of moves to improve its provision for the arts. For instance, the provision of much improved accommodation, very good ICT facilities and increased staffing capability in art as a separate subject in the main school is leading to more students with higher academic ability studying art in the sixth form. The school development plan includes further work to develop the arts more generally.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

71. Arrangements for the assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance in the sixth form are very good. Teachers assess the students' work and their achievements conscientiously and routinely. This provides the students and their parents with clear information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve or improve upon their predicted grades in the subjects or courses they follow. Annual and interim reports have a good level of content and parents' meetings are well attended.
72. Assessment information from Key Stage 4, GCSE results and other indicators of potential are all used effectively to set challenging targets for new students entering the sixth form. Tutors continually assess the progress of new and continuing students and are quick to identify those who may need additional help or encouragement to meet the demands of new course requirements. They are also adept at identifying and challenging those who are capable of performing at a higher level.

Advice, support and guidance

73. The quality of the educational and personal support guidance given to students is good overall, although lacking provision for general careers education and guidance. Before students join the sixth form they are well advised and guided towards course choices that offer them a strong chance of success at the end of this phase.
74. The sixth form provides a natural extension of the strong pastoral support available in the main school. Transition is very well supported through the induction processes. For instance, Year 11 and 12 students jointly prepare some assemblies. Tutors quickly get to know their students very well and thereafter maintain careful records that inform their regular discussions with each student about their progress and any difficulties they may encounter. Students who struggle to achieve the required standards receive appropriate support that helps most of them to achieve their target grades. In Year 13 most students particularly value the advice they are given about university applications. Students who replied to the questionnaire felt they had been helped to settle in well to the sixth form and would recommend other pupils to consider following in their footsteps. Other students were keen to state their enthusiasm for their work within the school and valued the school's caring but challenging culture that they felt helped them sustain motivation. They particularly value the support from the school's progression coach and individual teachers.
75. Provision for careers education and guidance however is under-developed and there is very little time dedicated to careers-related activities. There is no planned programme of careers education for A Level students to inform them of the full range of post-sixth form opportunities or to help them plan for future careers. Some students following vocational courses have access to work experience opportunities as part of their course, but there is no planned work experience for the A Level students. Independent career research opportunities are extremely limited and there is only one careers computer programme available for student use. The school needs to make more use in the sixth form of the school's careers adviser. Despite this, students feel that they are well advised about higher education provision and supported very well in their applications.

76. There are good arrangements to support students' health and safety. Risk assessment and child protection procedures are in place. The school was informed of gaps in the documentation for child protection, although staff training has been planned, and of a safety issue of cars parking where students move around.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

77. Parents hold the school in very high regard. They are particularly satisfied with the ethos of the school and the high expectations placed on students to work hard and they support the attitudes and values that the school promotes. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through formal consultations with staff and written reports. Staff are available to parents for consultation at other times and realise the importance of working alongside parents and students should difficulties occur. The school does not yet formally seek parents' views but is aware of the need to do so as part of a review of its provision.
78. A small number of issues were raised by parents in the general questionnaire but there was no indication from discussions with parents that these features were specific to the sixth form.
79. Students value the sixth form provision. Students who discussed their views during the inspection expressed confidence in the support and guidance provided by staff and are satisfied that the school meets the needs of the vast majority of students. They enjoy the extra-curricular opportunities available and raised no concerns with what is provided. These views are overwhelmingly reflected in student responses by questionnaire. The responses particularly demonstrate students' appreciation of the quality of teaching they receive, the challenges they are set, the assessments of their progress and help towards continuing achievements. A very small number of students suggested that some aspects of the sixth form could be better but these did not form a particular pattern. The annual reviews of life in the sixth form that the school collects from students are also very positive.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. This stage of students' education is treated as an integral but distinct part of their development, a process that continues through higher education and other routes and leads to many students becoming part of the "old boys" association. It has a positive impact within the school, with students providing practical support for learning of younger pupils. The emphasis of management is rightly on high standards. There is a clear set of values in the sixth form, which both the staff and students appreciate and respond to very well. Expectations of a positive attitude and diligence are clear and accepted, shown in the good staying-on rate of students with a wide range of attainment at GCSE Level. Governors are clear about the position of the sixth form, understanding the conflicting pressures on sixth form education, such as in curriculum provision and practical organisation, and they ensure that the school mission statement is fulfilled within this stage of education as strongly as in the main school. The head of sixth form is integral to the school's senior management team and fully involved in major decision making. He is knowledgeable about individual students, patterns of development and learning and areas for development. Relationships between staff and students are excellent because of the close formal and informal networks of support. Practical management is very good and there is a very useful sixth form handbook for students with a strong emphasis on standards alongside the practicalities of being in the sixth form.
81. The school has good systems of monitoring and evaluation that are continuing to develop. There is thorough analysis of data and this helps to set and monitor targets for individuals and groups of students. Senior management uses school data to judge value added in sixth form courses. This complements and extends external analysis. There is a coherent framework for monitoring and supporting teaching through performance management focusing on subject specialisms. There is a detailed plan for the professional development of teachers. Even though subject knowledge is a general strength of teaching the school is not complacent and continues to look at new developments, for instance in thinking skills. School management is very aware of varying strengths in provision and attainment. The school uses an external system to review students' opinions about life in the sixth form and responds accordingly. Every year students are asked to comment on the quality of their experiences in the sixth form. There is also a sixth form committee that acts very responsibly in organising prefects, quizzes and competitions. This is an example of the very good ways in which the relationships between staff and students support the maturity of students and everyday management.
82. The setting of academic and curricular targets is very good. There are reasoned and evaluative approaches to reviewing successes in subjects and the management of the sixth form. The school improvement plan is effective in this and has steered the changes to the curriculum introduced to meet the needs of students and the relative strengths resulting from changing subject requirements, for instance how the curriculum has been affected by the change from GNVQ to AVCE. The improvement plan has a clear set of improvement objectives.

83. Departments are mostly managed very well as part of the whole-school approach and the quality of this management has a positive effect on students' achievements. The leadership and management of geography in the sixth form is going through a period of transition and is currently unsatisfactory although the school has appropriate plans for improvement.

Resources

84. The sixth form is cost-effective when taking into account the overall good provision including teaching, the wide range of attainment on entry and the above average achievement of students.
85. The strategic use of resources in the sixth form is very good overall. New funding arrangements have been dealt with successfully and the school's expenditure on the sixth form matches the level of its funding. Very good use is made of external funding where available. Detailed planning is being carried out to improve accommodation and facilities more generally, which will benefit sixth form provision if successful. There are good rationales for the choice of sixth form courses available. The school rightly focuses on what it does well and what students feel they would gain most from, while maintaining its traditions.
86. Since the last inspection improvements have been made to development planning so that finance is allocated appropriately to developments, including the professional development of teachers linked to intended sixth form improvements. Spending is closely monitored and evaluated. Best value principles are used as in the main school.
87. The number of staff in the sixth form is good. They are knowledgeable and skilled and good use is made of their subject-specific expertise. The school has been designated a "Partnership Promotion School" by the Teacher Training Agency because of its strengths in developing new and training teachers. Practical resources for teaching are sufficient overall, and in some cases, such as in discrete ICT, these resources have a very positive effect on learning. Access to practical resources is sometimes difficult for teachers, especially when subjects are taught in non-specialist rooms. For instance, this affects how well teachers and students can use ICT in their work. This is also a problem because of the shortage of some resources for research in the sixth form library. The school recognises the difficulties and is working on plans to improve provision. The sixth form accommodation effectively supports teaching in the majority of lessons but the use of non-specialist room affects the quality of teaching in a minority of lessons.

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

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	12	92	87	42	43	5.50	5.80
Chemistry	8	63	90	0	43	3.00	5.90
Biology	8	88	88	0	34	3.75	5.25
Physics	18	67	88	17	40	3.53	5.67
Geology	5	100	90	40	30	6.40	5.16
Design and Technology	4	100	91	25	30	6.00	5.38
Business VQ	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.43	10.45
Economics	17	77	89	29	36	4.47	5.52
Sports Studies	5	100	92	20	25	5.60	5.09
Art	2	100	96	50	46	5.00	6.57
Geography	8	50	92	13	38	2.25	5.74
History	12	75	88	8	35	3.00	5.45
Religious Studies	9	100	92	33	38	6.89	5.84
English Language	20	100	91	25	30	5.30	5.27
English Literature	24	96	95	21	37	5.08	5.91
French	7	86	89	57	38	6.00	5.59
German	2	100	91	100	40	9.00	5.81
Italian	10	90	93	20	56	5.00	6.84
General Studies	41	85	85	34	30	5.07	4.91

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

90. The focus of inspection was on A/AS mathematics and chemistry. Sampling was also carried out in A/AS biology, physics and geology. Teaching and learning were good, varying from outstanding to satisfactory. Students achieve satisfactory to good results related to their previous attainment. Results are rising, the number of students taking these subjects is increasing and there is an improving retention rate.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Results are improving.
- The sound teaching is effective in ensuring satisfactory progress by students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, clear expectations of the students and commitment to their work.
- Students' attitudes are good. They want to achieve.
- Management of the department is good.

Areas for Improvement

- The development of teaching to promote the students' ability to independently undertake extended problems.
- The use of ICT, and other resources when appropriate, to provide students with a range of learning opportunities.

92. Attainment in recent years has been in line with the national average but in 2002 showed a significant increase. Students are achieving as well as, and sometimes better than, might be expected given their previous attainment, largely due to the sound effective teaching.

93. In 2001, the last year for which there is comparative data, the overall performance in mathematics at A Level was in line with that found nationally although too many students failed to gain a grade. The results from Year 12 AS Levels in 2002 are significantly improved. The sound progress made by Year 13 students is evident in lessons. They are able to apply and recall the techniques of algebra and calculus in the solution of mechanics problems, for example, to find the forces and acceleration of objects moving down a slope or within a pulley system.

94. Sound and effective teaching and the extra commitment of teachers to provide lessons outside the normal timetable ensure the sound progress. Some aspects of teaching are done well. The teaching approach used is generally textbook-based with the teacher introducing the exercise by working through an example with the students. Teachers use this style well, particularly when introductions engage and involve the students and when subsequent questions are selected to match work to their understanding and knowledge of the topic. On these occasions there is increased challenge and better paced learning. In a lesson in Year 13 skilled questioning ensured that students had to think about and voice opinions on the methods to use. This had a significant influence on the students' involvement, achievement and understanding. In contrast, in another lesson where the students were quickly taken through the example in the textbook, they were not sufficiently involved or engaged in learning. Sometimes, as in this case, there is over-reliance on the textbook although students find it a useful source of alternative explanation. Teaching is most effective when the teacher uses a working example beyond that in the textbook.
95. In support of this approach teachers have good subject knowledge. They have clear expectations of what students will do, in class and for homework, and of work being produced to deadlines. Teachers have a good working relationship with pupils. These factors all have a good effect on the response of students. Explanations are clear both within introductions and when teachers are giving individual support. Good emphasis is given to significant points. The approach is not as effective when questioning is not done well and gets only brief responses from the students. There was no indication during the inspection of other learning approaches or resources being provided. The coursework seen was of high quality but there is a need to make use of approaches and resources to develop the students' ability to undertake in-depth problems independently.
96. The students' attitudes in lessons are good. Coupled with the teaching this results in: clear note taking; understanding of the area of mathematics and the techniques to be used; very good behaviour; and students engaging with the work. As the lesson progresses the students gain confidence in their understanding and prior knowledge. Students give good commitment to attend sessions outside the school day. In lessons they are co-operative and attentive to teachers' instructions and introductions. They want to achieve. In some lessons they can be passive, in others they show enthusiasm and interest, depending very much upon the teaching approach used.
97. Subject leadership is sound. The head of department is well organised, ensuring good management, and clear on what the department is aiming to do. He is looking to develop the provision. Since the last inspection strengths of teaching have been maintained and now the teachers are all appropriately qualified. There is still a limited range of resources and teaching approaches used are similar. Plans to develop ICT are appropriate. Monitoring of the impact of the department's provision is provided through the clear and well-documented analysis of data on examination performance. The department needs to share good practice in teaching.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- The recent A level and AS results are a significant improvement over those for 2001.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of students' achievements.
- Teaching is very good overall and some is excellent.
- The head of department's very good leadership and collaborative approach ensures a good approach to change.
- The assessment and tracking of student progress effectively identifies any lack of expected progress as a starting point for student mentoring and improving the quality of teaching.
- Extra-curricular links to local industry and national organisations.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of laboratory-based ICT, which is holding up the implementation of ICT as a teaching tool and as a resource for developing independent learning approaches for students.

99. Attainment is above average and students are achieving more than might be expected because of the very good subject provision. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. A Level results have significantly improved and the AS course has been successfully introduced with good results at the higher grades. The management of the department has significantly improved in terms of supporting and challenging the teaching staff to improve. For example, teaching has greatly improved mainly because of the impact of in-service training led by the head of department.

100. GCE A Level chemistry results in 2000 were significantly better than national averages. In 2001 they were significantly below national averages. By 2002 they had returned to the previous standard. The improving trend in results has led to the subject becoming more popular with students. An analysis of the progress made by individual students from the start of Year 12 shows that many students have made better than predicted progress, given their prior attainment.

101. The standards of attainment of current students seen in lessons and from the scrutiny of their work are above average overall. In Year 12 there was evidence of the students handling the chemicals and equipment well, to collect results in order to calculate the relative atomic mass of magnesium. In Year 13, the teacher's questioning challenged and supported all students to clarify their understanding of a difficult mathematical, visual, spatial and content area of chemistry associated with lattice enthalpy.

102. The quality of teaching is good or better with some that is excellent. In the better teaching in Year 13, all students were encouraged by the teacher to think carefully in responding to questions. They were prompted to improve their answer to their highest possible standard. This consolidated their grasp of the factors affecting the heat of formation of compounds in predicting the magnitude of the lattice energy. The teacher's excellent knowledge of the subject meant that the lesson objectives were clear and displayed for all to see and follow. The three-part lesson structure and high quality support materials matched the needs of the students. Questions were targeted at the whole class and individuals to challenge and support their emergent thinking. This emphasis on the accurate use of English and mathematics to convey ideas supported the student responses to a deeper understanding in these complex concepts. Homework is clearly linked to learning.
103. The attitude and behaviour of students is very good. This is partly because the work is so structured and well-matched to their ability. Students are motivated and work hard.
104. The head of department provides very good leadership. Through a collaborative approach, he successfully manages the department so that changes are implemented with a clear focus on the impact on progress and high quality teaching. For example, the revised schemes of work, with their focus on good quality learning objectives, are being constantly improved. This is based on the analysis of performance data. Other good practices such as the experiences of the student-industry partnerships help to inform developments. The links between the three science subject departments are seen as important and examples of joined-up knowledge of the different subjects were observed in teaching. The development plan needs to include full costs and meaningful success criteria. The use of up-to-date text books has improved but the development of laboratory based ICT is holding up the implementation of ICT as a teaching tool and as a resource for developing independent learning approaches for students. The teachers value the support given to them by the technicians.
105. Extra-curricular provision has a very good effect on students' attitudes and expectations. Over a number of years the department has built up very good links to local industry and national organisations such as the Royal Society of Chemistry. Several students have achieved Gold Crest Award (British Association for the Advancement of Science) with one group being chosen by the Royal Society to make a presentation to the International Youth Science Fair in the USA.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

106. The AS/A Level course in design and technology (product design) was inspected. No further courses were available to sample. Attainment is average and students make satisfactory progress, supported by good teaching.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (PRODUCT DESIGN)

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

Strengths

- The technical expertise of teachers.
- The teachers' support, guidance and relationships with students.
- The teaching and learning of design skills.
- The spacious accommodation and safe working environment.

Areas for improvement

- The level of challenge in design thinking and further integration of designing and making
- The quality of practical work.
- The use of exemplar and modern materials and design products and further integration of ICT.

108. Attainment is around average and students are achieving satisfactorily. The numbers of students on the course are relatively low and fluctuate year by year. Students choosing to study the course who have previously followed the GCSE graphics products option are working well and achieving as expected. As an example, students in a Year 12 lesson used unfamiliar tools and machinery, with precise engineering tolerances, to make a sound quality reversing ratchet.

109. Teaching is good overall. Students respect the technical knowledge and expertise of their teachers and respond positively to the individual guidance they receive. They listen carefully and are productive for the duration of the lesson. In a lesson designing street furniture resources were used effectively to teach complex design principles. Students quickly gained insight into these complexities through independent experimentation and practice. Students would be even more productive if teachers were to challenge their thinking when they are at the early stages of developing their ideas. This would assist them in becoming more reflective during the process of developing designs; rather than simply writing a concluding evaluation, which students are already competent to do. It would help them to be more thorough with their research and to produce outcomes that match their original intentions. Students' portfolios demonstrate good technical skills in their development of formal drawings, both for presentation and for production. They develop good clear plans and explanations of manufacturing processes.

110. The teachers are very experienced and technically very knowledgeable. The head of department is fully conversant with the new course and ably supports students in meeting requirements. This has resulted in a relatively positive period of results and satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation is spacious and the working environment is safe, well planned, managed and maintained. It is not very stimulating for students in terms of displays and exemplar materials and products from which students could learn. Technical support, although very useful for the teachers and students with their day-to-day needs, could make use of current facilities more effectively (in particular the recent CAD/CAM acquisition). This would provide them with a greater range of examples of modern manufacturing techniques, extend and enrich their design ideas and thinking.

BUSINESS

111. The focus for inspection was the business education taught through an AVCE course in business and through A/AS economics or business studies. No further courses were available to sample. Attainment is showing some improvement as good teaching supports the good achievements in new courses.

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS STUDIES

112. Overall the quality of provision in business education is **good**.

Strengths

- Achievement in AS examinations.
- Improvement to results through A Level in 2002.
- Good teaching and learning.
- The teachers' expert subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to extend and enhance learning.
- The quality of formal assessment.
- The quality of questioning.

113. Results at A Level in economics have been either at or below the national average and below that for the school as a whole. However, students are achieving better than might be expected given their previous attainment. The recent 2002 results at AS Level in both economics and business studies were above those of the school as a whole. Close monitoring of standards needs to continue to ensure that this improvement is continued into A Level results. The 2002 A Level results were at least satisfactory, with all students gaining a pass grade or better.

114. The standard of teaching is good. The teachers' expert subject knowledge, together with the good pace of the lessons, provides a framework within which good learning takes place. This was shown in an A2 business studies lesson when students work on ratio analysis was well supported by the teacher checking and providing individual help supported by sensible questioning. The result of the good teaching is that the students have a very good attitude towards learning and, generally, are very responsive to questioning. Questioning is an area which could be given greater emphasis so as to develop a more critical and thoughtful approach by the students.

115. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department has made the most of resources that, at best, are only adequate. The students would benefit, however, from greater direction in the use of ICT to extend and enhance their learning. Work is set on a regular basis, but insufficient formal assessment makes it difficult for students to judge their level of achievement and progress. The department is putting in place measures to rectify this. The introduction of "Young Enterprise" into Year 12 should provide an opportunity for students to gain a practical approach to business.
116. AVCE business has taken the place of GNVQ business. In both cases the results have been below the national average. The replacement of GNVQ by AVCE business has been to the detriment of the subject in terms of both student numbers from about one-third of the sixth form to only five in Year 13 and none in Year 12 and, also, motivation. The school has decided not to continue with the course.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. The focus of the inspection was the Advanced Level, advanced vocational (AVCE) and Intermediate GNVQ courses in ICT. No further courses were available to sample. The department has made a significant improvement since the last inspection. This is due to improved provision for the teaching of ICT in the main school; the acquisition of PC-based computer suites, and the appointment of specialist teachers. The diversity of provision means that the department can cater to a wide range of interest and prior attainment.
118. Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **good**.

Strengths

- Good and frequently very good teaching from subject specialists.
- Effective use of time.
- Provision of courses to match students' interests and capabilities.
- Inclusion of students with different experiences of ICT on the AVCE course.
- Students are adapting well to the demands of the on-line AVCE course.
- Successful completion of the full AVCE course in one year.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work in Key Stage 4 to ensure that the demands of courses in the sixth form are more effectively addressed.
- Help for AVCE students particularly to develop their research skills.

119. Overall results in AS and A2 in 2001, the first cohort completing the courses, were lower than expected. The school responded to this by introducing the vocational courses, so that students may now opt for the course which best matches their interests and abilities. Results in GCSE have shown a sharp improvement since 1998 and this will have an impact on performance in the sixth form.

120. Students following the AVCE course already have substantial portfolios. They are quick to learn new procedures and they are filling the gaps in their knowledge. For example, some students are unused to the conventions of annotating documents with screen shots and text boxes, or are unaware of the organisational value of headers and footers. These are skills that need to be acquired earlier. Although students are unused to the style of learning implied by vocational courses, they are nevertheless adjusting to the new way of working. In order to increase efficiency, those students with the facilities should be encouraged to access the work at home, either by CD-ROM, on-line working, or e-mail.
121. Results for the first year of the GNVQ (Intermediate) course were good, with 83% of students passing, 43% with merit. It is a demanding course for these students, but portfolios of this year's cohort show that they were already close to completion of the first of the six units after only a few weeks.
122. Achievements in the current cohorts are good across each accreditation route. Although there is a wide range of ability and experience, teachers are managing to cater to these needs. Some students in the GNVQ course have poor research skills but teachers are helping them to improve.
123. Attitudes of students are always very good. In the A2 group students have made mature decisions about their work-related project. They respond well to the demands of the assignments, for example by recording interviews before they write them up. Some students have an impressive technical knowledge, and ask searching questions in order to deepen their knowledge further. Even those who have no computer at home are making good progress. Relationships with the teachers are excellent.
124. There is a wide range of prior attainment and experience in the AVCE course, but most students have chosen it as they perceive it to be less theoretical and more practical. Most are doing the double award, which is a challenge, but they are well into the first unit and the teacher has planned to move them on by focusing on key elements and building support around these. A lot is achieved in the short 35-40 minute periods. Students are quick to learn new features of software, for example word wrap in Word, or annotation with screen shots, but these are procedures they should have acquired in Key Stage 4.
125. Teaching is good in all AS/A Level lessons. This is because lessons are well planned. Teachers' professional knowledge allows them to anticipate problems as part of the planning. The very best lessons incorporate an increasing level of challenge leading to sound acquisition of the concepts being discussed. Teachers respond to needs of more able students by giving them pertinent advice and extra challenges. Their subject knowledge and good relationships with the students allow them to do this effectively.
126. Teaching is very good in the AVCE course. Teachers are aware of the rigorous demands of the course and ensure that students know where they should be at a given time. They intervene with sound advice whilst at the same time ensuring that students take responsibility for their own learning.
127. Teaching in the GNVQ course is good. Teachers know the course and are therefore able to direct the students through the materials. This is especially important for a new way of learning. A few students, who are more experienced in using the software, need more of a challenge.
128. Leadership and management are good. Overall improvement since the last inspection is very good. There is an emphasis on improving standards and provision, for instance

through curriculum choices. Limited time for the GCSE course means that there is less emphasis on theory and this has an effect on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. However, teachers take steps to redress the balance in the sixth form.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

129. The focus for inspection was the school's PE course, assessed through a Sports Studies A/AS examination. No further courses were available to sample. Average results reflect previous attainment and achievement is satisfactory as a result of sound effective teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers develop good working relationships with students.
- Students show a good interest in lessons. They are attentive and eager to learn.

Areas for improvement

- The level of challenge in lessons.
- The quality and range of learning materials and ICT resources in the A Level teaching areas.

131. Results are average overall, but few pupils attain the higher grades. Although achievement is overall satisfactory some students need more challenge. A small but significant number of students did not achieve a pass grade in 2002 A Level examinations. The AS results for 2002 show fewer students achieved grade C or above and two-thirds were graded D or less.
132. Students display knowledge of the links between physiological and psychological factors in performance and participation. They can explain the differences between structured sport and less formal recreational activity and can work independently and in groups to apply theoretical aspects of performance to practical sporting situations. They can respond to questioning and come up with their own practical applications and examples of the differences between structured sport and recreational activities. More able students can identify key joints of the body, copy actions and explain the movements associated with these joints. Students can identify the key reasons for mass participation in sport but lack the detailed knowledge required and can only identify some of the main agencies involved in promoting sport.
133. The majority of students have positive attitudes towards the subject. They are usually well prepared for lessons, courteous, they respond well to teachers and show interest in the subject. Most are willing to contribute during question and answer sessions, showing they can think for themselves, apply criteria to specific sporting actions and respond correctly. Only a few pupils will question the teacher or raise issues that require further clarification, this could be improved to ensure students have a firm understanding of the lesson content. Some AS students arrive at lessons without suitable kit/equipment, this has a detrimental affect on their achievement and needs to be addressed.
134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Subject knowledge is generally sound with clear introductions and review of key points at the end of lessons. Teachers use

questioning well to test knowledge and reinforce learning. They develop good working relationships with students. In lessons, links are made between the theoretical elements and practical sporting contexts and some independent learning was observed. Teaching has the most impact on learning when teachers provide clear feedback to help pupils improve their performance and understanding. Teaching is least effective when lengthy note-making by the teacher means time is not used as efficiently as it could be and few opportunities are provided to work independently, to research and investigate ideas, talk to each other or question key principles.

135. For a few pupils achievement is restricted because teaching is not planned to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Teachers' lesson planning needs to incorporate different tasks so pupils of all abilities can make suitable progress. For example, in a combined theory and practical lesson some students found difficulty in identifying types of joints and could not explain the movement actions when performing sporting actions. In order to improve, a range of teaching styles should be developed to meet the needs of all students, including incorporating ICT and other new resources into lessons. Closer monitoring of pupil progress and performance in coursework and homework tasks would allow teachers to regularly assess whether all students are making sufficient progress throughout the course.
136. The department has made sufficient progress since the last inspection. In lessons links are now made between theoretical and practical elements of the course, group work and independent learning is developing and GCSE PE has been introduced into Key Stage 4 to increase students' knowledge and understanding prior to the start of the A level course. Further work needs to be done to encourage students to observe, think, evaluate and criticise to improve their performance. Improvements identified in the department's development plan need to be made to the A Level teaching base including blinds, ICT equipment, resources and visual aids/displayed on the walls.
137. The department is led effectively. It is adjusting to recent staff changes and good support and mentoring is offered to the newly appointed teacher in the department. The A Level course would benefit from an agreed programme of lesson observations to share good practice. The department has expanded its PE and sports provision by giving students the opportunity to obtain a football leadership award within the sixth form enrichment programme. Good use is made of several non-specialist teachers to provide an extensive extra-curricular programme specialising in football and athletics.

HUMANITIES

138. The inspection focused on A/AS geography, A/AS history was also sampled. No further courses were available to sample. Teaching and learning vary from very good in history to unsatisfactory in geography and this is reflected in students' achievements.

GEOGRAPHY

139. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and students.
- Very positive attitudes of students to learning.

Areas for improvement

- How well students achieve.
- The quality of teaching.
- Department planning to improve standards.
- The range of opportunities for fieldwork and use of ICT.

140. Attainment is below average. Few students take the AS/A Level examination and there has been a trend of the number of entries declining, together with a fall in the GCSE grades of students choosing the subject. Over recent years few students have gained higher grades and in 2001 half did not obtain any qualification. The A Level examination results of 2002 are higher and AS results, for 2002 Year 12 students, are significantly improved since 2001, although national comparisons are not yet possible.

141. The school's analysis of data from previous years shows some years of under-achievement and some achievement better than expected. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of their work show attainment below average and under-achievement. Overall there is some under-achievement.

142. The lack of challenge in some lessons results in students not producing expected levels of work. In a lesson on the effectiveness of English Tourist Board advertising, students copied down a list of basic facts about the Internet, but did not discuss or use the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. In another lesson, after watching part of a recorded television programme on glaciers, students were able to list the main points and draw appropriate sketch diagrams, but lacked some basic knowledge such as what an ice-field is. In their work on the Mount St. Helen's volcano, students demonstrated understanding of the need for balance between environmental issues and economic development.

143. Teaching is overall unsatisfactory, but varies from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. In satisfactory lessons students are informed of what is to be covered and clear, detailed explanations are given. Unsatisfactory lessons are not well planned, with insufficient thought given to what students are expected to learn. Sometimes there is not enough challenge in the work presented. At other times students are expected to cover too much, this is especially so in the single period lessons. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching styles that are very teacher-directed, with little encouragement for students to be actively involved in their learning, for example through collaborative work or independent study. Opportunities for discussion are very limited and sometimes there is no time to assimilate information and ask questions. Teachers have good relationships with their students, but do not build on this by involving them more. In one lesson on the environmental impact of a volcano, a student who had recently visited Mount St. Helen's was asked to talk to the rest of the class about his experience. This was extremely brief and the opportunity was missed to involve the class in questioning someone with direct personal experience. The quality of teaching has a direct effect on achievement and the quality of learning.
144. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and want to succeed. However, teaching tends to leave them passive without opportunities to work collaboratively, sharing ideas or articulating their understanding. ICT is not identified in the range of work to be covered and the department has no computers or geography programs to enable students to develop geography ICT skills. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory with students' work marked and returned to them regularly. Homework relates satisfactorily to work in lessons. The use of assessment in target setting and data analysis, from internal and external sources to help improve standards, requires further development. Students need to become more involved in the process of taking action to improve their own performance, although they do know how targets are set.
145. The pattern of fieldwork provision has changed. The 2001 A Level group attended a residential week, the 2002 group had one day led fieldwork and one-day personal data collection. The current A Level group has also attended a two-day Excellence Challenge Masterclass. Students would benefit from planning the progressive development of fieldwork skills.
146. Leadership and management of the subject are currently unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory; attainment has fallen, the quality of teaching has declined and the teaching issues of collaborative learning and independent study identified in that report have not been effectively addressed. However, extra revision classes took place in 2001 and there is an extra lesson weekly before school to try to improve standards.
147. The school is aware of the difficulties and is taking appropriate action to improve. The department is going through a transition stage following staff absences and deployment changes. A new acting head of department had only been in post for three weeks at the time of the inspection and he had already started to update the department handbook and has plans to introduce a programme of teachers observing each other's lessons. A much more vigorous plan is required to improve standards through monitoring of teaching, planning and students' work; developing the curriculum and planning professional development.

148. Resources for geography are adequate, each student has good access to the main A level course textbook, but there is a limited range of library reference books, with most of them out-of-date and not relevant to topics covered today. However, there is good provision of periodicals.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

149. The inspection focused on courses in English Language and Literature and French. Some sampling was also done of work in Italian. German is also taught. Attainment is average in English courses and above average in French. In both subjects pupils achieve better than expected given their previous attainment. This is because of teaching that is sound and better in English and good in French. Recruitment is improving.

ENGLISH

150. Overall, the quality of provision in English (Language and Literature) is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are average for English Language and English Literature but students achieve well, building on their prior attainment.
- Teachers' knowledge is very good.
- Staff are committed and enthusiastic.
- Courses are well organised and teachers provide useful and relevant notes and advice.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching and learning styles to ensure students develop their own responses and research and share ideas and information to improve learning further.

151. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English Language and English Literature, attracting two teaching groups in each year, with around 15 students in each. The school admits a wide range of ability onto these courses, while expecting all students to attain at least a pass grade. Results are usually in line with predictions and often above, so students achieve well.
152. In 2001, results in English Language A Level were close to the national average and rose in 2002, with a high proportion of students gaining higher grades in English Language. Results in English Literature A Level in 2001 were slightly below national averages but these results also improved in 2002. The school's results in AS Language and Literature 2001 showed a good degree of success, although national comparisons are not available. An increased number of students took AS literature in 2002 and overall attainment fell back a little.
153. The observation of work seen during the inspection showed that there is a broad range of ability within AS/A2 language and literature groups. This is confirmed by target grades. Some students contribute confidently and fluently to discussion, whereas others remain silent. For example, in one AS group that was studying short stories by James Joyce, several students were particularly quick at identifying religious imagery and its effect. In an AS language group, some students were able to comment on the connotations behind a tabloid text more readily than others. Nevertheless, in their first piece of written work, all language students were able to find original examples of new linguistic usage from their own observations and comment on these.

154. Written work shows that all students make good progress from AS to A2. In the language course, they show increasing assurance in their use of linguistic terminology. They are taught to analyse a wide range of text-types in detail. For their personal study in the second year, they learn how to make transcripts and carry out analysis of spoken language. In literature, students' written work shows that they become more precise in their comments. Points are well-supported, although in some cases the effect of a writer's use of language could be explored in more depth.
155. Lessons observed were never less than satisfactory and in some cases were good or very good. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and often their enthusiasm is infectious. Language lessons draw on a wide range of cultural, historical and political issues. An introduction to Chaucer focused on the sound and rhythm of the poetry, not just a translation of the words, and students tried out their own reading aloud. However, most lessons in both courses use the same approach, which is a discussion led by the teacher. Questioning is good and some students contribute well, but they are rarely all drawn into the discussion, although this did happen in a lesson where all 18 students were asked to express an opinion on the advantages or disadvantages of spelling reform. Teachers emphasise the importance of students' own opinions, but they need to create more contexts for students to bring their ideas and research into the lesson.
156. Students are attentive and courteous in lessons. Some are keen to contribute, while others remain somewhat passive.
157. Staff mark work carefully, making suggestions for improvement. When setting and returning work, they ensure that students are familiar with the criteria for assessment, sometimes asking students to judge a particular piece of work against these. Targets are set for students based on their prior attainment and then re-set for A2 following AS results.
158. Teachers provide useful detailed notes on aspects of the courses and a range of relevant material from a variety of sources. The commitment of the department means that extra lessons are given out of school hours if the timetable has not provided enough. Theatre trips are organised to enhance learning.
159. Leadership and management are good. Both courses are well organised, with two teachers taking each group, and responsibilities are clear for AS and A2. A member of the department who is new to the course is being given careful induction. Some staff are examiners, and this experience is used well.
160. The English department has a development plan in line with the whole-school format. This outlines, among other priorities, training needs, although these could be more precisely identified.
161. Teaching and learning styles within the English Language and Literature courses tend to be limited. Staff give good models of analysis, both of literary and other language texts, but students now need to be given more opportunities to find their own sources and to share ideas more actively in lessons, for example through group or individual presentations.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES - FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Results show a consistent improvement and are above the national average.
- Positive attitudes of students towards languages.
- Efficient use of time.

Areas for improvement

- The repertoire of teaching techniques.
- The use of ICT and the overhead projector.

163. Results have continued to improve since the last inspection. They have been consistently above average and continue to improve. Attainment in 2001, the last year for which there is comparative data, was well above average. In 2002, 16 pupils, a very high number for A Level French, sat the examination and there was a 100% pass rate.

164. Students at the beginning of Year 12 have very good receptive skills; they are used to hearing the target language spoken and respond to teachers' use of it. They are less secure in the productive skills of speaking and writing. Teachers take steps to redress this deficiency so that by the time they reach Year 13, students can speak and write at length on more sophisticated topics, such as "The Modern French Family", offering their own considered opinions. Higher attaining students in Year 13 can comment on the presentations their peers have prepared and ask questions about them. Some of these are complex and sophisticated. Sometimes fluency is at the expense of grammatical accuracy.

165. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers ensure that the transition from GCSE, though daunting for some, is made as smooth as possible. The students' excellent attitudes help them to make good progress. Feedback is helpful and constructive. Teachers insist on correct pronunciation and correct grammatical errors. They do this unobtrusively and sympathetically.

166. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent: as well as their command of the language, they keep up-to-date with political and cultural developments in francophone countries. Teachers have high expectations of the students. They respond quickly to weaknesses and offer strategies for improvement. However, a restricted repertoire of teaching styles and a limited range of resources in Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly related to teaching accommodation in Years 9 to 11, have an impact on the overall attainment of students.

167. Students collaborate well. They are good listeners and are quick to assimilate new language. However, creative use of language is limited. Attitudes are always excellent. The department provides excellent advice on a range of courses in higher education and this has resulted in large numbers of students applying for courses that include a MFL.

168. Teachers' use of time in lessons is very good and students remain on task, but, although time is well used, students find it hard to maintain concentration when they have three consecutive lessons, and this has a negative impact on their learning. Conversely, single periods are often too short.

169. Accommodation in the sixth form is much improved since the last inspection but resources are still limited. Although there are overhead projectors, they are not regularly used. Teachers find it difficult in the accommodation for GCSE groups to make good use of resources. As a result pupils are not fully prepared for the independent use of language at AS level. The department recognises the potential of ICT for teaching and learning but has not yet embedded it into the programme.
170. Leadership and management are good. The department works as a team and plans collectively in order to deliver an effective programme. This is particularly important when classes are shared. The department continues to make good progress, and the professional team of teachers is keen to improve even further.