

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN OF GAUNT SCHOOL

Trowbridge

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126462

Headteacher: Mr J Dourneen

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 30 September to 4 October 2002

Inspection number: 250676

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Wingfield Road
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Wiltshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Roy

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

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11094	Ian Blair	Lay inspector	Educational Inclusion, including race equality	Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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			English as an additional language	
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History	
			Special educational needs	
10392	Donaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Law	
			History (sixth form)	
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10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English (sixth form)	
			Drama (sixth form)	
31683	Stephen Beaven	Team inspector	Music	
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27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John of Gaunt School is a large comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. It has 1428 students, including 194 in the sixth form, with an even balance of boys and girls. The vast majority of students are white, and under two per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these students have English as an additional language, but none is in the early stages of learning English. An average proportion of students have special educational needs, and there is a small unit for students with dyslexia. A small but significant number of students have serious difficulties with behaviour, and some have unsettled lives outside school. The standards reached by students joining the school are below average, particularly in reading and writing. A deputy headteacher has twice had to act as headteacher over the past two years, and the school has had a high turnover of teachers. There were five temporary supply teachers in the school at the time of the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

John of Gaunt School provides satisfactory education, and has some outstanding features. Standards rise from below average in Year 7 to average in Year 11 and in the sixth form. Students reach above-average standards in several subjects and in activities outside lessons. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and in sixth form lessons, although there are weaknesses in teaching for younger students. The leadership group work well as a team and have clear priorities for improving the school. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school does well

- The newly appointed headteacher and his senior colleagues provide effective leadership and have good priorities for improving the school.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has led to a long-term improvement in GCSE results.
- Standards in Year 11 are above average in science, music, design and technology and physical education.
- Gifted and talented students achieve very high standards in music and art.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good, with some excellent features.
- Provision for careers advice and work experience is well-organised and effective.
- The school makes good provision for students with dyslexia.

What could be improved

- A small number of students behave very poorly, despite the school's support.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 needs to be improved, particularly in English and literacy.
- School policies are not followed through consistently by middle managers.
- Arrangements to assess and track students' progress need to be improved.
- There are too few vocational courses and too little information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in May 1998, teaching and learning were generally good. There were, however, weaknesses in the standards reached by average students, in spiritual and cultural development, and in long-term planning. Since that time, there has been good improvement in GCSE results and in provision for cultural, though not spiritual, development. Improvements in long-term planning have been impeded over the past two

years by changes in leadership, and by a staffing shortage that has forced senior staff to give priority to meeting immediate targets. There are more weaknesses in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 than at the time of the last inspection, and development planning still lacks clear targets. However, the headteacher is introducing effective systems to deal with the school's weaknesses and to build on its strengths. The school is well placed to move forward again, provided it can stabilise its staffing.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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	C	B	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

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

GCSE results in 2002 were similar overall to those in 2001. Results were particularly good in science, where 50 students achieved A and A* grades. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average in science, and had recovered to average levels in mathematics, following improvements in teaching and leadership. Standards in Year 11 were above average in design and technology, music and physical education. Standards were average in other subjects, including English, except for ICT, where standards in Year 11 were below average. Overall, standards in Year 11 represent satisfactory achievement.

The results of Year 9 national tests in 2001 were above average in science, and average in mathematics and English. Results for 2002 are similar and represent very good progress from the standards reached by students joining the school. The quality of work seen during the inspection was above average in science and broadly average in mathematics. In English, the standards reached by students in Year 9 during the inspection were below average overall, partly because of weaknesses in teaching. Standards in modern foreign languages in Year 9 are below average for the same reason. Standards in Year 9 are above average in design and technology, and average in other subjects.

GCSE results have improved faster than in most schools since the last inspection, and results in Year 9 tests have shown average improvement. The school met its GCSE target in 2002. Further improvement in standards in Year 9 is held back by weaknesses in literacy skills in Years 7 to 9. Overall, the achievement of students with special educational needs, and of gifted and talented students, is satisfactory. There are some areas of outstanding achievement, such as musical productions and concerts, but the achievement of students with literacy problems is affected by weaknesses in the school's overall provision. The small number of students with English as an additional language, achieve well. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Good. Students want to learn and to contribute to the community.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Most students behave well, but there is some unruly behaviour, and the behaviour of a small minority is very poor.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Students co-operate well, and are willing to take responsibility. A few find it hard to form good relationships.
Attendance	Good, because of significant improvement over the past year. Punctuality is satisfactory overall.

The school council is effective, and allows sixth form students to show good leadership. Almost all students develop increasingly positive attitudes to work in and out of the classroom as they move through the school. Students develop excellent attitudes in extra-curricular activities, particularly in music. Students from all ethnic backgrounds work and play together well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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.

The teaching of the school's experienced, permanent staff has been a key factor in sustaining GCSE results, although sometimes they have to make good the effects of previous weaknesses. Good teaching in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of all students well.

Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory or better in a substantial majority of lessons, and the best is very good. However, learning in a significant number of classes is held back by weaknesses in marking and homework, and work is not always matched closely enough to the needs of all students.

Teaching in English is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory, with good features, throughout the school. The teaching of science is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Numeracy skills are taught effectively across the school, but literacy skills are not, despite some very good literacy teaching to older students in English. The teaching of ICT skills is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but too little is provided for some students in Years 10 and 11. Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs is good, and gifted and talented students receive good teaching at various points in their school career. Teachers' voluntary teaching in activities outside lessons is very good, and at times excellent. Teaching assistants give students effective individual support in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. There are some good courses, but there are weaknesses in provision for literacy, in timetabling and in vocational education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Specialist teaching is good, but much work in lessons is not matched closely enough to students' needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. These students' needs are clearly identified, they receive good additional teaching where necessary, and they learn well in the main school and in the sixth form.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Cultural development is good, with some excellent features. Provision for moral and social development are satisfactory, with good features but some inconsistencies which the school is addressing. There is too little provision for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory. Good personal care and support and careers guidance. Some weaknesses in academic guidance as information on what students know, understand and can do is not always used in planning.

The school has a satisfactory working partnership with parents. There is no daily act of collective worship, and provision for ICT does not meet legal requirements in Years 10 and 11. Provision for learning outside lessons is very good, particularly in music and sports.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Weaknesses in development planning are being tackled and the headteacher has strengthened the leadership group. Weaknesses in middle management have been identified and good procedures put in place to improve them.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are well-organised and in touch with the school. They understand its strengths and weaknesses well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school tracks overall performance effectively, but does not analyse data from individual subjects critically enough.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory, with good features. The school deploys its resources effectively, and uses grants for special educational needs well.

The school has recently had very high staff turnover. While very nearly all teachers are now qualified, several are teaching outside their main subject for part of the week, and some inexperienced teachers are having to cope with very demanding classes. The school has adequate resources for learning, and uses its library well. Accommodation is just adequate for the number of students.

Subject leaders create good teamwork in their departments, but some monitoring is not identifying and addressing weakness effectively. The headteacher's notes for middle managers are exceptionally clear and practical. This year, governors received financial

information from the local education authority too late to enable them to plan effectively. The school obtains good value in purchases, but systems for consulting parents and setting challenging targets for improvement are underdeveloped.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students make good progress. • The school is approachable. • Students are expected to do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Behaviour. • The quality of information for parents.

Inspectors found that some students' progress had been affected by staffing difficulties and other factors, but agreed with parents' other positive points. They share parents' concerns about the quality and regularity of homework. Most students behaved well during the inspection, but the behaviour of a small number caused serious concern. Inspectors found the quality of information good, and sometimes very good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 194 students in the sixth form, which has slightly more female than male students. Just under half of the students stay on from the main school, and the sixth form is roughly the same size as at the time of the last inspection. The sixth form is part of a consortium of three schools, and offers a broad range of A-level and AS courses, with a small number of advanced vocational courses, and some GCSE courses. Almost all students take A-level and AS courses, and those wishing to follow vocational courses often transfer to the nearby Further Education College. As in the main school, most students are white, with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few students have English as an additional language, but they are not in the early stages of learning English. Students joining the sixth form are expected to have at least five GCSE passes at grade C or above, and have reached average overall standards for their courses. Over half have part-time jobs. Some of these help their work, but some reduce their opportunities for study.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form enables students to reach average standards overall, and this represents satisfactory achievement in view of their results at GCSE. Teaching in lessons is good, but in some courses, students need to become more actively involved, and to improve their work outside lessons. The range of courses meets the needs of the students well, and fits in well with other local provision. Since the last inspection, the sixth form has maintained standards and extended the range of courses it offers. Management, cost-effectiveness, and improvement since the last inspection are satisfactory.

Strengths

- Standards at A-level are above average in law, history, music, psychology and sciences.
- Teaching in sixth form lessons is good.
- The sixth form consortium provides a varied and interesting range of courses.
- There is a very good range of activities outside lessons.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve good results.
- There are good induction procedures for students joining the sixth form.

What could be improved

- Many students' learning and study skills need improvement.
- Target setting and tracking of progress are not used well enough.
- Poor attendance and punctuality are not tackled quickly enough.
- There are weaknesses in provision for business studies and ICT.

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 and sciences	Satisfactory overall. Provision is satisfactory in mathematics. There is good teaching and achievement in sciences across a wide range of courses.
Design and technology	Good. Teaching is well matched to students' learning needs. They work hard, and make good progress.
Business.	Unsatisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory, but the school does not manage the subject effectively.
ICT	Satisfactory overall. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in development planning and management.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel.	Good. Provision for physical education is good, and has some very good features.
Visual and performing arts and media.	Good. Provision is good for drama and art and design, satisfactory for performing arts, and very good for music. Good teaching and a positive learning atmosphere lead to good achievement.
Humanities	Good. Teaching and learning are good overall, with good overall provision for independent learning skills.
English, language and communication.	Satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning in English lessons are good and sometimes outstanding, but there are some inconsistencies in the development of students' broader learning and study skills. Provision for modern foreign languages is good.

The additional studies programme gives students good opportunities to extend their skills and experience and to contribute to the school and broader community. There is, however, little additional provision for those needing to extend their learning and study skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Most students entering the sixth form receive good guidance, but a small number are enrolled on courses, particularly in mathematics, where they do not have a realistic chance of success. There are good induction procedures, and students are encouraged to sample their courses. However, there is too little guidance within the sixth form on developing skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and techniques for private study. Careers guidance is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Good consortium arrangements enable the school to provide for a broad range of students' needs and interests. The school ensures good teaching in advanced and other courses, and provides good opportunities for students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Monitoring of standards is satisfactory. Provision for all students to develop the skills they need to succeed at AS and A-level is not consistent enough. Most subjects are managed well, but there are some weaknesses.

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"> • There is a good range of courses. • Students enjoy the sixth form. • The teaching is good. • Teachers are accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities outside lessons. • Assessment and guidance on progress. • Careers and personal guidance. • Consultation with students.

Inspectors broadly shared the students' views of the sixth form strengths, though they found that study and learning skills needed more emphasis in teaching. They agreed that some improvements were needed in assessment and guidance on progress. However, inspectors found that there was a good range of activities outside lessons, that students were consulted effectively through the school council, and that the overall quality of careers advice was good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. As at the time of the last inspection, standards among students joining the school are below average, particularly in literacy. The school does not have complete national test scores for students joining in Year 7 over recent years, but its analysis of other evidence from tests suggests that standards may be falling. The broadly average standards reached by students in Year 9 and Year 11 in recent years, including results at GCSE, which have been improving at an above average rate in recent years, represent good long-term achievement. The standard of work seen during the inspection, however, showed that this pattern of achievement was beginning to be affected by the school's recent staffing difficulties. Standards in Year 9, where results have been improving at an average rate since the last inspection, are held back by weaknesses in literacy, and students entering Year 9 at the time of the inspection were reaching below average overall standards in English and in modern foreign languages. Standards in Year 9 were good in science and design and technology, and broadly average in other subjects, although in some, notably geography, standards were held back by weaknesses in written work. The standard of work in Year 11 during the inspection was good in science, art and design, design and technology, music, and physical education. In other subjects, standards were broadly average.
2. Students enter the school with numeracy standards that are slightly below average. They improve and extend these in mathematics, particularly through mental calculations at the start of lessons, and through other subjects. In science, for example, they use formulae to calculate the relationship between speed, time and distance, evaluate data to find the relationship between the volume of water being heated and the temperature rise; and use line graphs to represent their results in a variety of situations. In design and technology, they frequently measure and calculate when designing products, recipes and diets. In history and geography, they interpret statistics and construct pie charts and line graphs. The school's numeracy policy and the National Numeracy Strategy are helping raise standards.
3. Some students begin Year 7 with good skills in reading and writing, but a significant proportion do not write fluently and accurately, and do not understand more advanced vocabulary when reading. Most of these students are boys. By the end of Year 9, the school ensures that higher-attaining students achieve the standards they should, and there is outstanding achievement by some gifted and talented students. However, a significant number of students still have problems with basic literacy when they begin work on their GCSE courses.
4. Standards in ICT are broadly average in Year 9, and students develop their skills in using computers across a wider range of subjects than in most schools. Standards in Year 11 are below average, partly because there is no certificated course, and partly because the school is not able to ensure that all students use ICT often enough to reach the standard expected nationally.
5. The achievements of gifted and talented students are satisfactory overall, and these students do well in response to courses designed to help them at various stages of their school career. The long-term achievements of students with special educational needs are satisfactory, and some individual students, particularly those with dyslexia, achieve

good standards. The small number of students with English as an additional language also achieve good overall standards.

6. Girls do better than boys overall at GCSE, although the gap between girls' and boys' results has been narrower than in most schools in recent years. Higher-attaining boys reach good standards – for example, they achieved significantly more A and A* grades than girls in science in 2002 – but average and lower-attaining boys achieve much less than girls in some subjects. In English language, for example, boys in 2002 achieved more A* grades than girls, but many more boys than girls achieved a result below grade C. Boys' weaknesses in writing in Years 7 to 9 contribute to these differences. The school has identified the need to improve literacy standards, particularly among boys, and to improve the match of courses in Years 10 and 11 to boys' needs and interests.

Sixth form

7. Students join the sixth form with broadly average standards, and achieve broadly average examination results. Within this overall picture, examination results have improved steadily over the past five years, and there was a high pass rate among students completing A-level courses in 2002. Results are above average in the sciences, history, law, music and psychology, and below average in business studies and economics. Results in other subjects are broadly average overall. The standard of work seen during the inspection was close to the examination results. Students with special educational needs in the sixth form are committed to their learning, and achieve good standards. Gifted and talented students are effectively stretched by the teaching, and also do well. The small number of students with English as an additional language achieve well, and two achieved high grades in GCSE English in 2002. Overall, students' results and achievements in the sixth form represent satisfactory progress from their GCSE results.
8. As in the main school, able boys often reach very high standards, but boys overall reach lower standards than girls. While the gap between boys' and girls' results is similar to that in most schools, it is significant. In its analysis of 2002 results at A-level and AS, for example, the school picked out nearly twice as many girls as boys as having done particularly well. Inspection evidence across the sixth form showed a clear link between standards and the levels of students' learning and study skills, indicating that attention to this area is likely to be of particular benefit to boys.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Most students come to school each morning keen to learn, and enjoy its social atmosphere. Most, including those with special educational needs, are fully engaged in their lessons and the very good range of additional activities that the school offers. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in all school activities, and form good relationships with other students. Students enjoy using the library, and in some cases, for example where students are heavily involved in music, students form a strong working partnership with their teachers, and their attitudes to school are excellent. On the other hand, a small number of students throughout the school take too little interest in their work, and do not sustain concentration as they should. A larger number need a strong lead from their teacher if they are to work well, and many students do not understand the importance of homework and independent study. Overall, attitudes to school are satisfactory, but the poor attitudes of the minority force teachers to spend more time than they should on basic management, and are holding back the school's efforts to raise standards.

10. Most behaviour during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to good, with very good behaviour when students were interested and fully engaged their work. Behaviour in a significant minority of classes and tutorial periods is unruly and interferes with learning. Several teachers told inspectors of distressing breaches of courtesy and good manners, particularly towards women teachers. A very small minority of students behave very poorly and, at worst, their behaviour adversely affects learning and health and safety. Such behaviour is not confined to isolated incidents. The rate of fixed-term exclusions is above average, despite a wide range of measures taken to provide support for these students, including good identification of those likely to have learning difficulties in primary schools, and co-operation with agencies outside the school. Almost all exclusions are for one or two days, and they often have the support of parents. Behaviour has worsened since the last inspection.
11. Relationships among students, and between students and staff, are satisfactory overall, but reflect the wide variation in students' behaviour and attitudes. The disruptive behaviour of a minority of students makes it difficult for them to form constructive relationships, and sometimes disputes that begin outside school are brought into it. Arrangements to promote good relationships and personal development are particularly strong in Year 8, where students help around school on a number of tasks such as library and office duty. They engage enthusiastically in an adult role-play exercise, called the 'Real Game', produce records of achievement and respond well to opportunities to practise their presentational skills.
12. Attendance is above average, and has recovered from the fall to average levels in 2000-2001. The 2000-2001 figures are, however, recorded in Part C of this report, as this is the last year for which national comparisons are available. Punctuality is generally satisfactory, though there is some lateness at the start of the day.

Sixth form

13. Relationships amongst students are generally good both in lessons and in the sixth form area. They work well co-operatively in lessons, and there is good rapport between students and teachers, based on mutual respect. This rapport is sometimes excellent, and results in outstanding learning. Examples include work on contemporary Spanish culture, and on Elizabethan madrigals. Students respond very positively to opportunities to develop their personal skills. These include the additional learning scheme through which students participate in community projects, and the sixth form council, which makes a good contribution to the management of the school. Students with special educational needs and those with minority ethnic backgrounds have good attitudes and achieve well across a range of subjects, including English GCSE. Students with positions of responsibility, such as head boy and head girl, make an effective contribution to the life of the school.
14. Students following some courses, notably law and history, develop good attitudes to private study and investigation, and students across the sixth form are prepared to work outside lessons. In many cases, however, this work does little more than consolidate what they have learned in lessons, and too few students read widely and work independently in the way they need to if they are to succeed fully at AS and A-level.
15. Most sixth form students attend regularly, but attendance on some courses is low, and attendance in lessons during the inspection was only just adequate. Some students are late without good reason. These lapses hinder the consistency of work in the sixth form and limit achievement in some courses, for example in business studies.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is mostly in the hands of the experienced and well-qualified teachers who make up the majority of the school staff. These teachers know their subjects well, understand patterns in learning among the students they teach, and have a clear focus to their work that leads to good progress. This teaching has helped the school to meet its GCSE targets in 2002. Overall, teaching has retained the good quality seen at the time of the last inspection in Years 10 and 11.
17. By the time of the inspection, teaching in mathematics had recovered from the department's recent staffing difficulties. It was never less than satisfactory, and often good. Mathematics lessons are well-planned, with a clear focus for learning in each lesson, and teachers manage classes well. Standards in mathematics have begun to rise as a result, though there are still some weaknesses in marking and homework. The teaching of numeracy across the school is satisfactory. In design and technology, very effective teamwork from skilled and experienced teachers has enabled the school to continue to provide good teaching across the subject. The best of this teaching, for example on the design of specialist diets, is excellent.
18. The quality of teaching in English is very good in Years 10 and 11, both in GCSE classes and in work with lower-attaining students taking the Certificate of Achievement. However, English teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not meeting the needs of the students effectively. Some temporary teachers do not have a sound knowledge of the National Curriculum and some teaching from teachers working outside their main subjects is poor. Newly-qualified teachers are having to take responsibility for classes in Years 7 and 8 which contain an unusually broad spread of learning needs. The school has not yet made sufficient adjustments in its teaching to meet the needs of the substantial number of students who arrive with weaknesses in reading and writing. Even where teaching in lessons is good, written work in most other subjects across the school is not doing enough to help students improve their reading and writing skills.
19. Teaching and learning in science are good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. GCSE science teaching is consistently well-planned and challenging, and there is excellent teaching in some classes for younger students. However, teachers do not match work well enough to the wide range of learning needs in some Year 7 classes, and in a very small minority of lessons there is poor teaching, caused by a serious lack of challenge to students. The science department has been working to develop a consistent approach to literacy, but this is not always reflected in its teaching. The teaching of ICT in subjects, rather than as a subject, is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with effective support to teachers from the technician. The teaching is not meeting the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11, however, as some do not receive enough of it.
20. There is good teaching in history and geography lessons, based on personal enthusiasm, good knowledge of the subjects, and imaginative use of resources. Well-chosen themes contribute to students' personal development and to citizenship. However, marking and homework are inadequate in both subjects, and significant opportunities are missed to develop students' literacy. This is reflected in weak examination results. Teaching in the humanities GCSE course is less effective than that in history and geography, and some in Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Learning in Year 11 of this course is also held back by the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of boys. The teaching of religious education is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, though there is some unsatisfactory teaching of older students by teachers who are not religious education specialists. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory, with good features, in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and

11. This teaching is well-organised and enthusiastic, and builds good long-term attitudes to the subject. Good teaching leads to above average standards in music and art and design by Year 11. There is a significant amount of excellent teaching in music, based on outstanding knowledge of the subject, imaginative teaching techniques and very clear communication. Teaching in extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, is of very high quality.
21. Students with special educational needs receive good specialist teaching and are effectively involved in all lessons. The development of their literacy skills is, however, affected by the more general weakness in matching work to students' learning needs in lessons in Years 7 to 9. Teaching assistants provide good support, although they do not always have the knowledge and understanding to give effective support in science. Gifted and talented students receive effective teaching in special courses in a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. The highest-attaining students are also well taught in science in Years 10 and 11, and in the school's extensive provision of learning opportunities outside lessons. However, their needs are not met consistently enough in lessons, particularly in their first half-term in the school. The learning needs of the small number of students with minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, are effectively met.

Sixth form

22. The quality of teaching in sixth form lessons is good overall, and is satisfactory or better in all subjects. Teachers know their subjects well, plan interesting lessons, and engage students well in their work. A significant proportion of sixth form teaching is very good, and there were excellent individual lessons during the inspection in history and Spanish. Good teaching extends to courses for students re-taking GCSEs as well as to advanced courses. Staffing shortages have had less effect on teaching in the sixth form than in the main school, and had been dealt with by the time of the inspection.
23. Very occasionally, teaching in individual lessons is not clearly focused, and does not lead to effective learning. The impact of good teaching on learning varies significantly between subjects. In some, where standards are consistently above average, teaching incorporates and encourages the independent learning skills and habits of study outside lessons that are needed for high achievement. In others, these skills are less consistently taught, and this limits some students' ability to present their work well in coursework and examinations. This is particularly important for students who have weaknesses in literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT. All students are given long-term targets based on their GCSE grades, but some need more immediate targets, particularly where they have begun A-level work with the minimum requirement for the course.

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

Learning opportunities

24. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 includes all National Curriculum subjects and makes effective provision for health education, including sex education and education against the misuse of drugs. The introduction of citizenship education has been satisfactory. The principles of the national strategies for Years 7 to 9 are well established in number work, and the system of teaching ICT across a range of subjects works well. Opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills, on the other hand, are not consistently provided across the school. The curriculum for modern foreign

languages is satisfactory for students studying one language, but allows too little time for those who take on a second language, so that few students continue with two languages in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs receive good specialist teaching, particularly in the unit for dyslexia, but work in lessons is not always sufficiently modified to enable them to learn effectively.

25. The range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of most students and has good features. Certificate of Achievement courses are well organised in mathematics and modern languages. The English course is outstanding and leads to very good standards and achievement. There are effective arrangements for work experience for all students and the single vocational course, in health and social care, is effective. There is a successful work-related option for lower-attaining students, based on a range of placements in Year 10 and related to careers in Year 11. This helps students at risk of exclusion to remain in school. Nevertheless, the range of vocational courses is underdeveloped and a significant proportion of students do not have enough experience of ICT. There is no examination course in this subject and the school's arrangements do not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The lack of time for some other subjects, such as modern foreign languages and physical education, limits the quality of learning, and there is too little connection between courses in Years 10 and 11 and those in the sixth form, particularly in business studies.
26. The school has good arrangements to ensure that all students have equal access to courses. Students with English as an additional language receive effective additional teaching, and provision for them is good. The leadership group has a clear vision of citizenship as part of the school's ethos, to be taught through existing activities and involving everyone in the school. The school has carried out a thorough audit to ascertain where the strands of the National Curriculum for citizenship can be best taught. Some subjects, such as history, geography and the GCSE course in humanities, already make an important contribution. For example, a class was observed discussing changes in life in the countryside and the recent march in London. The strand of participation and responsibility is well established. The student council plays an important part in the school, and students participate in the Trowbridge Youth Council, and a model United Nations Assembly.
27. Provision for careers advice and work experience is well organised and extensive. It is being continually developed in co-operation with the community, for example to extend the range of placements for lower-attaining students. The community makes a good contribution to work in physical education, and other aspects of community involvement are satisfactory. The school has developed its relationships with primary schools since the last inspection, and members of the leadership group work closely with them on arrangements for the transfer of new students.
28. Opportunities for learning outside lessons are very good, and excellent in music. The school has successfully entered the West Wiltshire athletics championships for Years 7-11 and inter-students' competitions in rugby and football. Experience is enriched by trips abroad and outdoor pursuits. There are annual dance productions involving visits by professional performers. Study support is satisfactory, with good features. There are good extension courses for students in English, and a very good range of provision outside the school in mathematics. A science club meets each Thursday for Years 7, 8 and 9, and design and technology '2000' provides the opportunity to build and race a scale model racing car in the schools' F2000 competition based in Oxford. Art clubs meet on three days each week to enhance GCSE provision and to stimulate interest in drawing and painting. Language development is supported by a weekly public speaking session. Some homework clubs, however, are not as well attended as they should be.

Provision for music is an outstanding strength, with an excellent range of productions and concerts that have brought national recognition.

Sixth form

29. The curriculum for the sixth form is satisfactory. A very effective consortium arrangement with two other schools ensures a good range of courses at AS, A-level and GCSE. This complements local vocational provision at the further education college, and meets students' needs well. Statutory requirements are met for religious education, but there is no regular timetabled physical education for students. The range of courses has been developed well since the last inspection.
30. Provision for additional studies is well-organised, but there are not enough opportunities for students to develop key skills in independent study and ICT. This limits the benefit to students of the good range of courses they are offered. It contributes to the high rate of drop-out in some subjects, and also limits the standards reached by some students who are capable of high achievement, but who need more guidance on ways of using their time. The school has not developed this aspect of its work enough since the last inspection. There is good careers advice for students during their sixth form career.
31. Extra-curricular provision in the sixth form is extensive. A creative writing workshop meets after school on one day each week, and public speaking and debate take place at lunchtime on the same day. Humanities conducts a model United Nations after school once a week whilst music provides the opportunity to join a string orchestra after school. A good programme of visits includes an exchange with students in Santa Barbara, California and a visit to Berlin for history students. Physical education provides a ski trip during the February half term. There are frequent theatre visits. As part of law studies, students make visits to the law courts and experience collaborative work with other schools and colleges, whilst solicitors make visits to the school. As in the main school, opportunities for music outside lessons are outstanding, and lead to very high achievement among gifted and talented students.

Personal development

32. The school has made some improvements in spiritual development, but more are needed. All views are treated with respect, and there are some good features – a Muslim parent, for example, made a very effective contribution to an assembly following the September 11 attacks. There are good opportunities for reflection in many religious education lessons, and a student has designed and made a beautiful multi-faith wall-hanging. There are also examples of good spiritual development in music, drama and theatre studies lessons, where violence, loneliness and self-interest are considered. Assemblies give strong moral and social messages, but there is no opportunity to reflect upon these, and no link to any form of religious belief. They do not meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. No improvement has been made since the last inspection. Plans by the leadership group to include opportunities for reflection in lessons across the school are not followed through in most teachers' planning, and overall provision remains under-developed.
33. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Teachers treat all students with respect and set them a good example of co-operation, consideration and courteous behaviour. Opportunities for moral development occur in all subjects, and many teachers emphasise moral values and responsibilities in lessons. In English, for example, students discuss the moral dilemma experienced by Tess of the d'Urbervilles, while in geography they consider the responsibilities of individuals and companies for pollution, and the moral implications of population control. Science students begin to consider the moral issues involving medical research, and in history there is a strong emphasis on the morality of war. The personal, social and health education course effectively deals with moral issues relating to drugs and relationships. Overall, the school sends students a strong and consistent message on the difference between right and wrong, and this is understood and followed by the majority of students.
34. Policies for social development have good features, but are not carried into effect consistently enough. Strong social messages at assembly on collaboration and co-operation are applied by most students. This leads to good co-operation between students working in pairs and groups, and there is excellent teamwork between teachers and students in music and in the Certificate of Achievement course in English. The school encourages students to take responsibility for their actions, and to take responsibility for their own learning. However, the student planner, a key element in training students in personal organisation and responsibility, is not used consistently and effectively by almost half of the students, and too many neglect their homework. This has a significant effect on standards, and in art and design and geography it reduces the benefits to students of good features in the teaching they receive. Too many boys do not show the respect and courtesy due to female members of staff, and arrangements to teach them to do this are not fully effective. Roughly a third of registration and tutorial periods do not enable students to make a good start to morning and afternoon school. Graffiti are not dealt with quickly enough, there is too much litter, and students often push past visitors in the corridor and when going through doors.
35. The school helps students develop good knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures, so that they are fully aware of the range of cultures in modern society. Teachers in many subjects raise awareness of cultural differences through the use of videos, texts, significant objects, and musical instruments and styles from other cultures. Geography fieldwork ensures students have experience of appreciation of their national landscape and know about their own environment. School trips and exchanges to Spain, Canada and France enable students to learn about other cultures

at first hand. Students' own cultural heritage and diversity is promoted through regular theatre trips, and visits to art galleries and exhibitions. The outstanding contribution to cultural development of music has led to national recognition, particularly for its brass band, with opportunities to attend and participate in concerts at the Albert Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall. The cultural opportunities in music extend to all students, including those whose behaviour is poor in some other lessons. It provides an excellent introduction for gifted and talented students to the culture of professional musicianship.

Sixth form

36. The school promotes the personal development of sixth formers well through the broad range of activities it provides outside lessons. They contribute to leadership well through the school council, through taking the lead in musical activities, and by accepting positions of responsibility such as head boy, head girl and their deputies. There are good opportunities for reflection on significant issues in lessons, for example in theatre studies, where students identify and consider the themes of violence, self interest and loneliness in the lives of characters, and recognise it as constraining the human spirit. In English, students discuss the moral dilemma experienced by Tess of the d'Urbervilles, while sixth form geographers consider the morality of countryside sports. Science students begin to consider the moral issues involving medical research, but opportunities are missed in the sixth form science to consider the moral implication of embryology. Knowledge of European and other cultures is promoted through advanced study of renaissance and baroque music, and through participation in global challenge expeditions.
37. In law and history, students are very effectively taught the study skills they need to succeed in their work, and they evaluate each other's work well in geography. Additional studies help develop students' sense of responsibility, and there good opportunities for community service, for example through helping younger students who have reading difficulties. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with special educational needs, are fully engaged in sixth form activities, and provision for their personal development is good. However, across the sixth form, students are not given close enough guidance on developing the skills of personal organisation and independent study that are essential to good achievement in advanced studies. This is one of the main reasons why overall achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory, despite the many good features in its work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

38. Arrangements for the care of students have been placed under great strain by the arrival of a small but significant number of students with a history of very poor behaviour and attendance in their previous schools. The school has taken all steps in its power to deal with the situation while enabling these students to take part in mainstream education, but it has not been able to eliminate incidents that put learning and health and safety at risk. The school's provision for the care and well-being of its students is satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection it was good. The main reasons for the change are the high turnover of staff, which has resulted in the inconsistent use of some policies for guidance, such as checking planners and the use of tutorial periods, and the severe additional pressure caused by students whose behaviour is very poor.
39. The school has satisfactory procedures for child protection. Students receive good support from the school nurse and the counsellor, and fire drills take place and are fully recorded each half term. The school has procedures to ensure internet security, but these do not extend fully to all computers on the school site. The toilet facilities for

students are inadequate and in need of refurbishment. Some minor health and safety issues were reported to the headteacher.

40. Systems for monitoring attendance are satisfactory, and make good use of a new computerised system. The school works well with the education welfare officer in cases of persistent absence. However, the quality of morning and afternoon registration is unsatisfactory in a minority of tutor groups, with poor behaviour from some students, and some unpunctuality.
41. The behaviour policy has recently been revised and its system of rewards and sanctions ensures that most students behave well. The school has invested in training for staff in dealing with poor behaviour, and provides all additional support it can, both through teaching assistants and by the appointment to the leadership group of a teacher with strong skills in this field. There has also been some effective modification to the curriculum for potentially disruptive students in Years 10 and 11. Exclusion procedures are sound and applied appropriately. Nevertheless, inspection evidence showed that these various arrangements have not eliminated the threat to health and safety and learning, of both staff and students, from very poor behaviour. The school said that it was difficult to obtain statements of special educational needs for the students with emotional and behavioural difficulties who need them, and inspection evidence confirmed this.
42. The provision of other aspects of support and guidance is consistently good across the school and is very much appreciated by students. It is due mainly to the effectiveness of the tutor group system. Tutors get to know their students well and the provision is well co-ordinated by heads of year. There is a comprehensive programme of activities in each year group, which enables students to develop their personal skills. There is a particularly good programme in Year 8, that encourages the habit of good attendance, provides challenges for the more able and introduces students to the skills they will need in adult life. Students joining the school from primary schools receive good personal guidance. The school's support systems ensure that students with special educational needs take a full part in all school activities. A student using a wheel-chair during the inspection took her turn as a messenger for the office.
43. The school has a satisfactory range of procedures for assessing students' work and setting targets, and tutors receive a comprehensive assessment profile of each student. However, targets do not take account of the particular demands of practical subjects, such as physical education, and information from assessment is not used consistently enough in planning lessons. In mathematics, assessment is used effectively from Year 7 onwards to group students and to match work to their learning needs, but this does not happen in science until Year 8 and in English until Year 9, and contributes to some unsatisfactory teaching in these subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the use of assessment was weak at the time of the last inspection. It is now satisfactory. In the Certificate of Achievement course in English, assessment is used very well to plan work, to build confidence, and to raise standards. On the other hand, the system of minimum target grades does not take sufficient account of the requirements of each subject, particularly in history, where many lower-attaining students have weaknesses in literacy.
44. Assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are well-organised and effective. Information from them is used well by specialist teachers, particularly in reading, and there are some good examples of its use in lesson planning, particularly for students attending the dyslexia unit. Provision for students with special educational needs does not, however, figure consistently enough in lesson planning.

45. Assessment information from primary schools is not analysed early enough by departments. This makes it difficult for teachers of Year 7 classes to match work to students' needs from the beginning of the Autumn term, and in particular to address the needs of lower-attaining students, who are most often boys, in writing. Assessment is used effectively in mathematics from Year 7 onwards, and in science from Year 8. In English, the use of information on students' knowledge, skills and understanding is not used effectively to match work to their learning needs until Year 9. This significantly limits progress in students' first two years in the school.

Sixth form

Assessment

46. Sixth form students' work is regularly marked and assessed, and they have target grades based on GCSE performance. The use of assessment is satisfactory overall, but in some subjects students do not have enough day-to-day feedback on their progress, and have too few medium and short-term targets. Some students expressed concern about this in their pre-inspection questionnaire, and their views were confirmed by inspection evidence. In some subjects, notably mathematics, assessment arrangements for students entering the course are not rigorous enough.

Support and guidance

47. The arrangements for the transfer of students into the sixth form are good. Most students feel confident about their choices of subjects to study and are prepared for the new social structure in the sixth form. Students wishing to follow vocational courses receive good guidance on alternative provision within Trowbridge, and there are good arrangements for students wishing to improve their GCSE results. A small number of students, particularly in mathematics but sometimes also in English, are allowed to start advanced courses in which they have very limited chances of success.
48. Students are well supported and guided by their tutors and class teachers, and there is effective additional guidance through 'additional learning' lessons. Some students responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they needed more day-to-day guidance on their work, including access to teachers outside lessons. These views were borne out in part by inspection evidence, particularly in arrangements to enable students to develop the key skills they need to succeed in their work. Students with special educational needs receive good personal and academic support. Students are expected to dress sensibly, but some teachers are too slow to take action against inappropriate dress. The school prepares students well for higher education. They receive individual guidance on the options available from staff and visitors from the universities, and there is an excellent selection of up-to-date material in the careers library. The school provides good advice on practical aspects of university life.
49. Attendance and punctuality are not monitored closely enough, either centrally or in subjects. Poor attendance is not picked up quickly, and some students are not developing the habits of hard work and good personal organisation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Parents' views of the school are generally positive. Nine-tenths of those responding to the questionnaire are pleased with their children's progress, and many say that they would be happy to approach the school should they have problems or worries. Some parents expressed concern over the behaviour of disruptive students, and a larger

proportion did not feel that homework was used properly. These concerns were borne out by inspection evidence.

51. Parents are kept well informed both on their children's progress and more generally on the life of the school. For example, very good annual written reports summarise each student's strengths and weaknesses in each subject and suggest how they can improve. There are regular parents' evenings at which they can discuss their child's progress with teachers, and other events where they can hear about curriculum issues. Parents say that they find these very helpful. The governing body produces a clear and well laid out annual report for parents. The school prospectus is currently being rewritten, and the draft which was inspected is of high quality. Both these documents fully meet legal requirements.
52. Parents' contribution to the work of the school is not extensive but the contribution they do make is of high quality. For example, some parents make costumes and design stage sets for school productions. Others lead year assemblies from time to time. There is very extensive and effective support from the parents of students taking part in musical and sporting activities. However, the parent teacher association has folded due to lack of parental interest to run it. There is a home-school agreement in place and parents are extensively involved in the induction process. There is close co-operation with the parents of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, though this does not make an impact on the most serious behaviour when parents cannot control it. Overall, parents' contribution to learning at home and at school is underdeveloped, and too many parents do not check and sign their children's homework diaries regularly.
53. Students and their parents expressed generally positive views of the sixth form. Students say that they like the choice of subjects to study and the accessibility of the teachers, and that they would wholeheartedly recommend the sixth form to others. Some are concerned about the careers advice they are given and the provision of extra-curricular activities. The inspection team found that careers advice over the whole of the students' time in the sixth form was good, and that there was a good programme of activities outside lessons. However, they agreed that most students needed more opportunities for physical education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. When the school was last inspected, management and leadership were good, and the school had made good progress since its previous inspection. Development planning, however, did not provide clear enough targets for improvement. Since that time, the school has had an unusually high turnover of teachers, and a deputy headteacher has twice had to act as headteacher over the past two years. The present headteacher joined the school three weeks before the inspection. During the periods of temporary headship, teachers and managers had worked hard to maintain standards, and GCSE targets for 2002 were met. However, staffing problems had significant effects on standards and the quality of learning in a significant number of classes in mathematics, English and modern foreign languages; only exceptional teamwork prevented the same effect in design and technology. The school has done all in its power to recruit and retain suitably qualified teachers, and there has been a good improvement in some departments, notably mathematics. However, there are still too few suitably qualified and experienced teachers, particularly in modern foreign languages and English.
55. The change in headteacher has delayed the development of clear and effective long-term strategies, but this is now under way. Performance management has been successfully introduced, but the school development plan still does not have clearly

focused targets for improvement, and the range of courses in Years 10 and 11 has not been developed to meet the changing needs of the students or to match the development of the sixth form. The grouping of subjects into faculties does not make effective middle management provision for business studies, which has too little in common with other subjects in the faculty.

56. The recent high turnover of staff, and the need to rely heavily on agency teachers and newly qualified teachers, has required many middle managers to devote too much of their time to supporting colleagues. This has limited their time for monitoring the use of school policies. Nevertheless, monitoring in too many departments is not followed up by effective targets for improvement, and middle management is not ensuring that school policies, particularly on marking, homework, the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, and discipline, are properly followed in all classes. The school provides newly-qualified teachers with good personal support, but is not enabling them to plan for the very wide range of learning needs they meet in some classes. Teachers who are working outside their main subject also receive too little professional support and guidance. For these reasons, which stem chiefly from matters outside the school's control, the quality and consistency of management have deteriorated since the last inspection.
57. The headteacher has taken very effective steps to improve the organisation and management of the school since his appointment. He has reorganised and strengthened the leadership group, and has written clear and helpful guidelines for middle managers on development planning and monitoring. He has established a strong sense of teamwork within the school, and has developed very good priorities for improving its work. He has taken action to deal with behaviour that threatens the health and safety of students and teachers. All members of the staff and governors have responded with full co-operation. By the time of the inspection, the headteacher had laid the foundations of a consistent and effective approach to addressing the weaknesses that have arisen in management.
58. As at the time of the last inspection, the governors are well-organised and keep in good touch with the school. They took good care over the appointment of the new headteacher, and manage the school's finances effectively. However, they are not ensuring that statutory requirements are met, particularly in ICT. Governors receive financial information from the local education authority too late to use it to plan the next year's budget, and were informed at a very late stage that they would have to include a complete additional class in Year 7 from September this year. This placed them under unreasonable pressure to appoint staff, particularly for Year 7 classes. The school told the inspection team that arrangements to provide students with serious behavioural difficulties with statements of special educational needs were too slow, and that this led to more students being excluded. It has maintained good control of its finances since the last inspection, and uses specific grants effectively, for example in work with students with special educational needs. Non-teaching and administrative staff are efficient and ensure that the school runs smoothly.
59. The school makes satisfactory use of data management systems for registration, to assess its performance against that of similar schools, to provide information for tutors and to set targets for students. These targets are helping to raise and maintain standards in Years 10 and 11, although they do not take enough account of the demands of individual subjects, particularly practical subjects such as physical education. The school is not, however, using data on students in Years 7 to 9 effectively to match work to their learning needs in lessons, and the targets for students with special educational needs are not reflected in teachers' planning in many lessons.

The school has good policies and procedures for promoting race equality, and uses its limited resources well to provide additional teaching for students with English as an additional language. It ensures that students with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities, are involved in all school activities, and many students attending the specific learning difficulties unit achieve good examination results. The headteacher and governors work hard to enable students with behavioural difficulties to take part in education. They provide behavioural support through teaching assistants when they can and monitor exclusions closely. The headteacher and leadership group are giving urgent attention to improving the management of poor behaviour.

60. Accommodation is just adequate overall. However, there are not enough specialist rooms to allow all students to receive the planned curriculum for design and technology in Year 8, and some English classes have to move to a different room for each lesson. Resources for learning are adequate, but there are some shortages of equipment for science, and, following a burglary, for music. Teachers in several departments, notably music, art and design and physical education, have too little access to up-to-date ICT, and this prevents students from developing the full range of skills they need in these subjects. The library makes satisfactory provision for all subjects, and good provision for English. Very good co-operation between teachers and the librarian ensures that the library is well used and makes a significant contribution to the development of students' learning skills and personal interests. The careers library has been carefully built up and is of high quality.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

61. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall, and have good features. Good consortium arrangements with two partner schools enable the school to offer a broad and interesting range of courses and activities outside lessons. Induction procedures are carefully managed between the schools, with good opportunities for students to sample sixth form work. All students wishing to stay into the sixth form are welcome. There is good provision for those who need to take additional GCSEs, especially in English, and good access for students with special educational needs and disabilities. For the most part, students are guided towards courses in which they have a good chance of success. However, students in some courses do not start from the basis of an accredited course in Years 10 and 11, and some students are allowed to start AS and A-level courses in mathematics and English without an adequate basis in their GCSE work. Most subjects are managed well, but there are weaknesses in the management of ICT and business studies.
62. The school has recognised the need for students to develop independent learning habits in order to succeed in their examinations, and requires them to spend part of their time outside lessons in supervised private study. Students use private study time well in law and history, where they have good study facilities in a specialised resource area, but independent learning skills are not promoted effectively enough across the whole of the sixth form, and students spend too much time consolidating what they have learned in lessons rather than investigating new material. Provision for teaching the key skills of independent reading and writing, number work and ICT is not consistently effective.

Resources

63. Classes in the sixth form are taught by experienced and well-qualified teachers, and the school allocates strong teachers to GCSE resit classes as well as to AS and A-level

groups. There was, however, some instability in staffing during the last year, and this affected results in English at AS level. There are good learning resources for modern foreign languages, but there are too few resources for business studies. Other resources for learning in sixth form are adequate, and there is adequate accommodation.

UNIT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (DYSLEXIA).

64. The unit has places for 15 students with statements of special educational needs, and provides additional teaching for a further 23 students. Two teachers, both with additional professional qualifications, work a total of four and a half days per week. Students make good progress. They take all GCSE subjects except for a modern language, and most obtain grades in line with their capabilities. Students are also successful in the sixth form.
65. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. The teachers have created a purposeful atmosphere that encourages hard work and co-operation. Methods are very well adapted to the needs of dyslexic students, and teachers emphasise varied ways of learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students enjoyed writing instructions to accomplish the trick of peeling a pre-sliced banana after it had been demonstrated and practised. In all lessons in the Unit there is continual reinforcement of basic literacy skills. These lessons are well taught, and make an effective contribution to students' personal development by building confidence. Students with statements of special educational needs benefit from effective support from teaching assistants in lessons, and this extends to homework and coursework. Analysis of their written work across subjects shows that they steadily extend their knowledge and understanding, but marking is inconsistent, and there are too few detailed comments. Teaching and learning in Certificate of Achievement courses are good in modern foreign languages and mathematics, and outstanding in English.
66. Arrangements to assess students' needs and track progress are good, and parents are kept well informed, particularly of successes. The unit shares purpose-built accommodation with the Individual Learning Department, and has good resources. The small computer suite and classroom computers are used intensively. The unit is well managed. Co-operation with colleagues in the Individual Learning Department is close and effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. The headteacher and governors have carried out a good review of management procedures and development planning. They are also doing all they can to recruit and retain suitably qualified and experienced teachers. In their work to improve the school, they should give priority to the following issues:
 - (1) Take further action to eliminate unacceptable behaviour, by:
 - ensuring that policies to improve behaviour are consistently and rigorously enforced;
 - taking further steps to improve teachers' skills in managing behaviour;
 - working with parents to ensure that students show due respect and courtesy to all members of staff.(Paragraphs 9-11, 20, 41, 52, 91, 103, 149)
 - (2) Improve the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9, by:

- ensuring that reading and writing in all subjects help develop students' literacy skills;
- extending training arrangements for teachers working outside their main subject;
- improving provision for lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs in lesson planning;

(Paragraphs 3, 6, 16, 18- 21, 45, 73-75, 82, 85, 126, 13)

(3) Improve the consistency with which policies are followed throughout the school by:

- monitoring the effects of policies on standards and progress in each subject;
- setting time-tabled targets for improvement where necessary;
- giving due priority to the national strategy for Years 7 to 9.

(Paragraphs 18-21, 56)

(4) Improve the consistency, quality and use of assessment, marking and homework, by:

- monitoring marking and homework across the school, with targets for improvement where necessary;
- improving the use of assessment information in planning lessons;
- improving the use of assessment information at the start of Year 7.

(Paragraphs 20, 43-46, 50, 52, 59, 79, 106-108, 114, 122, 149)

- (5) Improve the range of learning opportunities, by:
- ensuring that there is adequate time and provision for all subjects taught;
 - extending provision for vocational education and ICT in Years 10 and 11;
 - improving provision for spiritual development and for the act of collective worship.
- (Paragraphs 4, 19, 24-5, 32, 60, 115, 125-6, 132)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve students' learning skills and participation in lessons, by:
- building independent research and investigation more consistently into courses;
 - improving provision for teaching communication, literacy in ICT skills;
 - extending the use of teaching techniques that effectively involve all students.
- (Paragraphs 8, 14, 37, 152, 154, 166, 170-2, 174, 176, 180, 185-6, 191, 194, 208-209, 212, 214, 218)
- (2) Improve arrangements to set targets and track students' progress, by:
- making more consistent use of targets in day-to-day marking and assessment;
 - setting intermediate and short-term targets where these are needed;
 - involving students more consistently in evaluating their own work and progress.
- (Paragraphs 46, 111, 176-7, 209, 215)
- (3) Improve attendance and punctuality, by:
- taking quicker action to identify and stem patterns of poor attendance and punctuality;
 - ensuring that all students are enrolled on suitable courses;
 - identifying weaknesses in students' work at an earlier stage and providing appropriate support.
- (Paragraphs 15, 47, 49, 150)
- (4) Improve provision for business studies and for the management of ICT, by:
- establishing effective management arrangements for the subjects at school level;
 - ensuring that provision in both subjects is kept fully up to date;
 - improving the links between sixth form courses and subjects in the main school.
- (Paragraphs 25, 55, 169-172, 176-8)

Additional points to be included in the school action plan

- (1) Improve arrangements for the secure use of the Internet. (Paragraph 39)
- (2) Ensure that students have adequate and hygienic toilet facilities. (Paragraph 39)
- (3) Improve training for students in personal organisation and the use of their planners. (Paragraph 34)
- (4) Improve opportunities for physical education for sixth form students. (Paragraphs 53, 182)
- (5) Improve training for teaching assistants supporting students in science lessons. (Paragraph 85)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	137
	Sixth form	65
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		73

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	10	10	51	53	11	2	0
Percentage	7	7	37	39	8	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	14	31	16	1	1	0
Percentage	3	22	48	25	2	2	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1234	194
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	124	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	30	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	142	8

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	80

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	119	114	233

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	82	85
	Girls	87	83	86
	Total	152	165	171
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (72)	71 (71)	74 (61)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (42)	43 (46)	41 (24)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	82	96
	Girls	84	85	97
	Total	157	168	193
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (68)	73 (72)	84 (74)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (32)	34 (35)	55 (43)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	106	112	218

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	45	102	103
	Girls	61	103	109
	Total	106	205	212
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	50 (59)	94 (95)	98 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.4
	National	39.0

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	49	52	101
	Average point score per candidate	14.4	16.8	15.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	49	52	101	3	1	4
	Average point score per candidate	13.7	16.6	15.2	12	12	12
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1362	151	4
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	11	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	17	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	82.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.0

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	326

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28.5
Key Stage 4	20.9

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	3,919,764
Total expenditure	3,890,018
Expenditure per pupil	2,789
Balance brought forward from previous year	55,936
Balance carried forward to next year	85,692

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6.7
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	1407
Number of questionnaires returned	135

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	47	13	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	50	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	55	21	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	46	31	7	1
The teaching is good.	24	54	13	2	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	17	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	49	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	47	8	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	44	17	10	4
The school is well led and managed.	22	54	5	2	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	63	8	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	42	10	2	16

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The department has a core of highly skilled and effective teachers.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is reflected in improved standards at GCSE.
- The Certificate of Achievement course is well designed and very effective.
- There are good extension courses for gifted and talented students.
- The library is well stocked and well used.

Areas for improvement

- Inexperienced teachers have to teach classes containing a very broad range of learning needs.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with significant weaknesses in homework, and in marking in some classes.
- Tasks in lessons in Years 7 and 8 do not meet the needs of all students.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not make enough progress in writing.

68. Results in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations were broadly average in 2001, and 2002 results showed little change. GCSE results have shown good improvement since the last inspection. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average in Year 11, but below average in Year 9. Girls do better than boys in Years 9 and 11, but the gap between boys and girls at GCSE is narrower than in most schools. Students with English as a second language make satisfactory progress, and some achieve high grades at GCSE. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory overall progress, and those with physical disabilities do well. Standards among lower-attaining students taking the Certificate of Achievement course are well above average for this group, and the course is very effectively linked to GCSE. Gifted and talented students learn well in extension classes, though these do not operate in each year group. As students join the school with below average standards in English, recent GCSE results represent good achievement. However, the quality of provision in English has been, and still is, seriously affected by staffing difficulties, which have prevented the school from making satisfactory provision for all pupils and from making consistent improvements in its work since the last inspection.
69. By Year 9, most students answer well in lessons, but there is little evidence of more sustained speaking skills. The highest-attaining students write very good poetry and exceptional narratives, showing an emerging individual style. On the other hand, the weakest often produce a few barely legible words, lacking meaning and purpose. Similarly, the highest-attaining students read widely and fluently, although they do not always read with expression when reading aloud. Lower-attaining students in Year 9 still struggle with texts that they should be able to read by this age, and do not sustain concentration well when reading.
70. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average, and sometimes good, particularly in work that combines speaking skills with writing. For instance, a lively discussion of the social issues in 'Absurd Person Singular' helped students in Year 10 to understand that the structure of the play provides the framework for the humour. Spelling, punctuation

and grammar show increasing accuracy, and students write in a variety of styles. For example, students in Year 11 used detection techniques well as they tackled some challenging problems for their GCSE coursework unit on 'The Speckled Band'. Nevertheless, due to staffing difficulties last year, some students beginning Year 11 had completed no coursework in Year 10.

71. Learning is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8. There is an exceptionally wide range of standards in students' work in each class. Some students have reached high standards for their age. However, many, typically between one-third and half of the class, have mastered the initial stages of reading and writing, but not the vocabulary and sentence structures they meet in secondary school. Matching work to this exceptionally broad range of learning needs poses a severe challenge, and many teachers working with these classes do not have the experience and specialist skills to meet it. As a result, even in classes that are well-managed, many lower-attaining students do not understand their work, and do not know what they have to do to succeed. All students in one Year 7 class, for example, were asked to spell ten very difficult words that for most were beyond their knowledge, understanding or interest. In some other classes, there is not enough challenge, support and encouragement to enable higher-attaining students to learn effectively, and much work is unmarked.
72. From Year 9, students are grouped according to their learning needs. There is still some unsatisfactory teaching from temporary staff, but the bulk of the teaching is carried out by the department's experienced, senior teachers. The overall quality of their work is very good, and the best is excellent. For example, lower-attaining students in Year 9 preparing for a combined Certificate of Achievement and GCSE course were engrossed in devising mind maps to define the differences between similes and metaphors focusing on lively rhythms from Trinidad in the poem 'Windjammer'. Students learned well because the tasks were presented in carefully-designed parts, allowing them to develop their reading and writing skills. Students in Year 11 wrote interesting accounts of 'Much Ado About Nothing'. Their work over the year showed excellent achievement from the limited skills with which they started the course. Writing was well-organised and carefully presented, to a standard consistent with a strong grade D at GCSE, and with good prospects of further improvement. Students in Years 10 and 11 learn well in response to highly skilled teaching from the school's experienced and effective permanent staff.
73. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and some of this teaching is poor. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. Senior teachers provide detailed guidance to less experienced colleagues, and this is sometimes successful, for example in providing a good framework for library lessons in Year 7. Corrective reading courses for the weakest readers in Years 7 and 8 lead to satisfactory progress, and build confidence and self-esteem. School and departmental guidance on class management is also used well, though arrangements for private reading do not give enough guidance, and the time allowed is too short. Much homework in Years 7 to 9 consists of superficial tasks, such as word-searches, that lead to little constructive learning. By contrast, the experienced staff teaching GCSE and Certificate of Achievement courses deploy their professional skills and knowledge of individual texts to engage and challenge students, generating great enthusiasm and acutely perceptive analysis from them. Students appreciate the quality of this work, and grow in maturity as well as understanding as a result. Much of this teaching is very good, and a third is excellent.
74. The use of computers is satisfactory in English lessons that teach the National Curriculum for ICT, but their use elsewhere is limited. There is little contribution to number work. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is reflected in the organisation of

lessons, but its structures are not used in a way that helps teachers to match work to students' needs. The contribution of work in other subjects to reading and writing skills is seriously underdeveloped. By contrast, the library is well stocked with English books, and very well used.

75. The staffing shortages, and the need to provide constant support to less experienced colleagues, both in teaching techniques and in dealing with poor behaviour, have placed the head of English under exceptional pressure. With other senior members of the department, he has striven to ensure the best possible provision for all students, while continuing to develop the faculty's important strengths. New developments have included revision classes during the Easter holidays for students in Years 9 and 11, special courses for gifted and talented students, and an exceptionally effective Certificate of Achievement course. Nevertheless, some aspects of management need to be improved. Teaching groups in Years 7 and 8 contain an exceptionally wide spread of learning needs, and this makes it very difficult for teachers to meet the needs of all students in the class. The grouping of students according to their learning needs from Year 9 onwards promotes more effective learning. Monitoring of teaching identifies most weaknesses effectively, but does not do enough to tackle them. A shortage of classrooms in the English block obliges some teachers to move to a different room for each lesson. The head of English and his experienced colleagues are very well equipped to make further improvements, but only if there is a period of stability in staffing.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- There is a significant and growing proportion of good teaching.
- The department is well led and all staff are committed to raising standards.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement:

- Homework and marking are not used effectively enough.

76. Standards are broadly average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This reflects the results in national tests in Year 9 and in the GCSE in Year 11 over the longer term. Boys and girls reach similar standards. Students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, make sound progress in lessons. The overall achievement of all students, and improvement since the last inspection, are satisfactory.
77. Most students in Year 9 have satisfactory basic number skills. They use fractions, decimals and percentages confidently and calculate areas and volumes. They construct bar charts and line graphs to represent data and evaluate the mean and median of frequency distributions. Mental arithmetic skills are sound and have improved substantially since the last inspection. For example, Year 9 students of average and lower ability gave accurate answers to a variety of challenging questions involving number, measurement and data handling. Calculator skills are sound, although a minority of lower-attaining students rely on calculators too much. For example, in a lower set lesson in Year 9, some students found difficulty in subtracting the sum of two angles from 180 degrees to find the third angle. Higher-attaining students reach above-average standards. They understand square, triangle and cubic numbers and use them to generate sequences.

78. Students in Year 11 use number and measurement confidently. They apply the number rules to solve problems both with and without calculators. Most students simplify algebraic expressions and solve linear and simultaneous equations. A few have difficulty with basic algebra. For example, several lower-attaining students in one Year 11 class could not expand simple brackets and collect like terms. Higher-attaining students have clear understanding of shape and measurement. They understand similarity and the conditions under which two triangles are congruent. For example in a top Year 11 set, students successfully applied the four tests of congruence to determine the congruence of pairs of triangles. All students understand how to organise and conduct investigations. They develop their own strategies, explain their reasons and justify their conclusions. Most can generalise and test their results.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It was never less than satisfactory, and was good in just under half of the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers understand their subject well. They present work in a manner suited to what students already know. By asking suitable questions and explaining by means of appropriate examples, they help students to understand new topics and learn new methods. For example, in a Year 10 lesson students considered their heights. By careful questioning they learnt that all measurement is approximate and has a lower and upper bound. The difference between 6 and 6.0 was discussed and the claim to accuracy of each digit. This was extended to areas (products of rounded numbers). Students were thus able to understand the limitations of measurement, and good learning took place. Teachers strike a good balance between class teaching and independent learning in most lessons. This helps students to sustain interest and move on quickly to new work. In most lessons, good class management and the positive attitudes of students assist learning, although a small minority of students behave poorly in some lessons. All teachers understand the problems of students with special needs, and make good arrangements to ensure that they are fully included in lessons. There is, however, too little use of appropriate homework to support learning. The quality of marking is variable. Not all work is marked nor errors identified.
80. The department is well led and managed. Previous difficulties with staffing have been overcome, and although most teachers have been recently appointed, relationships are good and morale is rising. All staff are keen to raise standards. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory and improving, and there is good support for newly-qualified teachers. Students are grouped according to their learning needs from Year 7, and this promotes learning by making it easier for the teacher to give a clear focus to each lesson. There are good regular assessment and testing procedures. Students' welfare is monitored and records kept. This helps setting, planning and curriculum development. There are good extra-curricular activities to support gifted and talented students, and to help GCSE students achieve a grade C. There are books of good quality for all courses.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- GCSE results are consistently good, with a high proportion of top grades.
- Students make good progress through Years 8 to 11.
- The department's best teaching is excellent.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to engage students' interest.
- Students' written work is well organised, providing an accurate record for revision.

Areas for improvement:

- Some lessons lack challenge because students have already covered the work.
- In some lessons, scientific enquiry is not used effectively enough
- The most effective teaching techniques are not used consistently across the department.

81. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. While there is some variation in the standards reached between classes, overall achievement is good. The progress of those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is satisfactory overall, and good for very able students in Years 10 and 11. Eighteen students achieved A* in double award science in 2002, and a further 32 achieved A grades. Standards are more clearly above average than at the time of the last inspection, and overall improvement has been satisfactory.
82. Students joining the school in Year 7 have reached below average standards. For example, only about a third could describe how they would test a prediction about the relative absorbency of two paper towels. In many lessons students achieve well, sometimes very well, particularly in Years 8 and 9. Standards have improved to above average levels by Year 9, when most can make predictions about factors affecting the speed of fall of a parachute and relate their predictions to scientific understanding. However, learning is less good in some lessons, particularly in Year 7, where the pace of learning and the demands on thinking do not fully challenge more able students. Their skills in planning, analysing and evaluating the results of investigations are not well enough developed.
83. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11, they achieved very well when applying new learning about covalent bonds to work out the structures of compounds such as carbon dioxide. However, as in earlier years, achievement is less good in some lessons because more able students have too few opportunities to extend their learning beyond the basic lesson content. Students in lower-attaining groups are often held back by their inability to recall earlier work.
84. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 range from excellent to poor. Over time, strengths in this teaching outweigh its weaknesses, and its overall quality is satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Key features of teaching in very good and excellent lessons are building well on students' existing knowledge, using everyday examples to capture interest, posing questions that encourage students to think about the underlying science, and ensuring that all students work to their full capacity. In a middle group in Year 9, students' learning was excellent because the teacher used the familiar idea of wind resistance on cars travelling at different speeds to develop the principle of falling objects reaching a terminal velocity. As a result of skilful questioning the teacher challenged their misconceptions and they

quickly grasped the idea that a sky diver would not continue to accelerate indefinitely. By the end of the lesson, the teacher's high expectations were rewarded because almost all could use the idea of opposing forces to explain why the shape of an object affects its terminal velocity.

85. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not expect enough from students, particularly the most able. In Year 7, for example, students repeated work on differences between living and non-living things that many had done at their previous school, and did not carry this forward sufficiently. Similarly, in Year 9, students' learning was unsatisfactory because the lesson was poorly planned and they were not clear what was expected of them when testing parachutes. Marking of students' work is inconsistent across the department. About half the teachers make comments in their marking that show students how to improve their work, but others write comments that are encouraging, rather than directed towards improvement. The progress of students with special educational needs could be improved if teachers and support assistants focused more clearly on specific learning objectives for each lesson. As in English, teaching Years 7 to 9, and particularly in Year 7, is made more difficult by the very broad range of learning needs in each class.
86. Teachers encourage students to develop their skills in spotting numerical relationships, as in a Year 9 class, in which students used their own results to draw out the relationship between rate of temperature increase and volume of water being heated. Students use their ICT skills effectively, for example in searching the Internet for relevant information on alternative energy sources in Year 11. Although some teachers make good use of key words to help students develop understanding and improve their ability to recall earlier work, they do not do this consistently across the department.
87. Good leadership and management have created a climate of rising standards, and the department is keen to develop its work further. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 make good use of recent national guidance, and the department has taken a leading role in the use of materials from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. Monitoring of teaching, however, has yet to ensure that the most effective techniques are used consistently across the department. It is very well placed to make further improvements in its work if this can be achieved.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Most students benefit from good teaching and learning.
- Students can choose from a good range of specialist options at GCSE.
- Teachers manage poor behaviour well.
- Assessment and marking are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Some students do not have a positive attitude to learning.
- Standards in textiles are lower than in other art options, and need to be improved.
- Students need more opportunities in class to evaluate their work critically.
- Teachers and students do not make ICT an everyday tool for teaching and learning.

88. Standards in art are just below average when students join the school, and are average in Years 9 and 11. Results in recent GCSE examinations have been above average in

painting and drawing, average in three-dimensional work, and below average in textiles. Girls do substantially better than boys, by a margin similar to that in most schools. Students generally achieve well in art across a good range of two and three-dimensional (3D) media. Students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students. Talented artists do very well, and one student last year achieved amongst the highest GCSE grades in the country in the painting and drawing examination. Overall standards and provision are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

89. Between Years 7 and 9, students achieve well across a wide range of media, including ceramics and ICT work in Year 8. Because the focus of teaching moves away from drawing in Year 8, progress in this key skill is interrupted, and achievement at the start of Year 9 is less good. Students catch up, though, and reach average standards by the end of Year 9. They have a broader range of skills than students in most schools.
90. In one GCSE option block, many students are in art classes where their skills are unsuited to the demands of the course. This is particularly so in textiles. Students in the Year 11 textiles group have not progressed well over their course because of staffing difficulties. These have led to unsatisfactory attitudes and low standards, particularly amongst girls. With strong new teaching, this achievement could improve, but students' responses to the more rigorous demands of new staff are often too negative. They, and some others from this option in painting and drawing, sometimes exhibit wilful resistance to learning. Standards in most painting and drawing groups are much higher, and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is particularly good. Here, and in the 3D option, attitudes are mostly more positive. Standards in painting and drawing are above average and this aspect of art is a strength of the department. Students make particularly good progress in Year 11, where their work gains refinement and depth.
91. The quality of teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. In most groups and lessons, learning is also good because strong class management controls potentially disruptive behaviour effectively. Not all learning is as good as the teaching, however, because some students still have entrenched negative attitudes, deriving from lower expectations in previous years. Where teaching is very good, students gain skills and knowledge very successfully, benefiting from teachers' very good knowledge base. This improvement can often be observed during lessons. Highly effective one-to-one discussions and help in lessons are key factors in these improvements.
92. Planning of courses is good and includes appropriate support for literacy and numeracy. Many lessons include good examples of teachers extending students' written skills or improving their mathematical understanding through focus on spatial skills. Students in Year 7, for example, were measuring and learning about proportions of the face in portraiture. Opportunities for students to develop their spoken communication through discussion and evaluation of artwork are less frequent. The limited skills of some older students would be improved by better planned oral work in their earlier years. The department lacks computers, and needs them to develop students' understanding of ICT as a tool for regular application in creative artwork. Students use the art books in the library regularly and well.
93. The department remains well managed, as it was at the time of the last report. Marking and assessment are good. Teachers consistently mark work effectively, so that students know how to improve. A good degree of feedback at a one-to-one level reinforces teachers' helpful written assessments. The art team, work well together and staff are well supported, for example through training and professional development opportunities. New teachers receive very good guidance and support.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- A very strong sense of commitment has minimised the effect of staffing shortages. Good management makes an important contribution to learning and standards.
- Teachers manage behaviour well.

Areas for improvement:

- The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is slightly unbalanced as a result of staffing and accommodation problems.

94. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11, and results in GCSE examinations have been higher than the national average over the last three years. The range of courses allows all students, including those with special educational needs and those with particular aptitude for the subject, to make good long-term progress, and excellent progress in aspects of the subject that are particularly well taught. The progress of all students, is helped by grouping students into sets, according to their learning needs, in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs are also helped by open-ended projects that allow them to succeed at a range of levels, and take account of the pace at which these students can work. Overall, achievement is good. A severe staffing shortage has been tackled with exceptionally good teamwork. As a result, above average standards in Year 11 have been maintained, while standards in Year 9 have improved. The school has also made important improvements in its facilities for the subject. Despite the difficulties it has encountered, the department has made good improvements in its work since the last inspection.
95. In Years 7 to 9, projects require students to combine a range of different skills so that, by Year 9, they have good knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of designing and making activities. A balloon operated toy buggy, for example, involves cutting and shaping wood, drilling and joining members and reinforcing corners with gussets. Other toys require students to understand mechanisms, such as cams to derive vertical motion from circular motion. In food technology, students gain a good understanding of food preparation and nutrition together with a knowledge of dietary needs. ICT is used extensively in project folders, for graphics, word processing and lettering. Controlled routers are used well in product design and computer controlled embroidery in textiles.
96. Literacy is addressed through the display of word-lists and in written work. This is satisfactory, and there are suitable books in the library. There is satisfactory provision for numeracy through the constant need for measuring and calculation in projects.
97. Students in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop their skills and reach good standards across five GCSE options. They learn and practise the design processes typically involved in industrial production, and how to follow a design brief, although sometimes lower-attaining students find it difficult to relate the steps they have to take to the end product. In food technology, they develop good understanding of the nature of special diets, and they reach good standards in solving problems in economics. Standards in a vocational course for health and social care are broadly average.

98. Teaching is good overall. It is often very good and, in a few instances, excellent. In the best lessons, teachers are very well organised and show marked sensitivity to students' needs. This generates very good working relationships and strong sense of common purpose. Teachers manage time very well, particularly in food technology, and provision for students with special educational needs in this area of the subject is excellent. Teachers throughout the department use a good range of strategies to match work to the needs of all students, and give sensitive individual support whenever they can. They use assessment well, with good involvement of students, and give students good guidance on improving their work.
99. The department has faced formidable difficulties in staffing its courses. The current staff includes several agency teachers, part-time teachers, some highly experienced, but others without specific experience in the subject, who need support and professional development. Accommodation is of good quality, but limited, and not all students in Year 7 receive the full range of the planned curriculum at Year 7. Despite this, a very good attitude prevails. Teachers work well together, are committed and enthusiastic for the subject. Very good management plays a key role in this success. There are excellent relationships, good documentation, very good assessment procedures and good schemes of work that provide for students of all abilities and are under constant review. Unusually, there are two heads of faculty sharing management, but the arrangement is working very effectively.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

100. Work in dance and drama was sampled. As at the time of the last inspection, GCSE results are well below average in drama, but good work was observed in lessons with younger students. Dance is taught as a subject in Years 7 to 9. Standards were broadly average in the Year 7 class seen, but below average in Year 9, chiefly because of poor behaviour among boys. There is insufficient evidence to support an overall judgement on the quality of provision in these subjects.
101. Lively students in a Year 7 class responded enthusiastically to a range of different activities. They developed good skills in non-verbal communication through the physical dimension of drama, creating interesting group shapes representing waxworks in a museum. In another lively, well-structured lesson, Year 8 students learned the techniques needed to create a stock character and how to present a short scene in melodrama. In both classes, students worked constructively in small groups and benefited from on-the-spot evaluation of their own work and that of others. This is a strength of the teaching, because students learn to criticise constructively and accept comments about their own work. Learning in the Year 11 lesson seen, however, was not effective, partly because of a poor response from the students, and partly because of weak planning. Students began without an effective warm-up activity, and as a result had no sense of mood or atmosphere in which to create their dramatic improvisation. They wasted too much time chatting, and their acting was superficial. The standard in this class reflected the low results in recent examinations.
102. There is a good management framework for drama, with very good schemes of work. Wide-ranging extra-curricular activities enrich learning, enabling students to gain confidence and self-esteem by working with others. Good use is made of the drama studio, and students benefit from using lighting, stage blocks and simple props in an appropriate theatre-like setting. These strengths contribute to students' personal development and build confidence. Inspection evidence and examination results, however, indicate the need to instil a greater sense of purpose and commitment to success among older students if standards are to be improved.

103. Despite well-planned teaching, learning in the Year 9 class observed was unsatisfactory. This was mainly due to poor behaviour on the part of boys that prevented other students from learning. Many students, especially girls, underachieved. Teaching and learning in Year 7 were satisfactory, with good features in planning and in knowledge and understanding of the subject. Here again, however, achievement was held back by a lack of commitment on the part of boys.
104. Dance in Years 7 to 9 is taught under difficult circumstances. Accommodation is cramped, boys often regard dance as an inappropriate activity, and some pupils wear large trainers that impede the graceful movement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- A good partnership between teachers and students leads to good learning in lessons.
- Teachers use interesting resources and activities, which help students build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Leadership gives clear direction for improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards in written work are too low, and work is not effectively marked.
- Students' progress is not monitored and tracked effectively.
- Homework is under-used.

105. Boys and girls reach broadly average standards in Years 9 and 11. There has been little change in standards since the last inspection, but higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs continue to do well. Achievement over time is satisfactory, and the subject continues to be a popular choice with students, especially boys, for GCSE. However, a weakness in assessment mentioned in the last inspection report has not been tackled, and progress is held back by a lack of attention to detail in written work. There has been too little progress in these aspects of the subject since the last inspection.
106. By Year 11, most students can use primary and secondary information to compile case studies and previous coursework indicates that fieldwork skills are good. Throughout Years 10 and 11, discussion in class shows good understanding of key issues in the subject, such as the impact of climate change and the physical and human factors that contribute to events such as the Lynmouth Disaster. Most students know and use subject vocabulary with confidence. However, students' written work does not reflect these strengths. Data analysis lacks depth, issues are evaluated too briefly, and conclusions are limited in their scope. Homework and ICT are not used effectively in coursework, and too much is incomplete and carelessly presented, particularly in mapwork. Not all students recognise these weaknesses, and those who do make little effort to correct them. This contrast between the good learning and progress in lessons and the quality of written work is preventing students from achieving all they could at GCSE.
107. There is a similar pattern to standards in Year 9. All students, including those with special educational needs, participate well in lessons and give brief but correct oral answers to questions. All students make good progress in extending their geographical

skills, and higher-attaining students in Years 7 to 9 make rapid progress and write well. By Year 9, most students can extract and classify information from primary and secondary sources in fieldwork and in the classroom. They know geographical vocabulary, although they have to be prompted to use it. However, most students do not complete their written work well enough. Answers to questions are too brief, there is too little use of ICT, and much work is careless, with many basic errors that teachers do not pick up in marking. As a result, students are not prepared effectively for GCSE coursework.

108. Teaching in lessons is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are well organised, and plan good opportunities for learning, both in group and individual work. They use a variety of resources to stimulate interest and keep all students working hard throughout lessons. Questioning promotes thinking skills and probes understanding. Teachers support students well, using praise and encouragement to boost confidence, especially among lower-attaining students. They expect good behaviour and manage students firmly and fairly, creating a positive learning environment. In some, but not all, lessons, work is modified well to meet the needs of higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs. These strengths are not reflected in teachers' approach to written work, particularly in marking, which gives students too little guidance and passes over basic mistakes, both in literacy and in geographical understanding. Students are not required to redo or correct work, or to make up for missed work, and their progress is not monitored effectively.
109. The management of geography has many good features but also some weaknesses. The new teacher in charge is building on existing strengths and leading the team in moving forward and raising standards. All teachers have contributed towards the new schemes of work and the development plan. Students help evaluate their own work, and have targets linked to assessment in Year 9. On the other hand, monitoring has not fully identified the weaknesses in teaching, and there is no programme of action to put them right. Resources for learning are good, and include a well-managed faculty resource centre, with computers and a specialist library.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Students meet nationally expected standards at the end of Year 9.
- Teachers pass on their enthusiasm for history, and learning in lessons is good.
- There is good access to history for lower-attaining students at GCSE.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 work hard on their GCSE coursework.
- There is a good range of learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Areas for improvement:

- GCSE results are still below average at grades A* to C.
- Work in history is not making a sufficient contribution to literacy skills.
- Written work is not marked consistently in Years 7 to 9.

110. Standards are broadly average in Year 9, and in Year 11, but there are some weaknesses in standards in Year 10. The results of GCSE examinations are improving, though the proportion of students reaching grades A* to C remains below average. However, this reflects the popularity of the GCSE course with many lower-attaining students, and boys' results are closer to those of girls than in most schools. Students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Overall, achievement in history is satisfactory. Teaching and the range of learning opportunities outside the classroom have improved since the last inspection, but provision for literacy has not. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
111. Students in Year 9 understand the importance of chronology. They try to support arguments with evidence, for example when assessing the causes of the First World War. Higher-attaining students are developing good analytical skills and distinguish between short and long-term causes of historical events. Boys respond well to questions and discussion in class, but girls develop their ideas more fully in writing. Students write at some length in their assessed work, although many lower-attaining students, often boys, do not write easily or fluently. Students are developing good enquiry skills, but low-attaining students are not always able to absorb all the information they amass.
112. At the end of Year 11, students analyse source materials well. They work very hard in class, concentrate well when researching basic information and investigating source material, and reach good standards in their coursework. In general, students reach higher standards in coursework than in examinations, and this helps them develop independent learning skills. Some students' coursework is well above the level that might reasonably be expected. Boys continue to give good answers in lessons but do not develop their ideas sufficiently in their writing.
113. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Teachers know their subject and convey their enthusiasm well. They expect good behaviour and achievement, and reward it with praise and encouragement. Almost all students respond well, working hard in lessons, although there is inattentive behaviour from a minority of students in some lessons. Teachers often plan their lessons around varied activities that involve discussion and making displays as well as reading and writing. In one very good lesson in Year 9, the interpretation of World War 1 in the Black

Adder television series was successfully used to stimulate interest, and then compared with historical evidence. In Year 11, students working on the Russian revolution used original source material well, and enjoyed making the front page of a newspaper outlining the main events. Students with special educational needs receive some individual help. Less experienced and non-specialist teachers are less successful in directing the full range of activities, though learning in their lessons remains satisfactory overall.

114. Homework is satisfactory, but marking of books is variable, with too few comments on books in Years 7 to 9. This term, the department is introducing a system to help improve the consistency of teachers' suggestions for improving work. Teachers emphasise numeracy by referring to statistical tables and diagrams. Students use ICT to improve their historical skills well, for example in analysing data from the 1831 census in Year 8. Although the department is aware of the need to improve literacy, and encourages the use of specialised vocabulary, history is not contributing enough in this area, and weaknesses in students' writing affect standards at GCSE.
115. Students have sufficient time for history in Years 7 and 8, but some groups have too little time for the subject from Year 9 onwards. This puts too much pressure on lower-attaining students. The department uses students' minimum performance grades as targets, but does not relate these to the demands of the subject, and grades achieved are often lower than these targets. On the other hand, the department moderates its own grading procedures well. Students' interest and enthusiasm are increased by the programme of visits and activities. Leadership generates a strong sense of purpose and teamwork among the teachers and pupils, but is not yet addressing weaknesses systematically enough.

HUMANITIES

116. Work in the humanities GCSE course was sampled. The course was compulsory for students in Year 11 at the time of the inspection, but optional for those in Year 10. The first group of students is due to take GCSE in 2003. Standards are broadly average in Year 10, but below average in Year 11. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with good features in the range of issues studied, which contribute to citizenship and personal development. Learning is satisfactory in Year 10, but unsatisfactory in Year 11 because of the reluctance of some students, mostly boys, to sustain concentration and complete written work. At times, the behaviour of these boys prevents the teacher from presenting the lesson properly, and other students from learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths:

- ICT is taught across a good range of subjects in Years 7 to 9
- The assessment system in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Most students make good progress to reach average standards by Year 9.
- There is good technical support for ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards in Y11 are below average, and there is too little provision in Years 10 and 11.
- There is no ICT examination course.
- Information from assessment is not used well enough.
- The subject does not have a clear direction across the school.
- Gifted and talented students, and some boys, do not reach high enough standards.

117. When they join the school, a few confident students can operate a computer with ease. For example, using a word-processor they can enter and edit their work, change the way it looks and alter the characteristics of the text. They know many of the functions of the program. However, most students lack this knowledge, and the lowest-attaining have very limited awareness of programs and the keyboard. Since the last inspection, standards in Year 9 have remained the same, while they have improved nationally. As a result, standards, which were good, are now average. Achievement remains good because students start below average and finish as average. However, in Year 11 standards have dropped from average to below average, and achievement is no longer satisfactory.

118. By Year 9, students can use a number of programs and explain why each is suitable for the task chosen. Most can mix words and images in a document. In the best work, students combine the functions of programs, explain their choices and show a good awareness of the needs of the reader. In design and technology, a package that helps students draw two-dimensional objects is used well. All have designed a watchcase and more able students have added thematic illustrations. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but the school does not identify students who may be gifted and talented, and they mark time, particularly in Year 7.

119. The quality and quantity of work in Year 11 range from well above average to well below average. Some higher-attaining students achieve high standards in design related work. On the other hand, a completed word-processed task from a lower-attaining student had too little formatting and included spelling errors, suggesting the spell-check facility had been incorrectly applied to it.

120. The teaching of ICT through a range subjects in Years 7 to 9 generally works well and meets most of the requirements of the national strategy. The approach does not work in the next two years where students' ICT experiences vary depending on their choice of subjects and their teachers. Some students have a full range of experiences, whilst others do not make enough use of ICT to reach a satisfactory standard. There are no ICT examination courses. The school has started a review of the ICT curriculum and is aware of the need to identify what each student should experience.

121. Teaching in lessons is satisfactory and occasionally good. In one good lesson, the teacher recognised that students were having difficulty entering numbers into a spreadsheet. She stopped the lesson and explained the solution. Her explanation, coupled with good class control, enabled the students to make swift progress. In some lessons where the teaching was just satisfactory, work was not matched closely enough to the range of needs in the class, and time was not managed tightly enough. In one lesson in Year 7, the teacher did not have sufficient skills to teach the subject, and satisfactory learning was ensured only through the work of the technician.
122. In Years 7 to 9, well-organised assessed tasks generate an accurate record of the standards reached by each student. However, the school makes insufficient use of this information. For example, the figures show that girls out-perform boys in Year 9, but the school has yet to establish any reasons why this might be the case. There is no system for assessing standards in Years 10 and 11.
123. Students are enthusiastic and their levels of concentration show that they find the use of computers motivating, interesting and, in some cases, exciting. The school has developed its resources significantly is now near to the national target ratio of computers to students. The network works well and this is a tribute to the expertise of those who install and maintain the equipment. However, the weaknesses described in this section indicate that management of ICT lacks clear direction, and that the school is right to give priority to this issue in its curriculum review.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- There is an above average proportion of A and A* grades at GCSE.
- Results are improving at a good rate in Spanish.
- Teachers prepare students well for examinations
- Students achieve good standards in the Certificate of Achievement course.

Areas for improvement:

- There is too little time for students studying more than one language.
- Standards during the inspection were below average in Year 9.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching, and some written work is poor.
- A small minority of students' attitudes and behaviour prevent them from learning effectively.

124. Standards at GCSE are broadly average in French and Spanish, and have improved since the last inspection, particularly in Spanish. Students achieve a good proportion of A and A* grades, and lower-attaining students achieve good results in the Certificate of Achievement course. Standards during the inspection were also broadly average in Year 11, although they were still showing the effects of earlier staffing difficulties, and some students had weaknesses in their written work.
125. Standards in Year 9 are lower than in most schools and, overall students are achieving less than they should. There is very rapid progress in individual lessons, some of which are very well taught. However, the higher-attaining students, who take two languages, do not receive enough teaching time to make good progress in both. Some students have negative attitudes to their work, and some teaching by temporary supply teachers is not meeting their needs.

126. Students with special educational needs made satisfactory long-term progress, but a few lack the necessary support for their behavioural difficulties. Gifted linguists are not fulfilling their potential because of the constraints of time. As a result, only a very small number take two languages at GCSE, and continue with languages in the sixth form. Provision for Spanish has improved significantly since the last inspection, however, and overall improvement has been satisfactory.
127. In Year 9 Spanish, the higher-attaining students translate accurately short sentences that include reflexive verbs and the vocabulary of their daily routine. In French, the more able students reach average standards in listening to and understanding spoken French, for example directions in the town. Their pronunciation of French is well above average as a result of extensive repetition and careful practice of the oral form of words. However, students cannot readily speak or write about their activities in the past or their plans for the future, because they have not had the time to cover this material. Lower-attaining students pronounce Spanish reasonably well and have a satisfactory range of vocabulary, for example when telling the time in Spanish.
128. By the end of Year 11, standards are in line with those expected nationally and students are achieving as well as they should. Higher-attaining students studying both French and Spanish speak and write the languages well. For example, they have a good command of the imperfect tense and adjectival agreement in French. Those higher-attaining students who only study Spanish, currently perform less well than expected in listening to and understanding the language. Their written work is also below average, and this is largely due to lack of practice and their unwillingness to consolidate their work in private study. Lower-attaining students taking the Certificate of Achievement talk about their family with satisfactory fluency and understand a simple level of spoken Spanish on this topic. Many of these students have special educational needs, and the course is appropriate for them.
129. The teaching of French and Spanish is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11. It was good or better in over a third of lessons seen during the inspection, but was unsatisfactory in just under a fifth. Teachers generally make good use of the limited time available, and learning is satisfactory. Their command of the foreign languages is very good, and they use French and Spanish extensively to help students learn to listen and understand. In the best lessons, teachers have very clear objectives and distinguish well between the revision of old topics and the presentation of new ones. They plan lessons well, and use a good variety of activities to sustain students' interest. The best lessons open with a quick-fire session of questions and answers which probe students' knowledge and understanding and correct misunderstandings. In one Year 9 French lesson, the teacher conducted an exemplary session to practise new structures with the whole class and with individual students. This, combined with the pair and group work that followed, added to students' high levels of speaking and pronunciation. Students are encouraged to reflect on grammatical points and to see the patterns of language, so that their grasp of grammar is greatly enhanced.
130. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, planning does not match activities closely enough to students' needs, and there is too much repetitive work. When this happens, learning deteriorates. Students lose interest and concentration, at times disrupting the lesson and showing a lack of respect for the teacher.
131. Work in modern foreign languages makes a particularly strong contribution to the development of students' skills in ICT. Word processing is used extensively and there is interactive software to promote accuracy in spelling and sentence structure. Plans

are in hand to publish a brochure and create a website. Reading skills are promoted well, though reading materials are stocked in the department rather than in the library. Provision for developing writing, however, lacks consistency. This is partly because of the need to rely on temporary staff, but has resulted in significant amounts of incomplete and unmarked work in some classes for older students.

132. Leadership and management have provided thoughtful and purposeful direction through a period made difficult by the need to recruit temporary staff. Monitoring and evaluation of examination results are particularly strong, and teachers are well aware of the value they add to students' performance. However, the organisation of the school curriculum does not allow adequate time for students to study more than one language effectively, and this is limiting the number of students taking languages in the sixth form. Resources are deployed well, and there has been an enterprising approach to raising funds for additional equipment, such as satellite television. Learning, is enhanced by a well-established and well-organised programme of foreign visits and exchanges.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- Teaching is good overall, and the best is excellent.
- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are very good.
- Productions and performance are of outstanding quality, and well supported by parents.
- Students learn a great deal about their own and other cultures.
- Teachers ensure that all students are fully involved in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- There are too few keyboards and other instruments for use in the main school.
- There is too little access to computers and use of ICT.
- Instrumental teaching is not monitored closely enough.

133. Overall, students reach average standards in Year 9, and above average standards in Year 11. Students progress more rapidly in Years 10 and 11 because teaching groups are smaller, and students take more responsibility for their own learning. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, and students with special needs make similar progress to other students in lessons. Opportunities for gifted and talented students to learn outside lessons are very good – almost one in seven take instrumental lessons and participate in a range of ensembles – but work in classes does not always stretch them fully. Nevertheless, achievement by Year 11 is good overall. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in maintaining standards and developing the curriculum to include music from other cultures.

134. In Year 9, students can identify and explore relationships between sounds, and some explore musical conventions in a range of styles and traditions. In a Year 8 class, students worked successfully to respond to each other's musical messages using pitched percussion instruments, and in a Year 9 class students worked well in groups using the chord structures and melodic conventions of the blues. Students improvise, compose and perform pieces, listening carefully to their own work and the work of others; they make judgements about what they have heard using correct technical language. They reach broadly average standards across all of these activities.

135. In Year 11, students opting for music discriminate and exploit the characteristics and expressive potential of selected musical resources, genres and styles. They compose and perform music to an above average standard. A Year 10 class working on African drumming understood key features of the music, and worked very effectively in groups to develop improvisations to demonstrate this. Students in Year 11 developed complex compositions to a high standard after well-structured feedback from the teacher and comments from other members of the class.
136. Overall, teaching and learning are good in classes and in instrumental lessons taught by visiting specialists. All teachers have good knowledge and understanding of music, plan lessons well, and engage students in their work. The best teaching is excellent, and leads to energetic, well-managed lessons with inventive methodology. For example, a Year 7 class learned the importance of breathing, and students' singing improved dramatically, after they had run twice round the hard area outside the classroom. Teaching in most other lessons was good, but in some lessons students were reluctant to take responsibility for their own learning, and the teacher had to pay much attention to managing the class. The quality of learning in instrumental lessons is enhanced by very good attitudes from students. A student in the early stages of learning the electric guitar, for example, very quickly learned to damp strings with his right hand, and confidently played the riff from 'Smoke on the Water' by the end of the lesson.
137. The department has made a satisfactory start in developing literacy and numeracy skills in its teaching, and books in the music department and resources in the school library are used effectively. While the department has in the past been made good use of ICT in its teaching, it has been unable to update its equipment, and by the time of the inspection there was too little use of computers to meet the requirements of National Curriculum. Music makes a very good contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures, and non-European musical forms are very well taught.
138. Leadership and management have some excellent features, particularly in the organisation and management of the school's exceptional range of music outside lessons. Students have a wide range of opportunities to take part in productions and concerts, and the brass band has been highly successful in national competition. However, the management of provision within the main school is not bringing the full benefit of this work to all of the students. Performance management and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is in place for class lessons, but instrumental lessons are only monitored informally. All students, including those with behavioural difficulties, are fully involved in their lessons. Overall, leadership of music is good, and management in the main school is satisfactory. Accommodation is satisfactory and is used well, but resources for music in the classroom are barely adequate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, promotes above-average standards.
- Teachers are highly committed, hard working and approachable.
- Curricular provision is good and extra-curricular provision very good.
- The school has Sportsmark status and community links are very effective.
- Leadership is strong.

Areas for improvement:

- There is not a clear and continuous pattern of learning in Years 7 to 9.
- Informal assessment could be better linked to National Curriculum levels.
- Teachers' assessments are not accurate enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy, lacks consistency.

139. Standards are broadly average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11. In view of the average standards reached by students joining the school, this represents good long-term achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The learning and achievement of students with special educational needs follow a similar pattern. Standards are good in athletics, football and hockey, and a significant minority of students achieve high standards. For example, in athletics, both boys and girls in Years 7 to 11 are West Wiltshire champions. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Strengths include improved examination results, effective links with the community, and improved facilities. Opportunities to plan and judge performance have also improved, but ICT is still under-used.
140. By Year 9 most students know how to warm up effectively, independently and with understanding. In games such as netball, rugby and football, most students acquire sound basic skills, techniques, rules and tactics. Although they can transfer skills they have learned into a small game context, many students are not proficient in a full game. A minority of students show good creativity in gymnastics, for example by exploiting body symmetry to make interesting shapes. Students are competent in the skills of observation and analysis and can incorporate strengths into their own work, but have too few opportunities to evaluate independently of the teacher.
141. By Year 11, most students are achieving good standards, mainly because of good teaching and planning. For example, all students have an individual fitness programme in Year 10 which underpins all other activities. The Junior Sports Leaders' Award contributes very positively to their personal development. Students' written work is well organised and presented, and coverage of work is good. High-attaining students reach a good standard in mixed hockey, where both boys and girls can execute more advanced techniques such as skilful use of reverse stick to counter attack.
142. The quality of teaching and learning is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where gains made in individual lessons are not fully reflected in learning over time. This is due to a lack of continuity in learning – teaching groups change, teaching approaches alter, and there are pockets of poor behaviour among boys. Good organisation and management within lessons ensures that students work safely, make best use of time and deepen knowledge. Most tasks set are well matched to students' needs, enabling all to progress equally well. Teachers

adapt language effectively to each group, so that students know what to do and how to improve. Accurate technical feedback gives students confidence in their own abilities and empowers them to work without close supervision. Inconsistencies in the teaching of key skills, assessment and teaching methods, which limit achievement in Years 7 to 9, stem from outdated schemes of work. Informal assessment procedures are insufficiently linked to formal assessment procedures. Consequently, students do not know, for example, what they have to do to reach the next National Curriculum level.

143. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory, but inconsistent. Some teachers use key words and technical terms effectively, while others miss opportunities. Examination students are well supported by suitable reference books in the library, and the range of books to promote general interest in sport is satisfactory.
144. Leadership of the department is sensitive and effective. Its strengths far outweigh the aspects of its work that need further development, and it leads to good standards in Year 11. Links with the community are well developed. For example, 500 youngsters in the locality were involved in the 'Super School' scheme. Teachers are fully committed to raising standards as reflected by their hard-work, involvement in training and determination to benefit from performance management. Take up and range of extra-curricular activities is very good and good relationships exist between teachers and students. With further planned development of facilities, and a planned increase in teaching time in Years 10 and 11, the school is in a good position to build on the subject's established strengths.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The head of department provides good leadership and standards are rising.
- Full and short GCSE courses have been successfully established.

Areas for improvement:

- Gifted and talented students are not achieving enough.
- Assessment, marking and homework need to be improved.
- Learning opportunities do not include visits, visitors and the use of ICT.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not monitored effectively.

145. Students reach average standards in Year 9, and average overall standards in Year 11, with better standards among students taking the full GCSE course. Statutory requirements are met. There is no significant difference between the standards reached by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, but gifted and talented students do not do as well as they should because they are not challenged enough. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. The school has introduced good new courses since the last inspection, and standards in Year 11 have risen. In view of the unsatisfactory standards and provision at the time of the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory.
146. In Years 7 to 9, students show a developing knowledge of the Christian religion through progressive study of its origins, teachings and practice. They can argue for and against the existence of God, and collaborative work leads to effective collage presentations to the class. Students have satisfactory speaking and listening skills, and most write well

enough in simply constructed sentences using appropriate vocabulary. Most students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions, and higher-attaining students show more breadth in their knowledge.

147. By Year 11, most students have extended their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam. All know the significance of the Creed, and high-attaining students can quote from it. In the full GCSE group, students can describe and explain the rituals carried out on Hajj, and more able students explain how teachings relate to these rituals. Higher-attaining students show good understanding of technical language, and support their opinions well. In coursework, students can explain the teachings of Christianity and Islam on abortion. Lower-attaining students, on the other hand, give brief responses to questions, with superficial explanations and often a one-sided view.
148. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall, though in some classes gifted and talented students are not stretched enough. Specialist teachers have good knowledge of the subject, prepare lessons well and sustain a good pace of work. Good use is made of humour, and of praise when deserved. In the best lessons, learning aims are shared with students; teachers' expectations are high and they use a wide variety of resources. Most students, including those who find the work difficult, become enthusiastic and co-operative. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is broadly satisfactory with some good teaching to full GCSE course students by specialist teachers. An extract from 'Mister God, this is Anna' was most effective in teaching the idea that God is everywhere.
149. Most teaching by teachers who are not specialists in religious education is satisfactory, but a minority of teachers do not know the subject well enough to teach it effectively. Homework is inconsistent, and much is of low quality. Poor behaviour by a significant minority of boys occasionally prevents others from learning. Learning is hindered by lack of assessment, and students' progress needs to be more closely monitored. Work is not marked well enough, and adequate library resources are under-used. There is, however, some promotion of literacy in lessons through specialised vocabulary, and provision for numeracy is satisfactory. ICT is not used in religious education although there are plans to address this. There are too few visits, visitors or extra-curricular activities.
150. The present leadership and management of the subject have established a pattern of sound progress and recovery from previous low standards. Planning documents are good, with up-dated schemes of work and individual lesson plans. However, there is still too little monitoring and assessment of students' progress. Religious education makes a distinctive and significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through reflection, learning about beliefs, values and the concept of spirituality, students reflect on their own beliefs and values in the light of those they are studying. The subject also helps to prepare students for adult life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society. Accommodation is good, with two specialist rooms. Colourful, stimulating and inspiring displays, including an outstanding wall-hanging of religious symbols made by a student, enrich the working environment.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	100	89	0	39	3.0	5.7
Computer Studies	7	71	74	29	13	2.3	1.8
French	2	100	78	9	13	1.5	1.6
Mathematics	1	100	62	0	15	3.0	1.5
Other social studies	1	100	74	0	11	1.0	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	14	100	96	57	46	6.7	6.6
Biology	23	78	88	17	34	4.3	5.3
Business Studies	15	87	92	40	32	5.9	5.5
Chemistry	8	100	90	38	43	5.5	5.9
Communication Studies	10	100	93	80	31	7.4	5.5
Economics	8	63	89	13	36	2.5	5.5
English Language	11	73	91	27	30	4.4	5.3
English Literature	6	83	95	33	57	4.7	5.9
English/Language	20	95	92	20	30	4.4	5.3
French	2	100	89	0	38	6.0	5.6
Design and technology (full)	9	89	91	33	30	5.3	5.4
Geography	8	88	92	25	38	4.8	5.7
German	1	100	40	100	91	10.0	5.8
History	13	100	88	62	35	7.7	5.5
Home Economics	6	67	83	0	28	2.7	4.7

Mathematics	41	76	87	29	43	4.5	5.8
Music	1	100	93	100	35	10.0	5.8
Other sciences (geology)	5	80	90	60	30	6.4	5.2
Other social studies	32	97	87	34	34	6.1	5.3
Physics	10	90	88	50	40	6.0	5.7
Spanish	2	100	89	0	39	3.0	5.7
Sports/PE studies	12	100	92	0	35	4.3	5.9
Business	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18.0	10.5
Leisure and Tourism	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.1
Science	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.0	9.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

151. The school offers a good range of mathematics courses, including further mathematics at A-level and opportunities for students to retake GCSE. Examination results in mathematics are below average. In science, the school provides biology, chemistry, geology and physics at AS and A-level, and human biology at AS level. This offers a good choice of science subjects to students, and standards overall are above average. Biology was fully inspected and the other subjects sampled.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and leads to effective learning for most students.
- Students work hard and enjoy good relationships with their teachers.
- There is a good choice of courses, including provision for further mathematics.

Areas for improvement:

- AS and A-Level results are below average.
- Students' independent learning skills are not developed.
- Some students start courses with too little mathematical knowledge to succeed.

152. The number of students choosing AS and A-level mathematics in 2001 was high and well above that in other subjects. Results for both examinations were below average, but showed some improvement in 2002. The minimum entry standard for students to take the AS course is low, and some students have not taken the higher level GCSE examination. This makes it very difficult for these students to understand some lessons and many do not continue to A-level in Year 13.

153. Students in Year 13 during the inspection were reaching average standards, and these show a further improvement on the most recent examination results. Most students have good algebraic skills, which they use confidently when introduced to a new topic. For example, in a lesson on log functions, students' ability to manipulate algebraic expressions enabled them to solve logarithmic equations by changing the base of the logs. This

accelerated their progress and improved their understanding. The achievement of these students is good.

154. Standards on the AS course in Year 12 are below average. A minority of students lack algebraic skills, and this hinders their ability to acquire new learning. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, some students had difficulty in solving equations. This delayed their progress in a statistics lesson on discrete random variables. Standards and progress in the GCSE course in Year 12 are satisfactory.
155. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are planned at an appropriate level. Teachers have a clear understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. By discussing appropriate examples teachers help students to understand the principles and methods used to solve problems. For example in a Year 13 calculus lesson students were shown how to differentiate log and exponential functions. By using good examples, and asking appropriate questions the teacher ensured all students understood how to tackle a variety of problems. This enabled all students to make good progress. Learning is also enhanced by students' very positive attitudes to their work. They persevere well with difficult problems, seeking help when necessary. Good assessment helps students to remedy errors and tackle new work with confidence. There was, however, one poor lesson during the inspection, in which the teacher did not establish a clear direction for the students and set a pace of work that was much too slow.
156. Overall, mathematics in the sixth form is well led and effectively managed. Teachers work well together and all staff are committed to raising standards. There is good monitoring of students and schemes of work are revised in the light of examination results. There are good books to support learning. Overall improvement in the sixth form since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Biology

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

Strengths:

- A-level results are improving.
- Learning is good as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge.
- Students' notes are well structured, providing an accurate record for revision.
- Few students fail to complete their courses.

Areas for improvement:

- Teaching approaches in some lessons lack variety.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough to set short-term learning targets.
- Students have too few opportunities to develop their independent research skills.

157. A-level results were below average in 2001, having been well below in each of the previous two years. At AS level, results for Year 12 students in 2001 were average. In relation to their earlier GCSE results, students did as well as expected at both levels. Results in 2002 were similar to those in 2001. Standards in lessons and written work in Year 13 are a little above average. They are higher than those suggested by recent A-level results because frequent staff changes in previous years have had a detrimental effect on results. In Year 12, standards are average, but there is a wide range of attainment. Although examination results have been depressed, standards are now rising, and there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

158. Students achieve well in their lessons. For example, in one they quickly understood how original work on nerve impulses had been carried out. They also make good progress over time. Early in Year 12 they understand the structures of fairly simple organic molecules, but by Year 13 learn about the structure of DNA. A few students demonstrate high standards when analysing the results of their fieldwork, for example speculating about reasons for differences found between freshwater streams in terms of canopy cover and water flow. Most make very good use of ICT skills in presenting results, using colour effectively in pie charts to demonstrate differences in stream populations. Students in Year 12 have only just started their course, but are moving successfully into sixth form work. The majority already show good understanding of the detailed structure of cells.
159. Teaching and learning are good, and occasionally very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively to focus students' attention on key learning points. For instance, in Year 12, the teacher pointed out common misconceptions when students used electron micrographs to identify key features in cells. The teacher used very good subject knowledge in a Year 13 lesson about nerve impulses by building on students' existing knowledge and drawing out from them a method for investigating the transmission of information through the nervous system. Teachers use a good range of methods to maintain students' concentration. In Year 12, the teacher used resources well to simulate how centrifugation is used to separate cell fragments; this was followed by a video-film showing how scientists use electron microscopes. Occasionally, teachers do not vary their approach sufficiently, for example spending a whole lesson going through examination questions. In these lessons, some students, both female and male, lose interest and 'switch off'. Students in Year 12 follow instructions well, but have too few opportunities to develop their independent research skills, partly because of a lack of textbooks. Assessment is not used effectively enough to show individual students how they can achieve higher grades. Students learn well because their work is well structured, providing an accurate record for future revision. They have positive views about biology lessons, saying that most are both stimulating and challenging.
160. The teaching staff has recently been much more stable, and the department is well led and managed. There is good teamwork and commitment to building on what has already been achieved.

Chemistry

161. Examination results in chemistry are broadly average, but were higher at A-level in 2002. Standards in the sampled lesson were above average. Students achieved very well because the teacher deepened their understanding by using very good subject knowledge to encourage speculation about possible reaction mechanisms for aromatic substitutions.

Geology

162. Standards in geology are above average. Students make good progress by building well on their achievements in science at GCSE. By Year 13 they investigate the porosity and permeability of rock, recognising anomalous results and speculating about possible causes. The course captures their interest because it often refers to real geological events such as volcanic eruptions and landslips. Examination results are usually above average.

Physics

163. Examination results are usually above average. Two lessons were sampled. Standards were average in one and above average in the other. In the latter lesson, students achieved well because the teacher helped them understand how to apply their knowledge of diffraction to the spectral analysis of light from a star.

Human biology

164. Standards in the human biology lesson seen were above average. Achievement was good because students used a well organised practical session to test for nutrients in food, and deepened their understanding of the digestive process. Four students (from John of Gaunt) are currently in Year 12, but numbers entered for AS level examinations have usually been low; none were entered in 2002.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

165. The school offers AS and A-level design and technology options in food technology and product design. These were inspected. Examination results have improved steadily over recent years, and are broadly average. They represent good progress from the standards students have reached at GCSE.

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is well-planned and well matched to the needs of the students.
- Students are committed and work hard.
- Teachers use a good range of resources to promote practical investigations.

Areas for improvement:

- Students are not critical enough in their research.
- Students have limited knowledge of some aspects of design.

166. Students carry out a broad range of practical research and problem-solving. They have satisfactory knowledge of significant movements in the history of design, including art nouveau and art deco, and relate these to contemporary practice and to their own work. Work seen during the inspection was broadly average, and shows good progress from the standards most students have reached at GCSE. Project folders are, for the most part, well presented, and show step-by-step progression in design. However, students tend to rely on source material as conclusive evidence rather than as material for searching enquiry, and this is one significant reason for standards not rising to above average levels.

167. Teaching during the inspection alternated from a general discussion of a specific design, or aspect of design, to individual help and tuition with personal projects. Teachers plan work well to engage students' interest, and create a good working atmosphere. Design ideas are pursued methodically in lessons, helping students develop creative maturity and a professional, disciplined, approach, though many find it difficult to sustain this in independent study. Students are committed, show confidence in discussion, and work with a high level of interest and concentration. Assessment keeps students in touch with their own learning and helps them evaluate their own work. This contributes to the consistency of learning and progress.

168. Students find that the consortium helps broaden the range of teachers' skills available to them, and gives them contact with a wider range of students. In discussion, some students felt that a wider range of options to include, in particular, textiles, would be an improvement but all felt that current courses met their needs. Displays of sixth form work help inspire younger students. As in the main school, the department has been placed under great strain by the difficulty of recruiting specialist staff, but has overcome these through good teamwork. Overall, the quality of provision is similar to that at the time of the last inspection.

BUSINESS

169. Provision for business studies at AS and A-level was inspected, and provision for economics was sampled. In business studies, examination results have fluctuated very widely. They have been broadly average overall in recent years, but fell in 2002, when a high proportion of students did not complete their AS course. Results in economics have been broadly average in most years, but were well below average in 2001. The standard of work seen in lessons in economics was average in Year 13, though the teaching group was very small, and below average in Year 12, where standards suffered from students' lack of previous experience of the subject. The school's management arrangements do not provide an effective framework for these subjects to develop

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

Strengths:

- The current Year 12 group has the potential to do well.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards are below average and achievement is too low.
- Students do not work hard enough, either in lessons or in independent study.
- Attendance is low, and too many students do not complete their course.
- There is too little contact with other business studies departments and with organisations outside the school.
- There is too little use of ICT, and there are too few library resources.

170. Teaching in lessons, and day-to-day management, are satisfactory. However, many students begin with little or no previous experience of the subject, and the school does not make sufficient adjustments in its teaching to deal with this. Students say that it does not take long for them to catch up, but standards among the remaining students in Year 13 are below average. The department's own analysis reveals the under-achievement of many students. The drop-out rate in 2002 was unacceptably high, and attendance is poor: the average attendance rate in lessons during the inspection was 80 per cent. Many students, particularly in Year 13, have limited understanding of current affairs, and have limited writing and speaking skills. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, only one of the class could readily relate the financial analysis they were studying to decision-making about business matters.

171. In lessons, students and the teacher share good relationships and enjoy the work. Teaching has some good features, including good use of a game format for revision, both at an early stage in Year 12, and in Year 13, where students assess and evaluate the games against their own examination criteria. Marking, however, does not provide enough information for students on ways to improve their work, and students do not work hard enough, either in or out of lessons. The teacher's expectations are appropriate but too often students do not respond as they should.
172. There are too few resources to provide effective support for advanced learning. There is only one computer in the classroom used for business studies, which is very isolated from the rest of the school. The library lacks suitable books and periodicals, despite the librarian's willingness to acquire them. No visits to or from organisations or businesses are arranged, and the subject manager has too little professional contact with other business studies teachers or departments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

173. The school offers AS and A-level courses in computer studies and information and communication technology. The most recent examination results are from small group sizes. A-level results were above national average levels in 2001 and have remained similar to those attained prior to the last inspection. Standards dipped in the 2002 examinations in both courses.

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

Strengths:

- Standards in work seen in the inspection were broadly average.
- Students are keen and well-motivated.
- Computer resources are good.
- Management of resources is good.

Areas for improvement:

- Leadership lacks clear direction.
- Learning opportunities, planning and assessment are barely adequate.
- There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

174. Students often enter the sixth form with below average standards because they have not been able to study ICT at GCSE. Standards of work are broadly average, but with some weaknesses in knowledge and understanding. Students on the computer studies courses do well where they can use their own expertise in using software programs. They have created a series of simple PASCAL programs, some complex spreadsheets, and a range of databases using an object-oriented language and a menu-based environment. Students develop a better understanding of the computer systems used in industry through presentations made by their peers on their own use of ICT in the workplace. One student talked knowledgeably about her experience of backing up data, setting up cash-till systems and closing down computer systems at the end of each day. Another gave details about the processing and management information systems used by a well-known fast-food retailer. They understand terms such as *relational tables* and *fields* but have a limited knowledge about the process of *normalisation*. Students can explain that a relational table of students' names will require a unique code number for each student to avoid duplication. They have a limited knowledge of web design or electronic mailing because they have few opportunities to learn about them.

Students use PowerPoint and Word to compile presentations but these are of limited quality. They have a good mix of graphics and text but lack a smooth flow of ideas or integrated design.

175. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, and is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, there is a good partnership in learning between teacher and students. The teacher is knowledgeable and students respect this and want to learn more because the subject-matter is relevant. In a lesson closely linked to the use of computers in industry, students could see how the analysis of data can lead to amendments to future planning by examining their experiences of part-time work. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, short-term planning is poor, aims and objectives are vague, timing is haphazard and students make slow progress.
176. Students use ICT to a limited degree in a range of other subjects; for example, one had word-processed his experiment to test the resistance of conductive putty. However, there is no course for any students to improve their key skills in ICT and as a result, standards in ICT generally are below average. Students improve their literacy to some degree through their accumulation of a good technical vocabulary.
177. Leadership is not providing clear direction for the development of ICT. Standards and teaching are not monitored closely enough, and there is no clear direction in planning. A significant number of students who choose ICT in Year 12 do not follow it through to Year 13. Website and network management, though, are good. The school's website manager has revamped the school's website and this is generally of good quality. It has, for example, enabled students from other schools to carry out research on the school's results before deciding to take up A-level options. However, sixth form students are not allowed to contribute to the website, even though some intend to study Internet website design at university. Assessment in lessons is unsatisfactory, and time is wasted when teachers teach students skills they already have. Computer resources are good and good network management ensures that there are few breakdowns. Although there is a computer club, sixth formers are rarely involved.
178. Improvement in ICT in the sixth form since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although more able students do well, students of average or below-average ability under-achieve. Standards and provision have not improved as much as they should.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

179. Physical education was inspected fully. A-level results are below average but rising, and are in line with students' GCSE grades. Standards on the Community Sports Leaders' Award (CSLA) are well above course requirements.

Physical education

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and students are well prepared for examinations.
- Guidance given to students starting the course is good.
- Take up of AS and A-level courses is good.
- The Community Sports Leaders' Award (CSLA) significantly contributes to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement:

- Research and independent learning skills need further development.
- The timetable has too few opportunities for students to participate in sport.
- Teaching does not do enough to promote literacy and ICT skills.

180. A strong feature of A-level work is the high quality of many of the students' personal performance plans. Higher-attaining students undertake training programmes diligently, relate theory to practice effectively, and cover topics comprehensively. Students can to argue a case successfully - as in discussing leadership theories – but other aspects of their study and learning skills are underdeveloped because they do not read around topics or undertake sufficient independent research. They also have too few opportunities to use ICT. Many lower-attaining students do better on practical than on theoretical aspects of the subject.
181. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan effectively. For example, work is broken down into manageable components enabling students to make steady gains. The grammar, writing and spelling of a minority of students are not good enough to meet the demands of the course at the higher grades. A coherent strategy for the teaching of these skills is lacking. Teachers are willing to use one another as an effective learning resource. For example, in a CSLA lesson students made considerable gains when observing the teaching of a Year 7 gymnastics lesson. Having had their first attempt at organising part of an activity themselves, they quickly appreciated the complexity of organising an activity safely and effectively. The CSLA course contributes significantly to the development of students as mature, caring and responsible citizens.
182. Higher-performing students continue to achieve well in sports because a good range of extra-curricular activities is available to them. The department has developed several aspects of its work since the last inspection, and has maintained overall standards. However, there are fewer opportunities to follow the CSLA course, and physical education is not now available to all sixth form students. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
183. Students' work is assessed accurately and consistently, in line with school policy. They know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities are good. For example, 17 students toured Zambia with the World Challenge Expedition. Guidance for students joining AS courses is good, and all have a realistic chance of success. The high esteem in which students hold their teachers contributes both to the high uptake of courses and standards achieved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

184. A-level and AS courses in drama and theatre studies were inspected, and work in music and performing arts was sampled. Recent examination results in drama and theatre studies have been slightly above average, and represent good achievement in view of results at GCSE, which are below average overall. Some teaching groups, however, are very small. Results in art and design have been broadly average, but with a high pass rate, and this also represents good achievement. Provision for performing arts is satisfactory. Although some teaching groups have been very small, examination results and practical work in music are very good.

Drama and Theatre Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in Drama and Theatre Studies is **good**.

Strengths:

- The good teaching which takes place in the subject, with staff creating an animated and motivating environment in which good learning can take place.
- The imaginative interpretation of the A-level syllabus.
- The contribution which the subject makes to students' personal and social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in students' written work.

185. Students in Year 12 made good progress in work on the Irish Theatre movement and Sean O'Casey's play *'Shadow of a Gunman'*. Students had prepared for the lesson through personal research, and shared their knowledge and understanding effectively in pairs at the beginning of the lesson. As a result, all could place it within its social, historic and dramatic context. Students generally achieve well in demanding practical activities, for example by applying Stanislavski's theory of tempo rhythms in their study of an extract from the play. However, one or two found it difficult to concentrate hard enough to sustain their character in this exercise. The two students in Year 13 showed effective understanding of Brecht's rehearsal and staging techniques as they considered a short section of Brecht's play *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich*. Standards are lower in written than in practical work, and some students rely too much on information supplied by the teacher. Several have weak essay writing skills, and make too many grammatical mistakes.

186. Teaching in lessons is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers know the subject very well, and use their own drama skills and talents very well to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of resources, for example using video to help students to evaluate their own and other's work. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, and good relationships contribute to learning. Teachers support lower-attaining students in writing with writing frames, but this is not enough to enable them to overcome their difficulties.

187. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and well-informed co-ordinator. With other members of the department, she provides students with an imaginative and demanding curriculum. There are many opportunities for students to take part in workshops and productions, and to see theatre productions. Assessment is good, with half-termly targets for improvement. Work in drama and theatre studies makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through its emphasis on collaboration,

and its study of moral issues in plays from a broad range of cultures. Standards have shown good improvement since the last inspection.

Art and design

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching enables all students to make good progress.
- Students are encouraged to learn independently.
- Good staff liaison leads to good assessment and one-to-one advice.
- There is good provision for students with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Many students' oral skills are weak, so they often have difficulty discussing work analytically and critically.
- Studio space for Year 12 is only just adequate.
- There is too little use of ICT.

188. The range of standards and experience of students joining the sixth form is broader than in most schools, but few boys study the subject. Standards are broadly average, although the pass rate is very high, and represents good achievement from GCSE results. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to their AS level course. Standards are above average in one group, and broadly average in the other, which includes students with special educational needs.

189. In Year 13, visual work is appropriately more individual, and students confidently develop their own styles. Students' strengths lie in research and visual exploration aspects, but they are too reluctant to discuss this in public. Some Year 13 students were unresponsive in a lesson where analytical skills were required. The department has identified this weakness and has developed ways such as video presentations to try to improve students' competence. The speaking and listening skills of students in Year 12 are better.

190. Teaching is good. Some is very good, and all is satisfactory. Teachers share classes, so that students benefit from a good range of specialist skills. Students are encouraged from the start to become independent of teachers, who do not intervene in work unnecessarily. This creates a good degree of personal response in visual work in AS level investigations. Teachers provide good opportunities outside lessons for students to improve work, and Year 13 students have a studio where they can work in free periods. Overall, students learn well, developing mature and valued relationships with staff.

191. Management is good. The team is well supported and staff co-operate well over moderation and marking of students' work. Effective one-to-one discussions between staff and students form an important element of the assessment process. Although the relatively small studio for Year 13 is very useful, Year 12 have no such space. These students would benefit from such access to enable them to work independently in free time. The lack of ICT in the department is detrimental to students' understanding of computers as an everyday tool in all aspects of their creative work.

Music

192. Provision in music is **very good**, and benefits from the wide range of activities outside lessons. In the lesson observed, students were drawn into the subtlety of word painting in an Elizabethan madrigal through skilled questioning, excellent subject knowledge and a vibrant enthusiasm for the subject. This lesson made a real contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development. The extended curriculum gives senior students a genuine opportunity to take responsibility and show leadership. For example, two sixth form trumpeters (both of whom intend to audition for music college) used their own time to research and select the repertoire for a trumpet quartet to play during the school's open evening. The quality of sixth form music stems from careful development of students' skills from Year 7.

Performing arts

193. Provision sampled during the inspection was **satisfactory** overall, and good in dance. Standards are broadly average and, as in drama, students are more successful in practical aspects of the subject than in evaluating their work, where some are held back by limited confidence in expressing their ideas to the group. Students have good attitudes in lessons, and work hard.

194. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in dance. Higher-attaining students in dance showed poise, clarity of movement and good expression. Others successfully acquired, with the help of the teacher's skilful guidance, some appreciation of the vocabulary of movement. The lesson was effectively planned and structured enabling students both to acquire basic knowledge and experience and to gain in confidence. The teacher made good use of information and communication technology in the preparation of resource material. Teaching in other lessons showed good understanding of the subject, good management of classes and feedback to individual students. However, teaching could do more to address the underlying weaknesses in students' skills that prevent most from reaching above average standards.

195. There is good additional provision for performing arts, for example through visits from professional dancers. Dance makes a valuable contribution to the very good standard of school productions such as, 'Macbeth.' The range of courses has been extended since the last inspection, and development is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

196. History, law and psychology were inspected fully, and work in geography was sampled. Standards and examination results in the subjects inspected fully are above average, and well above average in history. There is a high pass rate in geography, but fewer high grades. A-level results were below average in 2001, and showed little change in 2002, although higher-attaining students achieved a good proportion of A and B grades at AS in 2002.

History

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Standards are high and students achieve well.
- The department provides a good learning experience for its students.
- Students develop good learning and independent research skills.
- The curriculum offers a good range of options.

Areas for improvement:

- Students and teachers need to make more use of ICT in lessons.
- Resources in Year 12 are not matched closely enough to students' needs.
- Teachers could make better use of assessment information at the beginning of the course.

197. Standards in Year 13 are well above average, and students achieve a significant number of A grades at A-level. Results are improving over time, and overall achievement is good. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students, and there has been excellent recent achievement from students with special educational needs.
198. Students' work shows good improvement over the length of the course. Students in Year 13 understand complex issues, and can all carry out an independent investigation. The oral and written work of the highest-attaining students shows a very analytical approach and the ability to support argument well by the use of apt quotations. Students are confident in completing research tasks and in sharing their findings with others. Communication skills are developed well in written work and discussion, but are held back in presentations to the class because students do not use ICT.
199. Students in both year groups enjoy their studies and work well together. Good assessment procedures give students valuable individual guidance. Most students in Year 12 handle new vocabulary and concepts confidently, and are methodical in finding information to support their work in class. However, in some lessons, lower-attaining students in Year 12 need more guidance to participate effectively in group tasks.
200. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject, and promote a high level of participation. Students take responsibility for their own work by researching different themes and then reporting back to the group. They are encouraged to research and make decisions about the past based on what they have read, rather to rely solely on class notes. The best teaching is inspirational – for example, in the use of the work of Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell to help students understand the concept of burden in the British Empire. Good questioning focuses discussion and takes forward the learning of all members of the group. Timetabling allows very effective use of team teaching to prepare students for course work. Students use computers for research and word processing but they are rarely used in lessons. The humanities faculty learning resource area is used effectively.
201. The high standards and the quality of teaching and learning stem from good management and development of the subject. Procedures and documentation are good, and teachers work well as a team. The new examination system has been

introduced very effectively. However, teachers do not have easy access to information on what students have already achieved, and this makes it difficult for them to set clear individual targets. Students have the opportunity to go on a range of valuable visits, for example to Berlin, and can choose to focus on American or Russian history. Students judge their experience in the subject to be very good, and provision has shown good improvement since the last inspection.

Law

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is consistently good and there is a clear focus on independent learning.
- The number of students choosing law is rising.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and relevant professional experience.
- There are good links with local schools, colleges and the community.

Areas for improvement:

- Students do not make sufficient use of computers.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough at the beginning of the course.

202. Law is a valuable addition to the subjects taught in Years 12 and 13, and the number of students is growing each year. In 2002, students did well, and three were awarded A grades at A-level. In 2002 80% of students passed the subject at AS but with no A grades. The standard of work in Year 13 is above average. Full GCSE results for students in Year 12 were not available during the inspection, but there are a number of high-attaining students, and standards are potentially above average. Achievement is good in relation to results in previous tests or examinations. Attitudes are very good, and students value and enjoy their work. Numbers of male and female students are similar, and they are achieving equally well.

203. Students make good progress in a new subject because of good teaching in lessons. In both year groups they respond well to questioning, and recall knowledge gained from previous lessons, confidently using appropriate vocabulary. Students in Year 12 showed clear understanding of some aspects of the judiciary, although individual students initially struggled with the concept of the separation of powers. They are confident in using web sites to research specific issues, such as the payment of judges. In Year 13, some higher-attaining students can explain complex legal issues very well, and all could begin to write about provocation as a defence after studying a range of famous cases. Most students in Year 13 have the detailed knowledge and the higher levels of understanding to do well in examinations, because they have been well prepared. Students are skilled in using computers as part of their learning, but, although they frequently make presentations in class, they do not make enough use of ICT.

204. Teaching is good. In the lessons observed, teachers showed that they have very good subject knowledge, supported by real experience in the legal or related professions. A team teaching approach provides a good introduction for students in Year 12. There is very good support for students outside the classroom, through visits and links with other schools and colleges, with the police and the courts. Year 13 students particularly appreciate this. Teachers promote good learning by carefully balancing different activities in the classroom, and by using case law to support students as they develop understanding in depth of all aspects of the legal system. They use questioning and

simulation well, and assessment is rigorous, ensuring that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. There is a clear challenge for students in lessons, and they are actively involved in all aspects of learning. Students use an appropriate range of resources, many of them produced within the department.

205. Management and leadership are good. The consortium links, part-time teachers and resources are managed well, and the new courses have been effectively introduced. Very detailed schemes of work ensure that all topics are covered in appropriate depth. As in history, however, teachers do not have ready access to information on students' previous achievements, and this makes it difficult for them to set targets. This is a successful and popular subject that is promoting high standards.

Psychology

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and assess work positively and helpfully.
- Procedures for monitoring students' progress are thorough.
- Students' work is clearly expressed and accurate.
- Students are enthusiastic and work hard.

What could be improved:

- Planning in a small minority of lessons is only just adequate.
- Teachers have too few opportunities to monitor and support one another, or to observe good work in other schools.

206. Psychology was not inspected during the last inspection. Standards have risen in recent years, and are good in comparison with students' overall GCSE results. Almost all achieve higher grades in psychology than would have been predicted, and male and female students do equally well. Year 13 students know about individual differences and deviation from social norms. For example, they understand the belief that mental illness can be used as a means of control. They write clearly about dysfunctional behaviour that interferes with a person's life, may cause personal distress or cause others to feel uncomfortable. In one lesson, students showed good understanding of the effect of media on children's behaviour. Most students can give very clear definitions of terms from social learning theory. By Year 13, they are confident and speak convincingly, for example about types of learning. Students' attitudes to learning are good.

207. There is some variation in the quality of teaching, but it is good overall, with some very good features. The relaxed relationships in some lessons, combined with clear focus on learning aims, were impressive. In all lessons, teachers' subject knowledge was strong. They demonstrate an enthusiasm for psychology that rubs off on the students. A variety of methods is used to impart learning, for example dictation, discussion, worksheets, research and class teaching. In a minority of lessons, teaching was less well-focused, and work lacked pace, so that learning was only just satisfactory. Students are treated as adults, and this has a positive impact on learning.

208. Resources for learning are adequate, and there is a suitable range of texts and periodicals in the library. However, teachers have little opportunity to observe and learn

from one another, or to see good work in other schools. In other respects, the subject is led and managed well.

Geography

209. Teaching in AS and A-level courses was sampled. Overall, provision is **satisfactory**. There is, however, good teaching and learning in lessons, and very good teaching was observed in one lesson. Students in Year 12 are making the transition from GCSE to AS quickly and are beginning to use subject terminology and to think more broadly. They assume responsibility for their own learning, and engage in personal research using a variety of resources. They listen carefully and provide answers that reflect good thinking skills. The written work of these students shows promise, but is as yet immature and lacking in depth. These factors limit the effect on standards of the good teaching and learning that takes place in lessons.
210. A-level students, after success at AS level, are confident and are practised in the use of secondary sources of information. They are increasingly critical and evaluative of their own work and also of information presented to them. Some think carefully before they write, but others need to take more care, and sometimes rush. Some earlier work shows over-reliance on printed information. Teaching in lessons is thorough and highly professional, although there are occasional gaps in assessment. Students told inspectors that they were happy with their courses, and overall achievement justifies this view.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

211. The school offers a broad range of courses in English language, literature and communication studies, as well as opportunities for students to improve their GCSE grades. Work in the AS and A-level English courses was inspected, and the GCSE work was sampled. A-level French was inspected fully (there is no AS group in Year 12), and work in Spanish was sampled. Results in languages are broadly average overall, but some teaching groups in recent years have been too small to represent sustainable provision.

English

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

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning in lessons are good.
- Teachers interpret A-level syllabuses imaginatively.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, and create an animated and motivating working environment.
- Students achieve good results when re-taking GCSE examinations.

Areas for improvement:

- Students need more opportunities for personal investigation and independent learning.
- Students need more examples of good written work, to extend their knowledge of essay structure.
- There are too few medium-term targets for students.
- A small number of students are allowed to begin AS courses with too little chance of success.

212. Overall, A-level results are broadly average, but vary very much according to the standards reached by students at GCSE. There is wide variation in these standards, and there has recently been a high dropout rate in Year 12. Teaching for these students was, however, affected in 2002 by the staffing shortage in the English department. Students in Year 13 during the inspection were reaching average standards. Overall, standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

213. In discussion and in writing, higher-attaining students make mature and perceptive points about the texts and factual materials they study. Other students find it hard to structure their ideas and opinions, and to express them confidently. Teachers understand this, and use good questioning skills to extend students' understanding and participation. Regular opportunities are provided for students to engage in collaborative learning and to express their responses about the texts they explore. Higher-attaining students' written work often shows a strong personal response to the texts they read, supported by relevant quotations and the opinions of accepted academics. By contrast, some lower-attaining students rely too much on the opinions of others, and make judgements without evidence to support them.

214. Able students have advanced reading skills, with clear understanding of the poetry and prose they read. In an A-level Literature class, some able students showed clear understanding of the psychological nature of characters in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and could appreciate the writer's use of language to convey his ideas and opinion about the moral nature of the story. The large majority of students in the sixth form have good technical reading skills, though some of the lower-attaining students still have problems in identifying deeper levels of language in the texts they read. Students in Year 13 develop sound critical and analytical skills, and can identify the linguistic features of a range of literary and factual materials.

215. There are examples of good personal research and investigation at A-level, where one student gained full marks in her personal investigative unit of work. However, other students involved in the same unit produced written work that was based on limited personal research and lacked the depth needed to reach an above average grade. Some of the least able students in both Years 12 and 13 still have problems in producing well-constructed pieces of work, in terms of structure and style. The lack of

independent research and study skills among students is the main reason why the good teaching in lessons does not consistently lead to above average standards.

216. The quality of teaching in lessons ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Teachers have clear learning objectives for all lessons, and share them in detail with students. This gives a clear sense of direction and purpose to lessons. Lessons are active and well paced, with timed targets for all activities. Learning in lessons is enhanced by students' positive attitudes towards their work. Students particularly enjoy the opportunity to take control of their own learning through regular group activities. Students' work is regularly marked. Teachers supply constructive and positive comments, and suggest how particular pieces of work can be improved. Students however do not have medium term targets for improvement. This leaves some without sufficient sense of direction, particularly in their work outside lessons.
217. Leadership sustains a strong sense of teamwork, and the use of examination syllabuses is challenging and demanding. There is not, however, sufficiently consistent guidance for students on learning outside lessons. Analysis of the work produced by students taking GCSE showed very good teaching and learning, leading to a good pattern of success. These students included two with English as an additional language, who achieved grades A and B respectively.

French

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

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning in lessons are good.
- Extensive use of French in the classroom develops good listening and speaking skills.
- Teachers encourage independent research skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Students need to consolidate their command of vocabulary and structures more thoroughly.
- Some teaching groups are very small.

218. Overall, students taking French reach the standards they should, and higher-attaining students achieve high examination grades. However, teaching groups are very small. The standard in Year 13 during the inspection was broadly average.
219. Male and female students do equally well. They speak French confidently and convey their views effectively, particularly when using recently acquired material. Most students gather the gist of spoken or written French at an appropriate level and select the important details. They possess a satisfactory range of vocabulary on the issues currently under study, for example political topics such as immigration and racism. Their recall of less recent vocabulary and structures is less secure. For example, there was confusion between the imperfect and conditional tenses and between 'temps' and 'fois'. While some written work is good, the writing of lower-attaining students contains basic grammatical errors. These features indicate a reluctance among students to consolidate their work by sound revision and learning, and this weakness undoes some of the benefit of the school's good provision. There are also some weaknesses in students' ability to structure an argument in essays and in literary appreciation. All students have good research skills and use the Internet extensively to gather information for their topics. .

220. Teaching and learning in lessons are good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of French language and culture. French is used exclusively in the classroom, and the language is pitched at a challenging level to develop above average listening and speaking skills in students. There is a wide range of activities, well matched to examination requirements, with particular emphasis on translation and the study of grammar. Role play in pairs promotes good speaking skills. Instructions for activities are clear: the requirement to produce a summary of a text on right-wing politics, without the aid of prompts, encouraged memorisation and maximum effort. Texts, often from the Internet, are well-chosen, topical and interesting. Teachers use texts systematically, with careful preparation, lists of background vocabulary, guidance on eliciting information, probing questions both oral and written, and a steady rise in the level of response required. Homework is well planned and integrated with learning in lessons.
221. Students are attentive and interested. They form excellent relationships with teachers, and take an active part in lessons. They have good research skills, use dictionaries and other reference works well, and are competent in working with ICT. They make extensive use of the videos and written material in the specialist library. Students organise their folders well. In class, students make notes on items when instructed, but need to show greater independence and ambition in learning, particularly by noting vocabulary and structures and using their notes.
222. Leadership and management are good. ICT is effectively promoted, and there are good procedures for assessment that involve students in reviewing their own work. Foreign exchanges and visits enhance learning, and work experience abroad is planned. Students are offered a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes the reading and appreciation of literature.

Spanish

223. Overall, the quality of provision is **good**. Teaching groups remain small, but numbers are rising. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent in equal measure, and is good overall. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of modern Spanish life and culture. In the most successful lessons, they provide a varied and engaging range of learning activities, coupled with highly skilled questioning to make students think hard and consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers make very good use of the skills of native speakers in the class, use well-targeted praise to promote learning, and make each lesson a stimulating and exciting experience. Where the teaching is satisfactory, the range of activities is more restricted, and students, though still attentive, learn less effectively. Standards overall remain broadly average, partly because some students in Year 12 have gaps in their knowledge from GCSE, but good written work in Year 13 suggests standards are rising. The growing interest in the subject in the school, with the high levels of skill in the teaching and excellent attitudes from Year 12 students, put the subject in a very good position to grow and succeed.